

TOWARDS A GENDERED THEOLOGY OF WORK:

**A case study of the paid and unpaid work experiences of Indian Christian women in
Pietermaritzburg**

ROWANNE SAROJINI MARIE

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR BEVERLEY HADDAD

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the paid and unpaid work experiences of Indian Christian women in Pietermaritzburg as they would inform a framework for a gendered theology of work. Intersecting gender and development theory with theologies of work, the study asserts that gender, particularly as it relates to understandings of what constitutes “work”, has been neglected by theologians.

In order to better understand the “work” roles of women, gender and development theorist, Caroline Moser (1993) has provided a framework. She asserts that women’s work roles can be categorized in three important ways namely, productive work, reproductive work and community work. The gender-based division of labour has contributed to socially ascribed gender roles that cause women to be primarily responsible for monotonous, exasperating, tiring, time-consuming and economically unrewarding activities. Men on the other hand occupy “productive” roles that are economically rewarding and community roles that are usually seen as prestigious. Similar roles carried out by women are often not rewarded and are undervalued. Due to the social construction of differentiated gender roles, tasks associated with the reproduction of society fall almost entirely to women. Moser’s (1993) conceptualization of women’s roles is useful in this study, highlighting the different types of work that Indian women are involved in. However, this gendered analysis has not been prevalent in existing theologies of work. Rather, these focus solely on doctrinal, class or ethics perspectives. Furthermore, it is argued that these theologies of work are developed without the first-hand knowledge of the experiences, struggles and challenges that workers themselves encounter. This is particularly the case for women workers.

In order to investigate women’s work experiences in this study, extensive fieldwork was carried with a group of Indian Christian women in Pietermaritzburg. Four research tools, namely a questionnaire, a 24-hour time study diary, semi structured interviews and focus group discussions were developed and employed to better understand their work roles. The findings revealed that Indian women continue to remain confined to these roles of productive, reproductive and community work because of the impact of culture as well as religion. While some Indian women have entered the productive market and are financial contributors to households, they still assume the roles that are culturally seen as “women’s work”. In

addition, their theological understandings and Biblical interpretations of work have resulted in women remaining acquiescent to such roles which are often depicted as ‘the ideal woman’. In a context where women find themselves immersed in roles of production, reproduction and community work, it is crucial that theological reflection engages these work experiences which are intertwined with women’s faith practices. This study is an attempt to do this as it offers a framework that points toward a gendered theology of work.

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I, **ROWANNE SAROJINI MARIE**, declare that

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Rowanne Sarojini Marie

Name of Student

Signature

Date

As the supervisor I approve the submission of this thesis:

Professor Beverley Haddad

Name of Supervisor

Signature

Date

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ACRONYMS USED IN THE TEXT	xi
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	xii
1. INTRODUCING THE STUDY	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Sharing women's experience	2
1.3 Considering the historical background of Indian women in South Africa	4
1.4 Understanding women's 'work' experience	7
1.5 The notion of 'work' within a Christian context	9
1.6 Investigating women's lived experiences in paid and unpaid roles	10
1.7 Outline of the study	11
2. SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF INDIAN WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA	
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 The arrival of Indians in South Africa	14
2.3 Poverty and Indian women in South Africa	23
2.4 Traditional and cultural roles of Indian women	34
2.5 Indian women and Christianity	44
2.6 Conclusion	51
3. WOMEN'S PRODUCTIVE AND REPRODUCTIVE ROLES IN COMMUNITIES	
3.1 Introduction	52
3.2 The neglect of women's roles in gender and development planning	53
3.3 The history of gender and development planning initiatives	60
3.4 Moser and gender and development planning	70
3.5 The "triple roles" of women	78
3.5.1 Productive work	78
3.5.2 Reproductive work	81
3.5.3. Community work	84
3.6 Strategic Gender Interests and Practical Gender Needs	86
3.7 Conclusion	94

4.	THEOLOGIES OF WORK	
4.1	Introduction	96
4.2	The notion of “work”	96
4.3	The development of theologies of work	100
4.4	Major themes in existing theologies of work	110
	4.4.1 Work as a blessing or a curse	110
	4.4.2 Work in the Spirit	112
	4.4.3 God as worker	115
	4.4.4 Work as co-creation with God	116
4.5	The problem of “work itself”	117
4.6	A worker’s theology	121
4.7	Conclusion	124
5.	THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN’S WORK	
5.1	Introduction	125
5.2	Geographic location of fieldwork	125
5.3	Study design	128
	5.3.1 Questionnaire	129
	5.3.2 24-Hour Time Diary	133
	5.3.3 Individual semi-structured interviews	137
	5.3.4 Focus groups	138
5.4	Study participants	139
5.5	Work experiences of participants	141
	5.5.1 Time spent on work roles	141
	5.5.2 Division of labour	147
	5.5.3 Impact of culture on work roles	152
5.6	Women’s theological understanding of their work	158
	5.6.1 Work as a blessing or curse	158
	5.6.2 God as sustainer and provider	164
	5.6.3 God as worker	166
5.7	Faith practices in relation to experiences of work	167
	5.7.1 Prayer	167
	5.7.2 Worship	169
	5.7.3 Attitude towards work	171
5.8	Conclusion	173
6.	TOWARDS A GENDERED THEOLOGY OF WORK	
6.1	Introduction	175
6.2	Women’s everyday work experiences	175
6.3	Women’s work experiences in relation to God	179
6.4	Women’s work experiences in relation to faith	182
6.5	The Bible: ambiguous but important	185
6.6	Conclusion	189

7.	CONCLUDING THE STUDY	
7.1	Introduction	190
7.2	Hypothesis revisited	190
7.3	Summary of the study	191
7.4	Implications of this study for action	192
7.5	Recommendations for further research	196
	APPENDICES	198
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	211

LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

APPENDIX 1	INFORMED CONSENT
APPENDIX 2	QUESTIONNAIRE
APPENDIX 3	SAMPLE OF 24-HOUR TIME STUDY DIARY
APPENDIX 4	SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
APPENDIX 5	FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS
APPENDIX 6	SAMPLES OF TIME DIARY ANALYSIS TABLES

ACRONYMS USED IN THE TEXT

GAD	Gender and Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IWA	Indian Women's Association
MOW	Movement for the Ordination of Women
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PGNs	Practical Gender Needs
SGIs	Strategic Gender Interests
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACBC	Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference
SPG	Society of the Propagation of the Gospel
WID	Women in Development
WAD	Women and Development
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

FIGURE 1	Assessment of Questionnaire	131
FIGURE 2	Possible Participants of this Study	132
TABLE 1	Participants of Group 1	141
TABLE 2	Participants of Group 2	144
TABLE 3	Summary of Weekday Average of Group 1	144
TABLE 4	Summary of Weekend Average of Group 1	145
TABLE 5	Summary of Average of Group 2	146
TABLE 6	Division of Work – Group 1	149
TABLE 7	Division of Work – Group 2	151

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The notion of 'work' is understood differently in various contexts, where some conceptualize work as the activity that entails obligation and responsibility, while others associate work with financial remuneration. There are also those who think of 'men's work' and 'women's work', 'good work' and 'bad work', 'clean work' and 'dirty work', or 'important work' and 'unimportant work'.

Amidst these various notions of work, this study aims to explore the paid and unpaid work experiences of Indian Christian women in Pietermaritzburg as they inform a gendered theology of work. Referring Caroline's Moser (1993) conceptualization of women's 'triple roles', this notion asserts that women are involved in roles of productive, reproductive and community work. The study argues that whilst Indian Christian women continue to be involved in all these roles, there appears to be neglect within existing theologies of work to incorporate a gender perspective that takes seriously the lived experiences of women's work. Building on an existing body of knowledge on gender and development, feminist theories as well theologies of work, this study attempts to provide a framework for a gendered theology of work.

It has been argued that the experiences of Indian women have been subsumed within 'history' and have been lost within historical annals (see Nadar, 2002). The listening to and telling of stories and sharing of experiences are central to human existence as such a practice has the potential to build and shape our world view as well as give meaning to our faith. It is important to hear the unheard voices by inviting those who are usually restricted to speak for themselves. There are those whose voices will probably remain lost to history and there are those whose stories will never be written by themselves or anyone else. Understanding the importance of listening to the often unheard voices, this study intends to place women's experiences at the centre, giving attention and creating space for muted voices. It thus begins by sharing the experiences of two Indian Christian women from Pietermaritzburg, tracing the steps of a typical day in their lives.

1.2 Sharing women's experience

The first experience is of a woman named Shamilla¹ who is married and is a mother of two. Shamilla is known as what would typically be termed a 'working mother' since she is involved in paid employment. Her day begins with the buzzing of her alarm clock beckoning her to arise at 4.30am. With one hand on the clock and the other rubbing her sleepy eyes, she drags her tired body out of bed, wishing that she could have slept for another ten minutes. As she gets out of bed she whispers a prayer saying, "Dear God, it's another day. You helped me through yesterday and I know you will do the same today. Give me the strength to cope".

Without disturbing the rest of the family, Shamilla makes her way into the bathroom to take a quick shower and then neatly apparels herself for the day. She then makes her way into the kitchen to prepare breakfast and lunch packs for her husband and children. With left over curry from the previous night's supper she prepares sandwiches for each of them. Having run out of curry as a sandwich filling, she quickly spreads some jam onto bread for her own lunch. At 6.00am she starts to rouse the rest of the family, who begin with their routine of getting ready for the day, having breakfast which is usually laid out by Shamilla. Each of them packs away the lunch packs that she lovingly prepared, and then rush off into their day. Shamilla is now quite constrained for time so she scurries on with tidying the kitchen, washing the breakfast dishes, giving the dog its meal and quickly hanging up some washing, trying to sip a cup of tea (which is her breakfast) in between all of these activities.

At 7.30am she rushes off to the sound a car hooting for her. This is the time that her lift club usually fetches her. She arrives at place of employment at 7.55am where she works as an administrator. At 10.00am she has a short tea break and a slice of her jam sandwich. During her lunch break she takes a quick walk to the nearby supermarket to purchase break, milk and other necessities for the household. Shamilla's day at the office ends at 4.30pm and she reaches home by 5.00pm. As she walks into her home, she is greeted by her little son who waves some school notices that must be read and signed by her. She places her handbag down onto the kitchen counter, slips off her shoes, skims through the notices and signs them. She then gets down to preparing supper. As soon as the meal is on the stove, Shamilla fetches the washing from the line and begins to iron school and work uniforms for the next day. Her

¹ All names used are pseudonyms.

husband arrives from work at 5.30pm and heads into the shower to clean up before supper. Shamilla then helps her son with his homework until 7.00pm. At 7.00pm she serves supper to her family. Supper is a time where she catches up with the children and her husband allowing each of them to share the highlights of their day. By 7.30pm they have all had their meal and Shamilla then washes the supper dishes and lunch boxes, cleans the kitchen, and vacuums the lounge and dining room. By 8.30pm her husband starts preparing for bed. At 9.00pm she goes into the shower after which she tidies the bathroom in readiness for the next day. Shamilla then packs her children's physical education bags in readiness for the next morning. It is now 10.00pm and she realizes that she needs to cut up the chicken and vegetables in preparation for the next day's meal since she will be attending her son's school meeting and will not have sufficient time to do so then. Shamilla is now exhausted and ready to retire since she has been going from 4.30am. She quietly creeps into bed so as not to disturb her husband, her body aching from the business of day and her feet quite swollen. With a sigh of relief she then whispers a prayer, "Dear Lord, I made it through another day with your help. Thank you Lord for being with me today. I know we can do it again tomorrow when the routine starts all over again".

The second experience is that of a woman named Asheera, who is married and has three children, one whom is married and has two children of her own. Asheera's grandchildren are aged two and seven. Asheera is a 'stay at home mom', who's day begins at 5.00am. Unlike Shamilla, she does not use the alarm clock since she has developed the habit of waking up at this hour each day. She begins her day by taking a quick shower after which she prepares breakfast and lunches for her family. Her husband and children start waking up from 6.00pm and prepare to leave home. At 7.00am Asheera's two year old grandchild is dropped off for her to take care of. By 7.15am her husband and children have left home and Asheera prepares porridge for her grandson. On this particular morning he is not happy, often pushing away his porridge. Asheera does her best to feed him his meal and then tries to put him down to nap, since she has a full day of domestic chores ahead of her. Since everyone in her family usually leaves in a big hurry each morning, it leaves Asheera with a disorganised home. Her grandson finally falls asleep at 9.00am, and this gives Asheera time to get the washing, ironing and cleaning done. She usually does this in haste each day so that she can give her grandson the attention he needs when he is awake. Since her grandson usually naps for three hours, this gives Asheera until 12.00pm to get her chores done. In between her chores she

sits down to a quick cup of tea and reads her devotional book, spending a few moments in prayer. For Asheera this is her moment to refuel and talk to God. She then gets back into her routine, softly singing her favourite choruses and hymns. She must be done by 12.00pm since this is the time her older grandchild arrives home from school. By this time the younger child has awoken and Asheera prepares a quick lunch for her older grandson. When he arrives, she gives both the grandchildren lunch and sets them up for some play time. This is usually in view of her so she could watch them while she catches up with some ironing.

By 2.00pm Asheera sits down to help her grandson with his homework, which usually takes about forty five minutes. It is around this time that her children start arriving from school and Asheera prepares a light lunch for them. She then gives both her grandchildren a bath, after which she starts preparing supper for the family. This is usually done by 6.30pm. Asheera's daughter and her husband also share a meal with them when they come to fetch their children. Supper is usually 7.00pm after which Asheera's daughter and her family rush off to their home to put the children to sleep. Asheera then cleans the kitchen, washes the supper dishes, packs away the left-over food, rearranges the lounge which was set up for her grandchildren to play, and catches up with a little more ironing. By 10.00pm, Asheera sits down to a cup of tea feeling quite exhausted from the activities of the day. Like Shamilla, she too has been on the go since the early hours of the morning and by the end of the day she gets into bed feeling the strain on her lower back from being on her feet and carrying her grandson. She prays, "The end of another day Lord...tomorrow holds the same! Thank You for giving me the strength to cope".

The experiences of Shamilla and Asheera resemble that of many other Indian women.

1.3 Considering the historical background of Indian women in South Africa

In order to better understand the experiences of women such as Shamilla and Asheera, it is necessary to consider their historical background. The Indian community arrived around 1860 as indentured labourers in South Africa. From the period of their arrival until present, the Indian community played and continues to play a significant role in South Africa. With the hope of finding a better life, thousands left Indian territory and journeyed to South Africa

(Naidoo, 2001:6). The initial years were difficult ones since the Indian community became slaves in the hands of land owners (Naidoo, 2001:6).

Indian women suffered multiple oppressions because of their race, gender, culture, language limitations and lack of education (Naidoo, 2001:6). Many of them travelled with limited belongings, and this led to conditions of extreme poverty (Naidoo, 2001:6). Women laboured for long hours in the sugar cane fields or as domestic workers to the Europeans (Naidoo, 2001). Working hours, which should have been nine hours per day, were extended to as much as thirteen hours per day (Naidoo, 2001:6). A number of the women who had worked on sugar cane plantations were paid in the form of fixed food rations (Naidoo, 2001:6). Pregnant women worked for up to seven months, thereafter, their rations were suspended until such time as they resumed work again (Naidoo, 2001:9). Many of these women often neglected their roles as mothers because of their long working hours.

Having experienced many challenges in the initial years of their arrival, it was only by the 1940's that women of all races began to participate to some extent in the public world of politics (Hassim, 2006:6). Indian women in Natal, conventionally understood to be passive and culturally subordinate to men, began to mobilize as part of the passive resistance campaign inspired by Mahatma Gandhi (Hassim, 2006:6). For this purpose, women were organized by language, namely, Tamil, Hindi and Gujerati, and began to draw connections between the struggles of Indians and Africans against white domination while raising the issues of women's rights (Hassim, 2006:6).

By the 1950's many Indian women leaders, such as Fatima Meer, Zainab Asvat and Amina Pahad, joined the nonracial Federation of South African Women in their struggle for democracy for all (Hassim, 2006). As decades went by, Indian women became more visible in political activity because of the oppressive circumstances they found themselves in. Even though there is a measure of political liberation and freedom that Indian women presently enjoy, they still remain bound by cultural stereotypes prevalent in society. For example, as soon as Indian women enter the productive market, a concern is raised within the household as to whom will take responsibility for the reproductive economy within the home. Since this is generally seen as the responsibility of the women within the Indian community, it often results in women assuming multiple roles.

Although there are few historical records on South African Indian Women (particularly focusing on religious experience), the work of various scholars has been consulted to help construct such a history. For example, the recent work of Desai (2010), written in commemoration of the 150 years of the arrival of the Indian community in South Africa, entitled *Inside Indian Indenture*, has contributed to understanding the historical background of Indian indenture, telling the story about the multiple experiences that made up the journey. Also explored in the work of Desai (2010) are the religious and cultural experiences, oppression and exploitation, leisure activities and power relations on the plantations as important encounters of the Indian community. Another example is the work of Alleyn Diesel (2007), who traces the stories of Indian women in South Africa and points out that many Indian women have interesting and sometimes compelling stories to tell, and they are remarkably articulate in telling these stories which demonstrate their strength and determination in the face of adversity. She also argues that in recent years, the documented stories of people in the so-called ‘previously disadvantaged’ communities in South Africa have almost completely overlooked the experiences of Indian women (Diesel, 2007:6).

In recent years, Govinden (2002) and Nadar (2001) have built on the historical background of Indian women and given attention to their contribution to the Christian faith. At the outset of recollecting the journeys of faith by Indian Christian women, Nadar (2001) points out that women’s experiences are often neglected within the annals of their respective church histories, since these records give attention to ‘his’ story. Govinden (2002) also argues that Indian women’s histories have been insufficiently documented since much of the past research assumes that the term ‘Indian history’ is inclusive of both male and female. She points out the necessity for critical scholarship on the lives, histories and experiences of Indian women (Govinden, 2002). In understanding the lives of Indian Christian women, what becomes important for this study are their work experiences in particular.

1.4 Understanding women's „work’ experience

The experiences of Shamilla and Asheera personify the categories of women involved in ‘unpaid work only’ as well as those involved in ‘paid and unpaid work’. What becomes clear in each of their experiences is that women carry many burdens alone with little or no mention of the involvement of others within the household. This has to do with ways in which work roles are divided within households. Before attempting to address how work roles are divided, it is important to clarify what is meant by the term ‘work’ for the purpose of this study.

Watson defines work as “the carrying out of tasks which enable people to make a living within the environment in which they find themselves” (1980:83). Similarly, Auster (1996:1) argues that work is the set of activities that are associated with performing one’s paid occupation and provides money for the purchase of goods and services. While such definitions are helpful, they do not give consideration to unpaid activities, for example, domestic work.

From a Christian perspective, Volf states:

Work is honest, purposeful and methodologically specified social activity whose primary goal is the creation of products or state of affairs that can satisfy the needs of working individuals or the co-creators, or (if primarily an end in itself) activity that is necessary in order for acting individuals to satisfy their needs apart from the need for the activity itself (2001:11).

Volf asserts that those components that are considered to be *human activity* must ensure compatibility with human dignity which includes both paid and unpaid activity (2001:11). This study, therefore, understands work as the paid and unpaid human activity of Indian Christian women, which is compatible with human dignity. A more recent scholar, Darryl Cosden (2006), concurs in his definition that human dignity is at the core of work activities whereby human work is a transformative activity –essentially consisting of dynamically interrelated instrumental, relational, and ontological dimensions to develop one’s humanness

while building up their natural, social, and cultural environments thereby contributing protectively and productively to the order of this world and the one to come” (Cosden, 2006b:179).

While Volf (2001) and Cosden (2006b) focus on human dignity, Gender and Development theorists stress the gendered division of labour. A scholar whose contribution is seminal to this discussion is Ester Boserup (1970:2). In her discussion on women’s role in economic development, Boserup (1970:2) emphasizes that gender is a basic factor of the division of labor with the main divisions being that of ~~age~~ and sex”. She dismisses the generalization that men are providers of food in most communities asserting women too have been providers in many areas of the world (Boserup, 1970:17). She also discusses colonialism, together with the penetration of capitalism, as aspects that have had negative effects on women. Instead of liberalizing society, they contributed to the loss of status amongst women (Boserup, 1970:17).

Caroline Moser (1993), building on this notion of a gendered division of labour, categorizes work into three categories, namely, productive work, reproductive work and community work. This she calls women’s triple role. The first role of women as identified by Moser (1993:27) is the reproductive role, which includes childbearing and rearing responsibilities as well as domestic tasks done by women. It includes not only biological reproduction but also the care and maintenance of the work force (male partner and working children) and the future work force (infants and school-going children). This suggests that men typically function primarily in the role of production, while women generally function in all three roles of production, reproduction and community work simultaneously (Moser 1993:27). Women’s community and reproductive roles tend to be undervalued, while the opposite is true of men. Secondly, Moser (1993:73) describes the productive role as work done by both men and women for pay in cash or kind. In the current context this is the typical eight to five role of individuals upon which much value is placed. In a typical Indian context, a person is seen as making a valuable contribution to the household once they become involved in this productive activity (Rao, 1999:55). The final category discussed by Moser (1993:73) is the community managing or the care role of women. Primarily women undertake these activities as an extension of their reproductive functions to ensure for the provision and maintenance of the family or community.

In attempting to understand the roles of women such as Shamilla and Asheera, who are women of faith, there is a need to understand the notion of ‘work’ from a Christian perspective.

1.5 The notion of ‘work’ within a Christian context

Although theologies of work are discussed within the academy, Nolan (1991) makes it clear that very little of this discussion filters down into the life of the church. Certainly, the burden of the multiple roles that Indian women assume is not discussed within the church context, which to a large extent is a patriarchal institution (Rakoczy, 2004:198). There have been some attempts within theological circles to reflect on the issues of work and labour, however, this subject has been addressed largely from a class analysis with little focus on gender. This study is an attempt to address this omission and focuses on Christian women’s paid and unpaid work experiences.

Existing theologies of work have been created from within a systematic theology or ethics paradigm, but have not addressed the problem of work itself (Hughes, 2007). The early 1990’s, however, saw some key South Africa theological voices attempting to do this. In a publication edited by West and Cochrane (1991), local theologians and academics began to theologise the nature of ‘work’ with a particular emphasis on the experiences of South African workers. These scholars argue that it is the experiences of these workers that must inform any theological reflection on work. Written in the apartheid era, West and Cochrane (1991) remind us that while black workers were exploited and stripped of their dignity, the church failed dismally to address their concerns.

In attempting to address the role of the church in connection with workers, African scholar Kenneth Mtata (2011) develops an African theology of work, showing that there is a deep association in African societies between the world of work and the spiritual world. Mtata (2011:47) observes that traditional African society built a work ethic that was communal. Work was carried out in community, but this did not necessarily guarantee gender equity or the inclusion of women. Mtata (2011) unfortunately does not further develop this important discussion in his African theology of work.

Through this discussion, it is clear that there is little gendered analyses in existing theologies of work, hence the focus of this study. However, this study is limited to a homogenous group (Indian Christian Women) and does deal with the experiences of other Christian women. As its theoretical starting point, this study thus investigates the paid and unpaid work experiences of Indian Christian women, as they inform a gendered theology of work.

1.6 Investigating women's lived experiences in paid and unpaid roles

Having insight into a typical day in the lives of women like Shamilla and Asheera highlights the need to address certain important questions in order to better understand their experiences. First, how is work understood culturally by Indian Christian Women? Second, to what extent are Indian Christian women involved in care, productive and reproductive work? Third, what, if any, theological understanding of work exists amongst Indian Christian women? Finally, how can these experiences contribute toward the creating of a framework for a gendered theology of work? In order to address such questions, two important steps were necessary. The first step was to carry out a literature review, capturing primary data through reading and analyzing a wide range of sources in the key areas of Indian women, notions of work, gender and development theory, and theologies of work.

The second step was to conduct empirical research with a group of Indian Christian women. Fieldwork was thus conducted at St Paul's Anglican Church in Longmarket Street, Pietermaritzburg. The participants of this study were Indian women between the ages of twenty and sixty years of age (this is the age group that is typically involved in the categories of productive, reproductive and community work). Within this age group, the involvement and experiences of women were investigated within two categories: women involved in unpaid work only, and women involved in paid and unpaid work.

During the fieldwork process, four research tools were developed and employed thus yielding a rich collection of empirical data. These research tools include, first, a questionnaire, which was administered at a Sunday morning church service to Indian women between the ages of twenty and sixty. The purpose of this questionnaire was to provide the researcher with key information about the women represented in this study, establishing the person's age, number in family, the respondent's status in family, relationship to family, source of household

income, the respondent's reproductive role (care of children, cooking, other domestic chores), productive role (within the formal or informal sector) and community role (voluntary/unpaid care work).

This questionnaire assisted the researcher in selecting a study sample for the next phase of the fieldwork. The second research instrument used was a 24-hour time diary. From the initial questionnaire, twenty individuals were selected to keep a set of four one-day time diaries recording all their activities within a twenty-four hour time period. The 24-hour time diaries gave the researcher insight into the everyday work experiences of women. This was followed by semi-structured individual interviews which enabled the researcher to have a greater understanding of the experiences of each of these women as recorded in their 24-hour diaries. Finally, a focus group discussion was held with each of the two categories of participants. One focus group included participants involved in paid and unpaid work while the other included those involved in unpaid work only. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss more deeply their lived experiences of paid and unpaid work. Each of these research tools, together with the data analysis, will be discussed in greater detail later in this study.

1.7 Outline of the study

The next chapter will provide a detailed historical background of Indian women in South Africa, from as early as the indenture experience. It will also discuss aspects of Indian culture focusing on various traditions and cultural roles that Indian women are expected to undertake. This will be followed by a discussion on poverty and the impact thereof on Indian women in South Africa. Finally, this chapter will explore the impact of mission on Indian Christian women, which becomes a vital component for understanding their Christian experience.

Chapter three will discuss work roles of women in communities. This chapter will also introduce the theoretical framework of Caroline Moser (1993) who asserts that women's work roles can be categorized in three important ways, namely, productive work, reproductive work and community work. Whilst this framework has been critiqued by various scholars, it has been important to this study in highlighting the various work roles assumed by Indian women. Moser's (1993) conceptualization of Practical Gender Needs

(PGNs) and SGIs (Strategic Gender Interests) will be discussed, and it will be argued that SGIs assist us in challenging the structures and systems that keep women overburdened by the multiple roles they play in the household.

Chapter four will investigate existing theologies of work, arguing that the traditional Christian teaching on the role and responsibilities of Indian Christian women have added to their burden. This chapter will also outline some of the key voices that have contributed to theologies of work over the past decades. As various theologies of work are considered, it will be argued that there is little gendered analysis in such theologies, as useful as these may be. It will also be argued that the problem of ‘work itself’ and its impact on the ‘worker’ has not been adequately addressed, particularly in relation to the various work roles women assume.

Chapter five will give attention to the lived experiences of women in their roles of paid and unpaid work, outlining the extensive fieldwork carried out with twenty Indian Christian women. The four research instruments employed during the fieldwork process, namely, a questionnaire, a 24-hour time study diary, semi structured interviews and focus groups, will be described and discussed.

Chapter six will then consider important aspects for a framework of a gendered theology of work. It will also suggest how this framework can impact the lives of Indian Christian women, as well as the academy.

This study concludes with Chapter seven offering practical steps for action as well as recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF INDIAN WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the history of Indian women in South Africa. Before we attempt to understand the lived experiences of Indian Christian women in Pietermaritzburg, it is important to trace their history in order to gain a greater understanding of the background that shapes their experiences. The history of the arrival of the Indians in South Africa will be examined followed by a discussion around the aspect of poverty and Indian Women in South Africa, looking specifically at the impacts of the various time periods on their lives. The chapter will then attempt to provide a gendered analysis of various traditions and cultural roles that constrain Indian women. The assumptions underlying their work experiences will also be discussed. The impact of mission on Indian Christian women, which becomes a vital component for understanding the Indian Christian experience, will also be examined in this chapter, giving attention to particular experiences of various Indian women in their experiences of Christianity.

At the outset, it must be noted that older historical records have been extremely limited in capturing the Indian story from the perspective of women. In many records, their voices are either hidden or expressed within the wrappings of *'his-story'*. It is only recent historians and feminist scholars (for example Nair, 2010; Desai, 2010 and Nadar, 2002) who have gone through the painstaking effort of restoring the voices of Indian women in the indenture story. In view of that, some of my historical reflection may not necessarily be in chronological order. Instead, for the most part, I lean toward those scholars and authors who reflect the voices and experiences of women. The fact that Indian women's voices in the indenture story were largely unheard or unspoken of is an argument in itself, reflecting the *'sub-human'* state to which they had been confined. In any event, as I journey through the pages of history, I intentionally look and listen for the voices of Indian women within the indenture story. Let us now turn the pages of history.

2.2 The arrival of Indians in South Africa

The Indian community first arrived in South Africa on 16 November 1860 (Naidoo, 2001:9). There were 342 people aboard the *S.S. Truro*, mainly South Indian Hindus and a small number of Christians and Muslims (Arkin, 1989:4). Later, on the 26 November 1860, the *S.S. Belvedere* brought a further 351 immigrants (Arkin, 1989:4). In total, there were 152,184 Indian immigrants that arrived in South Africa between the years 1860 and 1911 (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:2). The purpose of their coming to South Africa was mainly as ‘indentured labourers’, to work on the sugar cane plantations, particularly in Natal (Naidoo, 2001:6). “After the abolition of slavery, subjugated India replaced Africa as the supplier of labour on colonial plantations and the Indians in their thousands, mainly from the south, were brought as indentured workers whose state of unfreedom was a little different from that of slaves” (Meer, 1975:2).

Desai (2010:38) gives an account of a notice of immigration which was issued to all those earlier immigrants intending to immigrate to Natal. While the following quotation is rather lengthy, it helps to understand the promises that were made to Indians that caused many to take the decision to journey to foreign soil. The immigration notice stated, for example, the following:

Notice to Coolies intending to emigrate to Natal

You will be taken free of expense to Calcutta, and, while there, will be well fed and properly lodged until the ship sails; and should you be ill, the greatest care will be taken of you. When the ship is ready you will be supplied with good clothing; the finest ships are selected, and the voyage takes about five or six weeks. The food, medicines and other appliances on board are of good quality and your health, comfort and safety will be most carefully attended to...You will have a house rent free to live in, with plenty of garden ground to cultivate at your own leisure, and care is taken not to separate families and relatives. The climate is remarkably healthy and there is an abundance of good water, fruits and vegetables. If you are ill, medical attendance, medicines and nourishment are provided free of charge...You will be required to cultivate sugar-cane and to make sugar, rum and molasses. Great varieties of work either for strong men or for women and children are available. You will have to work

for five years, six days in the week, for nine hours between sunrise and sunset – all Sundays and holidays excepted (Desai, 2010:38).

On the contrary, South Africa became a land of broken promises where none of the spoken intentions were fulfilled (Naidoo, 2001:5). –“These poor Indians were made to believe that the Colony of Natal promised a good life. Plenty of food, trees which somehow produced gold coins and a host of hell ridden lies which easily convinced hungry, desperate souls to make the journey to this land of false promises” (Naidoo, 2001:9). It was such promises that enticed many of the indentured Indians to make the brave and courageous journey to an unknown land.

With the hope of finding a better life based on those initial promises made to them, many of them boarded the *S.S. Truro* (Naidoo, 2001:8). –“Caught up in this human web of misery, poverty and hopelessness, Indians began to immigrate with the hope of selling their labour and perhaps finding a new life in the Colonies. Yes, slavery was abolished, however, another type of slavery veneered as ‘indentured’ labour was now promoted by the British” (Naidoo, 2001:8). For a number of them, their hope of finding a better life was shattered by the reality that while they tried to escape one type of ‘caste’ system in India, they found themselves in yet another here in South Africa. Ebr-Vally states:

Indian immigrants to South Africa were probably regarded as outcaste in India, having chosen to seek a better life elsewhere, yet in South Africa the issue of caste did not disappear. Indians in South Africa regrouped themselves and reformulated the caste system to allow themselves to inhabit a world somewhat different to India yet similar enough to keep the memory of India alive (2001:22).

Since the caste system was so entrenched in their being, the indentured Indians could not escape the experience of such a system, but this was also made more complex by the experience of yet more segregation and separation in South Africa based on racial divisions.

For those who had taken the decision to make the courageous journey, that initial journey which was said to have taken about forty days in total, was not a pleasant one. Naidoo states:

Men, women and even children as young as a year old suffered much from the hardened blows of nature itself on the rough seas which made the journey a living nightmare. For more than forty days they endured this kind of hardship. They were cramped like unwanted human cargo journeying to a land of broken promises. They suffered physical discomfort and illness, some even died. All this they were able to bear. It was the degradation of human self-respect by the authorities on these ships which really broke many emotionally and of 6487 that left India on these journeys to the 'promised land'; many died on board ship (2001:9).

The women in particular endured unimaginable hardships, abuse and challenges on the journey. Naidoo (2001:9) records an incident of a young girl who was put into chains for refusing to carry out a certain task requested of her by the ship officials. When she was released from the chains she jumped overboard and committed suicide. Desai (2010:20) concurs with such accounts stating that many young women committed suicide, mostly by throwing themselves overboard, due to the inability to handle the inhumane treatment and torture on the ship. He asserts that the lives of these young women, who were in search of a better future, was brutally halted and what is even worse is that they disappeared from history books (Desai, 2010:21). One such woman was a young, single woman by the name of Muniyammah. "To the men in charge, she was cargo being transferred from one port to another. After all, is this not one of the meanings of the word 'indenture': official requisition for stores; orders for goods, especially from abroad?" (Desai, 2010:21). Hence, in the mind of the colonial officials, the indentured labourers and the women in particular, were merely cargo or goods, who were considered to be numbers and not human beings (Desai, 2010:21). Their vulnerability was severely abused and taken advantage of, and they often had no form of defense against such onslaughts (Desai, 2010:21).

Desai (2010:21) notes that many single women and widows had been amongst those indentured labourers, taking the risk of crossing over. In trying to understand why these women had immigrated to South Africa, he writes:

Widows and adolescent girls who emigrated were usually socially 'disinherited' by the patriarchal infringements that viewed them or their behavior as a violation against normative expectations of respectability. Hindu women of the nineteenth century had

socially confined roles that were well defined in subordination to men. Women who transgressed these norms became outcasts. Widows were especially affected. Their obliteration from official marriage records was a further loss of identity for women who already had a ‘non-human status’ for being without a husband. Such women transformed social marginality into personalized historicity when [they] embarked on a journey in search of redefinition and subjective visibility (Desai, 2010:21).

It becomes clear that there were a variety of reasons why women chose the path of indenture. For some, it was an attempt to seek redefinition, identity and subjective visibility as women (Desai, 2010:434). For others it was an attempt to escape from a ‘man’s world’ (Desai, 2010:434). There were also widows escaping *sati*² while others were escaping forced marriages and still others were escaping the hardship of patriarchy and a caste-ridden society (Desai, 2010:434).

Desai (2010:22) observes that although these women were once ‘non-human’ by status, they managed to reinscribe themselves into recorded history through documents of indenture which transformed their status from ‘non-human’ to that of ‘historical pioneers’ by emigration. Although this may be true, I argue that these historical records were largely written from a male perspective and the voices of women were often not heard in such historical reflections. I concur with Desai (2010:278) who asserts that although many Indian women made such impacts and noteworthy contributions to the well-being of the Indian community, the names of many of these great women were, unfortunately, not known simply because the cultural practice was to address them by the names of their husbands. It is only in recent literature and feminist scholarship in particular, that attempts have been made to find these lost voices and restore them into the annals of history.

In their attempts to escape cultural oppression, patriarchy and the hardships of the caste system, Indian women took the risk of indenture with the hope of a better life. These Indian women apparently took advantage of the opportunity offered by indenture to transcend their marginality within the nuclear Hindu family by embracing a more Indian diasporic community, a community that was nevertheless created by violent disruptions and exile”

² *Sati* was a Hindu custom in which the widow was burnt to ashes on her dead husband’s pyre (Desai, 2010:462).

(Desai, 2010:22). However, as stated earlier, to their dismay, even before they set foot in the ‘land of promise’, Indian women continued to experience the oppression and inhumane treatment they tried to escape, now under new and foreign circumstances (Ebr-Vally, 2001:21). The oppression and stigma had commenced the moment the decision to emigrate was taken, and even before they had made the journey. Ebr-Vally (2001:20) uses an Indian metaphor *kala pani*, which when translated means ‘the crossing of the black waters’. Desai (2010:56) concurs that in the mind of the Indian, the act of crossing the *kala pani* was considered contamination and defilement of the soul. He comments:

It was held to lead to the dispersal of tradition, family, class, and caste classification and to the general loss of a ‘purified’ Hindu essence. *Kala pani* had a much deeper meaning for many Indian villagers. Under British rule, those who committed serious crimes in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh had to cross water to serve their imprisonment on the islands of Andaman and Nicobar. *Kala pani* signified a life of internment with no return. Many recruits feared that they would be converted into Christians, and that Hindus would be fed with beef and Mohammedans with pork. The decision to emigrate was not taken lightly because it was said that those who braved the *kala pani* were automatically compromising their Hinduness (Desai, 2010:56).

Hence in the eyes of those left behind in India, the many that had made the journey were considered defiled, unclean and contaminated (Desai, 2010:56). For the women in particular, who were often responsible for all the preparation of prayer utensils, meals and the cleaning up before and after religious practices, this would have meant that yet another stigma of contamination and defilement was attached to them, adding to the burden they were already carrying (Desai, 2010:56).

Ebr-Vally (2001:132) interestingly notes that the authorities of the Colony of Natal had kept a very precise account of the caste origins of Indian immigrants. Surprisingly, people were treated according to their caste rank all through the recruitment process (Ebr-Vally, 2001:132). The various castes were accommodated separately and appropriately fed according to their specific caste requirements, which went on for several weeks while on board (Ebr-Vally, 2001:133). However, once they had passed the limits of Indian territory,

this had all changed. As soon as they arrived in South Africa, ~~they~~ had to share shacks and eat the same food regardless of their caste status” (Ebr-Vally, 2001:134).

The process of immigration had brought about three fundamental losses for the indentured labourers (Ebr-Vally, 2001:134). There was ~~the~~ loss of the sub-caste, the loss of the *Brahmin*, and the loss of elders. All three of them had fundamental consequences for the way in which Indians‘ reconstituted themselves in South Africa” (Ebr-Vally, 2001:135). Thus, the Indians in South Africa were faced not only with the challenge of oppression, ill-treatment brought on by racism, poverty and other such social conditions, but also the need to reconstruct some sense of social stratification that was upset by the crossing of the *kala pani* (Ebr-Vally, 2001:135).

The work of historian Joy Brain (1983) is one of the few historical accounts that captures the history of Indians in Natal during the period of 1860 until 1911. Brain (1983:xvi) notes that socially India adhered strictly to the caste system. She further describes the caste system as one which fosters an attitude of reverence to members of the higher castes, of friendliness to those of equal status and of antipathy to those of lower degree (Brain, 1983: xvi). Brain (1983:xvi) assumes that the higher the position of the individual in the caste system, the more discontented they would have been in their new country. In the caste system, the *Brahmin* or priest is situated at the top of the caste edifice, holds the sacrificial power and is considered to be the purest of all human beings, while the sub-caste (*Shudra*) occupies the lower ranks of the caste edifice (Ebr-Vally, 2001:136). The other important element is that of elders, or the absence thereof. Ebr-Vally states:

Indian fraternities consist of extended families where the ultimate authority rests with the eldest man, be it father or grandfather. The very process of recruitment of indentured labourers left out the elders. The recruiting agents preferred to pick young men between the ages of eighteen and thirty (2001:137).

Thus Indians had to reformulate their social structures as well as identity in order to deal with these losses within their newfound home (Ebr-Vally 2001:137). Ebr-Vally further asserts, ~~As~~ a matter of fact, the Indian identity as inherited from India is structured by the group. The individual does not have any intrinsic value outside a group” (Ebr-Vally, 2001:135).

Ebr-Vally (2001:135) believes that the caste system began its demise during the first decade of the Indian immigration to South Africa.

However, Desai (2010:176) argues that although caste in the new environment had started to play a secondary role, it was neither simply abandoned nor duplicated. He does agree that caste was almost impossible to respect on the ships where migrants had to eat, sleep and drink together, hence the forced ‘closeness’ on the ship had suspended notions of hierarchy and privilege (Desai, 2010:176). What becomes clear is that there are no references made to women occupying the status of Brahmin or elder, since these positions were reserved for men only. Hence within the religious ranks as well, the women had come with a deeply rooted patriarchal religious attachment which kept them in subordination as second class citizens. For young and vulnerable women, there was no female ‘elder’ that they could turn to for advice and counsel, or in their moments of doubt, fear and anxiety, simply because this was a privileged status position reserved for men only.

Despite various castes and religious ranks that indentured Indians had represented, to the colonizers/colonialists all Indians were simply ‘coolies’³ and no respect was paid to purity, rank or duty (Desai, 2010:177). All had to do the same work, and in fact the higher castes were frowned upon for being less productive since they had not developed the culture of hard work as the sub-caste might have out of desperation for survival (Desai, 2010:177). Although this remains true that caste became quite fluid in the journeys across the *kala pani*, Desai (2010:179) argues that there were individual migrants who carried with them the caste-related ideologies which would have led to caste-based prejudices. He states, “Caste consciousness may have been compromised on the ship but did not disappear. The Coolie Commission⁴ reported that indentured Indians were reluctant to use estate hospitals. One of the reasons cited by witnesses was that they ‘objected to take water from the hands of any person not of his own, or of a superior caste’” (Desai, 2010:179).

³ The term coolie was used by colonialists for indentured labourers. It was derived from the Tamil word, *kuli* which referred to payment for menial work for persons without customary rights and were at the lowest level in the industrial market. In India it was regarded as a term of reproach. The term later transformed from *kuli* into *coolie* (Desai, 2010:78).

⁴ The Coolie Commission was a central institution in South Africa set up in 1872 as a commission of inquiry. Its purpose was to listen to the grievances outlined by the indentured labourers. It is said that often the commission made light of those grievances noted by the indentured Indians (Desai, 2010:74).

Although caste was not considered by the colonialists, it did not immediately disappear from the lifestyle of indentured Indians. Desai (2010:179) observes that caste was beginning to mutate into very broad regional identities, “Kalkatia and Madrasi”, which was a reflection of the north or south of India. “As caste was being deconstructed, so it was being reconstructed into regional identities” (Desai, 2010:179). The north and south divide existed even before indenture and distinctions were associated with colour and physique (Desai, 2010:181). Skin colour was a source of discrimination and northerners were often fairer than southerners, with upper castes being fairer than lower castes (Desai, 2010:181). Desai (2010:181) comments that some of these stereotypes were also carried over to Natal, which often led to the occasional clashes on the sugar estates.

It is evident that the disturbing experience of crossing the *kala pani* had long lasting impacts on the Indian community. Pillay (1989:148) comments that although some of the indentured labourers in the initial decades of their domicile maintained ties with India, these ties were soon broken. “Their children were now South African-born and with intermarriage among castes and the new commitments that ensued from setting up home in South Africa, reintegration into the society in India became impossible” (Pillay, 1989:148). For many of them as much as they longed for ‘home’, to make the journey back to their land of origin was unthinkable. For women in particular, if they had returned to India, the stigma, oppression and hardship would have been even more than they had experienced even before they had left. Singh (2005:145) concurs that historically, Indians were adverse to crossing the *kala pani* since it was traditionally regarded as full of peril to the Indian soul, as discussed earlier. “In search for their fortune they had not only found themselves indentured but they had transgressed fundamental cultural and social codes. Shame, disappointment and dishonor weighed too heavily on the immigrants to allow them to keep in touch with their families, fraternities and villagers” (Ebr-Vally, 2001:138). Having arrived in South Africa under such diverse and trying circumstances, the Indian community found themselves at a point of no return, hence were faced with the challenges of making a life in a land of broken promises and reformulating an identity as “ster” in South Africa (Pillay, 1989:148).

Naidoo (2001:6) states that the initial years were those of physical torture, hardship and pain. “Complaints of ill-treatment of the indentured immigrants were quite common” (Arkin, 1989:4). This inhumane treatment went on despite the commitment made by the Immigration

officials to the Indian government (Arkin, 1989:5). Naidoo records various incidents of such cruel treatment and its tragic impact on various Indian families, recounted in the following:

Another tragic family case was that of Mudlay (No.116821)⁵ and his wife Odda Nagi (No.116838), who although they were employed as domestic servants, received the rates of pay for field labourers. His working hours were from 4am to 9pm with two half hour breaks, while hers were from 4am to 7pm. The elder child was two and a half years old, and all day was tied to a peg in the parent's hut for safety, until the day's work was over. When a second child was born and a week old, the employer refused to allow the mother to bring the child to work. Fearing the child would starve, the mother gave the child away to foster parents. The child died of neglect. Complaints to the Protector⁶ were to no avail (Naidoo, 2001:15).

Many other accounts such as this have been lost with the voices of women who endured such intense hardship. These women had chosen the path of intense work on the sugar plantations as a means to supplement the meager incomes that they were receiving. It was a decision taken for survival.

While some people had come from India as indentured labourers, there were also those who came freely for the purpose of trade and business opportunities (Ebr-Vally, 2001:126). This was particularly true in the case of Muslim and Hindu traders. Ebr-Vally states:

Muslim traders were not the only free Indians to arrive in South Africa. Hindu traders arrived in the early 1890s. They followed the same migratory pattern as their Muslim counterparts, although for some of them the reasons for migration were different. Some left India, like the Muslims, to settle down as traders but some were actually contacted by established Muslim Gujarati traders to carry out specific tasks. They left their villages to work as skilled clerks or accountants for Muslim businessmen who knew their abilities. Once settled, they would also call on their families, fraternities

⁵ Naidoo (2001:15) records that when the Indians arrived in South Africa they were referred to by number. Usually this would be preceded by 'Coolie' followed by the number in order of their arrival.

⁶ It was the Coolie Commission of 1872 that proposed the appointment of a Protector of Indian Immigrants to act as a 'caretaker' of indentured Indians. The Protector was a white male and most often the indentured Indians felt that the Protector was biased in his role (Desai, 2010:95).

and entire communities to follow their example. A number of such Hindus later started their own businesses and used their hereditary specialization as assets. They opened their own shops as tailors, jewelers, shoemakers, bakers, etc. (2001:126).

The poverty levels and harsh conditions amongst those who came as free Indians were not as severe as those of the indentured Indians. However, for the majority who had come as indentured labourers, there was a widespread belief amongst Natal Europeans during the 19th and early 20th century that only the low-caste Indians or untouchables had immigrated to South Africa (Ebr-Vally, 2001:127). –This obviously served the racist purpose of discrimination against those referred to as ‘coolies’” (Ebr-Vally, 2001:127). Ebr-Vally (2001:127) argues that whilst it is true that poverty does play a major role in the emigration of Indians to South Africa, it was not the only common denominator. She states:

It is probably true that the majority of indentured Indians left for economic reasons. However, there is more to Indian emigration to South Africa than poverty. Shrewd and cunning recruiting agents convinced people to leave India. Agents or their sub-agents would lurk in temples, at weddings, community meetings, fairs and markets, and use snatches of conversation about an impossible marriage, a forced wedding, a bankruptcy, a bad crop, or a family feud to entice people to leave for greener pastures in a welcoming land of opportunity (Ebr-Vally, 2001:127).

The Indians were therefore enticed and ‘seduced’ to come to South Africa for the advantage, progress and well-being of the colonialists. Now between a rock and a hard place, fearful to make the journey once more across the *kala pani*, most Indians had begun to settle in their new found ‘home’.

2.3 Poverty and Indian women in South Africa

Since many of the Indians had come only with a small suitcase that contained their life’s belongings, they experienced conditions of extreme poverty (Naidoo, 2001:8). This had impacted greatly on the women who constantly felt the pressure of having to feed their families usually to the extent of denying themselves of a meal (Naidoo, 2001:23). In the

initial years of their arrival, the main work opportunities available to Indian women were on the sugar and tea estates where they had served as cheap labour (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:8). Having worked just as hard for as many hours as men did, women received only half the pay that men did (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:14).

Most of the indentured labourers were Tamils and were mainly from the South Indian city of Madras now known as Chennai (Diesel, 2007:3). They belonged largely to the labourer (*Shudra*) class (Diesel, 2007:3). It is recorded that of the total number of indentured labourers who arrived in the colony, 13 percent were children accompanying their parents (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:4). Although technically children under ten were not allowed to work, they were in actual fact given light work to do, while those over ten helped with weeding in the fields, generally under the oversight of the women (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:4). Naidoo (2001:15) states that the women laboured for long hours in the sugar cane fields or as domestic workers to the Europeans. He asserts that the working hours, which should have been nine hours per day, were extended to thirteen hours a day (Naidoo, 2001:16). Brain (1983: xvii) mentions that many Christian missionaries often condemned the long hours that the women had to work in the cane fields from daylight to dark, reminding the employers that amongst the crowd of women were those who were probably in their early stages of pregnancy, some with suckling babies, and many who had left little children behind in their huts. Unfortunately, these concerns were expressed to no avail.

By 1903, the Kearsney Estate, which was a very successful tea estate in Natal, owned by Sir Liege Hulett and Sons, was said to have employed 4500 indentured workers, many of whom were women (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:8). ~~W~~Women were preferred on the tea estates because of the skills involved in picking and also because they were cheaper to employ (they received half the wages men were given). During picking season, women could be in the field for as many as eleven to thirteen hours” (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:9). The 1904 census recorded only 236 Indian women in Natal employed outside of domestic and agricultural work (Freund, 1991:417).

Pregnant women continued to work for seven months, thereafter their rations were suspended until such time as they resumed work again (Naidoo, 2001:19). Many of these women neglected their roles as mothers because of their very long working hours and this in turn

greatly impacted on the health and well-being of their children (Naidoo, 2001:19). Desai (2010:5) asserts that the harsh socio-economic conditions experienced by indentured labourers in Natal affected women in particular. He states, “Life in Natal was difficult, even for those who managed to keep their families intact. Socio-economic conditions made family life precarious. Violence was endemic in the experience of indenture. Sometimes it turned inwards. Women were often on the receiving end” (Desai, 2010:5). One such account that Desai (2010:6) relates is that of a woman named Wootme who was murdered by her husband at Blackburn Estate in Inanda, smashing her head with an axe when she requested that he go to work. Men could not handle the pressures brought on by the socio-economic conditions and this impacted on their behavior towards their wives, often resulting in acts of violence (Desai, 2010:6). Women in turn were constantly faced with the hardship of providing food for their children (Desai, 2010:6). Desai states:

Indentured women faced enormous challenges. They were paid lower wages and received less food rations than men. Pregnant women unable to work, or those who were ill, could also be denied rations. Women were sometimes forced to append themselves to men to gain access to food. Men labeled such women, who acted out of desperate need to survive, ‘_rice-cookers’ (2010:6).

Desai (2010:117) states that what impacted more on women was that initially employers denied women and children rations, stating that they did not see much productive value in them and therefore did not compel them to work. By 1866 the law was amended which entitled women and children under 10 to half rations (Desai, 2010:117). This had changed further around the 1880s when the law came to support the idea that women be compelled to work unless they had a medical certificate to attest otherwise (Desai, 2010:117). With the fear of the rations being cut off, women pushed on with work despite illness or even pregnancy. Desai (2010:117) relates accounts of women losing their babies in childbirth due to medical and physical neglect resulting from these long hours that they had worked. What becomes clear from the literature is that although women worked just as hard, and in some cases, even harder than men, their work was often invisible or regarded as unimportant. The very fact that they received only half the wages that their male counterparts did, suggests that they were devalued and prejudiced against, not because they produced less in terms of their work, but because of the fact that they were women.

While women found opportunities to work on the sugar cane plantations, there were not as many opportunities as for their male counterparts outside of the sugar cane industry (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:10). For example, one such opportunity for Indian men was found in the food and hotel industry as waiters and it has remained a popular occupation ever since (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:10). Indentured waiters, classed as ‘special servants,’ were in demand and generally worked under better conditions than the other indentured workers (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:10). Many were also employed as cooks and house servants as well as railway workers, where they played a significant role. Dhupelia-Mesthrie asserts:

While indentured labour is most commonly associated with sugar cultivation, the Natal Government Railways was one of the biggest employers of indentured labour (exceeding the number employed by any sugar cane estate). Railway workers received higher wages and better food than those on the farms. Skilled workers were platelayers, carriage builders, porters, signalmen, brakemen and lamp attendants. They played a vital role as railway construction, stimulated by the discovery of gold, proceeded at a considerable pace in the 1890s (2000:14).

Unfortunately women were restricted in the opportunities offered to them, and they were mainly confined to the sugar estate because of their skill and ability in the plantations, or alternatively, they were employed as domestics (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:8). This often meant that the quality of food given to them was inferior compared to that of their male counterparts who found employment elsewhere, as well as receiving only half the wages for the same amount of work done by men (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:14).

The traditional bondages and patriarchal attitudes in which many Indian women found themselves had kept them limited to the domestic sphere, with a number of them engaging in hawking and market gardening, selling predominantly fresh fruit, vegetables and flowers (Hiralal, 2010: 155). Around the 1920s in Natal, a number of Indian women had also become involved in weaving baskets which they sold either door to door or along the roadside (Ebr-Vally, 2001: 50). By then, all Indian females had gained the name ‘Coolie Mary’, which was used by whites, since they had difficulty pronouncing Indian names (Ebr-Vally, 2001:50). The poet B.D. Lalla wrote about the Indian female hawker drawing attention to the disliked label, ‘Coolie Mary’ (Ebr-Vally, 2001: 51). The poem reads:

To thy door each bitter morning
Cold or hot or wind a-storming
Comes she with her breath a-panting
_Nice fruits, missus, and greens' a-chanting
Is she not a blessed fairy?
Dubbed as a Coolie Mary? (Ebr-Vally, 2000:51)

For Indian women of that period, market gardening and hawking became a small yet significant source of income (Ebr-Vally, 2001:52). They were driven to these domestic means of income as a way to survive economically as many of them were living below the poverty line (Ebr-Vally, 2001:52). Walker (1991:71) highlights that between 1943 and 1944, a comparative assessment revealed that 70,6% of the Indians in Natal were living below the poverty line. These poverty stricken situations were confirmed by prominent political activist and medical practitioner, Dr. Goonam, who vividly describes the extent of poverty amongst the Indian community, particularly felt by the women, as leaving her feeling helpless against such poverty (Goonam, 1991:155). Hence it was such desperate situations that compelled Indian women to look for means of survival. Since formal work was not generally encouraged within the Indian community, and also because many Indian women were deprived of acquiring the necessary skills for formal employment, they had no option but to resort to domestic labour for income and survival.

The stigma endured by Indian women at that stage was not just segregation through race, but were also class and gender related. The dominant patriarchal family structure contributed to oppressive relationships which often led to considerable violence against Indian women. As the Indian community began to settle in Pietermaritzburg, there were increasing accounts of alcoholism, crime and violence against women, with divorce becoming more prevalent (Diesel, 2007:6). Diesel (2007:5) asserts that this is associated with stress caused by lack of recognition as a community and with the social change related to segregation and displacement of Indian families.

One such experience that had elevated the stress levels and perpetuated poverty amongst Indian families was that of forced removals, which had a devastating impact on the lives of the Indian community (numerous others were affected as well, but for the purpose of this study, I make reference to its impact on the Indian community). Although the issue of land

itself is not within the scope of my study, it becomes important for us to gain a richer understanding of those critical aspects woven into the social strata of the Indian community and Indian women in particular; hence I will give brief attention to this aspect.

Since 1913, the Indian community were either forced to move from where they lived, or were not allowed to buy land in most places in South Africa (Meer, 1975:4). The Group Areas Act of 1950 was set up as the machinery to segregate the whole country along rigid racial lines, to limit land rights of non-whites to the barest minimum and also to halt Indian penetration into certain areas (Meer, 1975:4). Apartheid was South Africa's unique system of legally prescribed racial segregation and white domination which has made the country a major focus of international attention since 1960 (Meer, 1975:4). It was under this system that the South African economy developed structures which ensured a grossly unequal distribution of economic resources, distorted industrial development, wide-spread poverty, low living standards for the majority of South Africans, including the Indian community, an inefficient public service with a racially skewed pattern of delivery, and an extremely segmented labour market (Meer, 1975:4). We are reminded:

People are driven from their homes, loaded onto trucks and transported to relocation sites, their sites are numbered and expropriated, their houses are demolished by bulldozers and they are prevented from entering certain areas, all in terms of the law. Legislative sanction exists for every one of these procedures (Harley and Fotheringham, 1999:36).

Such are the recollections of many Indian families during that period, and these experiences devalued the quality of life, particularly of Indian women, who were burdened with maintaining the social stability of their families amidst such turmoil (Meer, 1975:8). Meer further states:

The problems of land and trading rights pursued the Indian people throughout their history in South Africa. Although one of the original inducements of indenture was that they could exchange the free return passage to which they became entitled after 10 years in the colony, for a gift of free crown land, only 83 such gifts were ever made and Indians found that there was no land on which they could settle. The

colony had alienated large tracts of land to private companies in order to attract British settlers. Indians were forced, by and large, to lease and to purchase the most inhospitable land and apparently uncultivable portions of such land at exorbitant prices from settlers. Likewise, their businesses were pushed to the fringes of the cities and to the rural areas (1975:3).

This was yet another broken promise which left the Indian community feeling displaced and alienated. Many Indian families, who recall the account of being forcibly removed from their homes and land, do so with a deep sense of anger and bitterness. For some, their land was their very identity, it was their birthright, it was the very thing that gave them a sense of belonging, and a sense of dignity. For it to have been stripped away in the ruthless manner that it was, was considered inhumane and heartless. In the Indian context, the possession of a title deed served as a constant symbol of security in a land of uncertainty and broken promises. This experience left many families with devastation unimaginable to those who have not been in a similar situation.

An interesting study carried out by the South African Council of Churches and the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference resulted in the compilation of a report in 1984, highlighting the effects and devastation of removal on family and community life (Harley and Fotheringham, 1999:49). Amongst some of their findings, it was noted that removals uprooted families and destroyed homes (Harley and Fotheringham, 1999:49). They frequently had the capacity to induce hopelessness and damage people's self-esteem both personally and as a family. People who are forcibly removed feel threatened, powerless and unable to cope with their bewildering predicament. It was also noted that their basic survival was threatened, and this led to great strain in the family, to the extent that parents felt they were unable to care for their children (Harley and Fotheringham, 1999:49). To avoid destitution, some family members became migrant workers, but this split the family and caused further stress and deep trauma. Many families who went through this were just not able to cope. Aggravated poverty leads to fatalism, or to antagonism towards those who still have resources (Harley and Fotheringham, 1999:49). Although many relocated families do overcome their dazed condition and survive all these threats, it is due to their own resilience or community support, and not because of the State's caring for them (Harley and Fotheringham, 1999:49).

The initial alternative offered to those poor families who were forced to relocate was sub-economic schemes (Pillay, 1977:135). Pillay (1977:136), who had conducted a sample study considering the impacts of relocation on households, states that these relocations had impacted on families in the most severe ways. He states, “The dwellings in these schemes had no kitchens, and cooking, therefore, took place in rooms used also for sleeping. Almost all the households in the sample regarded the accommodation as inadequate, the main reasons being the small size, overcrowding, shabbiness, poor construction and inconvenient location” (Pillay, 1977:136).

The burdens attached to relocation were mainly carried by women who now found themselves with the dilemma of no longer being able to feed their families from their vegetable gardens since they were now in extremely confined and overcrowded spaces where it became impossible to keep gardens (Pillay, 1977:137). Adding to this problem was the fact that they were relocated to vicinities where markets and shopping facilities were not easily accessible; hence adding more to the existing burdens of women who needed to provide food for their families (Pillay, 1977:137). In addition, due to the very small houses they were forced to move into, households were faced with the burden of having to dispose of many of their household appliances and furniture due to a lack of space (Pillay, 1977:137). Pillay (1977:137) reported that many households were forced to leave possessions such as chairs, table, stoves and other such items outside their homes, which soon became damaged and unusable with time and weather conditions. These are aspects that perpetuated poverty amongst the Indian community of which the women carried the heavier burden and felt the greater impacts in many households (Pillay, 1977:138).

In addition to perpetuating poverty amongst households, these sub-housing schemes also had numerous social impacts on families. Pillay states:

There is no doubt that the social consequences of relocation had been adverse. All households in the sample felt that their community life – cultural, religious and recreational – had deteriorated substantially, and were highly critical of the lack of facilities offered in the scheme. For example, no community or sporting facilities were available. The old-established social organisations which they had helped to build up in their previous areas had been lost. The sub-economic scheme provided

only communal toilets, bathrooms and washing lines. Such communal facilities were totally alien to the households which previously enjoyed their private facilities. Now, much time was spent in queuing up to use these facilities provided. This aspect of the scheme was strongly criticized; the people felt that their status and dignity had been impaired by being forced to reside in a sub-sub economic scheme and to use communal facilities (1977:138).

Yet again, it was the women who felt the worst effects of the new, communal facilities since they were the ones who would bathe the children, do the washing and other such tasks. Because of their poverty stricken situations, they had no other option but to comply, even to the extent of being stripped of their dignity (Pillay, 1977:138).

Diesel (2007:5) records that it is under these conditions of forced removals that the Indians from Pietermaritzburg were moved from the mixed race settlements of Edendale, Plessislaer, Pentrich and Foxhill areas to a new suburb called Northdale. (Presently, it is mainly Northdale and Raisethorpe that still remain predominantly Indian suburbs). Resources such as shops, schools and health facilities in the new areas were initially poor, and this added to the frustration, depression, discontent and sense of loss of dignity that the Indian community in general had experienced (Diesel, 2007:5).

From around the 1960s, a significant development for Indian women was that a number of them began to move away from traditional domestic duties (a number of them were employed as domestic helpers to white families), and start working in factories, and as they became better educated they moved into office work, business and various professions (Diesel, 2007:6). This is confirmed by Freund (1991:417) who asserts:

Between 1951 and 1970, Indian women in the country as a whole increased as a percentage of the (Indian) workforce from 7,3 to 18,6%. Only 1,518 Indian women worked in manufacturing in 1951. This figure doubled to 3,082 in 1960 and then went to 13,530 in 1970. Where Indian women had been a very small component in the labour market, they became very significant. The movement of working class women out to waged work in Durban became the norm by the end of this time.

Since the 1990s⁷ growing numbers of Indian women have been attending tertiary learning institutions and have received professional training particularly in law, commerce and the social sciences, making a significant contribution to these fields (Diesel, 2007:6). To the Indian women, these opportunities marked a sense of breaking free from the dependency syndrome as far as employment was concerned. It was also the start of them breaking free from the vicious cycle of abject poverty that many women had found themselves in. Study opportunities meant that there would be greater work possibilities for Indian women, instead of them being limited to the option of factory work that many found themselves in (Diesel, 2007:7).

It was their lack of education and training that left many South African Indian women at the base of the social and economic pyramid and kept them bound within the limitations of culture, gender and race, hence, even when a number of them began to be educated and break free from the limitations, they were still at a disadvantage as Indian women in South Africa. For those who had been employed, the meager wages they received was just a perpetuation of the disadvantage and discrimination they had been experiencing.

Presently, Indian women in South Africa continue the process of rediscovering and redefining themselves within a society that has been constructed in the past through oppressive influences such as patriarchy, racism, capitalism, religious bigotry and ethnocentrism. This process is an important move towards reconciliation and respecting human dignity, but the challenge remains for South African women themselves to find common ground, with oppression still deeply grounded in some of their experiences.

When it concerns issues such as employment, labour, access to land and training, South African Indian women have over the years been disadvantaged in comparison to men (Jithoo, 1991:353).

Since the first democratic elections in South Africa, and the exciting new beginnings of our fledgling democracy, women have begun to see many changes in their lives. One of the significant happenings has been the incredible new space that has opened up for structures

⁷ This is not to suggest that before the 1990s, Indian women did not receive education at tertiary institutions, but this period marked a noted increase particularly in the Pietermaritzburg area, since a number of them attended the University of Natal (now UKZN).

and projects that focus on the welfare of women. In a host of areas, women's concerns are being raised, and the government, as well as the non-governmental organizations, are now giving attention to the wellbeing and welfare of women. South African women's voices are being raised and heard on a number of issues.

Along with their on-going determination and struggle to fight for change, their deep compassion for others is what makes the Indian women of South Africa a resilient force. During apartheid, people of South Africa were separated from each other physically, culturally, economically, and socially based on racial categories which were determined by the then government. The impact and lasting effect of this kind of separation is immense with dominant hierarchical structures once focused on race continuing to manifest themselves in hierarchies of class, religion, and gender. These continue to greatly impact on the lives of women. Women of all races, religions and regions of South Africa have in one way or the other, experienced apartheid. Some experienced apartheid in relation to the inhumane treatment of being regarded as second class citizens, while others experienced the privileges of apartheid, which was the result of being born into the 'white-race', the so called 'superior' racial group.

Irrespective of the nature of these experiences, women undoubtedly differed. It was by and large women's leisure activities, their jobs, their rights to access of facilities and services, and their education that reflected these differences. On the part of the majority of Indian women in South Africa, they experienced apartheid in terms of the forced removals from their homes and relocation to new, government-constructed townships, the inferior education as well as the denial of access to resources. As literature continues to seek to address the experiences of South Africans from political, religious, economic, and cultural perspectives, each of these perspectives become important for understanding the current condition of South African society and formulating appropriate directions for the country in the future.

Indian women presently enjoy the status of being fully South African; hence they are beneficiaries of the struggle to elevate the status of women, since they are considered previously disadvantaged women in our country. Arising out of the Bill of Rights in South Africa, women are given the assurance that they have the right to be treated equally to men. They are also assured of the right to freedom, safety and dignity. In addition, they are

promised the right to be healthy and free from all forms of violence at home and in public. They are also given the right of non-discrimination at home or at work. Many Indian women have worked themselves out of desperate situations of poverty and are now in positions of economic stability. However, for most, the struggle against cultural and religious oppression continues.

2.4 Traditional and cultural roles of Indian women

While Indian women were challenged by issues of poverty as discussed in section 2.3, they also found themselves constrained by cultural and traditional roles and expectations. In this section I argue that although Indians began to settle in South Africa, the women were still largely impacted by their traditional roles and culture that they had imported with them. Not even the *kala pani* could keep these traditional and cultural roles from journeying with them. When they arrived in South Africa, Indian women suffered multiple oppressions in terms of their race, gender, language limitations (many of them could not speak or understand English) and their lack of education (Naidoo, 2001:9). Although they belonged to various language groups which would have typically formed traditional caste or class systems in India, in South Africa they were forced to mix so these systems were never observed much (Ebr-Vally, 2001:122). In addition, the apartheid system into which they came caused all Indians to experience the oppression that became common to all.

But compounding the extent of the oppression that Indian women were already experiencing, were the cultural bondages that many of them found themselves locked within (Diesel, 2007:6). Indian women have since time immemorial remained within a cultural bind struggling to break away from traditional roles (Diesel, 2007:6). Expanding on this theme of Indian culture and its impact on Indian women, Bagchi (1995:34) shows that Indian women strongly adhere to and are governed by traditional roles that are informed by culture. Culturally, Indian women have been misled by an imposed ideal of womanhood, which is depicted by gentle manners, natural tenderness, and lack of physical strength (Rao, 1999:1). This misconception forced her away from the real world into the seclusion of a helpless and dispossessed life and caused Indian women to believe that they had no place in the world of work outside their homes (Bagchi, 1995:34). During those initial decades in South Africa, and as discussed in section 2.2, Indian women were confined to domestic type roles such as

harvesting on the sugar plantations, picking leaves on the tea estates, weaving baskets, and selling fruit and vegetables from door to door (Ebr-Vally, 2001:8,9,38,50). Those women who ventured outside of these traditional, domestic related jobs were labeled loose or promiscuous (Desai, 2010:21). In no uncertain terms was this vocalized by some brave women who stated that while the pressures experienced by Indian women as workers, house-keepers, wives and mothers in poverty and poor conditions went unrecognised, huge emphasis was placed on their ‘lack of morality’ (Desai, 2010:21). Whenever women acted contrary to cultural expectations, as oppressive as they were, these women were deemed ‘immoral’. Historical records often failed to capture the great sacrifices and contributions made by Indian women, but here are the kinds of details that *were* captured:

One migrant, Thoy Cunniaappa Muda (332228), listed, or as it is most likely, had her caste listed as ‘prostitute’. She was 20, from North Arcot, and arrived on the Dunphaile castle in October 1884. This was often the case for single women who came without the ‘covering’ of a male person, and the colonials, knowing this to be part of the cultural practices of India, perpetuated the oppression of Indian women by adopting such labels for them (Desai, 2010:21).

The traditional Indian wedding was oriented towards the man’s happiness and pleasure and it was the wife’s role to implicitly obey and oblige to his wishes (Rao, 1999:49). The model Indian wife was one who obeyed her husband in every way and never talked back, and she had no right to wealth or even to her own body. She was the ‘property’ of her husband (Rao, 1999:55). She was supposed to be provided for by her husband and had no economic freedom (Rao, 1999:55). Central to her existence was motherhood, and if she were a mother of sons, a little more status was awarded to her, as opposed to her being a mother of daughters (Bagchi, 1995:35).

The traditional stories told in many Indian homes in their growing up years were those about their land of origin, India. One such story was that of the differences in treatment between boys and girls. The birth of girl children in the traditional Indian context was not celebrated, while the birth of a boy child was hailed with joy (Nadar, 2001:144). The birth of girls was seen as a liability to the family, which brought misfortune into the family, and this too contributed to the stigma that Indian women faced. Being born a boy was itself a privilege,

for he was seen as an asset to the family, being the one to care for his family in their old age, and the transmitter of the family name for generations to come (Nadar, 2001:144). There was supposedly more value in educating boys than girls, since boys would give back to the family when they became employed (Nadar, 2001:144). The girl was inducted into house-keeping and child-care roles early. If older, she was told that she was the model for the younger siblings under her care. She was prepared for “marriage and the pots” (Nadar, 2001:145). Since in most strata of society she was hardly expected to contribute to the economic status of the family, and was usually regarded as a liability, she was to be married off as early as possible (Nadar, 2001:145).

Education has always been very important to Indians (Ebr-Vally, 2001:185). It was seen as the major route to upward social mobility to attain better jobs in industry and the professions (Ebr-Vally, 2000:158). However, the tradition of not educating girls was quite strong in the initial years of the arrival of indentured Indians. Ebr-Vally (2001:158) gives an account of one of the first schools, the St Aidan’s Mission Springfield School, around 1900, where there was a record of only one female pupil. One of the greatest fears that elderly traditional Indian folk in South Africa often expressed was that education would influence Indian girls to work and that in turn would lead them ‘astray’, hence it was better for them to remain domesticated (Freund, 1991: 421). With a boy, on the other hand, the mother’s status increases, and the development stages of a boy are marked with many more ceremonies than those of a girl. Parents, especially the mother, are indulgent towards the boy as he is an investment for old age (Ebr-Vally, 2001:158).

The early induction of a female gave a reality orientation to the roles demanded of her during her life span. Consequently, she went through the roles of a disciplined daughter, a submissive wife and daughter-in-law, a sacrificing mother and a dominant mother-in-law (Diesel, 2007:6). One might suggest that her role of submissive daughter-in-law was perhaps the most difficult, calling for the adjustment to unfamiliar expectations of the new ‘extended’ family. This has not changed much for present day South African Indian women who also become entangled in the web of ‘the extended family’ (Diesel, 2007:5). Reflections of these stories have been mirrored in the context of South Africa, though they are not as intense as they were found to be in India.

The cultural practice of the ‘extended family’ or ‘joint-family’ system is deeply rooted within the Indian community and is characterized by close family bonds, which aimed at providing a haven for all. Arkin comments:

Every member is part of a whole and the family as a whole takes responsibility for the welfare of each member. The daughter-in-law comes under the authority of the mother-in-law who is the female head of the family and the one who assigns the household duties of cooking and cleaning to the other female members of the family. The mother-in-law’s direct and complete authority over the young bride results from a desire to integrate the new wife into the female side of the family (1989:75).

However, Arkin (1989:75) believes that with changes in the social climate in the South African context, Indian women appear to be resisting the traditional roles assigned to them, expressing the great struggles they have with these expectations. —Many of the younger generation complain that they find it difficult to reconcile the values inherent in the traditional Indian way of life and family relations with their westernized outlook (Arkin, 1989:75). However, conservative Hindus felt unhappy about the younger generation’s inclination to move away from the valued tradition and culture of extended or multiple families, expressing that the nuclear family household was an incomplete household (Arkin, 1989:75).

Anand Singh (2005:33) argues that although there may have been resistance toward the joint family system in the early 1970s, the post-apartheid era together with its contemporary political climate made a strong case for its continuance in a number of homes. In his research examining Indians in post-apartheid South Africa, Singh’s work reflects statements made by Indian participants in the research, such as, —It’s too dangerous and inconvenient to let our children buy their own houses in this day and age” and —Properties are too expensive to invest in right now when our future as Indians in this country is so dicey” (Singh, 2005:33). In the post-apartheid era, as Indian women began to find employment and become professionals or working women, they claimed that the benefits of having the joint family system outweighed the disadvantages (Singh, 2005:36). During the time when they had to stay at home all day with their in-laws, this was undoubtedly problematic, but the post-apartheid era in particular, had opened up employment opportunities for a number of these women (Singh:2005:36).

The women in this study testified to having enjoyed one or more of the following common benefits of the joint family system: caring for children who do not go to school, taking and picking up children from school, caring for them after school, cooking and keeping the kitchen in order, laundering and ironing clothes and general administration and oversight of household care through the employment of maids and gardeners (Singh, 2005:35). In a number of instances, where maids could no longer be afforded due to regulatory wage and benefit standards, they were often replaced with help from members of the extended family who were not in full time employment (Singh, 2005:36). From my own research, I have generally found this to be the grandmother either on the paternal or maternal side.

Another aspect dominant in Indian culture is the theory of supremacy of the male in reproduction, which symbolizes man as the seed giver and woman only as the field (Rao, 1999:1). The idea is that the produce belongs to the one who owns the field and the field must also belong to him (Rao, 1999:1). This in turn gives a man rights over a woman and power over her productive capacities, her sexuality and her reproductive capacities (Bagchi, 1995:36). This is true even when women have entered into the formal economy. Diesel comments:

Unfortunately becoming wage earners has not necessarily given women independence from patriarchal control. Traditional Indian families have tended to regard women as having a subordinate status to men, with the expectation that their primary roles are those of wife and mother. This has resulted in many women being largely confined to home and, engaged almost entirely in domestic activities (2007:6).

Diesel goes on to argue that Indian women have been discouraged from gaining an independent identity, and that their identity is acquired “from a male relative: father, husband or eldest son after the husband’s death” (2007:6). Diesel attributes much of these attitudes to religion itself, whereby “Hinduism, Islam and Christianity have largely worked to maintain this attitude, often portraying women as not only physically weaker than men, but also intellectually and morally inferior, to perpetuate their subordination” (2007:6).

Kumari (1998:38) argues that it is those persistent inequalities between men and women that continue to result in a lower quality of life for Indian women. Because of such a high prevalence of patriarchy in the Indian context, there exists a great control by men of socio-economic and property resources, as well as all major decisions of the family and thereby society (Kumari, 1998:38). Kumari (1998:38) comments that the unequal power relationships between men and women accrue power to men at all levels, and this is the root cause of inequalities. Hence the ongoing struggle for gender justice has as its main agenda the need to correct the false basic cultural assumption that women are of lesser value than men (Kumari, 1998:38).

It is clear that such assumptions are not inherent at birth but they are developed and internalized as individuals interact with family and other cultural systems. What complicates matters more is that gender roles are not just confined to cultural teachings, but also intertwined with religious practices, making it more difficult to free oneself from this bind (Diesel, 2007:7). For a Hindu woman, her husband is much more than just her husband, but he is to be revered and respected and almost idolized (Rao, 1999:1). The same could be said for Indian Christian women where they were often taught about submissiveness to their husbands as the head that God placed over their lives, and that they should learn in silence based on Paul's injunctions (see Nadar, 2001:146). Kumari (1998:41) believes that since patriarchy is perpetuated through a process of institutionalization of social, cultural and religious practices, the same process must be adopted to unlearn these values and to reconstruct alternatives to restore and reclaim the worth, dignity and rights of women.

Interestingly and importantly to this study, the traditional Indian woman is also known for her ability to work extremely hard, which is interpreted as a cultural requirement (Rao, 1999:11). Rao states:

Waking up before the cock crows, she does all the household work, including sweeping the floor, washing the clothes, cleaning the pots and pans, bathing the children, cooking food and serving them, before going out to for work. In the hot sun, she has to work in the field under the landlord's hawk-like gaze, all through the day; she is forced to ignore the cries of the baby lying in the cloth-hammock at the tree branch nearby. Soon after returning from the field she has to fetch water, pick up a

few dry twigs for firewood and buy some rice. On returning she cooks for the night, washes clothes, feeds the children, and has a bath in the scant privacy that may be available...It is an eighteen hour job for her, a routine with no relief (1999:127).

Such were the outstanding abilities of Indian women to work extremely hard. Rao (1999:12), further states; “While men and women, through collective labour and collective wealth took society forward, women played a greater role in it. The idea of labour itself started with women, in society as in nature. In food gathering and food production which were behind all social progress woman’s part was vital” (Rao, 1999:12). He states that in the Indian context “Mother” is worshipped as a goddess with a variety of names, because of her amazing ability to provide for her family (Rao, 1999:13). He also suggests that the art of agriculture in the Indian context was actually initiated by women and they earned the reputation of being chief architects because of their amazing resourcefulness (Rao, 1999:13). Until present day, a number of Indian homes have a little saying that women are able to take nothing and make something out of it. This is especially in terms of providing for her family, particularly in poverty stricken situations.

Inasmuch as there is great reverence for the role of the mother in the Indian context, Hiralal (2010:152) reminds us that this must be understood within the context of gender construction and gender relations in Indian society. Although women are highly revered as mothers, their relationships with their spouses remain those of subordination. It is inscribed within Hindu laws that “A woman should never be independent. Her father has authority over her in her childhood, her husband has authority over her in her youth, and in her old age her son has authority over her” (Hiralal, 2010: 153). The act of total subordination is deeply entrenched in Indian culture in general. In Hindu law, a dutiful wife is one who practiced “patrivrata”, which is basically the act of a woman worshipping her husband as if he were a god regardless of his worth or character (Hiralal, 2010:153). The same cultural practices around the total submission and subordination of women to the authority of men have been imported into Christianity (Nadar, 2001:146).

Contrary to tradition and culture, a few Indian women in South Africa even became pioneers in the political arena. It was during the 1940s when women of all races had begun to participate to some extent in the public world of politics (Hassim, 2006). The Indian women

in Natal, conventionally understood to be passive and culturally subordinate to men, began to mobilize as part of the passive resistance campaign inspired by Gandhi. For this purpose, women were organized by language, namely, Tamil, Hindi and Gujarati, and began to draw connections between the struggles of Indians and Africans against white domination while raising the issues of women's rights (Hassim, 2006).

One such Indian woman, who was at the forefront of promoting women's rights, particularly, their right to a better education, was Dr. Goonam. Being the first Indian woman doctor in South Africa, Dr. Kesaveloo Goonam, in her autobiography *Coolie Doctor* (1991), relates the hardships endured by Indian women who wanted to educate themselves. Goonam (1991:102) constantly declared that the lot of Indian women was not just to stay at home and cook and she inspired Indian women in South Africa to be motivated by the example of women in India who were the vanguard of the freedom struggle. Being at the forefront of the resistance movement, she herself was imprisoned together with a number of other comrades (Goonam, 1991:113). When Dr. Goonam approached the Natal Indian Congress to seek representation for women within the organization, she was told that Indian women were not sufficiently advanced to receive representation (Goonam, 1991:100). Clearly, as already noted, the oppression and enslavement suffered by Indian women was as a result of the internal cultural practices, as well as external factors, which excluded them from social life.

By the 1950s many Indian women leaders such as Fatima Meer, Zainab Asvat and Amina Pahad joined the nonracial Federation of South African Women in their struggle for democracy for all (Hassim, 2006). As decades have gone by, we have found that Indian women were at the forefront of such political activity because of the oppressive circumstances they found themselves in. Even though there is a measure of political liberation and freedom that Indian women presently enjoy, they still remain bound by cultural and gender based stereotypes of their roles in society.

Hiralal (2010:154) points out that for the Indian woman, it is issues of class, culture, race, ethnicity and gender that help us understand not only their variegated experiences, but also inform us about the nature, content and form of their political resistance. It is their culturally defined roles as mothers, wives, daughters and sisters that kept them in confinement and isolation in a way that did not allow them access to resources for such political activities

(Hiralal, 2010:154). It was, in actual fact, the Indian men themselves who discouraged the women from being involved in such activities since they considered it derogatory to their manhood for women to resist a law that was directed at the men themselves (Hiralal, 2010:153). This is one example that highlights the gender prejudices of women's roles in society. Hiralal (2010:154) argues that by virtue of women becoming involved in political activities, which was in actual fact by their own determination and not prescribed by men, the image of them being docile and passive has been challenged.

Although Indian women were confined and docile, Desai (2010:227) notes that there were many of them who, contrary to tradition and culture, saw the need for women to be educated. Desai (2010:227) attributes this to Christian families who were at the forefront of the drive to educate women. He illustrates this with the example of Miss Stephens, who was the first Indian nurse in Durban in 1914 and the Lawrence sisters all of whom qualified in various fields such as education and music (Desai, 2010:227). It was Sylvia Lawrence who became a lecturer at Springfield teacher's training college and introduced music education in Indian schools (Desai, 2010:277). As early as 1907, Indian women such as these were involved in the Indian Women's Association (IWA) which was formed by Tamil Christian women (Desai, 2010:278). "The IWA met monthly, with talks by women that aimed to provide 'moral and intellectual education'" (Desai, 2010:278). Unfortunately, the names of many of these women were not known simply because the cultural practice was to address them by the names of their husbands (Desai, 2010:278). Yet again, credit for the sterling work that Indian women had been involved in was sapped by those they were married to. Despite that, the IWA continued to grow and impact many women who were caught within cultural limitations and stereotypes, very often challenging these cultural limitations. Desai states:

In the first year of existence, the IWA petitioned the education department to provide education for girls, the Colonial Secretary to repeal the 'iniquitous' £3 tax⁸ on women, started sewing classes... The IWA considered it discriminatory to single out women. Members realized that they had 'unbounded' work to perform in elevating the present position of women, therefore the support of all true sons and daughters of India is necessary (2010:278).

⁸ Up to 1913, a compulsory annual tax was imposed on every Indian male of 16 years and over and every Indian female 13 years and over, who failed to indenture or to return to India (Meer, 1975:2).

Hence, although Indian women found themselves within the cultural and traditional bind, they were constantly aware of the need to break free from these limitations. Jithoo (1991), who conducted a study of Indians in South Africa looking specifically at the aspect of tradition versus westernization, states the following:

The changing status and role of Indian women in the family, and the wider society has to be viewed against the traditional and cultural background which dictated that their primary task in life was to bear children, be dutiful wives and devoted mothers. The study showed that there no longer existed a rigid division of labour: women engaged in a wide variety of economic duties, having evolved from labourers in the sugar fields to market gardeners, to technical and professional pursuits. The study reflected the emancipation of women from seclusion and discrimination in a male dominated society, to competition in an 'open' market labour. Women in the study fought to eradicate some of the deeply rooted beliefs in social institutions (like arranged marriages), religious mores, traditional values and ideologies, all of which seem to reinforce the spirit of male domination. Two factors were responsible for the increasing number of women in a variety of jobs and professions which were linked with the break-up of the joint family, education and economic independence (Jithoo, 1991:353).

Jithoo (1991:353) argues that for the modern educated Indian women, the new matrix of the nuclear family as opposed to the traditional joint family system was clearly a mark in history where women were able to evolve out of those traditionally bound roles to a more emancipated position. "Life in the joint family can still be very stifling for an educated woman, who wants to organize her own life, and does not look kindly to an authoritarian hierarchy based on super ordination and subordination" (Jithoo, 1991:353). Although many Indian women were able to escape the intense impact brought on by the tradition of joint families, there were many who were not able to do so for economic reasons and were confined to living in the joint family system until they were in a stable enough position to break free (Jithoo, 1991:353). Yet again, there were those who were liberated from this culture but were still caught within the bind of a patriarchal network even within a nuclear family, hence the struggle for equal position in the household went on for Indian women (Jithoo, 1991:353).

In this section, I have attempted to argue that indentured Indian women came with deep rooted cultural, traditional and religious roles that continued to impact on their lives for a number of decades, keeping them in positions of subordination and oppression. However, over time these roles have mutated to a position influenced by western ideals, as Indian women began to seek definition of what it meant to be 'Indian' within a South African context. The evolution toward a nuclear family as opposed to the traditional joint family has most definitely been a contributing factor for younger women who have pined for a subjective identity. In addition, economic pressures upon households saw Indian women moving from the traditional domestic type of jobs to more formal working opportunities.

Despite these changes, Indian women are still by and large downtrodden and continue fighting for equality within the domestic, social, economic and religious sectors of life.

2.5 Indian women and Christianity

In my attempt to intersect the faith experiences of Indian Christian women with their work experiences, it becomes important to understand their historical experiences of the Christian faith from the time of their indenture. The work of Brain (1983) was one of the earlier historical and statistical accounts of Christian Indians in Natal from the period 1860 to 1911. Brain (1983:247) records that of the 152 184 Indian immigrants between 1860 and 1911, 2150, i.e. 1, 4 percent were identified as being Christian. Desai (2010:262) records that the *S.S. Truro*, the first ship carrying 340 indentured labourers, brought with it an estimated 87 Christians. The historical account of Brain (1983:12) asserts that the first ten to disembark from the *Truro* and set foot on Natal soil constituted two Christian families. The first family comprised a Roman Catholic male from Madras, Davarum, aged 30 years, his wife Nagium (18 years), and two daughters, Kirbay (4 years) and Elizabeth (18 months) (Brain, 1983:12). The second family comprised Abraham (38 years), his wife Sarah (30 years) and children Esack (10 years), Yacoob (8 years), Arlandoo (5 years) and Pragmael (2 years) (Brain, 1983:12).

Despite the small number of Indian Christians in Natal, the Christian mission played a conspicuous and evangelical role amongst Indian settlers (Nair, 2010:9). –By 1860

Christianity had already taken root in the Colony of Natal. Whilst the Dutch Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church served mainly the White population, the Roman Catholic, the Methodist and the Anglican were the first three churches which were actively involved with mission work among the early Indian settlers” (Nair, 2010:9). The Lutheran church was the fourth denomination to make inroads into the Indian community and they were followed by the Baptists with Rev John Rangiah in Natal on 27 December 1903 (Nair, 2010:11). By 1925, the Indian community began to be greatly impacted by a Pentecostal movement, the Full Gospel Church, under the influence of John Francis Rowlands (Nair, 2010:107). The Indian branch of this was called Bethesda, and the first church started at 519 Longmarket Street, Pietermaritzburg on 26 July 1925, making huge impacts throughout the province and spreading throughout the country (Nair, 2010:107).

The work of Nair (2010) traces the role that Indian women played during the initial years of their arrival in South Africa. It is stated:

Combining Christian teachings with the cultural and traditional values in the Indian community regarding the status of women, we discover that they have excelled as mothers and wives, daughters and sisters. As we slowly turn the pages of our 150 years of history, we are introduced to the ‘Mothers in the Faith’ who became pillars of strength and the rock foundation of our spiritual, social and moral strengths which makes us to be who we are today (Nair, 2010:182).

Nair (2010:183) asserts that Nagium, who was listed as Coolie number 2, being the very first indentured woman to set foot on South African soil, unfortunately had no written records about her experience, but he assumes that she must have gone through the extreme hardship that all other women went through. “Her source of encouragement and hope in those early and dark days must have been her faith in God” (Nair, 2010:183). Then there was Kanakamma Rangiah who was the wife of the first Indian missionary sent out to Natal on 13 June 1903 (Nair, 2010:183). Nair states:

An American missionary in India, Mrs. Alice Stenger writes about Kanakamma taking the challenging journey from India to South Africa. It was especially hard for Kanakamma to take this journey into the unknown. It was a great sacrifice leaving a

good home and all the relatives in the community where John was respected and loved. Kanakamma became a fine missionary and John was outstanding. They dedicated churches and laid foundations for other churches. At John's death, Kanakamma carried on the work pioneered by her husband (2010:183).

At first Kanakamma was resistant to make the journey. At that time she was pregnant with her third child, but finally saw it as God's call over their lives. Nair (2010:183) states, "On the 23rd of August 1903 Kanakamma gave birth to a son. No fussing midwives, no special food or Indian medicine. John helped deliver the baby. It then was taboo in Indian culture, but this was Africa!" The story goes that Rev John Rangiah died in 1915 after a brief illness (Nair, 2010:184). Kanakamma was now a widow with six children, and when given the opportunity to go back to India, she chose to stay in South Africa and continue the work that she and her husband had started among the indentured Indians (Nair, 2010:184). Nair (2010:185) notes many other such women who had greatly impacted Christian ministry amongst indentured labourers and amongst women in particular.

It is noted that Indian Christian women, because of the strong missionary influence, became very effective with regards to education amongst indentured Indians (Desai, 2010:279). The educational opportunities for indentured Indian children were attributed to mission schools. Desai states, "The mission schools were the embryo of Indian education, and Christians, with their knowledge of English, had a head start in economic mobility among Indians" (Desai, 2010:262). By 1885, the Anglicans were running nine of the 21 Indian schools in Natal. This had increased in 1886 to 15 (Desai, 2010:267). By 1889, the Anglicans had opened the first girls' school, hence opening the way for girls to be educated contrary to cultural practices (Desai, 2010:267). Desai (2010:268) affirms the work that the Anglican mission had been involved with in Natal. Having been involved in initiatives of education, medical facilities, various welfare programmes, Desai (2010:268) comments, "The mission's greatest contribution, though, was in the field of education". Many Indian women had been recipients of these educational initiatives (Desai, 2010:268).

It is within this historical backdrop that Indian women in South Africa attempt to locate themselves, calling for a more rigorous analysis, since they exist in a cross-national, cross-cultural setting with much diversity within the same culture, class and nation. Unfortunately,

as we have noted, the history and experiences of Indian Christian women in South Africa have not been as widely documented as they should have been (Nair, 2010:182). Govinden (2002:263) suggests that the reason for Indian women's histories being insufficiently documented is that much of the past research assumes that the term 'Indian history' is inclusive of both male and female. She points out the necessity in the days of an emerging democracy, for critical scholarship on the lives, histories and experiences of Indian women who undoubtedly contributed to the development of society (Govinden, 2002:263). In like manner, at the very outset of recollecting the journeys of faith by Indian Christian women, Nadar (2002:139) concurs that women's experiences are often neglected within the annals of their respective church histories, since these records give attention to 'his' story.

It is these two Indian female scholars (Govinden, 2002 and Nadar, 2002), amongst others, in recent years, who built on the historical background of Indian women in South Africa, and gave attention to how these women contributed to the Christian faith. Govinden states:

Much of research in Indian history assumes that the term is inclusive of male and female, with little specific attention given to the particular experiences of Indian women. Given the male domination of society generally, it was inevitable that Indian men would have more opportunities to be chief players in this history. 'History' itself is a male defined 'master discourse'. Further, because men have held the power traditionally in historical research, Indian women's histories have been insufficiently documented (2002:262).

The individual stories of Indian women have been subsumed within the larger narrative of oppression. It is for this purpose that Govinden (2002:262) intentionally traces the histories of these women who have left an imprint on the generations to follow. One such woman that Govinden (2002:262) traces is Kunwarani Lady Gunwati Maharaj Singh, an Anglican woman that is said to have made an important contribution to the development of women in Colonial Natal (Govinden, 2002:262). Inasmuch as the Kunwarani⁹ made such significant contributions to the upliftment of women, not much of this has been documented. She is generally made mention of in the written records of her illustrious husband, Kunwar Sir

⁹ According to Govinden (2002:277), the titles Kunwar and Kunwarani are equivalent to 'The Honourable', and came to be used for names as this Agent-General and his wife.

Maharaj Singh who came as an Agent-General to South Africa in 1932 (Govinden, 2002:262). One could only imagine that all that was mentioned of her was that she was the wife of the Kunwar, without giving details of her involvement and tireless work in Colonial Natal to champion the cause of Indian women (Govinden, 2002:268).

Such remains the case of many other Indian women, whose contributions and active involvement become muffled within the wrappings of ~~his~~ "his-story". Govinden (2002:267) finds that for a woman of her time, where the education of girls was not actively promoted, the Kunwarani came from an exceptional educational background. She completed her teacher's diploma at the University of London in 1917, and unlike the women of her time, she married at the age of 29. She also lectured in history and literature at the Isabella Thoburn College which was attached to the University of Allahabad (Govinden, 2002:267). In addition, she had written a number of research papers on women, some for which she received awards (Govinden, 2002:267). Her role in South Africa was not just for the social upliftment of women, but also greatly impacted on the Anglican Church (particularly St. Paul's in Durban where she and her husband had been members). She had worked tirelessly to promote women's visibility in her attempts to improve their status and to expand conceptual spaces for them (Govinden, 2002:268). She also saw the need to address social and religious barriers and began to focus on the mission of the Church during a time when women played a subordinate role in church and society (Govinden, 2002:274). Coming from another continent, but deeply understanding colonial oppression, the Kunwarani became part of a body of women who shared in a common sisterhood and experienced a common faith (Govinden, 2002:275).

Other such narratives of powerful Christian Indian women often go untold or undocumented simply because it is taken for granted that these are covered within the greater historical annals. What does get recorded is the male encounter and experience. The depravation and lack of female voice in these historical annals leave us, particularly Indian women, the poorer for not having full exposure to these amazing narratives. However, we find that through up-and-coming female scholars, there is more being research being done and there is a concerted effort to document the experiences of Indian women in South Africa.

One such recent scholar is Alleyn Diesel¹⁰ (2007), who traces the stories of Indian women in South Africa, and points out that many Indian women have interesting and sometimes compelling stories to tell and that they are remarkably articulate in telling these stories, which demonstrates their strength and determination in the face of adversity. She also argues that in recent years, the documented stories of people in the so-called ‘previously disadvantaged’ communities in South Africa have almost completely overlooked the experiences of Indian women (Diesel, 2007:5). Diesel is very cautious of the fact that some feminists believe that ‘privileged’ white women should not write or ‘speak for’ those women whose voices have been silenced by their oppressive circumstances (Diesel, 2007:5). However, this reservation is met only with enthusiasm and encouragement from Indian women themselves, hence she is encouraged to have such experiences documented (Diesel, 2007:5).

However, presently we find that Indian women have begun to make great strides in education and the various fields of the economic sector. The Indian community celebrated 150 years since their arrival in South Africa, and it is remarkable to note that their story had progressed from arriving with a little suitcase on board the *S.S. Truro*, speaking very little or no English, to having made national impacts in all spheres of the country’s livelihood. Indian women in South Africa have excelled in the fields of education, medicine, health care, business, science, religion and theology as well as many other areas.

Indian Christian women are noted for their roles in leaving their mark on a history that was once shaped by patriarchy and androcentric mindsets. The re-telling of their dynamic stories is no longer within the wrappings of ‘his-story’ because a number of them have found the courage to break the barrier of ‘unfreedom’. One such woman relevant to this particular research is May Laban, the first Indian woman in the Anglican¹¹ Church in South Africa to be ordained (Nadar, 2002:137). Her story reflects her ambivalence towards full time ministry due to the attitudes that she had encountered from the Indian community with regards to women priests. Laban had been extremely involved in the church, carrying out all sorts of responsibility, and the only thing that she did not do was wear the priestly robes and preach. Laban recalls the struggle that it had been for women to be ordained during that period, to

¹⁰ Alleyn Diesel is not Indian, but examines the experiences of Indian women in South Africa, particularly those in KwaZulu-Natal.

¹¹ I use the Anglican experience because it is within the context of my research, but there are many other similar stories that Indian women from other church backgrounds relate.

the extent that they began to demand this right. It is out of this context that the Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW) started (Nadar, 2002:140). Laban's purpose for joining such a movement was not just for her own ordination, but because it was a cause she believed in. The year 1993 marks a victory for Indian women when May Laban became the first¹² Indian woman priest in South Africa. However, despite that victory, Laban recollects the struggles and challenges of being a woman priest. Laban is constantly challenged with remaining within a cultural context, and she completely maintains that she is "wholly a woman priest and not a woman priest filling a male role" (Nadar, 2002:143).

Having left the teaching profession in response to the call into full time ministry, Laban submits that although her battle for ordination had been won, there were greater struggles that she was up against in terms of acceptance and sexism within the church community which sought to devalue the worth of women (Nadar, 2002:142). This resistance did not come from the Indian community alone, but from others as well. Laban tells of a white priest who came to visit each of the women who were to be ordained to tell them that they were not welcome in church (Nadar, 2002:142). Hence, for Indian women like Laban, the struggle was not just dealing with acceptance from within but from the outer circle as well.

There are many other stories of Indian Christian women like May Laban, who may not necessarily be called into full time ministry like she was, but who demonstrate the immense contributions that Indian women have made to the life of Indian churches in South Africa (Nadar, 2002:153). Traditionally, Indian Christian women who felt a call to ministry were confined to roles in women's groups and Sunday school ministries, but on this note, Nadar hastily points out that the women's groups generally comprise 75% of the church's membership and that it is in Sunday school where essential formation of the church begins (2002:154). It is only in the retelling of these stories that we are able to highlight the significant roles that Indian Christian women played in the advancement and growth of the Indian Christian community as a whole. It is also in the retelling of these stories that we are able to dispel the myth that "women were invisible" or that they did not perform tasks that were important enough to be recognized in the life of the church (Nadar, 2002:155).

¹² There were five women in total who were ordained at that stage, but May Laban was the first Indian woman (Nadar, 2002).

The complexity in which Indian Christian women find themselves is a situation where they interpret scripture in a context which is dominated and handed down to them by the male structures of society. As articulated by Rakoczy, (2004:184), “The Bible with its patriarchal worldview and texts is not rejected per se but is mined to discover liberating gold amidst the mud and manure of oppression”. Since Indian culture is communal, group thinking generally takes priority over individual thinking. Many Indian Christian women find themselves within the dominant cultural wrappings of traditional Indian virtues for women which are named as “weakness, innocence, naiveté, passivity, dependence, chastity, and silence” (Rakoczy, 2004:185). Against this background, it becomes extremely challenging for Indian Christian women to develop and freely express qualities of strength, imagination, determination, and resilience since these would be considered contrary to traditional Indian values.

From this background one understands that when Indian Christian women make strides and take the risk of breaking beyond the barriers of culture, this marks a victory. Indian Christian women were undoubtedly fearlessly venturing into terrain where they were once considered inferior. As we see the numbers increasing in terms of Indian women involved in various forms of church ministry, those who are ordained as full time priests, as well as those who are becoming more involved in theological studies, it serves as a reminder that those who have gone ahead (women like the Kunwarani and May Laban), have created space for those who follow.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to set the historical context of the study by looking at the arrival of the Indian community in South Africa and the impact of indenture particularly on women. The chapter then progressed to look at issues of poverty as experienced by Indian women from the time of their arrival as indentured labourers until the attainment of democracy in South Africa. Attention was given to the various traditional and cultural roles of Indian women, particularly exploring the dismantling of the traditional ‘joint family’ structure and its re-emergence in the post-apartheid era. Finally, this chapter looked at the impact of Christianity on Indian women exploring their roles within the Christian context. The next chapter will give attention to the notion of women’s work, discussing the various roles that women assume in their households and communities.

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN'S PRODUCTIVE AND REPRODUCTIVE ROLES IN COMMUNITIES

3.1 Introduction

Since their arrival as indentured Indians, Indian women and the role they play in society has been devalued and regarded as unimportant. As noted in section 2.3, much of their involvement was culturally expected, thus causing Indian women to be involved for endless hours. Although many of them toiled for up to thirteen hours each day in the sugar cane fields, that was by far not the end of their 'work day' (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:8). They were still expected to care for the children, take care of chores around the home, prepare the meals from minimal income and also play a vital role in the religious duties that were expected of Indian women (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:8). Work in the Indian community has been considered in the formal sense, as depicting activity that one engages in from morning until evening and is remunerated with a wage or salary (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:8). Roles outside of this traditional mindset were not awarded the due respect they deserved (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:8).

As pointed out in section 2.3, indentured Indian women who were involved in productive roles were paid half the wages that their male counterparts were paid, although their roles in the 'productive' sphere were just as important. Some women even played simultaneous roles while working in the sugar cane fields by watching over their children, who also worked alongside them (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:8). Beyond Indian women's visible economy, which was already undervalued, there existed a less visible informal economy which played a significant role in the effective functioning of the household and Indian community (Ebr-Vally, 2001:8). All unpaid activities, as strenuous or time consuming as they were, were not considered 'work' simply because they were unpaid, and more importantly, they were considered women's cultural roles and responsibilities (Bagchi, 1995:34). Despite the levels of physical strain of these unpaid roles, they remained less visible, while their paid roles were limited and undervalued.

Various scholars have attempted to give attention to the less visible and devalued roles that women find themselves in (cf Mies, 1998; Miller, 1996). One such scholar is Caroline Moser (1993) who has helped categorize women's roles into three important components, namely productive, reproductive and community roles. This chapter attempts to locate the work of Caroline Moser (1993) within the broader gender and development discussion, giving attention, first, to the neglect of women's roles in gender and development planning, the history of gender and development planning initiatives, as well as the notion of women's triple roles. Whilst this theoretical conceptualization of Moser's triple roles has been critiqued, this chapter argues in favour of its usefulness in this particular study.

3.2 The neglect of women's roles in gender and development planning

The gender and development debate is of particular importance to this study because of its focus on the work experiences of women. Traditionally, the value of human work was determined by the price that the market placed on such work (Mies, 1998:67). This meant that the economic systems of the day put no value on work done at home, volunteer work and the work of the informal or hidden economy (Mies, 1998:67). Mies (1998:67) asserts that under capitalism, it was capital accumulation that became the dominant mode of productive activity and this in turn determined the value of one's work. This type of undervalued work formed a vital part of the effective running of households, however, because of lack of value, it was in some cases neglected at the cost of women going out to look for paid work that was given value (Rao, 1999:55). Alternatively, there were those who chose paid work, and had no option but to still maintain their domestic roles with excellence, with no assistance from males of the household (Diesel, 2007:6). In section 2.3, incidents were related where a neglect of these domestic roles often led to acts of violence in the home, hence Indian women, even though they moved into paid work, still maintained a high level of involvement in their unpaid roles as well.

While early development initiatives have attempted to place women's concerns on the development planning agenda, they neglected to detail the various roles that women played. For example, Parpart (2000:49) comments that women were largely ignored by early development initiatives, which had begun to preoccupy economists and colonial officials in the 1930s. She states that these approaches identified development with modernization and

assumed the wholesale adoption of Western technology, institutions, and beliefs (Parpart, 2000:49). During the 1940s and 1950s, development planners designed projects aimed to modernize colonies all over the globe (Parpart, 2000:49). Although many of these projects failed, this did little to undermine most development experts' faith in modernization; however, there still appeared to be neglect towards understanding and discussing women's roles in these initiatives (Parpart, 2000:49).

Martha Nussbaum (1995:76), who also addressed gender planning initiatives, took issue with the same concern around the neglect of addressing women's roles in planning initiatives. In her discussion on human capabilities, she argued that each human person experiences exactly the same needs and desires (Nussbaum, 1995:76). This is expressed as the need for food and drink, the need for shelter, sexual desire, mobility, capacity for pleasure and pain, cognitive capability to perceive, imagine and think, and so forth (Nussbaum, 1995:76). Hence, for development planners to only hear the voice and expressions of men in their planning initiatives is neglectful and she associates this neglect with injustice and unequal power relations (Nussbaum, 1995:76). Even though women began to contribute to the economy of the household, they did not escape their roles in the domestic sphere and in fact, their burdens were often heightened by the multiple roles they were now involved in (Kabeer, 2003:13). Since the domestic related chores were considered 'women's roles', and were part of the cultural expectations, these were often left for women to attend to before and/or after their paid work (Kabeer, 2003:13).

There was an attempt in the 1970s for 'equity' based arguments, where women were seen as economic actors rather than welfare clients (Kabeer, 2003:13). For example, when Ester Boserup (1970), through her seminal work on the division of women's labour, investigated the impact of development projects on Third World women, she discovered that most of these projects ignored women and that many technologically sophisticated ones undermined women's economic opportunities and autonomy (Boserup, 1970:64). Her book *Women's Role in Economic Development*, was the first to place gender issues on the international development agenda. In her discussion on women's roles in economic development, Boserup (1970:2) highlighted that gender is a basic factor of the division of labour with the main divisions being those of age and sex. The generalization that men are providers of food in most communities was criticized since women too had been providers of food in many areas

of the world (Boserup, 1970:3). She drew a comparison between the 'female' and 'male' systems of farming, looking specifically at the African and Asian experiences (Boserup, 1970:3).

Boserup (1970:6) examined the diverse economic activities of women, and argues that there was a demand for a better statistical base for information about their situation. This was inspired by a growing demand that women's productive roles should be made visible and should be strengthened (Boserup, 1970:6). Also, in the wake of the strategy of satisfying basic needs, combating female poverty was seen as an anti-poverty approach, thus not as a problem of gender inequality but rather as one of underdevelopment (Boserup, 1970:6).

Although Boserup (1970) attempted to address the neglect of women's roles in development planning, her work was later critiqued. Braig (2000:14), for example, suggests that while the work of Boserup attempted to make productive work of women more visible, it took away attention from other roles that women assumed (such as reproductive and community roles), since development projects began to focus on interventions of making productive work of women more visible (Braig, 2000:14). "In attempting to make women's productive roles visible, their reproductive and community roles fell by the wayside" (Braig, 2000:14). However, it was Boserup's (1970:17) intention to highlight the problem that gender division had been confining women to prescribed roles. Boserup (1970:17) further argued that although modernization was seen as operating in tandem with women's loss of economic independence, she also attributed blame to cultural practices for women's marginalization and economic disadvantage.

While it is true that the work of Boserup (1970) was critiqued, it was also commended for its attempts to improve the situation of women. Kabeer (2003:12), for example, asserts that it was Boserup's equity-based argument which saw women as economic actors rather than welfare clients, and this began to shift the focus to improving the productivity of women. This argument, however, was said to have had limited success in the 1970s since it implied a change in gender relations which in turn, would have affected the cultural fabric of society (Kabeer, 2003:12).

In Boserup's attempt to address the division of labour which left women at a disadvantage, Kabeer (2003:12) notes that one of the challenges was that gender inequality not only existed in all societies, but more so, in all levels of society. For example, as noted in section 2.4, indentured Indian women received half the wages for equal work done. They also received only half the amount of ration that men received; and they did not enjoy equal opportunities of education as men did. It was also noted in section 2.4 that their voices were not heard in historical records since they were often referred to by their husbands' names, and even in religious practices, they were usually at the lower levels of traditional hierarchies (Desai, 2010:278). Hence, based on their gender, as argued by Kabeer (2003:2), Indian women were prejudiced at all social levels.

Kabeer (2003:11), upon reflecting on the work of Boserup (1970), further argues that one of the urgent needs to place 'gender' on the development planning agenda was because of the failure of conventional measures of economic activity (which was conformed to western market-based economies), to fully comprehend the roles and various levels of women's economic contributions. "They both failed to acknowledge the magnitude of women's unpaid work and undercounted women's paid work outside the modern sector" (Kabeer, 2003:11). What added to this need was that the 'household' was assumed to follow an idealized typical model of 'western nuclear family' with a male bread winner and dependent women and children, which led planners to focus development interventions on men, while welfare programmes such as maternal and child health, family planning and nutrition were directed at women (Kabeer, 2003:11). "The result was the emergence and widening of a gender-based productivity gap and negative impacts on women's status in the economy" (Kabeer, 2003:11). It was this negative impact that Boserup (1970) attempted to address, and as asserted by Kabeer (2003:11), inequalities that were highlighted with regards to gender divisions of labour, could only be effectively addressed if 'gender' was placed on the development planning agenda.

While Kabeer (2003:12) notes that early initiatives attempted to address inequalities faced by women, they did little to change gender biases, due to a lack of having such issues placed on the broader gender planning agenda. Whitehead (2008:4), however, argues that in our attempt to believe that gender planning has been effectively addressing women's concerns, we are actually dealing with gender myths and feminist fables, which fail to rearrange

knowledge which will in turn realign power. She argues that the concept gender has become a buzz word in various circles but the extent of change in women's lives has not matched these claims (Whitehead, 2008:5). She asserts:

Represented to technocrats and policy-makers in the form of tools, frameworks and mechanisms, gender became a buzzword in development frameworks in the 1990s. In more recent times it has fallen from favour and has a jaded, dated feel to it. Diluted, denatured, depoliticised, included everywhere as an afterthought, gender may have become something everyone who works for an aid organization knows that they are supposed to do something about (Whitehead, 2008:5).

Whitehead (2008:4) further argues that while the gender myth leads us to believe that the plight of women has been adequately addressed, the reality remains that there are huge inadequacies and neglects. Rai (2008:140) concurs with this argument with regards to the shortfalls within gender and development debates to address women's roles. Rai (2008:140) makes a connection between power and knowledge, which further excludes women from such planning. Rai comments:

The stories about women's erasure from formal scientific discovery on the grounds of gender, race and class, of the obstacles that social mores and institutional prejudices place in the way of women achieving in the public sphere of knowledge creation are not a thing of the past. While changes are reaching a breath-taking pace...it is in part to challenge this exclusion that feminist scholars and activists have questioned the very definitions of what counts as knowledge. Feminists have written about the extent to which traditional epistemologies worked to systematically exclude the possibility that women could be the agents of knowledge (2008:140).

Rai's (2008:140) critique is that while there are phenomenal changes in women's roles, women themselves still do not have enough power to produce or to serve as agents of knowledge. An important question asked is: "What power allows certain discourses to be recognised as knowledge and others merely as social mores, or even as superstitions?" (Rai, 2008:140). Rai asserts that when women do produce knowledge, it is regarded merely as a superstition or social more (2008:140). "Power is thus reproduced every time those who

claim to know are able to exclude those whose claims to knowledge are not recognized” (Rai, 2008:140). Thus women’s claims of knowledge have been ignored and they have been positively excluded as carriers of knowledge (Rai, 2008:140).

Rai (2008) and Whitehead (2008) thus both argue that because women have been prejudiced, gender planning initiatives have neglected the knowledge that women themselves possess; hence their roles have yet again been inadequately represented. Both Whitehead (2008:16) and Rai (2008:140) express their acute concerns around the issue of the relationship between knowledge and power, arguing that because gender planning has neglected the knowledge of women, it has given men the power to determine women’s roles.

Similarly, the work of Indian scholar, Chandra Mohanty (2006:45), in charting the cartographies of Third World women, questions who it is that is actually producing knowledge about colonized peoples and from what space and location, raising the concern that the knowledge of women themselves is not considered. Mohanty (2006:45) states that unlike the history of western, white, middle class feminisms, which have been given much attention over the last decades, Third World women’s engagement with feminism is in short supply. –There is a large body of work on women in developing countries, but this does not necessarily engage feminist questions...Just as it is difficult to speak for a single entity called Western Feminism it is difficult to generalize about Third World Feminisms” (Mohanty, 2006:46). Mohanty (2006:48) argues that the norm has been to connect white and western with being progressive and modern, while non-western is associated with being backward or traditional so much so that these analyses have frozen Third World women in time, space and history. In light of this, their voices which express their interests and needs have not been heard (Mohanty, 2006:48). Mohanty states:

In other words, few studies have focused on women workers as subjects – as agents who make choices, have a critical perspective on their own situations, and think and organize collectively against their oppressors. Most studies of the Third World women in multinationals locate them as victims of multinational capital as well as their own traditional sexist cultures (Mohanty, 2006:72).

Whilst I agree with Mohanty's (2006:72) concern that women's knowledge has been overlooked in planning initiatives, I tend to disagree that there has been little engagement from Third World scholars on feminist questions. Actually, the past decade or more has produced many Third World scholars who have engaged such questions (cf Haddad (2000); Nadar (2001); Nadar (2002); Oduyoye (2006); Phiri (2002); to name a few). Whilst such scholars have not actually dealt with gender planning per se, they have given attention to important feminist questions. The more important issue is whether such voices that have made significant contributions to feminist questions have been heard. As already stated, the concern raised by feminist scholars is that while there have been attempts to place women's issues on gender and development planning initiatives, the voices of women have been stifled (Kabeer, 2003; Rai 2008; Whitehead 2008).

Mohanty's (2006:72) concern that women's knowledge has been overlooked in planning initiatives is supported by Saskia Wieringa (2008:832). Wieringa, who is the director of the International Information Center and Archives for the Women's Movement, argues that while there has been ongoing discussion around gender planning, there still remain some missing gaps and a number of critical questions are unanswered. She states:

More specifically, fundamental questions relating to women's gender interests are not being asked while planning development interventions related to women. In the case of structural adjustment programmes, such questions include the following: Why does a feminization of poverty occur? Why is it that women have to do unpaid tasks which the state had organized, such as the care of the young, the elderly and the sick? Why are men not involved in these activities? Why is it that so many men drop out of the families they helped to establish? (Wieringa, 2008:832).

Unfortunately, gender planners have not always centered on women's empowerment and the transformation of gender relations (Wieringa, 2008:835). It appears that development planners have opted for the easiest approach in planning for women, which is why the welfare approach has been the oldest and most widely used approach in planning. Wieringa further comments:

Development planners are searching for easy schedules, quantifiable targets and simplicity, while addressing enormously complex situations. The empowerment approach¹³ has been seen as ‘too difficult’. Planners want to fix, with projects of a few years’ duration, problems which have grown over ages. They are often impatient with feminist theory building, which they consider too complicated and not directly relevant to their daily work (2008:835).

While planners look for convenient and easy methods to include women in gender planning initiatives, the problem remains that the various roles assumed by women themselves are not given adequate attention (Wieringa, 2008:835). As we have noted, this concern was raised as early as the 1970s out of Boserup’s systematic delineation of the sexual divisions of labour, and it was within this context that various women’s movements began to emerge that placed gender planning as a focal point of numerous agendas. However, the various roles assumed by women still remained neglected within such planning initiatives. Various movements such as Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development emerged as a means to address the inclusion of women in gender planning initiatives.

3.3 The history of gender and development planning initiatives

Sardenberg (2008:48) comments –Rare is the book, paper, or even workshop manual on gender and development that does not include a chapter or even section discussing the passage from Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD)”. The origins of –WID” (Women in Development), –WAD” (Women and Development) and –GAD” (Gender and Development), each carry a varying set of underlying assumptions that have led to the formulation of different strategies that enabled women’s participation in various development processes (Rathgeber, 1990:489).

The term –Women in Development” was directly inspired by the publication of Ester Boserup (1970), which was seminal in focusing scholarly attention on the sexual division of

¹³ The Empowerment approach was articulated by Third World women (Moser, 1993:74). Its purpose was to empower women through greater self-reliance. Women’s subordination is experienced not only because of male oppression but also because of colonial and neo-colonial oppression (Moser, 1993:74). This approach would be further discussed in section 3.4.

labour (Rathgeber, 1990:490). As stated earlier, while Boserup's work was critiqued for the oversimplification of women's roles, her work was groundbreaking and remarkable in that she was the first to systematically use gender in her analysis (Rathgeber, 1990:490). The WID perspective gained prominence and began to be more articulated by the liberal feminist framework and was particularly influential in North America (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33). As noted by Moser (1993) and Rathgeber (1990), the term "WID" was initially used by the Women's Committee of the Washington, DC chapter of the Society for International Development. It was part of a deliberate strategy to bring to the attention of policy makers in the north, the new evidence that was generated by the work of Boserup. Underpinning its intention was the need for women to be integrated into the development processes as active agents (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33). Programmes informed by such an approach began to address various needs of women, which included the creation of employment and income-generating opportunities, amongst other interventions (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33). Although women's significant productive contribution was made more visible, their reproductive role was still downplayed to a large extent (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33). While the WID approach played a significant role, critics began to identify gaps and weaknesses in such an approach. For example, there was the criticism that the WID approach was a 'technological fix' giving attention to the transfer of technology which was solidly grounded in traditional modernization theory, aimed merely to lighten women's workloads, but not necessarily dealing with systemic issues (Rathgeber, 1990:491). The approach was also critiqued for beginning from a non-confrontational acceptance of social structures without challenging them and avoided raising questions about women's subordination and oppression (Rathgeber, 1990:491). While the WID approach brought gender concerns to the attention of development planners, it saw development as a linear process and thus never challenged the existing socio-economic structures (Kabeer, 2003). In addition, this approach was also heavily critiqued for focusing primarily on the productive aspects of women's work, giving little or no attention to their reproductive roles (Rathgeber, 1990:492).

While WID remained one of the dominant gender and development prototypes, the late 1970s gave rise to a concern that women had inadvertently been left out of development strategies (Rathgeber, 1990:492). This neo-Marxist feminist approach became known as "Women and Development" (WAD), and while it has never played a dominant role on the agenda, it became an important voice in the discussion (Rathgeber, 1990:490). This approach

emphasized that “women have always been part of the development processes and did not suddenly appear in the early 1970s as a result of the insights and intervention strategies of a few scholars and agency personnel” (Rathgeber, 1990:492). The WAD approach also highlighted that women have always played an important role as economic actors and it focused primarily on the relationship between women and development processes instead of purely on strategies of integrating women into development (Rathgeber, 1990:492). While WAD is said to have offered a more critical view of women’s positions than WID did, it failed, however, to “undertake a full-scale analysis of the relationship between patriarchy, differing modes of production, and women’s subordination and oppression” (Rathgeber, 1990:493). The WAD perspective also exposed weakness by not giving detailed attention to the influence of patriarchy, thus implying that women’s condition was seen primarily within the structure of international and class inequalities (Rathgeber, 1990:493).

As the historical development of gender and development planning initiatives are traced, it becomes clear that the category of women, as focused upon by the WID approach, was a category of sex and not gender, hence this was also seen as a major flaw in the WID analysis (Parpart, 2000:53). It worked off the assumption that women have common, homogeneous interests simply because of their sex, and in turn, ignored that women have varied and often conflicting interests depending on their class, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, and sexual orientation (Parpart, 2000:53). There are, however, areas where women have common interests; rather than calling these “women’s interests”, a more appropriate term would be “gender interests”. These are the interests that women or men share due to the specific concerns surrounding their gender roles and expectations. In addition, Parpart (2000:53) states that although the WAD perspective has offered an important corrective to WID’s too-ready assumption that male-dominated states can be used to alter gender inequities, it also has its weaknesses. “The WAD approach is also inclined to see women as a class, downplaying differences among women, particularly along racial and ethnic lines, and at times assuming that solutions to problems affecting the world’s women can be found in the experiences and agendas of one particular group” (Parpart, 2000:53).

Like WID, the WAD approach also enveloped itself with the preoccupation of the productive sector at the expense of the reproductive aspects of women’s work and lives (Rathgeber, 1990:493). “The WAD approach was never a major player in the debate and with the final

meeting of the United Nations, Decade for the Advancement of Women in Nairobi in 1985, another more powerful forum for third world women began to emerge” (Haddad, 2000:123). Haddad (2000:123) asserts that while there had been much critical debate at a theoretical level on “global sisterhood”, the emergence of such a forum was the first practical expression by Third World development practitioners of their need to take control of the development agenda. She comments, “This meeting was an attempt to forge south-south linkages through a formal forum. As a result of this gathering an international organisation, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), was formed” (Haddad, 2000:123). Haddad (2000:125) further asserts that DAWN had significantly become a space that Third World women had created for themselves in which they could give voice to and articulate their own development concerns. She states:

Through the birth of this forum, the gender and development terrain shifted significantly. The development agenda of western, northern-based women no longer remained the yardstick by which gender efforts were measured. This particular shift of power from one group of women to another is of crucial significance in South Africa where race and class issues define relationships between women (Haddad, 2000:123-124).

The DAWN vision statement was articulated by Sen and Grown (1987:80) which proclaims the commitment to a world where peace and justice prevail. The vision statement is affirmed as such:

We want a world where inequality based on class, gender, and race is absent from every country, and from the relationships among countries. We want a world where basic needs become basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated. Each person will have the opportunity to develop her or his full potential and creativity, and women’s values of nurturance and solidarity will characterize human relationships. In such a world, women’s reproductive role will be redefined, child care will be shared by men, women, and society as a whole (Sen and Grown, 1987:80).

Haddad (2000:125) comments that much of DAWN's work continued to be in the area of developing institutional capacity in order to equip women to take economic control over their lives. She critiques that DAWN, like WID theorists, have continued to portray third world women as vulnerable, helpless, trapped victims who need to be saved from poverty and backwardness (Haddad, 2000:127). She asserts that her own work makes a particular contribution to this debate, where she argues that "the role of the activist-intellectual is not to conscientize women into active organising, but rather to open space for women themselves to explore ways of resisting their oppression which might not always be consistent with 'expert' opinion" (Haddad, 2000:127). However, it is noteworthy that the efforts of the DAWN group and the collaborative initiatives between women of the first and third world gave impetus to an approach of gender and development, which emerged during the late 1980s as an alternative to the WID focus (Haddad, 2000:128).

"Gender and Development" (GAD) is an approach to development that became popular in the mid-1980s. GAD is said to have emerged from frustration with the lack of progress of WID policy in terms of changing women's lives and influencing the broader development agenda (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33). At that time, the dominant approach to including women in development initiatives was the Women in Development (WID) approach. WID focused primarily on women, without considering their relationships to men and how development initiatives would affect both men and women in society. The GAD approach includes the participation of both women and men. It emphasizes gender balance in access to the resources and benefits of society, and in participation in decision-making.

An important question raised asked whether gender can be successfully 'grafted' into existing structures, or whether it requires other structures to be successfully integrated into planning, hence the emergence of 'gender mainstreaming' (Moser, 1993:108). Within the GAD approach, this became popularly known as 'gender mainstreaming', locating itself within earlier modes of thought that focused generically on women (Woodford-Berger, 2008:124). Woodford-Berger comments that gender mainstreaming can be defined in a number of different ways, much of which are contested in one way or another, but the most common usage is said to be "a long-term strategy or systematic institutional approach for promoting/producing gender equality as a policy outcome" (2008:124). It is understood as an organisational strategy to bring a gender perspective to all aspects of an institution's policy

and activities, through building gender capacity and accountability (Reeves and Baden, 2000:2). Inasmuch as there appears to be much contestation and confusion surrounding the concept itself, Woodford-Berger (2008:124) states that there seems to be a general agreement about its aim. She comments, “Gender mainstreaming seeks to produce transformatory processes and practices that will concern, engage and benefit women and men equally by systematically integrating explicit attention to issues of sex and gender into all aspects of an organisation’s work” (Woodford-Berger, 2008:124).

Even though gender mainstreaming took off slowly, it continued to compete with earlier praxis and modes of thought ~~that~~ focused generically on women, Women in Development (WID) frameworks and on separate measures for compensating women for disadvantages and discrimination experienced by them in the development processes” (Woodford-Berger, 2008:124). Woodford-Berger (2008:14) further argues that in the attempt to mainstream gender, we should be daring to incorporate nuances, and to resist simplifications that generalize, sterilize and homogenize realities, and that do not take into account the complexity of identification and relationships in the experiences of men and women (Woodford-Berger, 2008:132).

The work of Indian scholar, Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay (2008), investigates these experiences of gender planning and mainstreaming. Mukhopadhyay (2008:135) comments that after three decades of feminist activism in the field of development, both at the level of theory and practice, ~~most~~ development institutions still have to be constantly reminded of the need for gender analysis in their work, policy-makers have to be lobbied to include ‘the g’ word and even our own colleagues need convincing that integrating a gender analysis makes a qualitative difference” (Mukhopadhyay, 2008:135).

Mukhopadhyay (2008:140) warns against this misconception of thinking that the inclusion of the word gender in planning approaches means that issues of women’s roles are automatically addressed. Although gender mainstreaming has been adopted as a tool for gender integration, the strategy raises two kinds of questions regarding accountability (Mukhopadhyay, 2008:140). The first problem identified with gender mainstreaming as a tool is that it does not convey to those who are using it, exactly what it is that they are responsible for ensuring (Mukhopadhyay, 2008:140). The second problem identified is that

while gender mainstreaming as a tool is supposed to ensure that everybody is responsible for gender equity commitments, this generally could mean that nobody is ultimately responsible for getting it done (Mukhopadhyay, 2008:140). The lack of accountability (both political and professional) in gender mainstreaming, and the lack of institutional spaces for enforcing accountability, is seen as one of the reasons for limited success in fully addressing women's roles (Mukhopadhyay, 2008:140). An example given by Mukhopadhyay (2008:141) is that some organizations merely increase the number of women since most gender mainstreaming checklists mention this as an item that has to be ticked off, but effectively this is not the be-all and end-all of gender mainstreaming. While this may fulfill the purpose of ticking off a checklist, this is far from fulfilling the intention of gender mainstreaming. For those who consider gender mainstreaming to be the 'magic bullet' to solving gender inequalities and to bringing about gender neutrality in planning initiatives, they are mistaken by this myth (Woodford-Berger, 2008:122). Woodford-Berger states:

In many ways, gender mainstreaming as a strategy and interrogative tool brings together the perspectives of different communities and others... This may be what accounts for the fact that gender mainstreaming has assumed rather mythic or 'magic bullet' proportions in the world of development industry. Intended to counter 'gender-neutral development planning', the myth behind the myth is that 'gender mainstreaming' can involve and equip almost anyone to promote gender equality in development (2008:122).

The concern raised by both Woodford-Berger (2008) and Mukhopadhyay (2008) is that gender mainstreaming in the absence of accountability becomes merely a technical exercise without political outcomes. In other words, when there is an intentional inclusion of women in theory but not fully in practice, then this does leave questions around the reliability of what is considered to be gender mainstreaming. Equally, Molyneux (2008:227) concurs that the efforts of gender mainstreaming have not, in actual fact, achieved the success that it anticipated. She states:

Among the many myths that populate the field of gender and development is the one that claims that gender has been so successfully mainstreamed into development policy that there is now little need for women's projects and programmes, or indeed

for women's policy units. The job of creating 'gender awareness' is done (Molyneux, 2008:227).

She suggests that the general view that gender awareness has become part of the common sense of the development policy is so widespread that some NGOs are reporting a growing *ennui*, 'a gender fatigue' in metropolitan policy arenas (Molyneux, 2008:227). Concerning the 'globalization of feminism' Molyneux (2008:234) suggests that skeptics see a glass half-empty rather than one that is half full. "Their concern is that the transformative agenda has been captured by power, coopted and instrumentalized, and its political vision is neutralized, where not exercised. Some worry that feminism's original and critical aim – to eradicate social inequalities and to create new forms of social life and political practice – has been abandoned" (Molyneux, 2008:234). She adds that there is doubt by some skeptics as to whether an international women's movement can be said to exist since there is a concern that women's movements and feminisms "have become an expression of women's integration into hegemonic patriarchal institutions where they are reduced to a lobbying group, an appendix without influence" (Molyneux, 2008:234). Molyneux (2008:236) proposes that if gender analysis and mainstreaming are to be more than just another policy tool, they need to be accompanied by a strategy for achieving "gender justice as part of a broader commitment to greater social and economic equality". However, this is not possible if there exists no political will, vision and strategy provided by collective action (Molyneux, 2008:236).

The biggest difference between WID and GAD is that WID projects were traditionally not grounded in a comprehensive gender analysis, while the GAD approach was gender-analysis driven (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33). GAD saw women's real problem as the imbalance of power between men and women, and its general aim being an attempt to meet women's needs by challenging existing divisions of labour and power relations (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33). "The GAD approach went further than WID and WAD in questioning the underlying assumptions of current social, economic, and political structures" (Rathgeber, 1990:495). While WID called for greater attention to women in development policy and practice, and emphasized the need to integrate them into the development process, the GAD approach focused on the socially constructed basis of differences between women and men and emphasized the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations (Reeves and Baden, 2000:3). Inasmuch as WID, WAD and GAD are theoretically distinctive, it is quite possible

for programmes to include elements of each. Reeves and Baden (2000:33), however warn against an interchangeable use of women and gender. They say, “There is often a slippage between GAD policy rhetoric and a WID reality where ‘gender’ is mistakenly interpreted as ‘women’” (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33).

Whilst such differences are noted, Haddad (2000:95) does the important work of engaging these planning approaches from a Third World perspective, extensively outlining and analysing the theoretical trajectories of the gender and development debate and the above planning approaches. Importantly, Haddad asserts that WID has been particularly critiqued for the “essentialist way in which third world women are presented in its approach” (2000:139). The image of Third World women being helpless victims trapped by tradition and incompetence in endless poverty and despair often becomes the highlight of western women and WID in particular (Haddad, 2000:120). The concern with ‘modernising’ such women without understanding their lives or experiences, nor giving the space to study their own voices has been the plight of WID (Haddad, 2000:120). The weakness of the WID approach was that while it focused on advocating women’s equal participation in employment, education and skills training, it avoided questioning the sources of women’s oppression (Haddad, 2000:118). Haddad further asserts that because the WID approach was “grounded in liberal modernisation theory which problematically saw development as a linear process, it never challenged the existing socio-economic structures (2000:118)”. Since WID gave rise to projects that were typically being characterised by income generating projects with an attached “welfare” agenda in which the women involved were taught literacy, hygiene, and child care, these projects “assumed that with the economic incentive women would simply find ways to juggle their time to fit in yet another activity into their already overburdened day” (Haddad, 2000:118). “It was in response to these critiques that Moser (1989) later introduced her “interests” model in an attempt to address the structural oppression of women” (Haddad, 2000:118).

Haddad (2000:119) further asserts, “The question of who defines “women’s interests” is linked to a further critique of the WID approach. Non-western development practitioners argued that despite shifting emphases in the WID approach over the years, their policies continued to remain squarely within the modernisation paradigm”. Haddad (2000:123) comments that the western women of WID have remained concerned with “modernising”

third world women without understanding their lives and experiences, nor giving them voice, and –all too often poor and marginalised women are seen as victims with little resources of their own”. While this debate has become crucial to the feminist project as a whole and has been deeply shaped by the racial divide, the work of Haddad (2000:123) overtly foregrounds representation both in terms of her role as an activist intellectual –working with poor women and also in terms of foregrounding the theological resources of women in their struggle to survive”. Haddad (2000:123) asserts that poor and marginalised women are not victims who have no voice, but active agents who take control of their lives in their struggle to survive within particular locations. –They know their needs and how best to navigate the conflicting and competing interests of their lives. This view is central to my work which attempts to add a religious dimension to the resources that poor women contribute and offer to the process of development” (Haddad, 2000:123). I assert that in this study the view that women are not victims but do have a voice and are active agents in giving expression to their lived work experiences, becomes an important one as those experiences connect with their faith to inform a theology of work.

What becomes clear is that each of the gender and development planning initiatives discussed above arose through various circumstances with these initiatives sometimes overlapping with each other. Each of these movements was clearly inspired by its own set of principles and assumptions, but each of them also had gaps and shortcomings. The shift from WID to GAD was an important one because it transformed the women’s agenda (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33). While WID focused on generating discussions and research on the role of women in development with the mandate to integrate women into development processes, GAD used gender rather than women as an analytical category to understand how economic, political, social and cultural systems affect women and men differently (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33).

Although scholars raised concerns around the neglect of some of the important roles of women in these movements (for example, the WID movement was critiqued by Reeves and Baden (2003:33)), one theorist who attempted to work over a number of decades within the different paradigms was Caroline Moser (1993).

3.4 Moser and gender and development planning

Caroline Moser (1993), who had been working for the World Bank from 1990 until 2000, was influenced by the work of Ester Boserup, which led to the development of the notion that women are involved in three roles. Being constantly mindful of the critiques of the WID approach, Moser (1993:1) asserts that the goal of gender planning is to bring about an emancipation of women from their subordination, and it moves toward their achievement of equality, equity and empowerment. Moser (1993:1) acknowledges that her work does not provide all the necessary answers and asserts that any situation may look different in diverse contexts.

Moser succinctly argues that gender planning is not an end in itself but “a means by which women, through a process of empowerment, can emancipate themselves” (1993:190). She explains that many attempts at planning have been based on western planning theories which depart from the following three generalized assumptions: First, the assumption that the household consists of a nuclear family of husband, wife and two or three children (Moser, 1993:190). She suggests that planners who have been trained in European and North American planning schools have, with much success, exported these assumptions, and in the reality of some contexts, this assumption remains no more than an idealized planning stereotype of western industrial society (Moser, 1993:16). Moser (1993:16) condemns the persistent failure of planners to recognize that low-income households, for a number of reasons, are not homogenous in terms of family structure. Moser (1993:16) also questions the idea of ‘head’ of households, which is usually depicted by planners as a male who is the provider while others in the household become ‘dependents’. She dismisses this notion as a figment of the statistician’s imagination since in actual fact, it is estimated that women head one-third of the world’s households with this figure reaching as much as fifty percent or more in Latin America and parts of Africa (Moser, 1993:17).

The second assumption is that the household functions as a socio-economic unit within which there is equal control over resources and power of decision-making by all adult members in matters influencing the household’s livelihood (Moser, 1993:17). Finally, there is the assumption that within the household there is a clear division of labour based on gender. The man of the family, as the ‘breadwinner’, is primarily involved in productive work outside the

home, while the woman is the housewife (Moser, 1993:15). Moser (1992:27) comments that of all the planning stereotypes, this remains the most problematic. She states, “While the typecasting of women as ‘home-makers’ is true, that is only one of three roles that they perform” (Moser, 1993:27). Moser (1993:27) states that women’s work can be divided into the areas of three spheres: productive, reproductive and community work. Productive work is defined as the production of goods or services rendered for income or subsistence, while reproductive work includes tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing and looking after children. Community work is volunteer or unpaid work (Moser, 1993:27). Moser (1993:27) argues that in most Third World societies, the stereotyping of the man as a bread winner, that is the ‘productive worker’, predominates, even when it is not borne out in reality (Moser, 1993:28).

She comments that in many societies these kinds of western stereotypes of the household structure as well as the gender division of labour are seen to reflect what she terms the ‘natural order’ (Moser, 1993:16). Moser (1993:28) argues that it is this basic premise that the gender division of labour is the ‘natural order’ as well as the premise that division between male as breadwinner and female as home-maker is based on a perceived ‘complementary’ role of ‘different but equal’ that has been challenged by feminists. “Feminists argue that there is no reason why gender should be an organizing principle of the social division of labour, except the physical process of childbearing” (Moser, 1993:29). It is such divisions that have positively excluded men from their community and reproductive roles, confining them to their role of production (in cases where this does apply for those men who are employed). Moser (1993:28) acknowledges that some men are, in actual fact, involved in community roles, but their role has a marked difference from that of women, reflecting yet a further division of labour. This role of men in community work is generally attached to power, leadership and prestige while the ‘unimportant’ and physical work is generally delegated to women (Moser, 1993:28).

Moser’s (1993:55) categorisation of the triple roles of women is based on her understanding of gender roles, gender needs, and policy approaches to gender and development planning (1993:83). Moser (1993:58) asserts that in order to identify the extent to which policy interventions have been appropriate to the gender needs of women, it becomes necessary to understand their underlying rationale from a gender planning perspective. Hence Moser

(1993:58) identifies five different policy approaches, each categorized in terms of the roles of women on which they focus and the practical and strategic needs they meet.

To briefly outline these various policy approaches, and locate them within the Moser discussion, the 'welfare approach' is identified as the earliest approach, introduced between the 1950s and 1970s (Moser, 1993:58). The purpose of this approach was to bring women into development as better mothers. Women are seen as passive beneficiaries of development. The welfare approach recognizes the reproductive role of women and seeks to meet practical gender needs (PGNs) associated with that role through top-down hand-outs of food aid and measures against malnutrition and family planning. It is non-challenging and, therefore, still widely popular (Moser, 1993:58).

Second, there was the 'equity approach' which was the original WID approach, used in the 1976-85 UN Women's Decade, and its purpose was to gain equity for women, who are seen as active participants in development. It was influenced by Boserup's (1970) studies which showed that although women were contributors to the basic productivity of their communities; their contributions were not recognised nor reflected in the national statistics (Moser, 1993:63). The equity approach recognized women's 'triple role' (productive, reproductive and community-based) and sought to meet strategic gender needs (SGNs) through direct state intervention giving political and economic autonomy, and reducing inequality with men. It challenged women's subordinate position (Moser, 1993:63). Criticized as Western feminism, equity is considered threatening, and is unpopular with governments.

The third approach was the 'anti-poverty' approach which was the second WID approach, a toned-down version of equity, adopted from the 1970s onward (Moser, 1993:66). Its purpose was to ensure that poor women increased their productivity. Women's poverty is seen as a problem of underdevelopment, not of subordination (Moser, 1993:66). This approach recognized the productive role of women, and sought to meet the PGN to earn an income, particularly in small-scale income-generating projects. It was an approach most popular with NGOs (Moser, 1993:67).

The 'efficiency approach' was the fourth, and is now the predominant, WID approach. It has been adopted particularly since the 1980s debt crisis (Moser, 1993:69). Its purpose was to ensure that development was more efficient and effective through women's economic contribution, with participation often equated with equity (Moser, 1993:70). It sought to meet PGNs while relying on all three roles and an elastic concept of women's time. Women were seen entirely in terms of their capacity to compensate for declining social services by extending their working day. This was said to be a very popular approach (Moser, 1993:70).

Finally there was the 'empowerment approach' which was the most recent approach, and was articulated by Third World women (Moser, 1993:74). Its purpose was to empower women through greater self-reliance. Women's subordination is experienced not only because of male oppression but also because of colonial and neo-colonial oppression (Moser, 1993:74). It recognized the triple role and seeks to meet SGNs indirectly through bottom-up mobilization of practical gender needs (Moser, 1993:74). The origins of this approach derived more from the emergent feminist writings and the grassroots experiences of Third World women (Moser, 1993:74). The empowerment approach was said to acknowledge the inequalities between men and women and it gave attention to the origins of women's experiences of subordination (Moser, 1993:74). What becomes important for this research is its emphasis on the fact that women experience oppression differently according to their race, class, colonial history and current position in the economic order (Moser, 1993:74). In relation to this study which focuses on the experiences of Indian women, this type of approach would be mindful of their history as indentured labourers, their oppression under the apartheid regime, the abject poverty levels they experienced as well as the cultural assumptions underlying their work experiences. This approach does not package all Third World women into a 'one size fits all' homogenous group with a sustained, common experience of oppression.

What makes Moser's (1993) triple role notion significant is its ability to move beyond technical elements of planning, and to conceptualize planning as aiming to challenge unequal gender relations and support women's empowerment (Moser, 1993:74). This triple role notion also becomes unique in its ability to make all women's work visible and valuable to planners (Moser, 1993:28). It was Moser's attempt to make the work roles of women, particularly those roles which were assigned as 'women's work', more visible. As stated

earlier, the triple role notion emerged out of the discussions of the sexual divisions of labour. It is these sexual divisions of labour that embody and perpetuate female subordination (Moser, 1993:28). The fact that some tasks are allocated predominantly or exclusively to women, and others to men, is a persistent phenomenon in human society (Moser, 1993:28). For example, Indian women have been misled into believing that roles of cooking, cleaning, caring for the family and maintaining the household are all done in the name of their cultural role as good Indian women. These roles were confined to women, were not seen as valuable or important and were not considered as 'work'. For the many women who do take up job opportunities in the formal economy, despite their increased labour input into paid work, women (particularly married women) either continue to bear the burden of domestic work or they share it with other females in the household, often their daughters. For men to engage in such domestic types of work was considered a cultural taboo. Hence, there existed a clear division between what was considered 'men's work' and 'women's work'. While domestic roles were considered to be 'women's roles', women were also involved in productive roles, contributing to financial well-being of households. Against the backdrop of Moser's work, other scholars began to engage and contribute to the discussion on women's work roles. For example, Parpart (2000:135) asserts that because of women's increasing roles in productive work, the notions of men's work and women's work are becoming increasingly challenged. Parpart states:

Gender analysis must reorganize the private sphere if women are to be freed from having to carry all the responsibilities of sustaining households and family structures. Although many women and men still see these as women's responsibilities, this perspective is increasingly challenged. This continues to be an era of the most difficult and intractable aspects of gender relationships and change. Gender ideologies that sustain the exploitation of women in the private sphere of the household contribute to producing development policies that integrate women into economic production in specific, exploitative, or marginal ways (2000:135).

While Parpart (2000:135) highlights the importance of challenging these ideologies that continue to keep women in subordination, Vinita Chandra (2010) who writes from the context of the traditional Indian family states, "The social division of labour set the role of

primary bread-earner for the man while it ascribed the role of home-manager and caregiver to the woman. This arrangement has been questioned for having given rise to gender inequality and having generated gender role stereotypes for man and woman” (Chandra, 2010:235). Because work roles are placed into boxed categories, it becomes almost impossible for men and women to step out of these defined expectations.

Commenting on the traditional Indian household, Chandra (2010:236) states that women who take on dual roles of ‘paid and unpaid workers’, continue to view themselves primarily as homemakers who, in addition to now being involved in the formal economy, continue to take care of household affairs and care for the family since this is the expectation of society as ‘women’s work’ and more so, a cultural expectation (2010:236). The contemporary work culture is characterized by long working hours, deadlines, competition, fewer holidays, infrequent leave, frequent travel, job transfers and increasing work pressure. All of this adds to the burden of these ‘dual roles’ or multiple roles in which women find themselves. Indian women are still faced with the responsibility of caring for the home, nurturing the family and caring for the elders of her household (Chandra, 2010:236). Indian women continue to face this burden alone for the most part, while men continue to exclude themselves from these roles because of the stereotypes created around what is considered ‘men’s work’ and ‘women’s work’.

Over the decades, feminists have argued that there is no reason at all why gender should be a defining and organizing principle in terms of the social division of labour. As mentioned, the rationale behind Moser’s (1993:27) triple role framework is that while women are seen as ‘home-makers’, this is only *one* of the three roles that they perform. Hence the three roles identified are productive, reproductive and community work (Moser, 1993:28).

While Moser’s (1993) conceptualisation of women’s triple roles has been useful in understanding the various roles of women, it has come under criticism over the past decades. For example, Bolt (2003) agrees that the concept of women’s triple role is significant in that it makes visible all areas of work, and it reminds planners that productive, reproductive and community work are inter-related (Bolt, 2003:36). Be that as it may, Bolt (2003:36) comments that the Moser ‘triple role’ notion fails to address the subtleties of the relationship between men and women and how this changes, along with their activities, over time. The

triple role notion focuses on roles not on social relationships, therefore does not address the interconnectedness of men's and women's lives, or highlight aspects of bargaining and negotiation (Bolt, 2003:36). In addition, its focus on women does not highlight the wide range of inequalities that exist between men and women (Bolt, 2003:36). Bolt (2003:36) argues that Moser (1993) actually ignores men as 'gendered' beings within the triple role notion, and that the division into practical and strategic needs appears artificial, with some finding it unhelpful. This was also a critique of the GAD approach where it was said to employ a "top down" method which delinks national gender structures from the organic process in civil society (Panday, 1997:5).

Similarly, Hoare (2007) concedes that inasmuch as Moser's triple role notion has its usefulness, such as seeking to challenge the inequality between men and women, and making women's multiple roles visible, it also has weaknesses identified by scholars (Hoare, 2007:182). She argues that the wide spread of gender analysis frameworks is contributing to the 'depoliticisation' of gender within development (Hoare, 2007:182). Hoare (2007:182) comments that often such frameworks as Moser's 'triple role' are used by practitioners who have not come to gender and development work from a feminist background and are often unaware of the political and theoretical underpinnings of such frameworks. Hoare states:

In this context the process of gathering information on gender inequality seems to have become a technical process that leaves prevailing gendered power relations intact, rather than something that in itself can and should represent the conscious exposure of, and challenge to, those power relations (2007:182).

Although Moser's triple role notion has come under such criticism, in this study it becomes useful in highlighting the various roles played by Indian women. As noted by Ebr-Vally (2001:64), it was during the 1960s and 1970s that Indian women in South Africa were starting to enter the productive market where opportunities began to open for them at various factories. Ebr-Vally states:

The number of Indian women working in factories, especially in the garment industry, grew dramatically during the 1960s. While in 1951 only 1518 Indian women were employed in industry, by 1970 this grew to 13530. Their wages were vital to survival

in the new townships, where the demands of rent, electricity and the vast array of consumer goods put pressure on the family's income. Much later, the more educated working-class woman favoured clerical/secretarial employment over the factory (2001:64).

While this remains true, the challenge for Indian women was that although they became more involved in productive roles, this by no means alleviated the huge burdens they were already carrying in relation to their reproductive and community roles. In fact, at that stage, these roles were not even noted as such; instead they were considered part of women's cultural responsibilities.

Hence, in the context of Indian women, Moser (1993) has provided a useful framework that has made their roles more visible and valuable. This triple role conceptualization helps us understand that Indian women are and have been involved in the various roles which have been discussed above, while men continue to be involved mainly in productive roles. If and when men do become involved in, for example, managing community, this is usually for pay or an elevation of status, while women continue to be roped into these roles as voluntary workers. Women do more household chores than do men; however, some men have increased their efforts in activities such as cleaning, cooking and household chores. The 'triple role' of women has alerted us to the fact that women are involved in all three roles, and for many of them, they do so simultaneously. This notion can be useful in conscientizing us with regard to the roles that Indian women are involved in, and it creates space to open up dialogue about making these roles more valued and visible. Such a framework has also effectively aided the goal of the emancipation of women to challenge and overcome oppressive roles and relationships. In addition, this framework has guided us in seeing that the concept of work is much broader than paid roles. Women are constantly involved in work without being paid.

3.5 The “triple roles” of women

3.5.1 Productive work

The first of the three roles identified by Moser is productive work and is thus defined as such:

The productive role comprises work done by both women and men for payment in cash or kind. It includes both market production with an exchange value, and subsistence/home production with an actual use-value, but also a potential exchange value. For women in agricultural production this includes work as independent farmers, peasants' wives and wage workers (Moser, 1993:31).

This category of work is explained by Moser (1993:31) as the type that brings in some form of payment either in cash or in kind, and is done by both men and women. Contrary to traditional thinking, Moser (1993:31) argues that although the ideology of patriarchy attempts to reinforce the popular stereotype of men as the breadwinners of their households, who are the only ones that bring in some form of reward, be it in cash or in kind, in reality, this does not actually happen (Moser, 1993:31). She is convinced that throughout the Third World, most low-income women play a vital productive role (Moser, 1993:31). Although this is the one area in which both women and men work, they unfortunately do so unequally due to the rigidity of the gender divisions of labour (Moser, 1993:31). Moser (1993:31) asserts that the term ‘productive’ work is fraught with complexities. She argues that to associate the term ‘productive work’ with an exchange value is an over-simplification of reality (Moser, 1993:31). With this ideology, women's productive role for use-value becomes unimportant and undervalued, simply because it does not generate an income. I argue that what planners fail to take into consideration is that this role is, in actual fact, contributing to the economy of the household simply because it saves the family from having to spend money on those items produced for use-value by the household.

Adkins (1995) attributes this undervaluing of women's productive roles for use-value to the advent of capitalism. She states, “The advent of capitalism is thus seen to have not only shifted the location of production for the market, but also to have shifted the major site of the

control of women's labour. Prior to the growth of capitalism, patriarchal control of women's (and children's) labour is held to have taken place primarily within the family" (Adkins, 1995:68). She goes on to argue that capitalism created a separation, and differentiated between non-market and market production, hence gender planners have confined production to market-related activities causing non-market productive work, done particularly by women, to become invisible (Adkins, 1995:69). As Adkins (1995:71) attempts to problematize the notion of production being attached to market related activities, she uncovers ways in which the unpaid labour of women is directly incorporated into market production via wives carrying out unpaid work which is necessary for the husband's occupation".

Spiegel (1994) argues that huge discrepancies continue to exist between women and men in terms of the economic value placed on this type of 'productive' work (1994:12). She attributes such discrepancies to the broader fundamental human concerns such as the role of women in society, differences between women and men, and even the intrinsic value of women and men underlie discussions of women's wages" (Spiegel, 1994:12). Spiegel condemns the *comparable worth* debates which raise the very questions of value itself (1994:13). "How is one's worth to be determined? By what standards is worth assessed? What are the components of worth - beauty, fortune, fame, goodness to other human beings, public service, altruism?" (Spiegel, 1994:13). Although the concept technically refers to the monetary worth of any particular job, Spiegel (1994:13) comments that the term 'comparable worth' gives evidence to the importance of wages in determining a person's deeper worth, and inadvertently suggests that women are not worth as much as men. Spiegel (1994:12) leads this discussion towards the need for religious reflections and intervention, as a possible means to resolve such inequalities. This was Moser's contention, that such inequalities as unequal wages for men and women still leave women to "pick up the work men won't do" (1993:32).

In relation to 'productive roles', Christine Williams (1993) did an interesting study that considered 'men's work' versus 'women's work'. This study sought to address the gender divisions of work as well as the stereotypes around men crossing over into so-called women's work and vice versa, since "[M]ost jobs are divided into 'men's work' and women's work'" (Williams, 1993:1). Williams adds:

Women earn less than men in every country, largely because they are concentrated in “female” jobs that pay less than “male jobs”. Female jobs also tend to be less prestigious and autonomous than male jobs. It is no wonder, then, that feminists have worked hard to break down barriers of segregation and encourage more women to enter traditionally defined male jobs (1993:1).

While attempts are being made to break down such barriers, it is just as important to understand what keeps men out of “female jobs” as is to understand what it is that keeps women out of “male jobs” (Williams, 1993:2). It is by and large the gendering of occupations that has contributed to the stereotypes that we encounter. “The man who crosses over into a female-dominated occupation upsets these gender assumptions embedded in work” (Williams, 1993:3). Almost immediately, a man who does so is viewed with deep suspicion and is suspected of not being a “real man”. There is suspicion that there must be something wrong with him to be interested in such work. These suspicions include that he is gay, lazy or effeminate. “If these popular suspicions are not enough to push him out of his occupation, they will certainly affect how he manages his identity on a daily basis” (Williams, 1993:3).

Women, on the other hand, who “cross over” into male dominated occupations are also subjected to suspicion but they are far more constrained in how they respond to these suspicions and prejudices. “Emphasizing their femininity (whatever that may mean) will have limited benefit for women in an occupational structure defined and controlled by men” (Williams, 1993:3). This is such simply because the qualities associated with men are far more highly regarded than those associated with women. This links with the widespread cultural prejudice that men are simply better than and superior to women. In trying to understand these stereotypes and suspicions, Jacobs states: “It might mean that the pressures for sex-role conformity are stronger for men than for women. In short, a man accused of being a sissy may be much more vulnerable than a woman accused of trying to be macho” (1993:61). Jacobs (1993:61) argues that trends have shown women to be more attracted to male-dominated occupations than men are to women-dominated occupations. This could have to do with the fact that “women’s work” is relatively unattractive in terms of the wages and benefits (Jacobs, 1993: 61). Women’s movements have also been commended by Jacobs (1993:62) as a factor contributing to women making greater inroads into male dominated

occupations. However, the opposite also remains true where no such social movement has challenged stereotypes for men (Jacobs, 1993: 62). Although recent literature has been based on the premise that sexual division of labour predates capitalist industrialization, the sexual divisions of labour are largely due to capitalism (Williams, 1993:12). “Capitalists were seen to benefit from gender segregation, which enabled them to set lower rates of pay for women’s work” (Williams, 1993:12). Williams (1993:12) states that women were preferred in certain types of productive work, not only because they were cheap labour but also because they were considered to be more docile and biddable and less likely to form efforts of resistance towards intensified work in poor conditions. This was the case for Indian women who were preferred on the sugar cane plantations because of their docile and submissive attitudes as discussed in section 2.2.

While there were such divisions that existed in productive work, this is only the first of the three roles in which women were involved, with the second being ‘reproductive work’.

3.5.2 Reproductive Work

The reproductive role comprises the childbearing/rearing responsibilities and domestic tasks undertaken by women and required to guarantee the reproduction and maintenance of the current labour force (husband and working children) and the future workforce (infants and school going children) (Moser, 1993:29). Moser (1993:29) comments that society has confined and restricted this role to women because of the fact that women bear children and that this connects naturally to the reproduction of all human life. She further argues that while ‘biological reproduction’ does refer rigidly to the bearing of children, the term ‘reproduction of labour’ extends further to include the “care, socialization and maintenance of individuals throughout their lives, to ensure the continuation of society to the next generation” (Moser, 1993:29). This role could thus be extended beyond women; however, it has been limited to women as a consequence of the strict division of labour (Moser, 1993:29). The male ideology has been of critical importance in emphasizing the exclusive role of the biological mother in nurturing infants and children (Moser, 1993:30). This in turn has excluded men from these responsibilities, and yet again, resulted in a work overload for women. To add to this tension is the notion that because this type of ‘work’ is considered to

be natural work it is, in actual fact, not considered to be real work and is therefore invisible (Moser, 1993:30). Moser further clarifies this as follows:

This is most graphically illustrated around the issue of rest. When men finish work, be it on the farm or factory, and return home, they are tired. They therefore rest, whether this takes the form of sleeping, drinking with other men or watching TV. In contrast to this, domestic labour has no clear demarcations between work and leisure; caring for young children is without beginning or end. Because reproductive work is not real work, women rarely rest except at night. Consequently in most cities women tend to work longer hours than men. Not only are they the first to get up and prepare the household for the working day, but also last to go to sleep (1993:30).

The dilemma of women's work and men's work has always kept Indian women confined to domestic chores and has in turn always excluded men. In fact, culturally, the domestic work that women were involved in was not even termed work but rather was seen as women's roles, as already noted section 2.3. The labels attached to men who carried out such chores were weak, feeble, sissy and being under petticoat government (see section 2.3). Traditionally, if an Indian man did the dishes, bathed the children, cooked a meal or hung out the washing, there would be a stigma attached to him because he was doing women's work.

An interesting study on Images of work conducted by Dianne Looker and Victor Theissen (1999:226) confirms that work has been divided into women's work and men's work. Their point of departure is that images of work are socially constructed and socially distributed, hence the images people have of work are reflective of their own social location and other social locations that are associated with each type of work (Looker and Theissen, 1999:226). They assert, "Men's work, for example is seen differently than women's work, and images males and females construct of the world of work will reflect the gender constraints they have themselves experienced" (Looker and Theissen, 1999:226). Their study revealed that the images of women's work and men's work are constructed within a family context and are anchored in the perceptions that children have of their parents' work, with women's work being considered undesirable (Looker and Theissen, 1999:226). Their study confirms that images of work contain two important dimensions, namely evaluation

and linkage. Certain images are judged as desirable while others are not (Looker and Theissen, 1999:226). An example of this is that creative work, such as crafting, can be seen as desirable, but ‘dirty’ work, such as washing and cleaning, is generally not (Looker and Theissen, 1999:226). Hence there are evaluative images of work and these images are “linked to special categories of people whose social attributes are also known and evaluated” (Looker and Theissen, 1999:226). The images of work become attached to the kind of person who does that work. For example, our images of work inform us that certain types of work are considered to be women’s work. Other types of work are believed to be carried out by those with low status, and are therefore undesirable (Looker and Theissen, 1999:226).

Although images of housework have changed over the past decades to be seen as ‘work’, it is nonetheless still considered by many to be ‘women’s work’ (Looker and Theissen, 1999:228). There are, however, images that it is not ‘real’ work because there is no end product for which women are paid (Looker and Theissen, 1999:228). Ironically, when there is pay allocated to housework that is done by a paid helper, the work is still not seen as valuable because it becomes associated with lower classes hence once more ‘evaluation’ and ‘linkage’ come to the fore (Looker and Theissen, 1999:228). Interestingly, the images portrayed by a group of young people within this study expressed that the work of the ‘father’ is secure, offers good pay, earns respect, is rewarding and enjoyable, has power and most of all is important to the community, while the work of a ‘mother’ is tiring, routine, dirty, difficult, boring and is not seen as important to the community as a whole, but only as benefitting the individual family. It is therefore not as desirable as ‘men’s work’ (Looker and Theissen, 1999:228). This study drives home the fact that images of work are socially constructed (Looker and Theissen, 1999:228). The fact that ‘gender’ and ‘culture’ by their very natures are also socially constructed mean that they too are large contributing factors to the images of work that have been created.

Williams (1993:13) concurs that the activities taken on by males receive the highest social evaluation. “Once tasks have been identified as having high status, men have the power to organize together to monopolize them and exclude women from them. At the same time whatever work is done by women tends to be devalued (be it housework or sewing or nursing), in the sense of both receiving lower economic rewards and holding lower social prestige” (Williams, 1993:13). The images portrayed above are inarguably strenuous

activities, but these are unfortunately not awarded the value and dignity they deserve, due to perceptions and images that have been created around women's work.

With the classification of reproductive work as women's work, Siphon Yanano (2011) asserts that it is such perceptions that create the taboos that people have around men being involved in such roles. In an interesting article entitled "When daddy stays at home", he describes the challenges of being a stay-at-home dad and also highlights the frustrations it often causes for women. He states "One desperate woman could not understand why she had to spell out every household duty to her hubby, or else nothing would be done. In my humble opinion, anyone who expects a stay-at-home dad to be as effective as a stay-at-home mom will be bitterly disappointed" (Yanano, 11 April 2011). He goes on to confess that one of the main contributing factors to this is that society has not prepared men for these roles. They have boxed and categorized men as providers, team leaders and protectors, hence anything outside this description poses a huge challenge (Yanano, 11 April 2011). He comments that for the man who finds himself in the role of stay-at-home dad, the first problem is that he has not been fitted with the mechanism to get the job done as women do, and the second problem is that he could possibly slip into depression simply because he is not the ideal man that society expects him to be (Yanano, 11 April 2011).

The final role that women find themselves in is community work (Moser, 1993:34).

3.5.3 Community Work

This is the third type of work that Moser (1993) mentions in her triple role framework and she defines it as follows:

The community managing role comprises activities undertaken primarily by women at the community level, as an extension of their reproductive role. This is to ensure the provision and maintenance of scarce resources of collective consumption, such as water, health care and education. It is voluntary unpaid work, undertaken in free time. The community politics role in contrast comprises activities undertaken by men at the community level organizing at the formal political level. It is usually paid

work directly or indirectly, through wages or increases in status and power (Moser, 1993:34).

Here again, community managing is seen to ‘naturally’ be women’s work and if it does extend to men, it is usually for remuneration or an elevation of status. Men are yet again excused from the core of this type of work, which could be very strenuous and time consuming. Moser states:

For low-income women this has meant increased time pressure in their role as community managers. Here they engage in bottom up struggles manifested through self-help community-based solutions to obtain food, health and education. In contexts where NGOs with highly ‘participatory’ programmes are helping with service delivery these are most frequently designed on the assumption that women will provide the necessary (unpaid) labour (1993:35).

Moser (1993:35) does submit that while men do in actual fact become involved in community work, there is a huge difference in the intention and type of involvement from that of women. This highlights that the spatial division between the public world of men and the private world of women means that for women, the neighbourhood becomes an extension of their domestic arena, while for men it is the public world of politics (Moser, 1993:35). This implies that while women are involved in their gender-ascribed roles as community managers, men are involved in community politics (Moser, 1993:35).

Moser (1993:35) states that for low-income communities throughout the world, there has been a consistent trend towards men running political organizations with mainly male members, and women forming collective consumption groups, which basically means that they are the ones doing all the work while men make all the decisions. The irony of such a situation is that when activities do overlap, men often occupy positions of direct authority and work in a paid capacity, while women frequently make up the rank of voluntary membership (Moser, 1993:36).

While Moser developed this helpful conceptualisation to understand women's roles, she realized that mere description was insufficient. This led her into addressing Strategic Gender Interests (SGIs) and Practical Gender Needs (PGNs) asserting that PGNs are ones that, if met, help women in current activities, while it is SGIs that transform the balance of power between men and women, which is at the center of keeping women bound to such roles (1993:37).

3.6 Strategic Gender Interests and Practical Gender Needs

It was Maxine Molyneux (1985:232) who developed the notion of 'interests' within the WID era. She argued that the planning for low-income women in the Third World must be based on their interests—in other words, their prioritized concerns (Molyneux, 1985:232). Molyneux (1985:232) differentiated amongst three specific interests thus developing a threefold conceptualization, namely, women's interests, strategic gender interests and practical gender interests. Having identified the different interests of women, Molyneux (1985:232) argued that it is possible to translate them into planning needs; in other words, the means by which their concerns may be satisfied. Molyneux described gender interests as "those that women may develop by virtue of their social positioning through gender attributes" (1985:232). Gender interests can be either practical and/or strategic, each being derived in a different way and each involving different implications for women's subjectivity (Molyneux, 1985:232).

Almost a decade later, Caroline Moser (1993:37) developed the notion of Practical Gender Needs (PGNs) and Strategic Gender Interests (SGIs), by referring to predominantly to PGNs and SGNs with the rationale that an interest defined as "prioritized concern" translates into a need (Moser, 1993:37) as asserted by Molyneux. Moser (1993:37) differentiated clearly between gender planning, which focused on the power relationships, and gender-conscious planning, which primarily takes account of women's problems and leaves the existing planning methods relatively untouched (Moser, 1993:37). An underlying rationale to clearly demarcating these interests and needs is that men and women not only play various and different roles in society with distinct levels of control over their resources, but also that they often have different needs (Moser, 1993:37).

As such, PGNs are those needs that have been identified by women within their socially defined roles as a response to an immediate perceived necessity (e.g., inadequacies in their living conditions such as the provision and accessibility of water, healthcare, and employment). In contrast, SGNs vary by context and are identified by women as a result of their subordinate social status. They tend to challenge gender divisions of labour, power and control, as well as traditionally defined norms and roles (for example, legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages, and women's control over their bodies) (Moser, 1993:37).

Moser (1993:37) highlights the importance of planning for low-income women in the Third World to take into account the prioritized concerns of these women based on their interests as mentioned by Molyneux (1985). Moser (1993:37) states, “When identifying interests it is useful to distinguish between ‘women’s interests’, strategic gender interests and practical gender interests...Having identified the different interests of women it is possible to translate them into planning needs; in other words, the means by which their concerns may be satisfied”. She further comments that from a planning perspective, the separation is essential “because of its focus on the planning process whereby an *interest*, defined here as a ‘prioritized concern’, translates into a *need*” (Moser, 1993:37). A need, in turn, is defined as the ‘means by which concerns are satisfied’” (Moser, 1993:37). Moser (1993:38) states that yet a further distinction can be made between women’s needs, strategic gender needs and practical gender needs, and it is within this distinction that gender policy and planning can be formulated, and the tools and techniques for implementing them are clarified. Moser (1993:38) argues that it is important for planners to distinguish between strategic and practical gender needs, and failure to identify this distinction often creates confusion. Moser thus defines strategic gender needs as such:

Strategic gender needs are the needs women identify because of their subordinate position to men in their society. Strategic gender needs vary according to particular contexts. They relate to gender divisions of labour, power and control and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages and women’s control over their bodies. Meeting strategic gender needs helps women to achieve greater equality. It also changes existing roles and therefore challenges women’s subordinate position (Moser, 1993:39).

Therefore, SGNs are those which, if met, would transform the balance of power between men and women. For example SGNs could be identified as the abolition of the sexual divisions of labour, the alleviation of the burden of domestic labour and childcare, freedom of choice over childbearing, the removal of various forms of discrimination against women, and so forth. Moser (1993:39) describes this as a bottom-up struggle rather than a top-down approach, and the failure to fulfil such gender needs continues to be a widespread struggle for many since it is such needs that express women's 'real' interests. On the other hand, practical gender needs are ones that, if met, would help women in their current activities. Moser defines PGNs as follows:

Practical gender needs are the needs women identify in their socially accepted roles in society. Practical gender needs do not challenge the gender divisions of labour or women's subordinate position in society, although rising out of them. Practical gender needs are a response to immediate perceived necessity, identified within a specific context. They are practical in nature and often are concerned with inadequacies in living conditions such as water provision, health care, and employment (1993:40).

Hence, PGNs are those formulated from the concrete, tangible conditions women experience, and they are usually in response to immediate perceived necessity identified by women within a particular context (Moser, 1993:40). Practical gender needs are determined inductively, are seen as a direct reaction to problems and interests which are perceived as being immediate, and they are based on social conventions such as the gender-specific division of labour and the roles it allocates to women (Moser, 1993:40).

By contrast, strategic gender interests are developed deductively from an analysis of the suppression of women and aim at overcoming the gender hierarchy (Moser, 1993:40). Satisfying the former, such as providing better public health services for women, may improve their living conditions but does not question gender inequality (Moser, 1993:40). While the purpose of such conceptual distinction between strategic gender needs and practical gender interests as developed by Molyneux (1985) and adopted by Moser (1993)

was to assist gender planning with various planning initiatives, some scholars have critiqued various aspects of this typology.

For example, Thenjiwe Mtintso (2003:572), who is a South African scholar, and an important voice in this study which is based on the South African context, contends that while it is necessary to remind ourselves of the distinction between practical gender needs and strategic gender interests, it is important to understand that practical gender needs will continue to be the major concern of black women, the majority of whom are African, poor, unemployed and living in rural areas, while “strategic gender struggles seem remote, academic and far-fetched for the majority of women who are literally struggling to survive poverty” (Mtintso, 2003:572). She argues that due to the “patchwork quilt of patriarchy under racist capitalism, even the idea of common gender interests seems far-fetched” (Mtintso, 2003:573). She comments that “woman” can only be usefully analysed within a particular setting and it is impossible to claim that any woman can represent the interests of women and of gender, hence the process of deconstructing “woman” and of dismissing the pretence of “homogeneity of experience in the false notion of sisterhood is a complex one” (Mtintso, 2003:573). She states:

We should not elevate notions of difference to realms of the absolute that may ultimately fragment the struggles against patriarchy. But, on the other hand, we should not hide the power of privilege under some spurious pretence of sisterhood and commonly shared experience of gender oppression. We have to move away from the sterile debates of essentialism, homogeneity, and difference. We have to understand the interconnection between gender and other categories of inequality and how to mobilize ourselves under those conditions for the ultimate eradication of patriarchal relations (Mtintso, 2003:576).

The voice of Mtintso (2003) as a black South African female becomes important in this discussion, particularly in addressing the issues of the eradication of patriarchal relations which is imperative in the South African context. Within this discussion of needs and interests, Mtintso (2003:578) cautions that it is important for women and gender activists to raise their consciousness so that they do not get absorbed or buy into the patriarchal agenda.

Another South African voice who addresses needs and interests is Hassim (2006). She expresses a deep appreciation for the conceptual distinction between practical gender needs and strategic gender interests, but she argues that because of the differences amongst women themselves, it remains a difficult task to define women's interests (Hassim, 2006:5). She comments that the value of this distinction will be accentuated only when we begin to conceptualize a women's movement that recognizes and allows for the diversity of women's interests (Hassim, 2006:4). Hassim (2006:4) comments, "No one agrees on how to define the notion of *women's interests* given the interactions of race, class, and other objective and subjective interests". Hassim (2006:5) further argues that while a common interest of women may be identified as the elimination of patriarchy¹⁴, the notion of patriarchy has been very unhelpful in many post-colonial countries, since it had failed to account for the particular intersections of class, race and colonial forms of domination with the oppression of women. While for some women the major interest may be expressed as the elimination of patriarchy, for others, their interest may be the deconstructing of an ethnocentric and middle-class bias that privileges "the western model of women's political struggles as the standard by which to judge all other women's political strategies" (Hassim, 2006:5). What Hassim (2006:5) does identify as one of the most stable interests common to all women is their exclusion, or least marginalisation from the political arena, which in turn impedes and excludes their voices in the planning process. Hassim comments:

Regardless of race, class, ethnicity, and other factors, women are consistently defined as political outsiders or as second-class citizens whose entry into the public sphere is either anachronistic and short or conditional upon their maternal social roles. Here the emphasis is on women's interests in accessing arenas of public power and less on debating the policy of such outcomes (2006:6).

In policy terms, interventions such as family planning services together with female education and employment were seen as key to the agenda and departed from a position of improving economic opportunities for the poor, hence this period further perpetuated an already existing neglect in intentionally addressing the various roles and key interests of women (Hassim, 2006:6). While the items listed above remain important, Hassim (2006:6) argues that these may not necessarily be the interests and needs of the women themselves.

¹⁴ Understood as the system of male domination (Hassim, 2006:5).

While being sympathetic to the usefulness of ‘interest’ categories in policy and programme planning, Haddad (2000:120) asserts that in the South African context there has to be recognition of the power dynamics in the relationship between the person defining the “interests” and those she works with.

Kabeer (2003:14) notes that many people find the distinction between practical gender needs and strategic gender interests as a planning tool problematic. While defining and devising measures to address women’s practical gender needs can be a comparatively straightforward matter, it also needs to be a completely different matter (Kabeer, 2003:14). If asked, women usually identify practical not strategic needs, hence defining strategic needs on women’s behalf easily falls prey to patronizing attitudes of ‘we know best’ and accusations of false consciousness, should women fail to recognise needs that have been defined for them (Kabeer, 2003:14). Devising measures to meet strategic gender interests is extremely difficult. Strategic gender interests can rarely be addressed in any reliable cause and effect way (Kabeer, 2003:15). Strategic change is a complex and contradictory process not particularly amenable to planning by objective. It can be a difficult task to categorize interventions according to these conceptual distinctions, for example, is education a practical or strategic intervention? (Kabeer, 2003:15).

The 2011 USAID report answers this question by identifying education as well as other aspects as strategic gender interests, thus calling for greater attention and emphasis to be placed on strategic gender interests when planning for development. The report states:

The objectives of addressing strategic gender interests are to create gender equity and equality by changing gender roles and responsibilities towards the equitable sharing of resources and benefits between women and men—such things as land rights, access to education, training and technology, employment opportunity, politics and culture. These environments or areas need more consideration of strategic gender interests especially in developing countries (USAID, 2011:1).

Thus women's land rights, access to education, training and technology, employment opportunities, politics as well as culture are noted as key strategic gender interests which have not been adequately addressed in development planning, perhaps due to the notion that strategic gender interests are more complex and require an increased amount of work and initiative (USAID, 2011:1). The concluding remarks of this report read as follows:

We have seen different areas which need more consideration of strategic gender interests which have revealed that in most cases, women are subordinated to men. If this is the case, then strong measures need to be taken to mainstream gender issues so as to address the existing gender relation which seems to be unequal. Moreover, planners need to continue monitoring and evaluating the situation to see how the plans are being implemented and to trace their impact on the social relationship so as to know what can be done to improve the situation. (USAID, 2011:4).

As pointed out in the report, an important underlying issue to be addressed is existing unequal gender relations, and while identification of strategic gender interests and practical gender needs is an important typology, it can only be more effectively implemented in the everyday lives of women once the underpinning unequal gender relations are addressed in meaningful ways (USAID, 2011:4).

Amidst various criticisms of this typology, scholars such as Hovorka (2006:56) applaud it as an essential element to achieving women's empowerment through gender-focused development planning (Hovorka, 2006:56). She clarifies empowerment as the questioning of the notion of selfhood that men and women bring with them to their everyday development activities and it is premised on a sense of self-worth and dignity (Hovorka, 2006:56). Hovorka states:

The empowerment process seeks to bring about changes in the distribution of material and symbolic resources, and the opportunities between men and women in the development process. It also seeks to bring about changes in beliefs and values that have been assimilated in the process of acquiring a gendered sense of selfhood, where

these constitute a constraint on their capacity for their existing agency in their own live (2006:57).

She further argues that while women's empowerment is attained through the identification of practical gender needs and strategic gender interests, and while empowerment increases women's access to and control over resources, we should remember that access alone cannot empower women (Hovorka, 2006:57). Hovorka comments, "Control over resources may reflect a degree of women's empowerment but access alone cannot empower women. We cannot assume that if a woman earns money she will be able to keep it, decide how it is spent or even have a wide enough scope of opportunities and choices to make use of it" (2006:57).

More importantly, Hovorka notes that "women having access to income primarily ensure the welfare of the family, yet can hardly address the problems of women's oppression and subordination since these are linked to unequal relations of power deeply entrenched in social, political and ideological issues" (2006:57). While women may be empowered to have access to financial and other productive resources, what lies at the heart of empowerment is actually the transformation of unequal relationships between men and women (Hovorka, 2006:57). When there is failure to address and challenge existing power relations that render women subordinate to men, transformation has not taken place which in turn means that women have not been empowered. A practical gender need merely remains an expression of women's experiences and situation if it is not *transformed* into a strategic gender interest (Hovorka, 2006:57). Hence to give fullness to this conceptualized typology of practical gender needs and strategic gender interests, I argue that both become important in understanding the roles of Indian women, where in relation to practical gender interests, they are given the space to express their everyday needs pertaining to food security, health, household welfare and financial security based on their lived experiences. While women themselves are able to formulate and express these needs out of responses to immediate perceived necessities, those expressions become meaningless if strategic gender interests, which translate into practical gender needs, are not being continuously and adequately addressed at the structural level. In other words, as important as it is for women to have the space and forum to express their everyday lived experiences; it becomes meaningless if there are no systems and structures in place to appropriately and adequately address these challenges expressed by women. Hence, strategic gender interests and practical gender needs

must work together in order to transform the conditions of oppression surrounding women's lives. I assert that in order for this to be effectively done, unequal power relations and the redressing of patriarchal ideologies must be at the heart of such transformation. As alluded to earlier, the most visible expression of unequal gender power relations is in the work experiences of men and women.

While the distinction between SGIs and PGNs has had its strengths as well as weaknesses, scholars have agreed that the development of this discussion by Moser (1993) has been an important component in the planning process. It conceptualizes planning as aiming to challenge unequal power relations and supports women's empowerment through structural change.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to understand women's productive and reproductive roles in communities, locating this discussion within the broader gender and development debate. It has been argued that women's roles have been neglected within gender and development planning initiatives, tracing the historical development of such planning. The seminal work of Ester Boserup's sexual division of labour was discussed, showing how this gave rise to Caroline Moser's (1993) contribution to women's triple roles, helping us better understand the productive, reproductive and community roles that women assume. Although Moser's 'triple roles' contribution came under criticism, it has proven to be useful to this particular study which attempts to highlight the involvement of Indian women in all three roles.

Within the Indian context, Moser's 'triple role' notion alerts us that women are, in actual fact, burdened with and often attempt to fulfill multiple roles. Whereas these roles are culturally understood as an expectation of the ideal Indian women, Moser's triple role conceptualization creates the necessary awareness that these roles are actually different types of 'work' that Indian women find themselves involved in. In creating the awareness that women bear triple roles, Moser (1993) was not merely satisfied with leaving this discussion at a place where this is not challenged. This opened way for Moser's (1993) extended discussion on Molyneux's (1985) conceptual two part typology of Strategic Gender Interests and Practical Gender Needs, which became important in understanding that men and women not only play various

and different roles in society with distinct levels of control over their resources, but also that they often have different needs. It is this typology that creates space to transform the balance of power between men and women which is at the center of keeping women bound to such roles (Moser, 1993:37).

Since this study investigates the experiences of Indian Christian women in its attempt to create a framework for a gendered theology of work, I now turn to theology in my attempt to understand existing theological perspectives on the notion of work.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGIES OF WORK

4.1 Introduction

Indian women find themselves involved in all three categories of work as outlined in the previous chapter. As soon as they enter the productive market, the first and foremost concern raised is who will take responsibility for the reproductive economy within the home. Since this is culturally seen as the sole responsibility of the women within the Indian community, it often results in women taking on a triple role. In attempting to exist within all three economies, as discussed in section 3.4, this is often at the expense their health, their leisure time and their quality of life as a whole.

The burden of these multiple roles played by Indian women is seldom discussed within the church context. There has been some attempt within theological circles to reflect on issues of work. However, this subject has largely been addressed from a class analysis or from the position of work ethics with little focus on gender. Hence, my attempt in this study is to create a framework for a gendered theology of work by examining the faith experiences of Indian women as they relate to their everyday lived experiences of work. In this chapter, various theologies of work will be considered, arguing that these theologies have neglected the lived experiences of the workers themselves, and that such theologies have not given consideration to a gendered analysis of work. In order to move towards a framework for a gendered theology of work, it is necessary to understand the notion of work from a Christian perspective, the historical background to a theology of work, as well as existing theologies of work.

4.2 The notion of “work”

Society tends to refer to work as “paid employment”. The Bible, however, embraces a broader definition of work that includes dominion over nature, service to others, and all productive activity (Volf, 2001:7). While it is difficult to define, there have been various attempts to describe the notion of work from a Christian perspective (Volf, 2001:7). For example, Bonino (1991:1076) suggests that there are two dimensions of work revealed in the

Biblical text of Genesis. The first dimension depicts work as a joyful task and a divinely appointed stewardship. The second dimension depicts work as being a punishment for sin and a painful duty and heavy burden (Bonino, 1991:1076).

While there were these two dimensions built from a Christian perspective, it was Karl Marx who revolutionized the philosophical thinking on work (Bonino, 1991:1076). After recognizing that the Bible presents these two aspects of labour, Marx identified the first as “creative labour”, which he defined as the way for human self-realization, and the second as “alienated labour” which was brought about by exploitation inflicted on slaves, serfs, and in modern times, the working class (Bonino, 1991:1076). A number of theologians, in dialogue with Marxism, have defined human beings created by God as workers and stewards, producing their world (the ‘objective dimension’ of labour) and in doing so they also realize their own potentialities (the ‘subjective dimension’ of labour) (Bonino, 1991:1076). Workers are meant to be “the subjects” of production, hence labour becomes alienated whenever the subjective dimension is subordinated to purely objective concerns (Bonino, 1991:1076). Workers are “entitled to participate in the decisions regarding the organization of labour and the use of the product of their hands” (Bonino, 1991:1077). Instead they were alienated from these products and became mere objects in their work experience (Bonino, 1991:1077).

A Catholic document, *Laborem Exercens* attempted to address the notion of work (John Paul II, 1981) which raised an important concern. The concern raised in this document was that in capitalism and in communism, workers were excluded from these decisions regarding the organization of labour and the use of the products thereof, hence have become ‘objects’ of production. *Laborem Exercens*, in the effort to define the notion of work, describes work as human activity, whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature or circumstances (John Paul, 1981:1). Volf comments that such a general statement about work as that offered by *Laborem Exercens*, cries out for a conceptual demarcation of work from other human activities since “work is one of those things in our daily life whose meaning is hidden in the mystery of familiarity” (2001:7).

Because of technological innovations, the character of work is going through a deep transformation such that new types of work are rising to prominence (Volf, 2001:8). Volf (2001:8) argues that in addition to technological advancements which change the character of

work, is the aspect of culture with different people considering different activities to be work, thus creating confusion of what work really means. –The avoidance of a denotative confusion is one reason for the need to reflect on the meaning of ‘work’ (Volf, 2001:8). Volf (2001:8) adds that in many societies when we say that someone is ‘working’ we are not merely indicating that a person is involved in a particular kind of activity, but we are also implicitly ascribing value to that person. –To work is good; not to work is bad. A person who does not work is less valued in a society. Thus we hear depreciative remarks about women (or even descriptions of women by themselves) who are ‘only housewives’ (Volf, 2001:8). Volf (2001:8) further adds that since paid work gives access to monetary power and hence to independence, it becomes a door to active participation in the home and the society at large. –Because their activity is not valued and remunerated as work, housewives are often barred from participating in decision-making that influences their lives’ (Volf, 2001:8). He further comments:

Finally, not to call doing household chores ‘work’ helps hide exploitation of many women in modern societies. For they not only get lower pay on the average than men do for the same work, but also put in an additional fifteen to twenty hours a week of housework – significantly more than men do – that is not valued as work at all (Volf, 2001:8).

In order to avoid the oppressive implications of the inherited concepts of work, Volf thus defines work as:

...honest, purposeful, and methodologically specified social activity whose primary goal is the creation of products or state of affairs that can satisfy the needs of working individuals or their co-creators, or (if primarily an end in itself) activity that is necessary in order for acting individuals to satisfy their needs apart from the need for the activity itself (2001:11).

In providing such a definition of work, Volf (2001:9) suggests that a responsible theology of work must operate with a definition of work that does not lend itself to oppressive misuse that keeps people in subjugation. Hence, while society has tended to limit work to paid activities, the notion of ‘work’ is actually much broader than this. It embraces anything that one considers to be work, be it paid or unpaid activity (Volf, 2001:7). This was the rationale behind Moser’s

(1993:28) contention that while the type-casting of women as ‘home-makers’ is true, this is only *one* of the three roles that they perform (Moser, 1993:28). As discussed in chapter 3.5, the three roles identified by Moser (1993:28) was productive, reproductive and community work, thus agreeing with Volf (2001:7) that the notion of work is a much broader concept than just paid activities carried out by individuals.

Increasingly, the notion of ‘decent work’ is understood as an important issue. ‘Decent work’, as a concept, was introduced and promoted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1999. As stated by the ILO:

Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all men and women (ILO, Decent Work Agenda, 1999:1).

There are three ‘rights’ expressed by the Decent Work Agenda (1999): the right to work, the right in work and the right to adequate social protection. In this regard, the Decent Work Agenda (1999) affirms that decent work is not confined to wage employment, but extends to self-employment, work at home and other income-generating activities (Decent Work Agenda, 1999:1). Pierre Martinot-Lagarde (2011:71), who is a special advisor for socio-religious affairs at the International Labour Organisation (ILO), shows that there is a convergence between the decent work agenda and the Christian tradition, thus having the potential to open spaces for dialogue between politicians and theologians. Examining the pillars upon which the decent work agenda is built, Martinot-Lagarde (2011:72), states that each of these pillars touches on theological and anthropological questions, which is centered on the notion of human dignity. The fundamental right is expressed as no forced labour, the eradication of the worst forms of child labour, freedom of association, collective bargaining, no discrimination, all of which is enabling and provides the basis for social improvement (Martinot-Lagarde, 2011:73). Martinot-Lagarde (2011:73) links this with the story of Exodus which speaks of the value of freedom where the freeing of the Israelites from the domination

of the Egyptians lead to a process of liberation. He comments that freedom of association is central to the way we understand the faith and that forcing children to work in inhumane conditions not only deprives them of their personal future, but that of the whole of society (Martinot-Lagarde, 2011:74). Martinot-Lagarde (2011:74) makes the point that the Christian tradition must respond to the notion of “decent work” given this convergence.

As we explore various perceptions of the notion of work, Volf (2001:7) suggests that Christian organizations will need to rely on careful theological reflection on the complex issues related to human work. It thus becomes the responsibility of theologians to outline frameworks that help to better understand the complexity of human work, bearing in mind the notion of decent work¹⁵. Before we attempt to understand the various theologies of work, it is important to reflect on the historical background that gave rise to the need for such theologies.

4.3 The development of theologies of work

As discussed in section 4.2, the Bible presents two contrasting perspectives and images of work, where, on the one hand, work is portrayed as “a divine mandate, a stewardship to be exercised, a creative task to be performed” (Baum, 1991:155). On the other hand, however, work is depicted as drudgery, as a painful duty or as punishment for sin (Baum, 1991:155). “Christian theology in any situation whatever must take seriously both of these aspects” (Baum, 1991:155). While the Bible, which was produced by an agricultural people, initially respected manual labour, early Christian theology despised labour due to the influence of the Greek tradition which assigned labour to women and slaves (Baum, 1991:155). Males on the other hand were free human beings, defined as thinking, intellectual beings (Baum, 1991:155). Baum (1991:155) further comments that it took Christian theologians a long time to recognize the need for a theology of work and it is only in recent decades that the Protestant and Catholic scholars have wrestled with this issue.

Yet, it can be argued that the discussion on the problem of work goes back to the early church fathers (Volf, 2001:71). Employing the doctrine of sanctification to provide a context for this

¹⁵ While this aspect is not within the scope of this study and is important for further study, I assert that this study is mindful of the notion of decent work even though it is not fully explored.

theological reflection, they focused on two main perspectives. The first being a discussion around what influence the new life in Christ should have on a Christian's daily work (Volf, 2001:71). Contrary to the Greek depreciation of work, the early church fathers affirmed that there is nothing disgraceful or demeaning about manual labour. "The early church fathers affirmed not only the nobility of works but also the obligation to work diligently and not be idle" (Volf, 2001:72). Influenced by the apostolic injunction to "work with one's own hands", based on 1 Thess 4:11¹⁶ and 2 Thess 3:10¹⁷, the early church fathers emphasized that Christians should be "ever laboring at some good and divine work" (Volf, 2001:72). They emphasized that humans should guard against reliance on the results of work, which is wealth, but should express an attitude of dependence on God (Volf, 2001:72). They also stressed the need for Christians to work not only for themselves but to be able to share with fellow needy human beings, basing this thinking on Eph. 4:28¹⁸ (Volf, 2001:72). Those who were without pity for the poor and needy were considered to be followers of the evil one (Volf, 2001:72).

The second perspective of the Early Church Fathers on the notion of work was more from a position of ethical reflecting on the influence of work around Christian character (Volf, 2001:72). Developing their reflections out of monastic thinking, the purpose of work was as esteemed as a spiritual exercise and discipline, a penitential practice, particularly if it was burdensome (Volf, 2001:72). Work was thus seen by the early church fathers as forestalling temptation, promoting humility and equality hence reflecting the character of Christ (Volf, 2001:73).

The writings of the Early Church Fathers considered the attitude and character of the workers from an ethics positions, but did not develop a comprehensive theology of work as a dogmatic reflection on the nature and consequences of human work (Volf, 2001:74). While the Early Church Fathers placed human work only under the rubric of sanctification, Volf (2001:75) comments that a theology of work requires a broader horizon of theological reflection on work, thus addressing the anthropological, cosmological, and social dimensions

¹⁶ "To aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we directed you". (All Bible references from here on are quoted from the New Revised Standard Version).

¹⁷ "For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat".

¹⁸ "Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy".

of work. In motivating for the development of a comprehensive theology of work, Volf further states:

In spite of all the changes in the nature of work throughout history, work has been and will continue to be a fundamental condition and dimension of human existence. Any theology that wants to take human existence seriously will not be able to circumvent theological reflection on human work (2001:75).

Thus Volf (2001:75) is arguing that theological reflections on work are much broader than the doctrine of sanctification, as proposed by the early church fathers. For the crafting of an effective, comprehensive theology of work, many more areas of work, in relation to human existence, need to be considered (Volf, 2001:75).

While it is argued that the problem of work was addressed by the early church fathers (Volf, 2001:71), it is also believed that the onset of such theological reflection was attributed to the period between the two world wars, where both during and before the Great Depression theological reflection was taking place around the problems of human work (Volf, 2001:5). These theological reflections culminated in the ~~R~~Report of the Section of Church, Community and State in Relation to the Economic Order”, which had been approved at the 1937 Oxford Conference on ~~C~~Church, Community and State” (Volf, 2001:6). Hence the experience of the Great Depression, which gave rise to high unemployment, also gave rise to people engaging theologically around the notion of work (Volf, 2001:6). It is out of such historical circumstances that theologians began to see the need to respond theologically to these issues that were affecting the daily lives of women and men.

The reflections of the early church fathers and the period during the Great Depression were informal theological reflections on the notion of work (Volf, 2001). Marie-Dominique Chenu (1963) is one of the earlier formally recorded scholars of the theology of work, even though he acknowledges that the notion of such a theology may have been around informally a little earlier (Chenu, 1963:4). He states that "the expression itself may be said to be quite recent; for, although the phrase 'morality of work' has been current since the nineteenth century, and 'mystique of work' for some twenty years, the term 'theology of work' appeared for the first

time only five or six years ago" (Chenu, 1963:4). This would place the notion of a theology of work toward the end of the 1940's or the beginning of the 1950's (Chenu, 1963:4).

He comments that the purpose of a theology of work was to aid Christianity to restore the dignity of manual labour that had been tragically stripped by applied science and machine (Chenu, 1963:4). Chenu (1963:63) argues that the subject of human work was not a matter of concern for theologians until this time. This was primarily because an awareness of the theological significance of work had not developed prior to the tremendous advance in industrial technology which was achieved during the last century of human's existence (Chenu, 1963:63). These advances started to compel theologians to recognize that work confronts human beings –physically and spiritually, with a new reality, the conditions and structure of which profoundly affect not only their standard of living but also their whole way of life" (Chenu, 1963:6). In noting this absence of a theology of work he states, –[T]his absence of a theology should not trouble us overmuch, when we consider that we also lack a psychology, a sociology and a philosophy of work. Today, all of these are in full and simultaneous development, including the theological aspect" (Chenu, 1963:4). As he builds his theology of work, Chenu (1963:48) asserts that all work has a spiritual dimension, not just religious or charitable work. He argues that it was the industrial revolution with all the oppressive conditions experienced by the workers that created a very negative outlook towards work (Chenu, 1963:10). Yet work is part of our human existence and function that benefits human society as well as forming the basis for a new understanding of Christianity (Chenu, 1963:10). He asserts, –The purpose of work today is not only to enable us to earn our living. It also creates a kind of social energy, at the immediate service of humanity as a whole" (Chenu, 1963:10). His theology contested the idea of dualism, arguing against a spirituality that wants nothing to do with the body, and maintaining that all bodily activities such as work develop our spirituality (Chenu, 1963:48).

As the seminal work of Chenu (1963) set the scene for the formal development of theologies of work, other theologies of work began to emerge, each bringing valuable contributions. As noted by Stevens (2011:6), in a Christian context, there are some pertinent questions relating to work that theologians must address: –What is good work? What is the point of this work? Who benefits? Does work have both intrinsic and extrinsic value? What does work mean? Whose work matters to God? These are some of the questions that must be answered

by a theology of work” (Stevens, 2011:6). He defines work as ~~any~~ purposeful expenditure of energy, whether the nature of work is manual, mental or both, whether it is remunerated or not” (Stevens, 2011:6).

It is such questions around the notion of work that the Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, mentioned earlier, attempted to answer as it began to contribute to the development of the theologies of work. Written by John Paul II in 1981 on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of Leo XIII's Encyclical "Rerum Novarum" on the question of labour, *Laborem Exercens* is described as one of the most remarkable ecclesiastical documents on the question of work ever written (Volf, 2001:5). What made *Laborem Exercens* remarkable is that it treated human work as a perennial and fundamental phenomenon and addressed it as ~~the~~ essential key to the whole social question” (Volf, 2001:5). Work, as a human issue, was seen to be at the centre of the "social question" (John Paul II, 1981:1).

Because fresh *questions* and *problems* are always arising, there are always fresh hopes, but also fresh fears and threats, connected with this basic dimension of human existence: man's life is built up every day from work, from work it derives its specific dignity, but at the same time work contains the unceasing measure of human toil and suffering, and also of the harm and injustice which penetrate deeply into social life within individual nations and on the international level (John Paul II, 1981:1).

Volf (2001:4) attributes the emergence of such writings as the *Laborem Exercens* to the high unemployment rates in economically developed nations in the early 1980s, which provided the occasion for such thinking. Volf states:

When people sense that work is a scarce resource in a world of total work, they start to feel like they are being forced to breathe thin mountain air. Without work they are outside their life-sustaining environment. Because of the perilous consequences at the lack of work in societies dominated by work, church bodies all over the world in recent years have put the problem of work high on their agendas. Even if they were mistaken about the urgency and significance of the problem of unemployment, they

were right in sensing the need for renewed theological reflection on the problem of work in rapidly changing technological societies (2001:4).

Other more recent contemporary scholars have added to the existing body of knowledge as theologies of work continued to develop. For example, Armand Larive (2004), an Episcopal priest, was an important voice in the discussion on theologies of work. His book, entitled *After Sunday: A theology of work*, argues that faith is exercised not only on a Sunday morning or in clerical councils, but rather in our secular work (Larive, 2004: 3). In developing his theology of work, Larive (2004) sees work as a godly activity, recognizing the daily work that people do as religiously significant and as an engagement in co-creation. The important question posed by Larive is: “What typically happens to Christians after Sunday? How are they supposed to carry their faith out the church door and into the coming work week?” (2004:147). He comments that in relation to this question, there are four ways in which we could respond (Larive, 2004:149). The first response suggested by Larive is that Christian vocation has little to do with our jobs, with the second being that it has something to do with all jobs (2004:149). The third response suggested by Larive (2004:149) is it has more to do with certain jobs and finally, it has everything to do with on-the-job and off-the-job existence Larive (2004:149). He concludes that his theology of work offers a unique chance for the church and the secular world to come together as equal partners, each are able to enlighten the other because there is a great deal of divine activity and energy not just in the church but in the secular world as well” (Larive, 2004:165). He grounds this conclusion in Rom.10:14-15a¹⁹, showing that human work has dimensions of divine participation and it is through our work that we are taking our faith out into the world, beyond our “Sunday” experience and expression of faith (Larive, 2004: 165). Larive (2004:88) suggests that when we consider the notion that we are co-creators with God, the concept ‘co-creator’ gives a picture of something *new* and this actually could restrict human beings’ vision of being co-creators with God in work. Since the concept ‘create’ constitutes something *new*, human work by its very nature, is not new but routine with its familiar round of sameness (Larive, 2004:88). He emphasizes the routine of human work by stating:

...ledger entries must be made, clerks must answer the same inquiries repeatedly, bills must be paid, employees must punch in at the time clock, agendas must be drawn up

¹⁹ “But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? **15** And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?”

for monthly meeting. None of these activities is new. And what is new doesn't spring up out of a vacuum, but, like the increase of knowledge, always rests on the accomplishments of what has gone before (Larive, 2004:88).

Larive's (2004) theology of work is an urge us to see beyond the mindset that work is routine, boring, and mundane bringing out nothing new, since human work is co-creative with the Creator.

A more recent voice is Andreas Kunz-Lubcke (2011:20), who asserts that work is part of humanity's condition as God's creatures. He comments –Since creation theology defines work as part of the being human, one can – from a modern perspective – infer that the right to work exists. If, accordingly, people can be conceived of as nothing other than a creature that works, deprivation or curtailment of work is tantamount to a curtailment of being fully human” (Kunz-Lubcke, 2011:20). He further states that societies depicted in prehistoric genealogies are characterized by a division of labour with the three major groups being shepherds, musicians and craftsmen (Gen 4:20-22)²⁰, thus serving to illustrate that from the perspective of a theology of creation, –all human work activities are to be understood as stemming from humankind's condition” (Kunz-Lubcke, 2011:20). The subject of work is a common thread in the Bible, particularly demonstrating how work is an integral aspect of human existence within the framework of creation theology (Kunz-Lubcke, 2011:13).

Another helpful and recent voice on a theology of work based on the South African perspective is that of Faulkner (2010). Faulkner (2010:1) builds on the compendiums from West and Cochrane (1991). The recent work of Faulkner (2010:1) suggests that a theology of work over the past 60 years has been crafted in two particular ways. He states:

One way is to begin with scripture, to see what scripture can tell us about the world of work and work itself, and make deductions from there. This approach has been used throughout the history of the Church. There is a second way which has evolved fairly

²⁰ —Aah bore Jabal; he was the ancestor of those who live in tents and have livestock. 21 His brother's name was Jubal; he was the ancestor of all those who play the lyre and pipe. 22 Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah”.

recently, from only about 60 years ago. It is a more philosophical approach, and is related to other recent disciplines such as psychology of work and sociology of work. It is connected with what it means to be a human being, and especially to attain fulfillment in what it means to be a human being. It brings God into these recent studies (Faulkner, 2010:1).

He further asserts, “The Theology of Work means both looking at the world of work, bringing God into that world; and looking at work itself, a creative activity done by human beings and seeing how God enters into that” (Faulkner, 2010:1).

It has become clear that whilst the theologies of work had developed over the decades, these theologies have given attention to the world of work; they have brought God into that world and have attempted to see how God enters into the creative activity of work. However, there seems to be neglect in addressing work itself, or the problem of work. This is particularly true from a gendered perspective in attempting to understand the impact and effects of work itself on women and how this relates to their faith. To add to this is the teaching styles of the church in relation to the problem of work. For example, a study conducted by the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) Church and Labour Project Research Group (ICT, 1991:254) revealed that the church²¹ does not know much and teach much about the interests, experiences and problems of workers. The hypothesis of the study was that workers who are members of churches generally experience a substantial dissonance between their work and their religious life (ICT, 1991:257). “It was also suggested that the Church should relate scriptures much more directly to the daily life of the worker; that it should preach unity, and about injustice... and that it should offer a much stronger pastoral presence for workers in terms of their actual conditions of existence and experiences. As one worker puts it “workers belong to the church” (ICT, 1991:266).

The critique has been that members of churches generally experience a disconnection between their work and faith experiences, which in turn creates neglect in theologically addressing the experiences and concern of worker themselves. For example, biblical scholar Alan Richardson (1963:61), in discussing the true relationship between work and worship,

²¹ This particular study was conducted in the provinces of Natal and Southern Transvaal in South Africa and included various denominational groupings.

comments that the Bible does not speak of work as worship. He states, “For Biblical writers work and worship are two different things, and they should not be confused with each other. But nevertheless they are related to each other” (Richardson, 1963:61). He asserts that one of the ways in which they may be related is that they both may be subsumed under a common conception - that of the service of God, where both are forms of divine service (Richardson, 1963:61). He comments:

Thus, the Biblical idea of service is not to be narrowly interpreted; it includes not only church worship and church work, but also the work which all, even non-Christians perform honestly and diligently in their due station within the body politic...work well done, whether that of rulers or that of slaves, is service rendered to God (Richardson, 1963:62).

However, a more recent African scholar, Kenneth Mtata (2011), argues that there actually is a significant connection between our work and faith practices. Mtata (2011) develops an “African theology of work”. He states, “Work is one significant area of contact between faith and work and as such an important topic not only for faith communities” (Mtata, 2011:7). He further states that work does not merely provide us with the means to meet our basic needs, but it also affirms our worth as human beings (Mtata, 2011:7). Mtata (2011:7) argues that work becomes central to the shared life within or outside the communion of faith, and the experience of work can be either one of affirmation or of alienation. In traditional African societies, work was carried out by groups of people who worked together, usually with the household constituting a production unit, resulting in much work being done in a shorter space of time (Mtata, 2011:37). As Mtata (2011) develops this African theology of work, he shows that there is a deep connection in African societies between the world of work and the spiritual world. He states “Whether the hunter had good dogs, the farmer had many cattle to plough the field, or one had a great voice to sing, in order to be successful, in one’s work, Africans believed in the final capital that came from the spiritual world, be they Ancestors or God or other benevolent powers” (Mtata, 2011:38). The understanding that work is the cooperation between human beings and the spiritual world is deeply entrenched in traditional African thinking (Mtata, 2011:39). An interesting observation made by Mtata (2011:47) is that because traditional African society built a work ethic around the notion that work was done in community with other human beings and in community with the divine, they found

themselves in a very challenging situation when modernity and colonialism took that away from them, causing the concept of work to change radically. Mtata (2011:47) comments that a communitarian outlook is more amenable to the biblical God of work in both the Jewish and Christian testaments. He uses Genesis 1:26²² to demonstrate that this is a God who worked in the community of the Trinity to create human beings (Mtata, 2011:47).

While colonialists and work managers viewed conversations, laughter and the telling of stories by African workers as a waste of time, they themselves saw time not only as a commodity but as a tool for building relationships (Mtata, 2011:45). Importantly, Mtata points out that while community is an important component in an Africa theology of work, “community alone does not guarantee equity as was demonstrated by African women theologians for instance. While African theology emphasized community, this community excluded women” (2011:48). Unfortunately, Mtata (2011) does not further develop this important aspect in his African theology of work. Finally, he (Mtata, 2011:48) warns against a sense of theocracy which could potentially lead to the abuse of power in building an African theology of work, demonstrating care and concern of the neighbour’s welfare. He states, “An African theology of work, to which the neighbour’s welfare is central, takes away the evils of unhealthy competition” (Mtata, 2011:48). Mtata (2011:49) asserts that such an Africa theology of work grounds itself in Traditional African and biblical values and makes concerted efforts for its further development.

As various scholars contributed to the development of theologies of work, Cosden describes such contributions as “a theological exploration of work itself by exploring work with reference to a number of doctrines within a systematic theology” (2006a:5). Cosden refers to theologies of work as a new discipline in which most attempts at elaborating a theology of work concentrate on *one* of those doctrines (2006a:5). Some of these doctrines as identified, for example, are the doctrine of the Trinity, which argues that work for human beings as God-imaging creatures is determined by the work of the Triune God (Schumacher, 1998). The doctrine of Creation argues that work was given in God’s original design at the beginning so that human beings could function as co-workers and co-creators with God (Soelle, 1987). The doctrine of the Holy Spirit depicts work as an expression of the Spirit’s work and giftedness, not only in church ministry but also in the world (Volf, 2001). Thus Cosden

²² “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image’”.

(2006a:5) argues that there are various theologies of work, each of which highlights a major theme within the broader discussion of work. Some of the major themes identified within existing theologies will now be discussed.

4.4 Major themes in existing theologies of work

4.4.1. Work as a blessing or a curse

The dual nature of work as being either a blessing or a curse has become a major theme within existing theologies of work. Jensen (2006:22), for example, proposes that there is “redeemed and unredeemed” work which is further described as work being either a blessing or a curse. He asserts that if our theology of work fails to describe work’s ambiguity in this fragmented world as *both* blessing and curse, then our theological conceptions become inadequate (Jensen, 2006:22). This supports the idea of Schumacher (1998) who states, “Work in short is ambiguous and reflects the ambiguity of the human situation. It has a double nature: negative as a result of the fall, positive because through work human is a co-creator with God” (Schumacher, 1998:61). Hence, through the theologies of Schumacher (1998) and Jensen (2006), we are urged to consider the dual nature of work, either as a blessing or a curse, in relation to Christian life.

Jensen (2006:21) asserts that if Christian faith emphasizes work’s value, it underscores work’s insufficiency as well since human work neither saves nor provides ultimate fulfillment to people. Jensen (2006:25) further comments that the value of work is not placed on length of time that one has engaged in the work, but instead, the value is placed on *people* themselves who are doing the work. He grounds this value theory in the accounts of Jesus, such as the calling of the disciples away from work, hence representing an alternative to the assumption that those who work hardest, longest, or in the most respected professions deserve the most (Jensen, 2006:25). Jensen states, “In the upside-down values of the reign of God, those without paid work are valued as much as those who begin work at the crack of dawn” (2006:25). Interestingly, it is on this point that Volf (2001) and Jensen (2006) both agree that each worker should be valued as people instead of value being placed on the type of work or its duration. This concurs with an earlier argument of Schumacher who states, “Central to our philosophy is the primacy of the human being in matters of work

organization. Subject to the realities of the market-place, we stand firm in the belief that people come first. Strategies, structures and systems exist for people, and not the other way around” (1998:157). Hence, there is a general consensus that the worker is more important than the work itself.

Jensen (2006:27) further argues that while biblical narratives stress the renewal of work they also point to work’s burden in a broken world where work is more often a curse than a blessing. He comments: ~~—~~Whether epitomized by the chains of slavery, the struggle for a living wage, or the experience of having one’s work owned by another, our labours often alienate us from one another and ourselves. Work can grind down, humiliate and exhaust workers” (Jensen, 2006:27). He further states that the trajectory of the expulsion from the garden in Genesis, 3:19a²³ indicates that work can breed its own frustration, exhaustion and despair (Jensen, 2006:28). ~~—~~Rather than self-expression, work becomes slavery under a new name” (Jensen, 2006:29). Jensen (2006:32) comments that the distinction between real work and not real work goes as far back as the fourteenth century to some monastic movements. Their claim was that real work was contemplative rather than active hence it was the spiritual that constituted real work rather than manual labour (Jensen, 2006:32). For many monastics, the story of Mary and Martha found in Luke 10:38-42 became an allegory for the contemplative versus the active life.

Mary, who sits attentively at Jesus’ feet and has no time for the activity of her sister, stands for all contemplatives, who should conform their behavior to hers. Martha, meanwhile busied with the work of the house so that the household can show hospitality to the guest, is likewise engaged in holy work: hers are the labours that make contemplation possible. Nonetheless, many contemplatives doubtless took heart in Jesus response that ~~—Ma~~ry has chosen the better part” (v42) (Jensen, 2006:32).

Hence, this is suggestive that there are those who value the spiritual as better work and all other activities become unimportant, as necessary as they are to the functioning of society, which inadvertently means that work could be a source of blessing or a source of curse (Jensen, 2006:32). The notion of the value of spiritual work, or work in the spirit, was developed by Volf (2001), hence this will be discussed as another major theme.

²³ “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground”.

4.4.2. Work in the Spirit

Volf (2001:79), in developing a theology of work, uses the concept of the *new creation*, based on the idea that the Christian life is life in the Spirit of the new creation (Volf, 2001:79). Volf states, –And the Spirit of God should determine the whole life, spiritual as well as secular, of a Christian. Christian work must, therefore be done under the inspiration of the Spirit in the light of the coming new creation” (2001:79). He comments that we cannot talk about the new creation without referring to the Spirit of God, since without the Spirit there is no experience of the new creation (Volf, 2001:102). Hence Volf (2001:81) is opting for an eschatological and pneumatological theology of work, arguing that he is developing a *Christian* theology of work which has an advantage over secular philosophies in that it is furnished with an adequate moral discourse. –Christian moral discourse is exclusive in the sense that it is based on the concept of new creation ushered in by Christ, but it is also inclusive in the sense that it respects other traditions and is ready to learn from them because it is ready to hear from them also the voice of the Spirit of Christ” (Volf, 2001:81). He argues against the traditional Protestant understanding of work as vocation denying that one is –called” to do a particular work irrespective of one’s inclinations, and he asserts that is our privilege to do the kind of work that God has gifted us to do (Volf, 2001:133).

Volf (2001:95) further argues that all human work done is in cooperation with God for the preservation and transformation of the world; hence it becomes a privilege to be a worker alongside God for God’s intents and purposes. Volf (2001:124) asserts that when God calls people to become children of God, it is the Spirit that gives them talents and ‘enablings’ so that they can do God’s will in the Christian fellowship and in the world, in anticipation of God’s new creation. All Christians have several gifts of the Spirit, and since these gifts can be exercised mainly through our work, our work then must be considered a central aspect of Christian living (Volf, 2001:124). Hence the centrality of work in the Christian life and the fact that every work of a Christian should be done under the inspiration of the Spirit which means that there should be no hierarchical valuation of the various types of work that people may do (Volf, 2001:124). Further strengthening his pneumatological argument, Volf asserts:

In a vocational understanding of work, God addresses human beings calling them to work, and they respond to God’s call primarily by obedience. They work out of a

sense of *duty*. In a pneumatological understanding of work, God does not first and foremost command humans to work, but empowers and gifts them for work. They work, not primarily because it is their duty to work, but because they experience the inspiration and enabling of God's spirit and they do the will of God "from the heart" (Eph. 6:6; cf. Col. 3:23). When a person does her secular work in grateful obedience for the new life God has given her, she also works out the experience of God's grace, but grace remains, so to speak, in the background. Grace only "compels" her to act. But when grace gifts and enables a person to do a particular task, then it stands at the very heart of her work (2001:124).

So a Christian theology of work must depart from the position of the Spirit, because it is the Spirit which empowers and enables people with the grace to carry out their work tasks. Volf further states, "All human work, however complicated or simple, is made possible by the operation of the Spirit of God in the working person: and all work whose nature and results reflect the value of the new creation is accomplished under the instruction and inspiration of the Spirit of God" (2001:114).

Building on Volf's (2001) argument that it is the Spirit that endows and empowers Christians to work in their various occupations, Cosden (2006a) concurs that the "enabling" is in relation to the person's relation to God, and the enabling depends on the presence and activity of the Spirit. Thus as Christians do "mundane" work, the Spirit enables them to carry out these assigned tasks (Cosden, 2006a:144). Cosden (2006a), whose book is entitled *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, urges a shift in traditional thinking that "earthly" work is unimportant and is "not the better part chosen". He comments, "Our motivation for Christian living must change, since our goals and understanding of what we can accomplish spiritually in this life had changed. In short, our whole way of living – our spirituality and ethics – also need to change" (Cosden, 2006a:40). He suggests that humans in ordinary work are God's apprentices and co-workers, and that contrary to various myths of modern culture which make us believe that our progress and happiness are determined by our production and consumption, humans do not create themselves through work (Cosden, 2006a:40). He states:

God created humanity, and so ultimately our existence and welfare depend upon God. The responsibility and pressure to invent ourselves through our technology and

achievements are, as history has shown us, indeed more than we can bear. This does not diminish the fact, however, that we have a God-given mandate to extensively shape and reshape our world through work. As we do this, of course, we shape ourselves time and again – and ultimately we shape the future as well. Yet, we never work alone. Even when we try to do it alone, God is always there working as well (Cosden, 2006a:98).

Hence, Cosden (2006a:98) is proposing that ordinary work in this world is a joint study between the God and the worker and can only be carried out by the enabling of the Spirit. Ordinary, everyday work should thus not be undervalued or underestimated since it is an extension of God's work in the earth. Cosden (2006a:99) further argues that central as it is, work is not all there is to life. Cosden asserts:

Although work is essential and is in one form or another the context for so much that takes place in our lives, the final word both for God and us is in the Sabbath. An existence without rest and space to reflect on our lives – what we have done, what we are doing, who we are and who we are becoming – is no existence at all (2006a:99).

Cosden (2006a:99) cautions that the Sabbath does not always mean inactivity. ~~It~~ reflects, rather, a rhythm and quality of life that at times simply let humanity and the world be" (Cosden, 2006a:99).

Both Volf (2001) and Cosden (2006a) develop a pneumatological theology of work arguing against the Protestant understanding of work as vocation, but instead as the enabling as gifting of God's spirit.

4.4.3. God as worker

Another major theme that emerged out of existing theologies of work is 'God as worker'. Taylor (2008) is one of the key scholars who developed such a theology of work. First, he presents God as worker highlighting that the Bible wastes no time in conveying what it thinks about work, and it portrays the very act of creation as the work of God, basing this on

Genesis 2:2²⁴. –God is the ultimate worker, which loads the act of work itself with inherent meaning, significance, and dignity” (Taylor, 2008:1).

Second, Taylor (2008:1) asserts that as those bearing the image of God, human beings, are called us to be subduers and rulers. Taylor (2008:1) grounds this assertion on humanity being created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 27), which means that we relate to God, resemble God and rule under God. God commands that we "subdue" the earth and "have dominion over" it. This does not mean that humanity can "plunder and pillage" the earth. –Rather, as God's image bearers we are to use our God-given creativity and responsibility to use the earth for godly purposes. For Adam and Eve, part of what this meant was that they were to "work" and "keep" the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15)” (Taylor, 2008:1).

Third, Taylor (2008:2) comments that it is the fall that frustrated the labours of humanity, referring to the rebellion of Adam and Eve. This resulted in human work, which was intended to be enjoyable, being associated with thorns, thistles and sweat (see Gen. 3:17–19).

Having laid these foundations, Taylor (2008:2) argues that it is God who calls us to work. Our "vocation" is more than our job, and it's more than just our preference or choice. Rather, our vocation is what God has called us to do, and it may change during seasons of one's life (Taylor, 2008:2). While Taylor (2008:3) creatively outlines some essential principles creating a theology of work, he works with a romanticized view of work, not taking into account the reality of the burdens and drudgery of work itself, particularly the burden that it places on women.

4.4.4. Work as co-creation with God

Another key theme that has emerged is that our work as human beings is done in co-operation with God, thus we become co-creators with God (Soelle, 1987:37). Dorothee Soelle (1987:55) denounced the evil of alienated labour, calling for its elimination since this type of

²⁴ –And on the seventh day God finished the work that God had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done”. (Note: I am aware that this translation does not use inclusive language, but I am mindful of the need to quote accurately from the text itself).

work does not help the worker understand that they are actually co-creators with God. The image suggested by Soelle (1987:55) is that of a worker bent over a treadmill, symbolic of the enslavement of work with the treadmill representing the monotonous round of duties that workers must accomplish. In this view, what is missing is the product of work (Soelle, 1987:55). As a result of this, the worker becomes dehumanized and alienated from his/her work (Soelle, 1987:55). Another missing dimension of work that the treadmill image conveys is progress. No progress is made on the treadmill and the daily cycle never changes, running its course within all allocated hours (Soelle, 1987:56). This image of the treadmill reflects the picture of a worker who has no control over time, which becomes problematic in relation to one's experience and expression of freedom. Soelle (1987:56) asserts, ~~Being~~ "Being in control of one's time or discovering and following one's own timing is an important part of a person's experience of freedom". In this way, the worker is stripped of his/her own time and another time takes over which is controlling and disempowering, hence depriving the worker of this natural aspect of life (Soelle, 1987:57).

Soelle (1987:57) further notes from the treadmill image that the worker is lacking a neighbour and is often working in isolation or independently of others. ~~There~~ "There is only a solitary figure harnessed to the mill. The image reveals the absence of sharing among workers" (Soelle, 1987:57). Giving and taking is not possible on the treadmill and people are not in a position to co-operate (Soelle, 1987:57). The person on the treadmill can learn nothing, does not grow and neither is changed by the experience of the work, but instead feels exhausted (Soelle, 1987:57).

Soelle (1987:57) also observes that the person on the treadmill is bent over and this reflects a painful, unnatural posture. This shows that there is no room to stretch, which is a powerful expression of the worker being forced into something smaller than who they really are or ought to be (Soelle, 1987:57). ~~Most~~ "Most people have to live like that. They are forced to live beneath their own physical, emotional, rational, and spiritual endowments. As the treadmill figure attests, people are crippled, bent, reduced on the gallows of work" (Soelle, 1987:57). The traditional dominant understanding of work has kept the workers alienated from their products, which belong to others, causing their productivity to be dominated by others (Soelle, 1987:57). It has kept them from their fellow human beings and has also restrained

them into a confined position that gives no room for expansion and ‘stretching out’ (Soelle, 1987:57).

Soelle (1987:37) argues against this dominant understanding of work, suggesting that work cannot be separated from creation, since we are co-creators with God to fashion a more just world. This can be done only when we reshape our traditional identification of work with wage or financial rewards (Soelle, 1987:37). This ideology impoverishes the true meaning of work and reduces it to a commodity devoid of meaning apart from the marketplace. Soelle (1987:37) suggests that we rearrange our theology of work to embrace creation, and not just money, and to understand the co-relationship between God and worker. Our myopic, production-oriented perspective on work is challenged by Soelle (1987:83) toward embracing a more humane understanding of work. “If we understand creation as stemming from God’s desire for relatedness or God’s wish to share the earth with the human being then it follows that work is the place where relatedness, mutuality and interdependence become visible” (Soelle, 1987:96). Hence Soelle (1987:96) argues that one’s work experiences should not result in isolation but should create space for social relatedness within existing frameworks of community and society. Although it is true that a present reality is that we are confronted with a current dearth of paid work, which the very thing that is creating the disintegration of human beings and is defining the self-worth of individuals, Soelle’s (1987:100) theology of work highlights the need for one to see beyond the material and monetary realm. “A theology of work accords a higher place to our interrelatedness than to our productivity. To understand ourselves as created in God’s image is to see ourselves as co-creators first of all. To participate in the unfinished creation is to choose freely and affirm solidarity with our fellow workers” (Soelle, 1987:100).

4.5 The problem of ‘work itself’

As discussed above, various scholars argue for theologies of work from particular systematic theology positions. While scholars have argued for such theologies of work and have substantiated their arguments from various Biblical positions, Hughes (2007:11) argues that failure of such twentieth century scholars to adequately engage these debates accords a quasi-naturalistic autonomy to ‘work’ in their thought, thus weakening theology’s capacity for deeper critical engagement (Hughes, 2007:11). Such scholars who have developed various theologies of work appear to have left the concept of ‘work’ itself largely untouched by their

theological claims, and have reverted instead to the naturalistic and personalist understandings (Hughes, 2007:29). What becomes evident is that the secular, modern debates about work are usually lurking in the background, finding very little connection to the various theological claims by twentieth century theologies of work (Hughes, 2007:29).

It becomes clear that various perceptions have created dichotomies in our understanding of work, dividing it into ‘good work’ and ‘bad work’, ‘important work’ and ‘unimportant work’, ‘dean work’ and ‘dirty work’ and more importantly to this study, ‘women’s work’ and ‘men’s work’ as discussed in section 3.5. Hughes (2007:29), who explores the ‘problem of labour’ from a theological perspective, surveys various twentieth century theologies of work, particularly that of Chenu (1963) and Volf (2001). Hughes (2007) asserts that while scholars such as Chenu (1963) and Volf (2001) have attempted to address major theological questions such as the relationship between divine and human action and the gravity of the effects of the fall on work, there still remain inadequacies within their respective theological approaches. He states:

All of them engage with various Scriptural foci appropriate to the consideration of work: Eden and the fall, the Sabbath and Hebrew Law in relation to work, Wisdom literature, the teaching of Christ in the Gospels, and of St Paul, particularly in the Thessalonian correspondence, and the relation of work to the Final End of all things. Yet behind all their discussions lurks the ‘problem of labour’ as it has arisen in secular debates in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and to which they are all, more or less explicitly, responding (Hughes, 2007:11).

While Hughes’ (2007) concern is valid that existing theological voices have not focused on the problem of work itself, in the early 1990’s some key South African theological voices did begin to respond to this problem. This gave rise to the publication of a helpful book edited by West and Cochrane (1991) entitled *The Three-fold Cord: Theology, Work and Labour*, including a compendium of empirical, biblical, practical and theological contributions based on the aspects of theology, work and labour in South Africa. This publication helpfully focuses on the South African experience, giving attention to the experiences of the worker.

While a book such as this based on the South African experience introduces methodological, hermeneutical, scriptural and doctrinal insights, it does give attention to the problem of work itself, and it is possible that such insights will resonate elsewhere in the world and even give rise to new perceptions on the subject of a theology of work (West and Cochrane, 1991:2). As I have argued earlier, existing theologies of work have focused on biblical reflection and class analysis without giving attention to a gendered analysis. In addition, the experiences of the ‘worker’ and the problem of work itself have hardly, if at all, been considered adequately in crafting such theologies. Written in the apartheid era, it was the purpose of such a book to explore various questions and concerns about work and labour –among Christians who have been involved in one way or another in struggling against the repression and damage done by Apartheid, particularly - in this case – to black working people in South Africa” (West and Cochrane, 1991:1). While Black workers have been exploited and stripped of their dignity, the church failed dismally to address these concerns (West and Cochrane, 1991:1). They comment:

Consequently, a perspective on theological and biblical questions about work and labour which accepts the option for the poor and oppressed is difficult to find, even among writings from the ‘Third World’ which have been translated. Then one still faces the difficulty of making links from other contexts which have been described in details not always applicable to one’s own context (West and Cochrane, 1991:1).

West and Cochrane’s (1991:3) book also gives rare expression to the perspective of a black woman called Essy Letsoalo, who focuses on the changing role of women in employment. She comments that while the role of women in employment has changed remarkably over the past decades, it is important to analyze those attitudes that have influenced women’s roles (Letsoalo, 1991:69). In her discussion on the sexual division of labour, she relates how African women have been involved in what is now termed the “basic needs” concept (Letsoalo, 1991:66). To substantiate this argument, Letsoalo comments, “...they produced food; provided water and clean clothing; taught children language, healthy habits and to perform certain tasks; and they even participated in the decision making” (1991:66). She states that Black women in South Africa have suffered a triple oppression of being blacks, being females and belonging to the working class that was devalued (Letsoalo, 1991:66). Letsoalo further states that in the “traditional African society the socio-economic

role of the women has never been undervalued” (1991:66). These women constituted an important portion of the productive labour force, and the attitudes towards women reflected a deep respect for their family roles (Letsoalo, 1991:66). However, with modernity, there seemed to be a shift in this thinking, since the western male “breadwinner” concept and the women’s “place in the kitchen” idea caused women’s roles in the home to become devalued (Letsoalo, 1991:69).

In addition to their roles in the home being devalued, women who did go into the “work” environment were considered to be a cheap source of labour, and were usually exploited through long working hours, low wages and miserable work environments (Letsoalo, 1991:69). They were also exposed to sexual exploitation and of particular importance is that they were often refused employment because they could marry or fall pregnant (Letsoalo, 1991:70). Letsoalo (1991:71) argues that while laws and legal rights of women are being put in place, these cannot change the attitudes of people toward women’s roles or what is perceived as the “women’s place”. Unless we effectively deal with such prejudices and attitudes that discriminate against women, the women themselves will not enjoy the equality, freedom and prosperity that they are meant to enjoy (Letsoalo, 1991:72).

Another helpful contribution in this book is that of African scholar, Nondyebo Taki (1991:167). In his discussion of the problem of work, he looks at the elements of a theology of work and suggests that the very first chapters of the Bible teach us much on work itself, with God setting the example for workers (Taki, 1991:169). He asserts that a theology of work is a multifaceted concept which must be described by the workers themselves, people who are engaged in the continuous practical activity of work (Taki, 1991:170). It is their experiences that determine a theology of work (Taki, 1991:17). Taki (1991:17) examines certain important ingredients, such as time, identification, rest, hardship, opportunity, equality, production and distribution, which he considers as being important in the development of a theology of work, making reference to God as the example in discussing each of these important ingredients. He states:

Like God people also need time to work, for time gives priority as to when work begins and when it is completed. Within time the quality of work done is also assessed. Time is also an indicator of when *rest* is obligatory or due. However, we

do have some situations where a lot of exploitation occurs where workers are obliged to work unpaid overtime, particularly most domestic workers and farm labourers, and factory workers (Taki, 1991:170).

Taki (1991:170) stresses the importance of time within the concept of work, since this is directly linked with another important ingredient, which is rest. “Work begins and work ends, therefore people need to rest from the work they have been doing. God rested; therefore workers need rest, leave and time-off” (Taki, 1991:171). In light of this, many unpaid work roles that women are involved in do not fit within the confines of fixed time periods therefore leaving women working for hours on end, often with very little rest (Desai, 2010:38).

4.6 A worker’s theology

While West and Cochrane (1991) deal with the problem of work itself, an important question posed by Cochrane (1991:279) asks where it is that existing workers’ theologies can be found. His immediate response to this question is, “Wherever Christian workers give expression to their faith in a way which integrates their religious values with their life in the working world” (Cochrane, 1991:279). He comments that theologies generated in this way cannot be read in libraries or heard in most pulpits, since they have many different forms and are shaped by different kinds of experiences “which in turn will inform the reflection of the workers on their faith in relation to their work” (Cochrane, 1991:279). In a sense there can be no single theology of work simply because of the variegated experiences of the workers themselves (Cochrane, 1991:279).

An important contribution in this regard is that of Albert Nolan (1991:160), who asserts that a genuine theology of work would have to be a worker’s theology (Nolan, 1991:160). According to Nolan (1991:160), a theology of work is one that is constructed by the workers and for the workers, which reflects their experiences and their struggles. If their experiences are positive then work is viewed as a blessing, but if they are negative, then work is viewed as a curse (Nolan, 1991:161). He draws to our attention that one of the reasons why theologians have little success in constructing a theology of work is that professional theologians are not workers, and are not a part of the “working class”, and do not have first-

hand experience of work, in the sense of manual work (Nolan, 1991:161). He comments that theologians must play a subordinate role in their construction, and it must be the experiences of the workers themselves that inform this theology of work (Nolan, 1991:161).

Nolan (1991:164) comments that the purpose of theology is to strengthen, nourish, and confirm the faith of Christians, hence the important issue to raise is whose faith is actually being nourished, strengthened and confirmed by this envisaged theology of work? Is it faith of the worker or faith of the professional theologian? (Nolan, 1991:164). He, like other scholars, argues that the Bible is somewhat ambiguous in its attitude towards work in that on some occasions it presents work as a blessing while at others it is viewed as a curse (Nolan, 1991:167). Hence, one cannot conclusively state whether work is a blessing or a curse, since this comes back to the lived experience of the worker. He states:

I guess they will experience work as a curse when they have to work long hours, travel long distances, earn starvation wages, work in unsafe conditions, live in hostels, work for a boss and so forth. But other experiences of work as a curse might also emerge, like women's unpaid and unrecognized work, or their double shift, or being forced into circumstances to sell their bodies. And who knows what other aspects of work might be experienced as a curse. Then there would be the experience of work as a blessing, like having a job at all or having a good job, a well-paid job. Perhaps workers could dream of work possibilities that would be a blessing, like not working for a boss, or working for workers as a trade unionist, or political work, or some kind of work that would be creative and rewarding in itself (Nolan, 1991:167).

I concur with the argument of Nolan (1991:161) and assert that it is the lived experiences of the worker that forms the discourse for creating theologies of work. The work experiences of the workers themselves will determine whether work is a curse or a blessing depending on their lived experiences (Nolan, 1991:161). While it is tempting for professionals and those within the academy to formulate theologies of work, these would not be as genuine as those theologies of work that are constructed out of the experiences of the worker (Nolan, 1991:164).

Within this era, Buti Thlagale (1991:143) addressed the need for a black theology of work, suggesting that generally the experiences of black workers were that work was a curse more than an enhancement in the quality of their own lives. He states:

What is produced by black workers does not enhance their living, but rather is claimed by those who own the means of their production and benefit from the circulation of money on the market. Work, instead of building those engaged in it, brutalizes them and reduces them to the level of servitude. The reduction of black workers to parts of the productive machinery, and the alienation of their products, form a counter position. The task of black theology is to reverse it (Thlagale, 1991:146).

Thlagale (1991:147) points out that while scholars have argued for various theologies of work using the Bible as a source, demonstrating how work is meant to be creative and redemptive, intending to improve the quality of life, in reality the experience of black workers has not been positive. Thlagale (1991: 149) comments that in building such theologies some scholars have even gone so far as to draw on St Paul's homiletic injunctions that there is neither Greek nor gentile, male nor female, slave nor free and describing the worker as being made in the image of God, to inform their theologies of work, but such scholars have avoided addressing issues of racism, oppression and injustices ingrained in the experiences of black workers.

A further point that Thlagale (1991:148) makes is that black workers have enslaved themselves by accepting the descriptive language of the oppressor even so far as to shape their own theologies of work around such perceptions. For example, since work has been portrayed as co-creation with God or as an act of worship, the injustices and inequalities faced by black workers were not adequately addressed, thus the need for local South African voices to emerge cannot be overemphasized (Thlagale, 1991:152).

While the theological contributions to the problem of work from the South African publication, *The Threefold-Cord* (West and Cochrane, 1991) are quite dated, it remains important to understand these local voices in such a discussion.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to look at the notions of work, reflecting on certain historical events that gave rise to the need for a theology of work. Some of the key voices that have contributed to the theology of work over the past decades have been captured. As various scholars have outlined their theologies of work, it was observed that such twentieth century theologians built these theologies around various systematic theology themes. The theologies of work were then discussed thematically. It was a critique that these theologies did not adequately address the problem of *work itself* and its impacts on the ‘worker’ (see Hughes 2007:29). I have argued that the problem of work and its impact on the worker was actually addressed in a South African compendium of scholarly contributions (West and Cochrane, 1991).

However, what has become clear is that there are little or no gender perspectives in these existing theologies, particularly in relation to the various work roles the women assume. It is now my attempt to craft a framework for a gendered theology of work out of the *lived* experiences of Indian Christian women, bearing in mind that as I craft this theology it must be a worker’s theology (Nolan, 1991:161). As already noted, one of the major critiques has been that theologies of work have been developed without the first-hand knowledge of the experiences, struggles and challenges that workers themselves encounter and the voices of the workers have not been heard in the constructing of such a theology (Nolan, 1999:161). While theologians are gifted in putting pen to paper, it must be the experiences of workers themselves that inform such a theology.

As I now progress to the next chapter, the lived experiences of paid and unpaid work of Indian Christian women at St Paul’s Church will be investigated.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN'S WORK

5.1 Introduction

This study is interdisciplinary, interfacing gender and development theory, theories of work and contextual theologies. It is out of these existing theories that the lived experiences of Indian Christian Women were explored in relation to productive, reproductive and community work. The previous chapter of this study discussed existing theologies of work, asserting that these existing theologies have neglected a gendered analysis and have not adequately addressed the experiences of women's work. In order to better understand these lived experiences of women's paid and unpaid work, fieldwork was conducted with a group of Indian Christian women in Pietermaritzburg. This chapter will commence with a discussion on the geographic location, followed by giving attention to the study participants. This will be ensued by a discussion on the work experiences as well as the faith practices of women involved in this study.

5.2 Geographic location of fieldwork

Before I discuss the fieldwork process, it is important to discuss the geographic location of this study, which is St Paul's Anglican Church in Langalibalele Street (previously referred to as Longmarket Street), in Pietermaritzburg²⁵. In order to better understand this particular

²⁵ The city of Pietermaritzburg is situated in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, and is the capital city of this province. The city was founded in 1838 and is popularly known as 'Maritzburg'. Abbreviated PMB and nicknamed the 'City of Choice', Pietermaritzburg currently has an estimated population of between 500,000 and 600,000. Pietermaritzburg is said to be one of the best preserved Victorian cities in the world (An example of its Victorian architecture is its city hall, which is known to be the largest red-brick building in the Southern Hemisphere). This city is known as a dynamic commercial, educational and industrial centre. Pietermaritzburg also serves the administrative city capital of the province and is the gateway between Johannesburg and Durban. It covers a total area of 649 km². During the apartheid days, Pietermaritzburg was segregated into different sections with 90% of the Indian population being moved to Northdale (as discussed in chapter two), while most of the Zulu speaking population were moved to Edendale (Facts about Pietermaritzburg, www.pmb.co.za).

church, its historical background was explored. Herby Govinden (2002:36) asserts that no comprehensive work was done to record the growth and development of the Anglican Indian Missions, but it was J.B. Brain (1983) who provided us with a brief account on *Christian Indians in Natal: 1860-1911*. Brain (1983:213) mentions that in Pietermaritzburg the first work among the Indians was as early as 1868, some six years after the forming of the nucleus of what was to be St Paul's Mission.

Although the work had started as early as 1863, this church was built and consecrated on 9 June 1894 (Govinden, 2002:36). It was originally known as St Paul's Mission, and was said to be under the oversight of Revd Dr Lancelot Parker Booth at that stage (Govinden, 2002:iv). This Mission also provided the Indian community with education, evangelism and social services. St Paul's Mission, which was situated at 10 George Street, Pietermaritzburg, was inaugurated in 1880 by the Very Revd James Green (Govinden, 2002:31). Brain (1983:213) records that in 1880, a school was opened for the Indian population by the Anglicans and this school was known as the St Paul's day school. The success encountered by this school encouraged the Anglican Church authorities to plan yet another school in Ohrtmann's Drift as soon as a teacher could be identified (Brain, 1983:213).

Brain (1983:217) asserts that although the number of Indian converts in Anglican missions was never great, in both Durban and Pietermaritzburg, there was steady progress. She records that by 1904 there were 112 Anglicans in Pietermaritzburg (Brain, 1983:220). This increased to 200 in 1909 and 213 in 1911 (Brain, 1983:220). The Anglican mission (particularly St Aidan's in Durban and St Paul's in Pietermaritzburg) was said to be the most active movement amongst Indian Christians between 1883 and 1911, despite the challenges they encountered (Brain, 1983:220). At that stage in history, they were also said to be the only denomination to open a medical dispensary and clinic for the Indian community (Brain, 1983:220).

Going back in Indian history, Brain (1983:186) states that there were over 122 000 Anglican converts by 1899 in Madras alone, and about 154 Indian clergy, and that influence was seen here in South Africa. She asserts that of all Protestant denominations, the Anglicans had more educational and medical institutions and more converts in India than any other (Brain, 1983:186). Brain goes on to suggest that it could be assumed that a large proportion of

Christians who came to Natal would have been members of the Anglican community, but exact numbers cannot be ascertained (1983:186). As Revd Booth began to get more involved with the Anglican Indians in Pietermaritzburg, his work was highly commended (Govinden, 2002:40). One example in particular was the opening of the school at St Paul's Mission and his attempts to open the second school (Govinden, 2002:40). Revd Booth spent 17 years working with the Anglicans and was said to be a "catalyst between awareness of need and practical action" (Govinden, 2002:40). Revd Booth succeeded in recruiting two deacons from India who continued the work. The Reverend Joseph Nullathumby, who arrived from India in 1892, was appointed to be assistant curate at St Paul's and he was ordained as a priest in 1896 (Govinden, 2002:36).

On the question of gender, Govinden (2002:143) notes that as soon as the SPG (Society of the Propagation of the Gospel) began to send women missionaries out, they began participating actively in the work of the churches, the schools and hospitals. One such woman is named as Miss Esther Payne-Smit, who gave forty years of dedicated service to St Paul's Mission in Pietermaritzburg (Govinden, 2002:143).

St Paul's was known for its continuous evangelical role and out of this parish, other churches such as Holy Angels and Glenwood, a Chapelry of St Paul's, emerged (St Paul's Centenary Brochure, nd). This parish was said to have played an active role in the community of Pietermaritzburg with its impact and association going beyond the Christian community. "From its fold have emerged community leaders, priests, educationalists, doctors, lawyers and other persons holding their own in the fields of commerce, industry and business. The Parish can be proud of its upliftment of the community" (St Paul's Centenary Brochure, nd). From its inception in 1880, the church is presently 130 years old and carries a rich heritage, particularly for its pioneering work amongst the Indian community.

In an informal interview with the current rector of the parish²⁶, it was found that presently the congregation has approximately one hundred families and is quite mixed racially. According to the parish roll, and in terms of the various cultural groupings, there is an estimate of 55% Indian, 35% Coloured, 15% Black (of whom many are Zimbabwean) and 5% White. Many of the members are in the 45+ age category. Most of the members of this parish do not live

²⁶ Informal Interview conducted with Revd Lynda Wyngaard on 27 May 2011.

within walking distance of the church but come from all over the greater Pietermaritzburg area. Having provided some historical background of the geographic location of this study, the study design will now be discussed.

5.3 Study design

This study was carried out in two parts with the first being a literature review, capturing primary data through reading and analyzing a wide range of sources in the key areas of Indian women, the notions of work, gender and development, and theologies of work, as discussed in the previous chapters. The review of literature in this study attempted to show the neglect of women's roles in gender and development planning as well as the neglect of gender analysis in existing theologies of work.

The second part of this study was based on fieldwork which was conducted from February 2010 until November 2010 at St Paul's Anglican Church. In order to effectively elicit a study of this nature, a four phase fieldwork process was set up employing four particular research instruments, namely, a questionnaire, a 24-hour time diary, individual semi-structured interviews and finally, focus group discussions. To broadly outline the use of these specific research instruments, the purpose of the questionnaire, which was the first phase of the field process, was to provide the researcher with a sample group of twenty women who would be invited to participate in the following three phases of the study. Once the sample group was selected according to specific criteria, these women were divided into two groups²⁷ according to their work roles, and were invited to participate in the time study diary. The purpose of the 24-hour time diary was to allow women the opportunity to write down their work experiences in a typical 24-hour day. These time diaries were then assessed and women were invited to provide greater detail of these everyday work experiences by the use of individual semi-structured interviews. Finally, focus group discussions were held allowing for more in-depth discussion on specific questions posed by the researcher.

Having broadly outlined the study design, each of the research instruments will now be discussed in greater detail. In each instance, the research instrument will be described

²⁷ The women remained in their allocated groups throughout the study.

followed by a discussion on the process employed in utilizing the instrument for the purpose of this study.

5.3.1 Questionnaire

The first research instrument in this study was a questionnaire (see appendix 2). This was accompanied by a clearly structured informed consent covering letter²⁸ (see appendix 1), the reason being that "a straightforward, easy to read cover letter may improve return rates and response accuracy more than any other single factor, while a vague or highly technical letter can have the opposite effect" (McMurtry, 1993:279). A questionnaire is regarded as one of the most common research instruments and is defined as a group of written questions used to gather information from respondents (Terre Blanche, 2006:484). The questionnaire consisted of twenty closed ended questions. "Closed questions have the advantage of eliciting a standardised set of responses from all the respondents thus allowing for easier comparative data analysis" (Terre Blanche, 2006:487). The questionnaire which was used for the production of general data for each of the respondents was straightforward and factual, thus making its format appropriate and user friendly. Its purpose was to establish a sample group that would be invited to participate in the next three phases of the fieldwork.

The questionnaire was administered at St Paul's on Sunday, 21 February 2010. After the morning service, women were invited to stay behind and the researcher was given an opportunity to address the group of women. The researcher thanked the women for their attendance, clearly outlined the purpose of the study, gave opportunity for any questions or aspects of clarity, and finally invited the women to fill out the questionnaire. It was clearly stated that this questionnaire was specifically for Indian women between the ages of twenty and sixty-five.

²⁸ The covering letter described the research topic, the purpose of the study and also outlined the entire research process. It also provided the contact details of the researcher and assured the respondents of confidentiality as well as informed them of their right to withdraw at any stage during the study and also of their right to withdraw from responding to any particular question that they wished not to answer. Respondents were also informed in the consent letters that although there is no financial payment or any other incentive for their involvement in this study, their insights will be important to how women's theology is discussed in the church and academy.

Forty-six women in total had completed the questionnaire. There were, however, a few women amongst the forty-six who were not ethnically Indian, and were also not within the required age bracket. This would be discussed under the assessment of the questionnaires. The women were also assured of confidentiality and were informed of their right to withdraw from this study at any time, as well as their right to withdraw from answering any particular question in the said questionnaire. The women were informed that once the questionnaires have been assessed, they would be contacted should they be required to further participate in this study.

The completed questionnaires provided the researcher with key information about the respondents, consisting of details such as their age, number of members in the respondent's household, the source of household income, the respondent's reproductive roles (care of children, cooking, other domestic chores), productive roles (paid work within the formal or informal sector) and community roles. It also provided the researcher with respondent's contact details for the purpose of contacting those who qualified for phase two of this study. Fig. 1 reflects the breakdown of all the women who had filled out the questionnaire.

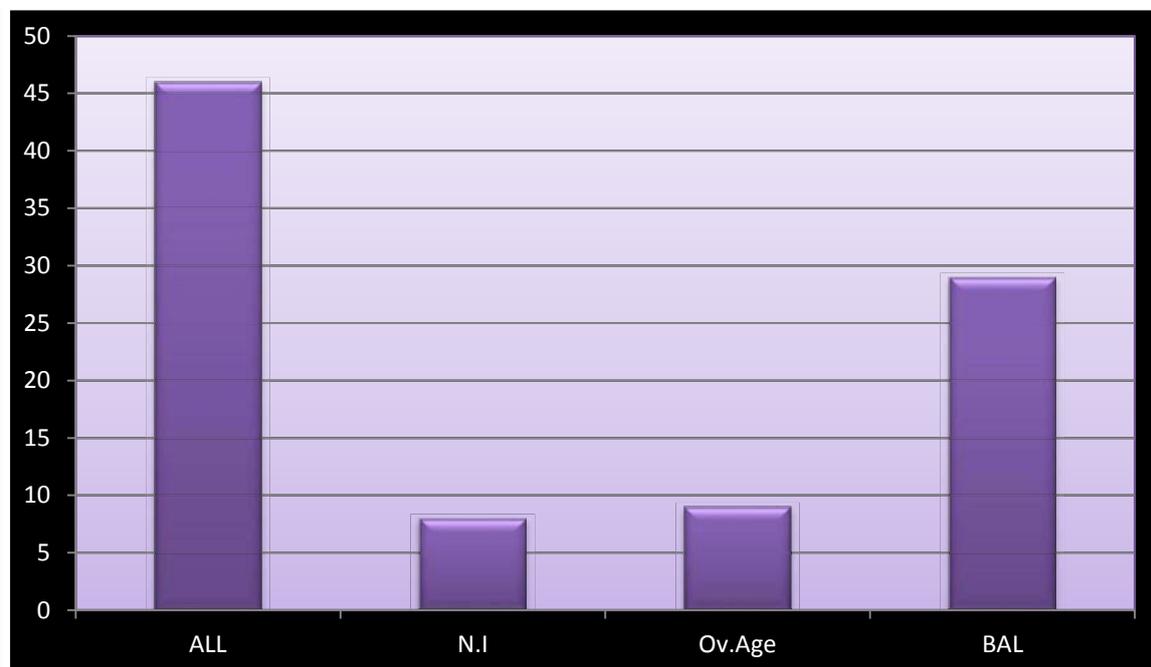


Figure 1: Assessment of questionnaire

Key to figure 1:	Total Number
ALL = All women who have filled out the questionnaire	46
N-I = Non-Indian, being those women who were not ethnically Indian	8
OV-AGE = Over age, with the required maximum age being 65.	9
BAL = Balance, being those who qualified to go into phase two of this study.	29

As reflected in Fig. 1, a total of forty-six women had filled out the questionnaire at St Paul's Anglican Church. Of the forty-six, eight women were not ethnically Indian, represented as N-I (Non-Indian) on the graph. These women were eliminated from phase two in order to maintain an ethnically homogenous group. Nine of the women were over the required age of sixty-five, ranging from sixty-six to seventy-four, thus excluding them from the study as well. As a result, there were twenty-nine women who qualified to go into the next phase of this study. These twenty-nine questionnaires were further analyzed to determine the type of work roles that the women were involved in. Fig.2 represents possible participants for the next phase of this study.

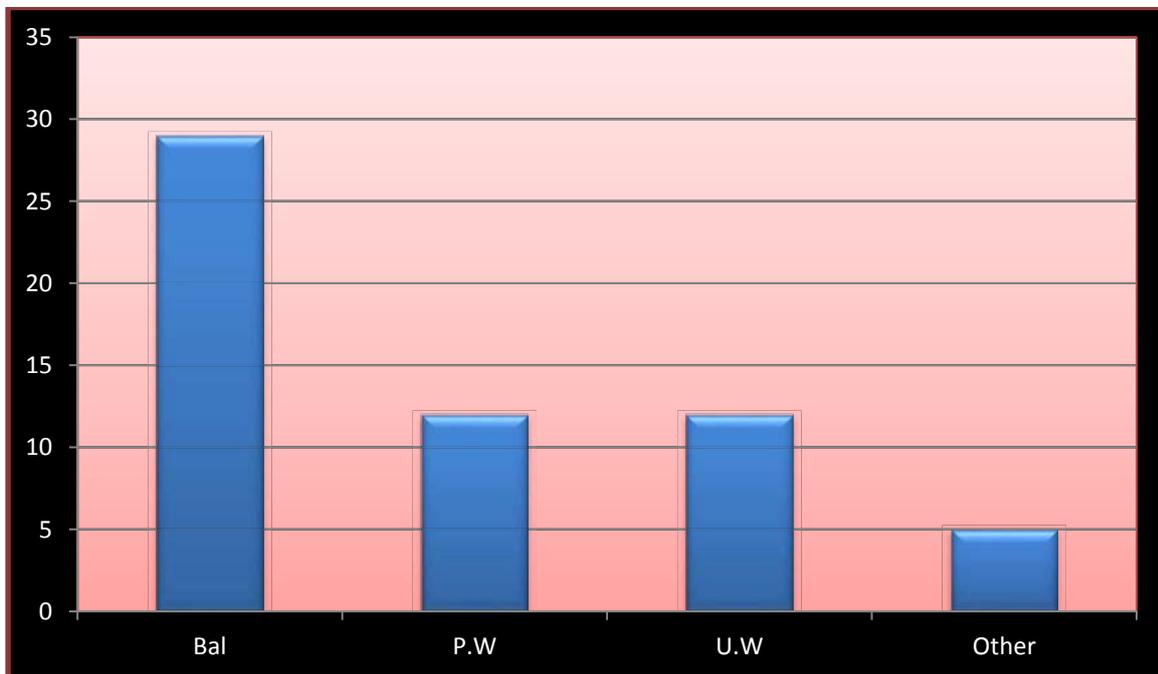


Figure 2: Possible participants

Key to figure 2:	Total Number
BAL = Number of women who qualified for Phase 2 of the study	29
P.W. = Number of women involved in paid and unpaid work	12
U.W. = Number of women involved in unpaid work only	12
Other = Number of women who were unavailable to participate in the study	5

As reflected in Fig 2, twenty-nine women fulfilled the criteria for participating in the next phase of this study, that is, being ethnically Indian and between the ages of 20 and 65.

The abbreviation P.W indicated in the key of Fig 2, reflects all those women who were involved in paid (formal and informal economy) and unpaid work. It is worth noting that of the total group of twenty-nine women, there were no respondents involved in the informal sector of paid work. Interestingly, section 2.3 of this study reflected that at one stage (around the 1930s and 1940s), Indian women were quite involved in informal work; however, with the development of factories and opportunities for education, Indian women had become less involved in such work. Phase two of the study required 10 participants from this category of paid and unpaid work. However, two extra participants were selected to accommodate for possible withdrawal from the study. Therefore, a total of twelve women were selected into phase two of the study.

The abbreviation U.W in the key above reflects those women who were involved in unpaid work only. Here too, only ten women were required for this category, but an extra two were included to accommodate for possible withdrawal, hence there were twelve women in this category as well.

Finally, there were five ‘_other’, which represented a group of women who indicated unavailability to participate in the next phase of this study for various reasons. One case in particular was relocation to Durban, and in another instance, it was established that the woman was a visitor to St Paul’s on that particular morning. The other three women stated that if at any stage anyone withdrew from the study, they were willing to participate. Having completed phase one of this study, those women who qualified for phase two were contacted

and invited to participate further. More details about these participants will be discussed in section 5.4.

It is worth noting that during the next phase of this study, two participants from each category had withdrawn for reasons such as hospitalisation and relocation, thus resulting in a total of twenty participants, with ten being in each category. This group of twenty participants continued throughout the fieldwork process.

5.3.2 24-Hour time diary

The second research tool employed during the fieldwork was the 24-Hour Time Diary (see appendix 3). The purpose of the 24-Hour Time Diary was to better understand the everyday lived experiences of women in the paid and unpaid work roles. It was the Statistical Commission of the United Nations that endorsed the preparation of a guide for producing statistics on measuring paid and unpaid work (United Nations, 2005:iii). On that occasion, the value of time-use statistics was noted, not only for issues related to gender but also more broadly for quality-of-life concerns, social accounting, care of the elderly, estimates of the workforce and total work accounts” (United Nations, 2005:iii).

The United Nations (2005:6) asserts that time-use data have been collected through household surveys since the 1920s, and this came largely out of an interest in the conditions of human progress and a curiosity about social change. The main context of such a study was around the working class and it was an attempt to understand and evaluate the amount of leisure time that people enjoy in order to develop a better picture of the quality of life (United Nations, 2005:6). United Nations (2005:11) further asserts that while nationally representative time-use surveys were completed in many developed countries right up until the 1980s and 1990s, it was only during the mid-1990s that at least 24 developing countries began to undertake data collection on time-use in almost all regions. Despite the diversity in terms of geography, economy and culture, many of these countries began to consider the national time-use surveys as an important statistical tool for improving measurement and valuation of paid and unpaid work for the increasing visibility of women’s work both at home and in the labor market” (United Nations:2005:11).

Having undertaken national data collection on time use since 1995 in fifty different countries, the objective of such a tool was described first and foremost as a means to provide an indicator of the quality of life or well-being of the nations in terms of time-use patterns of people (United Nations, 2005:13). The second major objective was stated as improving estimates of the value of goods and services with particular emphasis on increasing visibility of women's work through better statistics on their contribution to the economy" (United Nations, 2005:13).

Typical of any such tool or process, there are advantages and disadvantages to be aware of. The guide outlines several of these but just to mention a few, the advantages, for example, were that the time-use diary is traditionally inexpensive to develop and requires no special equipment or training (United Nations, 2005:58). In addition, it is useful when users are scattered or difficult to reach, it provides a means of overcoming the problems associated with collecting sensitive information by personal interview, it can be used to supplement interview data, and finally templates can be created which provide standardized formats, making analysis simpler (United Nations, 2002:58).

On the other hand, disadvantages are that diary studies rely on the subject being able/willing to complete the diary, participants often remember the completion of the task as better or worse than it actually was, or taking less or more time than it did, the large time requirement placed upon the subject means that the diaries must be straightforward and simple to complete (United Nations, 2005:58). This can have implications on the breadth and depth of the data collected, the labour intensive work required to prepare and make sense of the data may render it unrealistic for projects lacking time and resources, or where the sample is large (United Nations, 2005:58).

There are two types of time-use diaries, with the first one being the 24-hour time diary, which enables respondents to report all activities undertaken over a prescribed period of time, reflecting the beginning and ending time of each activity (United Nations, 2005:15). This is done so successively through the 24 hours of the day with fixed intervals such as ten, fifteen, thirty or sixty minute slots. The list of activity categories may consist of a small number of broad activity groups (such as paid employment, education, personal needs, domestic work, maintenance and leisure) or it may contain a longer list of more detailed activity tasks (such

as meal preparation, cooking, washing dishes, laundry, ironing, cleaning, sewing shopping, etc.)” (United Nations, 2005:15).

The second type of time diary is the stylized analogue version, in which

...respondents are asked to recall the amount of time they allocate or have allocated to certain activity over a specific period such as a day, week or year. It is different than a diary because the respondent does not report the specific time of day the activity is performed. Stylized questions are typically of the form, ‘Yesterday (or last week), how much time did you spend on activity x? Or: ‘How many hours per day (or per week) do you spend usually on activity x?’ (United Nations, 2005:15).

By using questions such as these, the stylized analogue enables the researcher to collect information on the frequency and duration spent on a set of pre-specified activities during the past week or month. The concern with this method is that it is possible to forget activities as time lapses.

Having carefully considered the advantages and disadvantages of both methods, the 24-Hour time diary was selected for the fieldwork; however, this could not be just a once-off exercise. As asserted by the UN Guide:

Basic statistics on time use are usually in the form of estimates of time spent on activities in an ‘average day’ or an ‘average week’. To arrive at that average or representative day or week, time-use data need to be comprehensive not only in relation to covering the whole range of possible activities but also in relation to accounting for differences between weekdays and weekends, effects of special holidays, and variations in activities across seasons in a year (United Nations, 2005:6).

In light of this, it was realized that a 24-hour time diary which is conducted once only would perhaps not be adequate to show its richness and variety, and could be too random thus creating anomalies, so it was necessary for a few more than just one time study diary to be

carried out so that an ‘average’ starts to appear. For example, the day on which the participant has her hair cut, or has a sick child, or a special meeting at work could be once-off rather than represent the normal day, hence having more than one time study diary could accommodate for these variances.

Having described the 24-hour time diary as a research instrument in this study, the process applied in utilizing this instrument will now be discussed. As already stated, it was necessary to administer more than one 24-hour diary in order for an average to appear. Each participant was required to fill out a set of four 24-hour time diaries, bringing this to a total of eighty diaries for the entire group involved in this study. In order to systematically capture the key aspects of these diaries, themes were identified and graphs were prepared according to these themes, which reflect the time spent by the respondents on various activities. Some of the activities were identified as number of hours spent on household chores, preparation of meals, caring for children, paid work roles, hours of sleep, time for self, including faith life (Prayer/ Bible Reading/Personal reflection, going to church), hobbies, and finally, a category called other, which included spending time with family/friends and volunteer work.

Since a total set of four 24-hour time diaries were filled out by each participant, it required a high level of commitment from the participants. The 24-hour time study diaries were spaced over a period of four weeks, with the weekday diaries taking place on Monday, 21 June 2010 and Wednesday, 30 June 2010, while the weekend diaries took place on Saturday, 3 July 2010 and Sunday, 11 July 2010. The 24-hour time diary was structured simply, allowing for easy completion by the participants. All respondents had completed their set of four 24-hour time diaries. Under each of these themes, a graph was prepared to reflect the average number of hours spent taking into account the set of four 24-hour time diaries for each respondent. This was a lengthy process that had to be carried out for each of the participants. To better illustrate this process, a small sample of the graphs have been attached (see appendix 6). Having completed the set of four 24-hour time study diaries, individual semi-structured interviews were then arranged for each of the participants. The key findings of these time study diaries will be further discussed later in this chapter. I will now move on to describing the third phase of the fieldwork process.

5.3.3 Individual semi-structured interviews

Having completed the set of four 24-hour time diaries, the participants then took part in the third phase of the fieldwork which involved individual semi-structured interviews (see appendix 4). As asserted by Terre Blanche:

Conducting an interview is a more natural form of interacting with people than making them fill out a questionnaire, do a test or perform some experimental task, and therefore it fits well with the interpretive approach to research. It gives us an opportunity to get to know people quite intimately, so that we can really understand how they think and feel. At one level, interviews are simply conversations, similar to the hundreds of short conversations we have all time (2006:297).

The previous two phases of the fieldwork allowed the respondents time and space to become more acquainted with the researcher thus allowing them to feel more confident about sharing their feelings and experiences. Once the time diaries were complete, individual semi-structured interviews were set up with each of the participants over a period of two months. The purpose of these semi-structured interviews was to enable the researcher to have a greater understanding of the experiences of each of these women within a 24-hour day. As mentioned earlier, one of the advantages of the 24-hour time diary is that it can be used to supplement interview data (UN Guide, 2005: 58), thus creating opportunities for discussion around experiences of the average 24-hour day in the lives of the participants. The advantage of adopting this style of interviews is that semi-structured interviews are open-ended thus creating opportunity for in-depth detail and allowing the participants to express their feelings and experiences, while structured interviews is straightforward, closed-ended and is essentially just a list of standard questions (Terre Blanche, 2006:297).

The question asked in the semi-structured interview was, “Is this what your typical day looks like? If not, how would you describe your day?” Women were given the opportunity to describe details of their time diaries with the researcher probing when necessary. Each semi-structured interview ranged from thirty to forty-five minutes. As stated earlier, one of the noted advantages of the 24-hour time diary is that it creates space for supplementing interview data, hence, the time diaries were kept at hand during each of the interviews. The

responses were written down by the researcher using the short hand method during the interviews and these were later written up into full transcripts. In order to effectively capture the information gathered from the semi-structured interviews, common themes were colour coded on each of the transcripts. Once all twenty semi-structured interviews were completed, the participants were invited to participate in the fourth and final phase of the fieldwork.

5.3.4 Focus group discussions

The fourth and final research instrument was focus group discussions (see appendix 5). –Focus group is a general term given to a research interview conducted with a group. A focus group is typically a group of people who share a similar type of experience, but a group that is not ‘naturally’ constituted as an existing social group” (Terre Blanche, 2006:304). The four basic components to a focus group discussion being procedure, interaction, content and recording (Terre Blanche, 2006:304) were considered and given attention to during each of the focus group discussions. Procedure such as giving everyone an opportunity to express their feelings and share their experiences with sensitivity and respect for the views of others, were outlined at the outset of each focus group discussion. Having women from the same church allowed for good group dynamics and vibrant interaction. The focus group discussions were shaped mainly around questions thirteen to seventeen of the questionnaire. Finally, the recording of these discussions were done by shorthand note taking. –While audio and video recording are sometimes used, this can be problematic because background noise often makes the sound incomprehensible” (Terre Blanche, 2006:307). In addition, these recording devices tend to cause people to be a little restricted and self-conscious.

The twenty participants were divided into two focus groups, with each group consisting of ten participants. One group consisted of participants that were involved in paid and unpaid work, which was their common type of experience, while the other group consisted of participants involved in unpaid work only. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss more deeply their lived experiences of paid and unpaid work as well as their faith practices. The duration of each focus group discussion was one and a half hours. A set of four questions were asked during each focus group discussion and at the end of each of discussion, participants were invited to write a prayer, poem or Bible verse expressing their work experiences as women. These responses will be discussed under section 5.6.

5.4 Study participants

Having described each of the research instruments used in the fieldwork of this study, attention will now be given to the participants of this study. As mentioned in section 5.3, the participants of this study were Indian women between the ages of twenty and sixty-five (this is the age group that is typically involved in the categories of productive, reproductive and community work) from St Paul's Anglican Church. The immensity of this undertaking makes it almost impossible to include and capture all voices and concerns, hence this study was limited to a homogenous group, that is, Indian Christian women in Pietermaritzburg. Within this age group, the involvement and experiences of women were investigated in the areas of women involved in unpaid work only, as well as women involved in paid and unpaid work (both in the formal and informal sector).

The purpose of the questionnaire, as already articulated in section 5.3, was to establish a sample group who would be invited to participate in the following phases of this study. Having done so, the responses of these twenty women were captured and assessed to create the foundation for the phases that will follow. Ten of these women were involved in paid and unpaid work while ten were involved in unpaid work only. The women were grouped according to their work roles as follows:

- Group 1 – Women involved in paid and unpaid work
- Group 2 – Women involved in unpaid work only

Table 1 below reflects the distribution of information gathered from the questionnaire about the participants involved in paid and unpaid work.

Participants	Age	Marital Status	No. in Household	Relationship in household	Work day commences at	Work day ends at
1	46	Widow	5	Mother	5am	11pm
2	60	Married	6	Wife/Mother	5am	10.30am
3	40	Married	5	Wife/Mother	6am	10pm
4	30	Single	5	Daughter	7am	6pm
5	35	Divorced	4	Mother	5.30am	10pm
6	39	Married	5	Wife/Mother	5.30am	10pm
7	40	Married	4	Wife/Mother	5am	10pm
8	40	Married	4	Wife/Mother	5.30am	10pm
9	38	Married	4	Wife/Daughter-in-law	5am	10pm
10	53	Divorced	3	Mother	6am	8pm

Table 1: Participants in Group 1 (Women involved in paid and unpaid work)

As reflected in the table above, the youngest participant involved in paid and unpaid work was 30 years old with the oldest being 60 years of age. Of the ten participants in group 1, six women are married, two are divorced, one is a widow and one is single. The average day commences at 5am and ends as late as 11pm. The ten women play various roles in their respective households such as wife, mother, daughter-in-law and daughter. The number of people in the households range from three to six members.

Table 2 below reflects key information about those participants involved in unpaid work only.

Participants	Age	Marital Status	No. in Household	Relationship in household	Work day commences at	Work day ends at
1	64	Married	6	Wife/Mother	6.30am	9pm
2	53	Married	4	Wife/Mother	6am	10pm
3	63	Widow	4	Mother	5.30am	8pm
4	62	Married	2	Wife	4am	7pm
5	65	Married	4	Wife/Mother	8am	8.30pm
6	51	Married	4	Wife/Mother	5.30am	7pm
7	55	Married	2	Wife	6am	8pm
8	56	Married	4	Wife/Mother	6am	8pm
9	36	Divorced	3	Mother	5.30am	9pm
10	21	Single	4	Daughter	7am	10pm

Table 2: Participants in Group 2 (Women involved in unpaid work only)

The age group of women in this category ranged from 21 to 65. Of the ten women, seven are married, one is divorced, one single and one widowed. The average day starts as early as 5.30am and end as late as 10.00pm. Similar to group 1, women in group 2 assume different roles such a wife, mother, and daughter within households. The number of members in each household ranges between two and six.

In relation to the entire group of twenty women, the ages ranged from of 21 to 65 years old. Although it would have been ideal to have a group of twenty married women, this was not possible simply because of the preset family structure which is not the ideal nuclear family any longer. Of the total of twenty women involved in this study, thirteen of the women are married, two are widowed, three are divorced and two are single. It is worth noting that all of the women who are widowed, divorced or single are in a household with males, either being a parent, brother, son or son-in-law, which becomes important in understanding the gender dimensions in the household.

5.5 Work experiences: time spent on work roles, division of labour and the impact of culture

In attempting to better understand the everyday lived work experiences of participants, four research instruments were designed and employed as discussed in section 5.3. These research instruments provided a variety of helpful information assisting the researcher to better understand how women spend their typical day. On analyzing the data from the responses provided in each phase of the fieldwork, three key areas were identified under their work experiences, namely, time spent on work roles, the division of labour and finally the impact of culture on their work roles. In order to systematically delineate the fieldwork findings in each of the said key areas, this will be discussed according to the responses from each group and will conclude with a summary based on both groups.

5.5.1 Time spent on work roles

Extrapolating key information from the questionnaires, the participants in both groups reflected that their workday commenced and ended at various times, as briefly mentioned in

section 5.4. In group 1 the longest work day was reflected as much as 18 hours, for example, participant 1 (see Table 1). Interestingly, the questionnaire revealed that women in group 2 also reflected a similar number of hours spent on work roles, for example, participants 2 and 9 in group 2 (see Table 2).

The initial figures presented in the questionnaire gave the researcher insight into the length of the work day of each of the participants. It was, however, the 24-hour time dairies that provided more details of what these hours meant on a daily basis, reflecting exactly how it was that women spent their time in a typical day. As already discussed section 5.3, the set of four time dairies of each participant were carefully analyzed to gain averages of the key work roles of women in each group and these were compiled into a consolidated table as reflected below. This average is reflected in the percentage spent per day on various activities, with the key categories being identified as number of hours spent in paid (productive) work, number of hours spent on domestic roles (such as chores before and after paid work, including reproductive roles), number of hours spent on self, number of hours of sleep, and other, including faith life (Prayer/ Bible Reading/Personal reflection, going to church), and hobbies. All forty time dairies were averaged with a graph prepared for each category.²⁹

Fieldwork findings of group 1 (women involved in paid and unpaid work):

In the case of group 1, two separate tables were prepared since most women were not involved in paid work over the weekends and this spread would be different from the weekday representation.

Table 3 reflects the number of hours spent on key areas identified for women in group 1, who are involved in paid and unpaid work.

²⁹ A small sample of these graphs has been attached to better understand the process (see appendix 6).

PARTICIPANTS	PRODUCTIVE WORK	DOMESTIC CHORES (Including reproductive roles)	TIME FOR SELF	SLEEPTIME	OTHER
1	41.67	12.5	16.67	25	4.16
2	41.67	12.5	12.5	29.17	4.16
3	41.67	12.5	8.33	33.33	8.33
4	41.67	8.33	8.33	33.33	8.33
5	41.67	16.66	4.16	33.33	4.16
6	41.67	12.5	8.33	29.17	4.16
7	37.5	16.66	12.5	29.17	4.16
8	37.5	20.83	4.16	33.33	4.16
9	41.66	8.33	12.5	29.17	8.33
10	41.66	12.5	8.33	33.33	4.16

Table 3: Summary of Weekday Average of Group 1 (Women in paid and unpaid work)

The data revealed that for those women involved in group 1, the average amount of time spent on paid work is between eight and nine hours per day, while they spend an additional two to five hours per day on unpaid work activities either before or after their involvement in paid work. All ten women involved in group 1 spend an average of at least fifty percent or more on paid and unpaid work activities during the weekdays. Six of the ten women are married (participants 2,3,6,7,8,9), and all six have children who are either sent to a child minder (such as a grandmother or day care) during the day, or are old enough to take care of themselves. Data also revealed that during the weekdays, women in group 1 have very little time for themselves (for example, see participants 5 and 8 in Table 3).

A similar exercise was carried out to determine the weekend averages of group 1 and the data revealed that during the weekends, five of the ten women spend an average of over 50%, some as much as 57%, (for example see participants 6 and 8 in table 4) of their day on unpaid work activities such as domestic chores, preparation of meals and caring for children, while the other five spend between 29% and 44% on such activities. In the case of those who do

not have to take care of children over the weekends, there is a little more time for themselves (for example, see participants 4 and 9 in Table 4). Table 4 below reflects the average number of hours spent over weekends by those in group 1.

PARTICIPANTS	DOMESTIC CHORES	MEALS	CHILDREN	SELF	SLEEP	OTHER
1	16.6	8.3	12.5	16.6	29.16	16.6
2	16.6	16.6	12.5	16.6	25	16.6
3	29.16	8.3	16.6	12.5	25	8.3
4	16.6	12.5	-----	20.83	33.3	16.6
5	29.16	8.3	16.6	12.5	25	8.3
6	33.3	12.5	12.5	8.3	25	8.3
7	20.83	8.3	16.6	16.6	25	12.5
8	37.5	8.3	12.5	4.16	29.16	8.3
9	20.83	8.3	-----	20.83	33.3	16.6
10	33.3	12.5	8.3	8.3	29.16	8.3

Table 4: Summary of weekend average of group 1 (Women in paid and unpaid work)

Fieldwork findings of group 2 (women involved in unpaid work only):

Similarly, time spent on work roles by participants in group 2 was carefully analysed. It is worth noting that the figures added up to almost the same for the weekday and weekend diaries of women in this group, therefore this data is presented as a consolidated spread sheet. This does mean that for participants in group 2 (unpaid work only), they are just as involved in work roles over the weekends as they are during the weekdays. Table 5 below reflects the average time³⁰ spent on work roles by women who are involved in paid and unpaid work.

³⁰ Time reflected in percentage per day.

PARTICIPANTS	CHORES	MEALS	CHILDREN	SELF	SLEEP	OTHER
1	25	12.5	12.5	12.5	29.16	8.5
2	20.83	12.5	8.3	16.66	29.16	20.83 (12.5% Community)
3	25	16.66	25	8.3	29.16	4.16
4	12.5	8.3	4.16	16.66	29.16	29.16
5	12.5	16.66	12.5	16.66	33.3	8.3
6	20.83	12.5	0	12.5	29.16	25
7	12.5	8.3	0	29.16	29.16	20.83
8	25	12.5	25	4.16	37.5	4.16
9	16.66	12.5	20.83	7.29	29.16	14.5
10	12.5	4.16	0	25	33.3	25

Table 5: Summary of average of group 2 (Time in percentage)

The data reflects that women involved in group 2 (unpaid work only) spend between 12% and 25% of their day on household chores such as washing, cleaning or ironing, while they spend from about 4% up to 16% of their day on the preparation of meals. Seven of the ten women in group 2 reflect their involvement in taking care of children, while three of the ten women are not involved in this way. Time spent on taking care of children ranges from 4% to as much as 25% per day (for example participants 3 and 8 – see table 5), in which case each of these participants take care of their grandchildren. Data also reflected that those women who are not involved at all, or are involved very little with taking care of children (for example participants 6, 7 and 10 in table 5) have more time for self and other activities, while those women involved in taking care of children have very little time for self and other activities (for example, participants 3 and 8 in table 5). In addition, the data revealed that five of the ten participants in group 2 spend more than 50% of their day on work activities such as domestic chores, preparation of meals and taking care of children (for example participants 1, 2, 3, 8 and 9 in table 5) with one woman (participant 2) spending up to 12.5% of her average day on community roles. In some cases (for example participants 3 and 8 in table 5), it must be noted that the average day adds up to more than 100%, which is due to women

multitasking, such as watching over the children while preparing a meal or carrying out domestic chores.

Summary:

The 24-hour time diaries proved to be useful in reflecting the amount of time women spend in paid and unpaid work activities. The fieldwork findings revealed that women in both groups spend a similar average time in various work roles, meaning that women who are involved in unpaid work only are just as busy all day as those involved in paid and unpaid work, or vice versa. The diaries also revealed that five out of every ten women in each group spend a minimum of 50% and more each day on work activities (be it paid and unpaid work or unpaid work only), ranging from 12 hours to as much as 16 hours per day on activities including productive, reproductive and community roles as outlined by Moser (1993). It must be noted that in assessing the time study diaries, these particular terms (productive, reproductive and community work) were not used as referred to by Moser (1993), simply to maintain the language familiar and frequently used by the women themselves. For example, when women carried out roles relating to their children, their time diaries reflected lines such as “helped children with homework”, or “gave baby a bath”, rather than “reproductive roles”, hence these tables have maintained the terminology of the women themselves and have extrapolated these categories according to Moser’s (1993) triple role of women’s work. During the weekends, women in both groups are just as involved and spend as many hours as they do in the weekdays.

For the purpose of this study, the women have been classified into these two particular groups according to their work roles, but Erin Kidd (2012:1) asserts that historically women have been divided into two such groups. According to Kidd, historically the two groups, typically referred to as “working women” and “stay at home moms”, have supposedly been at war with each other as this is the picture created of them in the large majority of female driven movies and other forms of media.

The fieldwork findings, however, revealed quite the contrary to the perception that these two groups have been at war with each other. During the focus group discussions in particular, women in each group expressed respect for their counterparts. For example, participants in

group 1 (women in paid and unpaid work) expressed that domestic chores are not as easy as they are made to appear and they expressed concern for the women in group 2 (women in unpaid work only) who are constantly burdened with this role. Group 1 expressed that although they too are burdened with such roles, they at least have a little break from it while involved in their productive roles, also stating that when one is involved in paid work, they have short breaks in the day, but this, unfortunately, does not happen in unpaid roles. Similarly, women from group 2 expressed that they cannot imagine how women in group 1 cope with such enormous workloads since they spend most of their time in paid jobs.

Whilst two such groups would have typically been reflected as being antagonistic toward each other (Kidd, 2012:1), the fieldwork findings revealed that women in each group understand the huge roles that they each carry and find themselves in a similar plight despite their different work roles. The fieldwork also revealed that women involved in unpaid work only (which has no time boundaries) spend just as much time in work roles as those women that are involved in paid and unpaid work. Having discussed the aspect of time spent on work roles, I will now discuss how these work roles are divided within households.

5.5.2 Division of labour

As noted in section 3.2, it was Ester Boserup (1970) whose seminal work opened the discussion on the divisions of labour based on gender constructs. Section 2.4 discussed that indentured Indian women worked just as hard on the sugar cane plantations but received only half the wages, and were still burdened with domestic roles, causing them to spend many hours each day on their work roles. While Moser (1993:29) asserts that it is such divisions that have positively excluded men from their community and reproductive roles, confining them to productive roles (see section 3.5), we find that Indian women are still burdened with such roles.

Fieldwork findings from group 1 (women involved in paid and unpaid work)

To better illustrate the division of labour, table 6 helpfully exemplifies the responses of group 1 to the question –Who does most of the domestic chores in your household?–

Participant	Myself	Husband	Son	Daughter	Domestic	Other (specify)
1					✓	
2	✓			✓		
3	✓	✓				
4						✓(Mum)
5	✓					
6	✓	✓				
7	✓			✓	✓	
8	✓				✓	
9	✓				✓	
10	✓					
TOTAL	8	2	NIL	2	4	

Table 6: Division of work of group 1

As reflected in table 6, eight of the ten women in group 1 reflected in the questionnaire that they take care of the domestic chores in their households. However, it is worth noting that while two of them did not reflect such involvement in the questionnaire, it was actually found during the 24-hour time diary that they are involved to an extent in domestic chores, meaning that all ten participants in group 1 (women involved in paid and unpaid work) were involved in such work roles.

Four of the women in this group reflected that they share these roles with a domestic helper, but this by no means frees them up from such roles as they are still involved in domestic responsibilities. They acknowledged that it is not possible for every home to have a domestic helper because of financial restraints, but for those who do have the benefit of a helper, they considered themselves privileged. It must be noted that there are more domestic workers in group 1, than in group 2. This is probably due to the income that the participant brings into the home, thus making domestic helpers affordable. Each of them did state, however, that although the assistance of domestic workers helps to cope better, it does not exempt them from certain domestic roles.

Two of the respondents in this group reflected that these roles are shared with their husbands while none of the respondents reflected the involvement of a son in the household.

However, both these women expressed that this is not normal cultural practice in many Indian homes, so they counted themselves fortunate. Women also expressed that when they are away from the home for work reasons or away in hospital, it greatly impacts on the family, since the father in the home cannot care for the family the way a mother does, as –women care for their children differently to how men care for them” according to participant 3 in group 1. Participant 4 in group 1 commented on the ability of women to multitask, stating:

You see, that’s the difference between men and women. Women are different. They are able to multi task – to do so much for the day and still have the strength to wake up the next day and keep going. As women, our minds are constantly working. When we go to bed we are thinking about what to prepare for their lunches the next morning, or did we remember to feed the dog, or don’t forget to take out the chicken from the freezer, or don’t forget to pack PE clothes for the children. Our minds are constantly operating. But it is different for men. Once their heads hit the pillow, it’s lights out.

Participant 7 stated, –The reality is that as a woman you cannot just come home one day and say: ‘Today I will watch some TV, read the paper, put my feet up and drink some coffee’. It is possible for men to do that but not for women, which feels quite unfair at times. Everyone’s well-being in the home rotates around you as a woman”.

Although women in group 1 were largely responsible for carrying out domestic responsibilities in their homes, eight of the women asserted that these roles should actually be shared with all within household, since they too contribute to the financial running of the home. They considered it to be –unfair” that these responsibilities fall entirely on their shoulders. Although this is the ideal, table 7 illustrates that in practice this does not really happen, and women are left burdened with productive, reproductive and community roles. Participant 6 in group 1 stated that although we would like to believe that these roles should be shared, this is the ideal since in reality this does not actually happen. She also used the case of Martha and Mary and stated how women have always been taught that ‘Mary chose the better path’, mentioning that the role of Martha was undermined. Whilst Christian

teachings may have added to these work overloads that women encounter, it is also culture that has added to the burden.

Fieldwork findings from group 2 (women involved in unpaid work only)

Similarly, women in group 2 were asked, “Who does most of the domestic chores in your household?” Table 7 illustrates the division of work in this group.

Participant	Myself	Husband	Son	Daughter	Domestic	Other (specify)
1	✓			✓	✓	
2	✓					
3	✓			✓		
4	✓				✓	
5	✓			✓		
6	✓	✓				
7	✓					
8	✓					
9	✓					
10	✓					
TOTAL	10	1	NIL	3	2	

Table 7: Division of work of Group 2

As reflected in table 7, all ten women responded that they carry out domestic chores in the household with one sharing such roles with her husband. Participant 2 in group 2 also expressed the family’s need for attention from the women of the house, while these are not expectations they have of men. For example, this participant stated, “As women, it is amazing that everyone in the family wants a piece of you, but you don’t generally get this expectation when it comes to men”.

Three women in this group reflected that they share domestic roles with their daughters and two with domestic helpers. It must be noted that there are half the number of domestic helpers in this group than in group 1 probably due to the affordability in group 1 of such help.

As noted in the first group, here again, it must be noted that the sons in the household do not participate in domestic roles. Participant 10 in group 2, who lives in the household with male siblings, also expressed that there are no expectations within the household for the boys to assist with domestic chores. She stated, that ~~it~~ is important for us to work together as a family, but it is usually the girls and women that feel the burden and pressures of keeping things in the home going, even though they may also be working, studying and doing everything else just as much as males may be doing, but they don't have the work burden that we do". This reflection was confirmed in the questionnaire which did not reveal the involvement of ~~sons~~" in the home, while responsibilities were shared with ~~daughters~~" as already illustrated in the table 7 above.

When asked why it is that women become burdened with such roles, participant 4 of group 2 commented that Indian Christian women were made to believe that these roles are women's roles only, mainly by the teachings that were received in the early years of their Christian faith. Participant 7 of the same group stated, ~~F~~rom the time of Adam and Eve, the man was meant to toil and bring in money, while woman had to work in the home and take care of its upkeep. This was what we were taught in our growing up days in the church. Also the story of Martha in the New Testament who was busy in the kitchen was a story that every one of knows off by heart". Participant 5 in group 2 stated, ~~F~~hese teachings stayed with us and although we are now occasionally exposed to teachings around shared responsibilities in the home, we are always mindful of the teaching we grew up with that domestic work is women's work".

Summary

In summary, it becomes clear that in both groups women are largely responsible for the domestic chores in households, leaving them burdened with carrying huge workloads since the well-being of the family depends on it. In understanding the experiences of women in their work roles, the fieldwork findings accentuated that Indian women are involved in productive, reproductive and community roles based on the divisions of labour according to their particular gender. Even though many of them have assumed productive roles, which are vital to the economic well-being of their particular households, they are still very influenced by their cultural and Christian upbringing which taught that certain roles within the household remain women's roles. When asked why it was that they considered domestic

roles to be women's responsibilities, it was mentioned that this was the teaching transferred to them either by their mother, female relative, elder women in the Christian faith or from their Christian experience in general. There was a general agreement amongst women in both groups that this notion's onset was by foundational Christian teachings. Women in both groups revealed that their Christian understanding about their work roles was acquired largely in the earlier years of their faith, mainly through a "Sunday Morning sermon or from teachings of various woman's groups, or even in Sunday school and Youth lessons".

The fieldwork findings revealed that work is not equally spread out in the family, and while men are said to "help out", women carry much of the work load based on gender division of labour. It appeared that women in group 2 were more accepting of these roles as women's responsibilities while women in group 1 expressed that these roles must be shared, since they too are equal financial contributors in the home.

5.5.3 Impact of culture on work roles

As discussed in section 2.4, historically Indian women were constrained by their cultural roles and expectations. The aspect of 'culture' often appeared throughout the fieldwork findings. Women in both groups expressed that it is 'Indian culture' which contributes to women's work overload, with many of them stating that in an Indian home, "domestic chores are never complete".

Fieldwork findings from group 1 (women involved in paid and unpaid work)

In group 1, seven of the ten women directly linked Indian culture with women's work overload which was clearly reflected in the semi-structured interviews. For example, participant 2 from this group said, "As Indians it is the cultural expectation that the women be there to help and support the family". Similarly, participant 9 stated, "Because of our cultural upbringing – a woman's place is thought to be in the house".

Participant 7 of group 1 stated:

I think that as women, especially Indian women, we are always working a 24/7 shift. I am not sure if this is the case for other cultural groups, but I know that it is definitely a reality for Indian women. I sometimes hear some of my friends at work (who are not Indian), say after work they went for a jog, or a cycle, or to the fitness club, and I wonder how on earth that is possible when all my mind is thinking about is cooking supper, helping with homework, getting lunches sorted for the next day.

Participant 5 expressed the constant exhaustion she feels from of coming home after work, preparing the supper and then helping the children with homework. She was probed regarding the involvement of her husband with regards to helping out with chores while she assisted the children with homework. Her response was:

We both come from the background where we have been taught that it is the women's role to take care of household chores, cooking, cleaning. After supper he usually relaxes and watches TV catches up with the newspaper. It is not something that is an issue to us, I suppose it is because we have done it that way for the past years now. There are some things that he would not expect me to do like mow the lawn or fix the car, so in the same way, there are certain things that I do not expect him to do. This is also a part of our Indian culture. We have been taught and trained in this way, and I think it is only the younger generation that will see the importance of helping out as a family. But I must add that he does help out when he can.

Participant 6 in group 1 commented that even though Indian women are becoming more involved in careers and are becoming professionals in various fields, they are still mindful of their cultural roles as Indian women. She stated, "As Indian women, no matter how educated or professional we are, it is part of our cultural upbringing to take the lead role in domestic responsibilities in the home, so I think it will take a long time for us to move away from this". Participant 8 mentioned that because Indian culture has informed us that certain roles are not for men, she counted herself privileged to have her husband assist with domestic chores, since this is not common Indian practice. She stated, "My husband and I usually do chores together, which is not so common for Indian men, so this gives me a chance to do others

things that I am sure most other women cannot find time to do, so in this way, I count myself as being extremely blessed”.

It was also found that within the Indian culture, extended families still play a significant role. For example, eight of the ten women in group 1 (women in paid and unpaid work) stated that they are able to cope with their huge workloads with help from extended family or from their parents. Since these women are involved in paid roles as well, they often send their children to a grandmother or some family member to be taken care of. Participant 3, who is a young mother of three children, stated, “Without the help of my mother, I would never be able to cope with the demands of life, so every day, I thank God for my mother”. While women in this group conceded that culture might have directly contributed to the work overload that Indian women encounter, they also noted that it does contribute positively. For example, participant 8 from group 1 expressed that because they are ‘Indian’ women, their culture is such that families are still very much a part of each other’s lives. She stated:

Although, we may not live with each other as an extended family, but we can still count on each other, especially when it comes to the care of our children. We know that we can always count on our mothers, mothers-in-law and other members of the family to help out with our children. And that is only because of the nature of Indian families and Indian culture.

The role of the extended family has been discussed in detail in 2.4, showing various trends over the past decades, and what has become clear that Indian families are still very dependent on the support and help they get from the extended family. Although the data did not show that households are made up of extended family structures, it did reflect a dependence of individual families on the support offered by extended families, especially around the care of younger children in families. This is more in the case of women in group 1 who leave home all day due to their involvement in paid work.

Women in group 1 were asked the question, “From your *cultural* understanding as an Indian woman, whose responsibility is it to prepare meals, do household chores and take care of the children in the home”? Eight women in this group asserted that it is the role of women. It was mentioned that as Indian women, they were taught that it is their responsibility to take

care of the cooking, cleaning, household chores, and taking care of the children. Women agreed that this was described to them as submission to their husbands or to other male figures in their lives (such as a father, brother or uncle). Participant 2 commented, “This teaching has been handed down to us, in some cases, directly from our mothers or grandmothers, or from some senior female figure in our home. Although it is seen as submission to men, the men themselves do not directly teach this in the home. This kind of teaching was a cultural expectation as part of the role of women in the home”.

Fieldwork findings from group 2 (women involved in unpaid work only)

Similarly, seven women in group 2 asserted that culture impacts on women’s work roles. What emerged strongly is that Indian culture placed a strong emphasis on education, hence the children and others members in the family that are studying, are not laden with the burden of domestic chores. For example, one participant in group 2 stated, “I do not trouble my children to help because I want them to spend all the time possible on their school work – I suppose that this is the way we as Indian families were raised, to place a strong emphasis on education”. Participant 6 of group 2 stated that even if she had to double up on her workload just to ensure that her children had extra time for studying, she is willing to do so. She stated:

I do not think that I am spoiling my children by not giving them too much of responsibilities, in the home, I guess that this is typical of most Indian families. I always encourage them to get on with the school work and I feel that once I start to impose on them to help me it could rob them of precious time that they need for the studies. You would know that as Indian families we place much on education, that is the best thing we can give to our children, so even if it means me working extra hard, I really don’t mind. From my own experience, our Indian families always emphasize the importance of education, more than sport or anything else, so I feel that if I always impose on them to do chores it will not work out the way we want it to.

Nine of the ten women involved in group 2 (paid and unpaid work) expressed their role in caring for grandchildren or the children of some family member as part of their cultural roles. Women articulated this role as vital to the functioning of family structures and saw this as

part of being Indian”. For example, one participant from group 2 stated, “I also take care of my grandson in the week so that keeps me very busy when he comes from school. I enjoy doing that because I understand that my children need my help in order for them to cope with their own load, otherwise they will not manage as a family. This is what we have been taught and have grown up with as Indian families”.

Participant 8 of group 2, who spends as much as 25% of her average day taking care of children stated, “Days are very busy with my grandchildren because the youngest is eighteen months old and it is very demanding on my time. Although it takes much of my day, I see my role in helping my children as a part of my God given responsibility”. Similarly, participant 1 stated:

My grandchildren start arriving from school around 1pm and my day gets very busy from then. I usually prepare lunch for them, and also help them out with their homework. This takes up most of the afternoon until I am ready to start preparing supper. My children need my help to take care of their children otherwise as a family they will just not cope.

Participant 3 of group 2 commented that many young parents today cannot spend quality time with their children due to work pressures, therefore it becomes the responsibility of grandparents to give children quality time. She stated, “My days are usually quite full with my grandson. He gets dropped off with me daily while his parents go to work. I feel the need to spend quality time with him, since his parents’ work situations are so demanding, leaving them with very little quality time as a family”. The data revealed that she spends 25% of her day taking care of children.

Three of the ten women involved in group 2 also expressed their role in caring for their aging parents by visiting them often, preparing meals and spending time with them. This was expressed as part of Indian culture and while women did not express these roles as burdensome, the time diaries and semi-structured interviews reflected that it does impact greatly on their day and demands much of their time.

Whilst women spend much time taking care of children and household chores as part of their cultural roles, it was found that culturally there still remains the burden for them to also prepare the meals and carry out household chores. For example, during the focus group discussion participants were asked, “From your *cultural* understanding as an Indian woman, whose responsibility is it to prepare meals, do household chores and take care of the children in the home”?

All ten women agreed that this is the practice in Indian homes that such roles are ‘women’s roles’, with many women agreeing that such teachings came by and large from women themselves. For example one participant in group 2 noted, “Whenever mothers taught their daughters these kinds of responsibilities around cooking, cleaning, taking care of children, it was usually done to prepare young women to be better wives when they get married. For some women, this ‘preparation’ started as young as 14 years of age (not that they would marry that young)”.

Participant 5 from group 2 commented, “Usually, it is the women themselves who put pressure on other younger women to become actively involved in their roles. It is viewed as being a ‘good Indian woman’”. It was also stated that as part of the Indian culture, whenever people visited a home and the women did not immediately get up to serve tea or a meal, this was often viewed negatively. Some of the younger women related how they were often told stories by the elder women of “how it was done in our days”, thus impressing on them their cultural responsibilities.

Women in group 2 did acknowledge that with the younger couples there seems to be more co-operation from their husbands with domestic chores. Participant 8 in group 2 commented: “Women who are younger seem to get more support from their husbands and their thinking is not as traditional as it is for us older women”. Participant 1 mentioned that while women are still mindful of their “Indianess”, Indian culture is not as strong as it used to be about 3-4 decades ago, but women’s roles are still shaped by it. It was also stated by one participant in group 2 that “with the younger women going to mixed schools and being influenced by their friends of other race groups, that strong dynamic of culture is not as visible as it used to be”.

Summary

In summary, both groups strongly agreed that Indian culture plays a role in the way in which Indian women carry out and manage their work roles. What became clear is that Indian women's workloads are still largely linked to their cultural upbringing and practices, causing women to work endlessly. Women involved in paid and unpaid roles carry out reproductive roles either before or after their involvement in paid work, claiming that their husbands *'help out'* with such responsibilities. Gender scholar, Marcela Valente comments on this, stating:

Many women who work outside the home say that the men they appreciate most in relation to family life are those who *'share'* domestic work, or who *'help out'* with children, but such a vague way of referring to examples of men taking on more domestic responsibility is not sufficient. Men subtly put the idea that domestic chores are women's work with the dreaded phrase: *'I help out at home'*. What would happen if women said: *'I help out at home'*. People would say *'Poor husband!'* or *'How terrible, what a state her house or her kids must be in!'* (Valente, 2009:18).

While women make such claims that their husbands *'help out'* when possible, Valente (2009:18) condemns the use of such phrases as *'help out'* and *'share'*.

5.6 Women's theological understanding of their work

The data reflected that women's understanding of their work roles is shaped by culture, as discussed in section 5.5, as well as by their theological or Biblical understanding and interpretations of work. It is these theological interpretations of their work roles which impacts on their work experiences. Three particular theological understandings emerged during the fieldwork, namely the notion of work as a blessing or curse, second, God as sustainer and provider and third, God as worker.

5.6.1 Work as a blessing or curse

The notion that work is not a curse from God was one that surfaced throughout the fieldwork of this study. In group 1 (women involved in paid and unpaid work), all ten disagreed that

work was a curse from God. Whilst participants in this group acknowledged that work can become burdensome, they conceded that it is not a curse from God. For example, participant 1 of group 1 stated, “These are ‘man-made’ rules that work is a curse, and although God cursed the ground, and God cursed Adam and Eve for their disobedience, that curse has been broken by the entry of Jesus into this world”. Participant 3 of the same group stated, “The Bible reminds us that work is a blessing from God, so we are required to do all our work with love and joy”. Participant 6 of group 1 commented, “In Genesis 3:14, we read that God cursed the serpent because it had deceived Adam and Eve in the garden. We also read that God cursed the ground but we are not told anywhere that work itself is a curse from God”.

Similarly, all ten participants in group 2 (women involved in unpaid work only) also expressed that they disagree with the notion that work is a curse from God. Some of them in group 2 stated, for example:

“God did say to Adam that out of the sweat of his brow he shall eat bread, but I do not see it as a curse – it is more like a price that they have to pay for their rebellion”.

“God will not curse something that He Himself does and believes in”.

“If we view work as a curse from God then a number of us would probably not be serving Him because we spend most of our lives working, so why would we want to serve a God that cursed the work we have to do every single day”.

As boldly affirmed by participant 2 of group 2, “If work was really a curse from God, then I would be living under a curse for about 16 hours a days, every day of my life since that is how much of time I spend working”!

An important finding is that while women made such positive acclamations in the focus group discussions, their individual prayers and reflections revealed quite a contrast. When invited to write down a prayer, song or Bible verse reflecting their experiences of work as women, these individual reflections revealed the internal concealed tension that they experience. It was especially their prayers that reflected the tension experienced in their work roles.

Prayers from group 1 (women involved in paid and unpaid work)

Whilst all ten women in this group reflected that they did not see work as a curse from God, their individual prayers reflect the burden that their work experiences leave on them as women. Their prayers revealed that although women may not openly express their experiences as negative or burdensome, they are in actual fact, quite onerous. For example, here are some examples of the prayers written down by women in group.

Thank you Oh Lord for helping me to carry my huge work load. I know that I often become so angry for this burden that I bear alone, but help me always to remember that you created me in a special way so that I am able to cope. I often feel so tired and weary and feel like giving up, but your strength helps me through each new day. Help me to realize that even though men may not understand the burdens of the workload we bear as women, I know that other women understand since many of them are in the same situation, but most of all, you Oh Lord understand our tired and weary bodies. Thank you for strength, in Jesus name, AMEN.

Christian teachings have by and large caused women to view work positively, causing them to profess within the public domain that work is a blessing from God, but actually their lived experiences reveal quite the contrary. Above is a prayer by participant 2 of group 1, who is a married woman taking care of a household of six members including herself. She is involved in paid and unpaid work and her workday is as many as seventeen hours.

Her prayer commences with gratitude to God for helping her to carry the huge work load that she endures. In her opening statement she discloses that her work load is not light but it is an immense load. She then expresses her anger that she has to bear this burden alone by stating, “I often become so angry for this burden that I bear alone”, meaning that her work load is not shared with others in her household. She then hastes to console herself by the affirmation that because she is created in a special way, she has the ability to cope with this load with God being her helper. Her work experiences leave her feeling tired and weary but God renews her strength and helps her through each day. She concedes that even though men may not understand these burdens that women bear with regards to their work experiences, other

women do understand her plight, so for this reason she is not alone in her struggle. The load she is carrying also impacts on her physically causing her to become “tired and weary”. The more important thing for her is that God understands her weary and tired body. Her prayer concludes with a note of gratitude to God as the giver of strength. Interestingly, this prayer begins and concludes with thankfulness to God for help and strength to carry the load, acknowledging that there is dependence on God to bear the workload. Whilst the introduction and conclusion of this prayer is optimistic, the contents in between reveals that the load is cumbersome.

A second prayer reflected below is that of participant 6 of group 1. This participant is married and takes care of a household of five members, including herself. She is involved in paid and unpaid work and her workday extends to as many as sixteen hours. Her prayer commences with a request for God to give attention to her prayer, acknowledging that she turns to God as her helper, creator and maker. Her work experiences are not expressed as celebrated, sunlit days but as dark moments that leave her feeling weary and exhausted. In those moments of exhaustion she knows that she could turn to God for help to carry the load.

She proclaims that she is not alone and that it is God who hears her cry and sees her tears, suggesting that her work experiences often cause her to cry out to God. She acknowledges that it is God who gives her strength to wake up each day and sustains her so that she could keep going on with her daily routine. She recognizes that her strength and her hope are found in God. As mentioned above, her prayer commenced with an appeal for God to hear her request, and it closes with thankfulness to God for hearing and answering her prayer. Her prayer states:

Hear my prayer my LORD and my Helper. I turn to YOU as my Maker and Creator. In my darkest moments of weariness and exhaustion, I know that I could look up to YOU as the ONE who helps me to bear the load that I must carry each day. I know that I am not alone. I know that YOU hear my cry and see my tears. Some days when I feel so tired to even wake up and carry on, YOU give me strength and sustain me. I thank YOU that my hope is in you and my strength is in YOU. Thank you for hearing and answering my prayer. AMEN.

Third was the prayer of participant 1 in group 1, who is a widow, in a household of 5, including herself. Her workday extends to as many as eighteen hours, and she is involved in paid and unpaid work. Her prayer reads:

–What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grieves to bear”....this has been my experience working as a woman. My experience has been a very tough one that not many will understand, working hard to keep my family together, and to provide all the needs for my children. But in all my hardships, God saw me through. I can do nothing without the strength and amazing love of God, I will surely fail, and I will be drifting like a ship without a sail. As women who carrying such great workloads, none of us will cope without your amazing strength over our lives. God give us courage to keep working. I thank you LORD for answer to this prayer.

This participant’s prayer opens with the words of a famous hymn expressing that she has a friend in Jesus, who bears her grieves. She articulates that it takes hard work to keep her family together and to provide for the needs of her family, and one would assume that this must be more challenging in the case of her being a widow. Her concern is for her family and for the provision of their needs, and she acknowledges that it takes hard work to keep them together and to ensure that their needs are met. She concedes that all women alike need strength from God in order to cope with their workloads. Her prayer reflects that she is concerned about providing for the needs of her children and she is also concerned about other women who need God’s strength to cope with their heavy workloads. It is God’s love and strength that keeps her from drifting like a ship without a sail.

Prayers from group 2 (women involved in unpaid work only)

Participants in group 2 were also invited at the end of the focus group discussions to write down an expression of their everyday lived work experiences as women. Here are some examples of their prayers:

Whatever work I do, I love doing it, because I do it to your glory, Oh Lord. Lord bless all the women, give them joy and happiness in all that they do. In this day and age when women work so hard, many of them are being so abused. Men would not understand the huge load that women carry, because you created us differently. Protect the women Lord, love them Lord, and give them your blessing to cope with the load, in Jesus name, AMEN.

This is the prayer of participant 2 of group 2. She is married and is in a household of four, including herself. Her work day commences at 5am and ends at 11pm. This prayer opens with a declaration that there is a love for the work done because this brings it brings glory to God. The participant prays for joy and happiness of other women, declaring that even though they work so hard, they are being abused. The kind of abuse being referred to is not clear, however, it is used in the context of women working so hard. It appears that the concern of this woman is that it is work experiences and overload that women encounter that tends to be abusive. She goes on to assert that women are not understood by men because women are created differently. Her prayer ends with a plea for God's protection and love over women, granting them a blessing to cope with the load. Her concluding statement is an acknowledgement that women are able to cope with the load because of their faith in God.

The final prayer below commences with a pronouncement of all that God means to this participant. God is the giver of strength in time of weakness, God is the one who hears the cries of God's children, God is the one who lifts up those that are down, carrying them through when their strength is worn out, and God is the one who lifts her burdens. While the goodness of God is affirmed, it also becomes clear that the work experiences of this participant are burdensome, but she also acknowledges that God is aware of such burdens that women carry. She alludes to the challenges of finding a balance in trying to maintain her work roles and also keep her faith life strong. She sees her relationship with God as the very thing that helps her to move forward even when she feels tired and weary. Her prayer concludes with praise to God for being the lifter of her head, which is probably bent low in trying to keep up with the challenges of her work load. It is in God that she finds strength to face each day, declaring that God is her amazing creator and God.

Her prayer is reflected as:

You Oh God give strength to the weak, You hear the cries of Your children, You lift us up when we are down and You carry us through when we don't have the strength to go any longer. Thank You for lifting my burdens. LORD You know that as a woman in this world there are many burdens that we face to make ends meet and to keep our families going, to keep our jobs going and to keep walking in faith with You. It is only by having a relationship with You that I can keep going forward – sometimes my body feels tired with all that I must endure for the day, but You are the lifter of my head. Thank You that it is in You that I find strength to face another day. How amazing are You my Creator and God!

In summary, whilst all twenty women reflected in the questionnaire that work is not a curse from God, their individual prayers as reflected above, indicated that their work experiences are burdensome, weighty and fatiguing, and may not be the blessing that they claim it to be. It became clear that during the group discussions women were not comfortable to reveal the cumbersome nature of their work experiences because of existing Christian teachings and cultural expectations imposed on them. However, the invitation to write down prayers and individual verses became a safe space for women to freely express themselves without the fear of feeling insecure that these prayers would be probed.

5.6.2 God as sustainer and provider

While the prayers above reflect the dual nature of work, they also reveal that women understand God to be their sustainer and provider of God strength to effectively fulfill their work roles as women. Women reflected that they are able to cope with their work roles because God sustains and strengthens them to cope with their loads.

Reflections from group 1 (women involved in paid and unpaid work)

All ten of the women in group 1 spontaneously expressed that God sustains them to cope with the various responsibilities they have for the day. Statements such as –“Only by the grace of God”, –“God helps me to cope”, “My faith in God keeps me going for the routine that will start all over again on a Monday morning” recurred throughout the semi-structured interviews. For example, participant 6 commented:

My day always begins with my personal time of prayer and devotion. I feel that if I do not have this time with God I will not be able to function for the rest of the day. Spending this time in the morning sets the tone for the rest of the day and it helps for things to go right in my day. It also gives me inner peace and wisdom to deal with those challenging and unexpected situations at work.

Similarly, participant 2 commented:

I find myself constantly talking to God throughout the day – I am always mindful of God's presence with me, otherwise, I would not be able to cope. How else would one be able to work and involved in a full time job, take care of the children, take care of the house and still be able to get up the next morning and have the energy to do it all over again? It is only with God's help that I am able to manage the huge load that I have, so my daily walk is one of faith and prayer.

Reflections from group 2 (women involved in unpaid work only)

Similarly all ten women in this group responded that they are able to cope with God's strength. For example, participant 2 stated, "I usually have my prayer time in the evenings. Although I spend from 9pm to 10pm in devotion and prayer, I am constantly praying, singing hymns and choruses throughout the day, or else I will not cope with my load".

Participant 8 commented, "If it were not for God's help, I don't think I would cope with all that I do". "I always commit my day to God and I believe that He answers my prayer by giving me the strength to cope each day". "I usually have my prayer time in the evenings. Although I spend from 9pm to 10pm in devotion and prayer, I am constantly praying, singing hymns and choruses throughout the day. This is my way of coping".

Participant 5 in group 2 wrote down, "Count your blessings name them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord has done. This song reminds me that even when I feel down and discouraged because of the load I carry, I will be surprised by the blessings of God over my

life for there are many blessings. It is God's strength that helps me cope with this load". The expression of this participant is that she does feel discouraged and down because of her experiences of work as a woman. While she highlights the blessings of God over her life, she is also mindful that work is burdensome, but it is God's strength that helps her to cope. Similarly, participant 4 in group 1 wrote, "Let the weak say I am strong", acknowledging that at times her experiences of work as a woman leave her feeling weak and down, and it is in those moments that she turns to God for strength.

In summary, all twenty women reflected that God sustains and strengthens them to cope with their work loads. This reveals that despite women's work role, be it paid and unpaid work or unpaid work only, women have developed a theological understanding that it is God who helps them and sustains them to cope with their workloads.

5.6.3 God as worker

The fieldwork findings clearly revealed that women understand God to be a worker, therefore, they too, who are created in God's image should be workers. There were acknowledgements, however, that God's work is "creative, splendid and magnificent" and cannot be compared with human work, especially with the work they do as women. Despite this understanding, women were clear that God is a worker and "irrespective of the kind of work that God did, we should follow this model and be workers". For example, participant 3 from group 1 (women involved in paid and unpaid work) commented, "God created the heavens and the earth and that must have been hard work so nothing exempts us from working". Participant 7 of group 1 stated, "Even though God's work is nothing like ours because we are not creating things like God did, but we are instructed to maintain God's creation, so this can only take place by hard work".

Similarly, participants in group 2 (women involved in unpaid work only) commented that God is a worker so we are instructed to be workers. For example, participant 8 of group 2 stated, "The Bible itself says that God worked – He worked for six days and on the seventh day He rested, so this means that God believed in work". Participant 9, making reference to John 5:17, stated Jesus tells us, "My Father is working until now, and I am working".

Women acknowledged that God is the ultimate worker, and this loads the act of work itself with inherent meaning, significance, and dignity.

This section has shared that women's understanding of their work roles has been shaped by their theological and Biblical understandings of work. Even though women have been taught that work is not a curse from God, their everyday lived experiences reflect a different portrait, where work is expressed as burdensome and onerous. Women also understand God a worker as well as sustainer and provider in their work experiences.

5.7 Faith practices in relation to experiences of work

The fieldwork findings revealed that there are distinct faith practices that are shaped by theological perceptions that women have developed around their work roles. As discussed in section 5.5, the theological notions in particular that have shaped women's faith practices are, first, that work is not a curse from God, second, God as sustainer and provider, and third, God as worker. Against this backdrop, three faith practices in particular became clear during the fieldwork, namely, prayer, worship and attitudes in work, as they intertwine with the work experiences of women.

5.7.1 Prayer

Responses from group 1 (women involved in paid and unpaid work)

All ten women in this group reflected that prayer is an important faith practice, enabling them to cope with their workloads. For example, participant 7 commented:

My day always begins at 5am with my personal time of prayer and devotion. I feel that if I do not have this time with God I will not be able to function for the rest of the day. Spending this time in the morning sets the tone for the rest of the day and it helps for things to go right in my day. It also gives me inner peace and wisdom to deal with those challenging and unexpected situations at work.

For this particular participant, the routine of her day and her ability to fulfill her work roles is determined by her time of prayer. She expressed that if she does not have this time of prayer she “will not be able to function for the rest of the day”. This prayer time also gives her success in her work day allowing for “things to go right”. Her ability to cope with her load, as well as the outcome of her workday is reliant on her time of prayer.

Participant 3 in group 1 stated, “I usually have my prayer time in the evenings. Although I spend time in the evenings in prayer, I am constantly praying quietly and talking to God throughout the day. If there is something I am unsure of at work, I just say as quiet prayer and God helps me to get it right”. For this participant who is involved in paid and unpaid work, while she has her time of prayer in the evenings she acknowledges that she is constantly praying thought-out the day. She attributes her ability to be successful in her paid work roles to her constant communication with God. Similarly, participant 6 of group 1, who is a young mother of three, mentioned:

I find myself constantly talking to God throughout the day. I am always mindful of God’s presence with me, otherwise, I would not be able to cope. How else would one be able to work and involved in a full time job, take care of the children, take care of the house and still be able to get up the next morning and have the energy to do it all over again? It is only with God’s help that I am able to manage the huge load that I have, so my daily walk is one of faith and prayer.

For this participant, her practice of prayer is not exercised in a brief moment of devotion but is expressed as a constant communication with God. Her faith practice of prayer is her means of coping with her workload.

Responses from group 2 (women involved in unpaid work only)

Similarly, all ten women in group 2 reflected that it is their prayer that helps them cope with their workload. For example, participant 1 who is married and also takes care of a household of six stated, “I usually have my prayer time in the evenings. Although I spend time in the

evening in devotion and prayer, I am constantly praying, singing hymns and choruses throughout the day. This is my way of coping or else I would not be able to keep up with the demands of life”. Similarly, participant 6 who is a married woman taking care of a household of 4 commented, “If it were not for God’s help, I don’t think I would cope with all that I do. One of the ways in which I can ask God to empower me with strength for carrying out my workload is through prayer”. Participant 8 of the same group stated, “I always commit my day to God and I believe that He answers my prayer by giving me the strength to cope each day”.

Participants in group 2 expressed that while they pray for God to help them to cope with their daily routine, they also pray for the provision of their needs. Whilst they may not have the burden of leaving home every day and going into a paid job, they are, to an extent, burdened with their financial needs being met. This is where their faith is really put into action where they need to trust God for the provision of their needs. For participants in group 1, this did not emerge as a deep concern, possibly because of the incomes they receive from their paid work.

Women in both groups expressed that it is their prayer that empowers them to cope with their workloads.

5.7.2 Worship

Women in both groups also expressed their work experiences as worship to God. For example, participant 8 of group 1 (women involved in paid and unpaid work) expressed her work roles as her time to worship God. She stated:

All the work that I do is an expression of worship to God because God is a worker and instructed us to be workers as well. Whether it is in my paid job or in the work I do at home is my way of worshipping God. Even the most simple task has become important to me, because I am doing it unto my family and in turn unto God as my worship to Him, because families are ordained by God.

Similarly, participant 5 of group 2 (women involved in unpaid work only) stated, “Domestic chores in the home are a blessing from GOD and it is my time of worship even though many people may not see it that way, and I do it as an expression of my love for God and for my family. This is expressed in the food I cook and in the clothes that I wash and iron”. For these women, they are worshipping God when they cook, wash or iron. While these chores may be strenuous, they are expressed as a time of worship to God.

Whilst it may appear that these women are just going about with their domestic chores, for them it is their time of praise and worship to God, and it is their faith life being practiced in what may be considered as the mundane routine of the day. Women in group 2 expressed that they enjoy the freedom in this regard of being able to sing along or even worship God aloud while they are working, while women in group 1 reflected that they need to exercise more restraint in this regard while involved in paid work.

Interestingly, women in group 2 expressed that they work just as many hours as women in group 1, therefore it becomes important for them to understand their work as an act of worship, otherwise, they walk away gaining absolutely nothing from their work, due to unpaid roles not being as valued as paid roles are.

Although participants in both groups expressed their work as worship to God, it seemed that participants in group 2 were more assertive in this regard. For example, one participant in group 2 stated:

The work that we do may not produce reports or paper or shoes or clothing, but it is producing clean homes, washed clothing, ironed clothing, and cooked meals, children that are bathed and fed. That is what I understand as productive work. I cannot say at the end of a long, hard day that I have not been productive simply because I do not get paid for the work I do. If anything, I have been extremely productive, but I am not rewarded with money for my productivity. What I am rewarded with is the knowledge that I have worshipped God all day through my work.

For participants in group 2, while they acknowledge that their roles are devalued by society, it is in exercising these work roles that they are actually worshipping God. It must be noted that this ‘devaluing’ that they spoke of was not in the context of fellow women. The

impression created was that fellow women, despite the work roles they are involved in, actually understand the challenges of unpaid work roles. Therefore, in the minds of these women, whilst their work may not yield the rewards that paid work does, they are reassured by the knowledge that they have spent yet another day worshipping God. For many of them, this in itself was regarded as rewarding.

5.7.3 Attitude towards work

Whilst women consider their work as an expression of their worship to God, the fieldwork findings also revealed that women believe that their attitude in carrying out these work roles is an important part of the expression of their faith in God.

In group 1 (women involved in paid and unpaid work), eight women spoke about having a positive attitude in their work roles because work is God's instruction to humanity. Women also linked the positive attitude in work roles to the notion that God empowers and sustains them to carry out their work roles. It was also revealed that women considered their attitude toward work to be a test of their faith. For example, a participant of group 1 commented, –Because I am involved in a paid job, I sometime feel that I am shirking my responsibilities and that my faith is being tested because I cannot do everything that the Proverbs 31 woman did, and it troubles me that I am not being an ideal Christian woman, but then I remind myself that I am also contributing to the finances of my family”.

Another participant in group 1 stated:

I sometimes ask myself the question, am I doing the right thing by going to a paid job when the Bible shows us images of good, godly women who stayed at home and cared for their families. I often wonder if I am pleasing the heart of God or whether my faith is being tested in this way. That is why I find myself working double time so that I do not fall short on my domestic responsibilities. I do this without grumbling or complaining because God instructs us to work with joy in our hearts.

In group 2 (women involved in unpaid work only), seven women commented about having the ‘right attitude’ in the work we do. For example, participant 8 of group 2, who is married and takes care of a household of four, and carries out all domestic chores alone, stated:

Love is important in all that I do and I try every day to be patient with my family. At times I become really angry because I feel so overloaded with the household responsibilities, but in times like that, I believe it is a test of my faith in God. I have learnt how to calm down when I feel like that. Singing a chorus, or saying a little prayer usually helps me with this.

Since this participant considers her work to be a practice of her faith and her worship to God, she restrains herself from feeling anger due to the work overload that she encounters, since she considers her attitude toward work to be an important part of practicing her faith in God.

It becomes clear that women view their work experiences as a test of their faith, thus they often feel compelled to ‘have the right attitude’ and ‘do all things with joy’. This faith practice often causes women to overwork, often comparing themselves to certain Biblical standards that they are familiar with. For example, one participant in group 2 commented on the illustration of the Proverbs 31 woman, who was depicted as the “ideal woman” and whose model should be followed by all women. She was seen as a woman who works willingly with her hands, rising early in the morning, providing for her family and household, she is also involved in all sorts of trade and has all kinds of skills. She was portrayed as one who is busy from morning until evening, and she also has time to care for the poor and needy. The group agreed that this woman has often been idolized as the one that all “good women” must follow and this is something that has been taught for ages by the church. This perception has limited women into feeling that their faith is tested through their attitudes in work roles, thus avoiding negligence in this regard.

What does appear is that those women who find themselves in paid and unpaid work take seriously their unpaid roles to the extent of becoming overburdened with such roles, since they consider this to be a test of their faith. If they do not fulfill these roles according to the

standards outlined in the Bible, then they consider this to be displeasing to God. In addition, since they are –supposed” to fulfill these roles, they hardly object to the overload since they consider a positive attitude to be important.

It was observed that women’s faith practices include three key areas as discussed above. First, women articulated that their success and ability to effectively carry out their work roles is determined by their prayer. Second, women conceded that when they are involved in work they are actually worshipping God. Finally, women considered their attitude in work to be a demonstration of their faith, which is sometimes tested.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to discuss the work experiences of Indian Christian women at St Paul’s Anglican Parish as well as the fieldwork process employed to investigate such experiences. Attention was given to the geographic location and historical background of this particular parish. The study participants as well as their particular work experiences in paid and unpaid work roles were also discussed. The four research instruments engaged to investigate these experiences were described and the fieldwork process was discussed in detail.

The key fieldwork findings revealed that Indian Christian women are, in actual fact, involved to various extents, in roles of production, reproduction and community work (as outlined by Moser, 1993). This study also revealed that women involved in unpaid work roles spend just as much time as those who are involved in paid and unpaid work roles. In addition, the gender divisions of work in households are not equally spread out amongst the family, thus causing women to be overburdened with these roles.

The fieldwork findings also revealed that the involvement of women in such roles is largely impacted and shaped by culture as well as the theological and Biblical teachings of their work roles. While such teachings have caused women to reflect positively on their work experiences, their individual prayers reveal quite the contrary, where the drudgery of the work involvements is voiced.

Finally and importantly, the fieldwork findings confirmed that women's work experiences intersect with their faith practices, with three particular faith practices being identified, namely, prayer, worship and attitudes in work. It has been argued that existing theologies of work have not adequately captured the voices and experiences of women, hence this study has attempted to understand the lived experiences of Indian Christian women with the hope of creating a framework for a gendered theology of work built out of such lived experiences.

Having investigated the paid and unpaid work experiences of Indian Christian women, it has become clear that there are three particular elements that become the building blocks of creating a framework for a gendered theology of work, namely, the work experiences of women, their theological understandings of work and finally their faith practices which intertwine with their work experiences.

The next chapter will aim at discussing these important elements as they point toward a framework for a gendered theology of work.

CHAPTER SIX

TOWARDS A GENDERED THEOLOGY OF WORK

6.1 Introduction

The work experiences of women remain an important discussion which needs to be addressed theologically. As revealed in the fieldwork findings of this study, women's work, be it paid or unpaid, ranges from productive, reproductive and community management, with women often multitasking in all three roles. However, whilst various theologies of work have developed over the decades, these have not given adequate consideration to lived work experiences of women, and have thus not addressed the theology of work from a gendered perspective.

Inasmuch as this study reveals that Indian Christian women are involved in productive, reproductive and community work, it also importantly reveals that it is their everyday lived experiences, their theological understandings of work, as well as their faith practices that become important resources informing a gendered theology of work. As a framework for such a theology begins to emerge, there are certain important aspects that must be considered. First, it is necessary to consider women's everyday work experiences. Second, attention must be given to women's work experiences in relation to God. Third, it becomes essential to consider women's work experiences as they relate to their faith practices, and finally, the Bible, being a significant part of women's faith experiences, must be reflected on as another important aspect in a framework for a gendered theology of work.

6.2 Women's everyday work experiences

As discussed in section 4.6, a key theological underpinning of this study was outlined as the importance of considering the worker's first-hand knowledge of the experiences, struggles and challenges that they themselves encounter, in constructing a genuine theology of work (Nolan, 1999:161). Existing theologies have not given adequate consideration to the voices and the experiences of the workers in constructing such theologies (Nolan, 1999:161). This

study has considered the lived experiences of women in their paid and unpaid work roles, which have become a laboratory for understanding their everyday work experiences.

As revealed in the fieldwork of this study discussed in chapter five, it is women's everyday roles in paid and unpaid work that become a resource in understanding their lived experiences of work which in turn should inform a gendered theology of work. Upon investigating the lived experiences of women's work roles, it was especially the 24-hour time diaries that provided us with a rich understanding of women's involvement in such work roles (see section 5.5). The fieldwork findings importantly revealed that women do play a triple role' as asserted by Moser (1993). This assertion, suggesting that men typically function primarily in the role of production, while women generally function in all three roles of production, reproduction and community work (in many cases, simultaneously), has been confirmed in this study. As discussed in section 5.5, there are three particular work experiences that became clear from the fieldwork findings. First, women spend long hours on paid and unpaid work roles, with some women spending as much as sixteen hours on such roles (see section 5.5). Second, women's work roles are influenced by the gender divisions of labour. Third, work roles are impacted by the division of labour within households, and third, such work roles are impacted by culture.

First is the aspect of time spent in work roles. As discussed in section 5.5, women work many more hours than men do in multiple work roles that they assume. Due to the social construction of differentiated gender roles of men and women, tasks associated with the reproduction of society fall almost entirely on the shoulders of women, which results in the longer working hours often leaving women overburdened. Working at home means that many women work longer hours in and around the house, get less sleep than men and others in the family do, and have little time or almost no time for leisure (see section 5.5). Although reproductive roles of women are necessary, such work is not valued nor is it seen as real work' since it is unpaid.

The second important aspect discussed was the division of labour. Section 3.2 asserted that it was unequal division of labour that led Boserup (1970) to link this unequal division with gender construction. Boserup's (1970) argument was that such divisions of labour actually excluded men from certain roles that were regarded as women's roles'. This is where the

work of Moser (1993) became important to this study, to help categorise what those roles actually were, helping us to understand the triple roles that Indian Christian women actually bear.

The third experience of Indian women is that their work roles are largely impacted by culture, often leaving them overburdened with such roles. Culture constructs an ideology of the kind of work that should be done by women and by men. In the light of this, unpaid care work has been seen as the responsibility of women, with the exclusion of men from this type of work. In understanding the lived experiences of the women in this study, it was revealed that very few men actually share the burden of unpaid work with women in their households, and much of this has to do with existing cultural assumptions. In addition, the male *‘breadwinner’* concept and the women’s *‘place in the kitchen’* idea have caused women’s roles in the home to be taken for granted. Such social divisions have generated gender role stereotypes for men and women. As discussed in section 2.3, Indian women who did go into the *‘work’* environment were considered to be a cheap source of labour, and were usually exploited through long working hours, low wages and miserable work environments. They were also exposed to sexual exploitation, and of particular importance is that they were often refused employment because *‘they would marry or fall pregnant’*.

Whilst it has been argued that men in the Indian context bear responsibility by earning for the family (see Chandra, 2010:239), the same argument stands strongly in favour of women who enter the domain of paid work, particularly in the context where the need for productive labour is a contemporary social reality. A branding of some activities as *‘inferior’*, for example, *‘housework’*, to other activities which are considered to be *‘superior’*, like *‘paid work’*, has contributed to these cultural paradigms, where Indian men do not want to be seen as engaging in activities considered by society to be inferior.

While home management and care giving are traditionally and culturally thought to be *‘women’s work’*, with the contextual changing scenario where women are more involved in various work roles, the gendered perception of familial and societal roles needs to be changed. Transforming such perceptions, modeling them as shared responsibilities could free women from the burden of carrying such roles alone. The deconstruction of male cultural and patriarchal paradigms, particularly in relation to unpaid work, and the reconstruction of roles are important in formulating new perspectives. The burden women encounter in their

work experiences is revealed in the time spent on work, the division of labour as well as the impact of culture. It must be noted that such experiences cannot be addressed without discussing the issues of 'justice', since such concerns are linked with the notion of justice. Moser (1993) intimated this in her conceptualization of SGIs (see section 3.6), where the redistribution of roles, responsibility and power need to be aimed at within structural levels.

Justice is about a redistribution of power and unequal power relations between men and women which are deeply rooted; for example, in the way work is divided up in our society, as asserted in section 5.4. Women remain caught up in productive, reproductive and community roles, with much of their work remaining less visible, less valued and often underpaid, if paid at all. Women do more than their fair share of reproductive work, i.e. child care, domestic chores, caring for the sick and the elderly etc., thus, addressing such unequal power relations that prejudice women is necessary. Justice is a broad concept that draws on the richness of the biblical accounts of "right relationships", and is not just about rights but about responsibilities and duties (Jarl, 2003:91). An analysis of work from a gendered perspective provides insights into the relationships between men and women and the inequalities arising from such relationships. Such inequalities are reflected, for example, in some of the prayers of the women in this study, where women allude that because men and women are created differently, men do not understand the burdens that women carry, often causing women to carry these burdens alone. These prayers also reflected that women sometimes considered it as 'unfair' or 'unjust' in light of the huge and multiple workloads that they often bear alone, as discussed in section 5.6.

Existing theologies of work have not adequately addressed these injustices suffered by women who toil from dawn until dusk without a sense of reward, appreciation and dignity for the work they do. The traditional dominant understandings of work have left Indian women believing that it is their lot in life to remain 'bent over a treadmill', isolated, in pain, and detached from the rest of community (Soelle, 1987). While feminist scholars such as Jarl (2003) have attempted to address the aspect of 'work' from a feminist perspective, focusing on trajectories of 'justice', such attempts have insufficiently addressed the notion of work itself within the context of modern debates of gender and development, as discussed in section 3.3. While such theologies have been helpful in identifying that traditional theologies have inadequately discussed feminist narratives, they themselves have held these discussions

in part, not giving adequate attention to the various work roles that women have assumed (specifically that of production, reproduction and community roles as discussed in chapter 3), which are the lived experiences of Indian Christian women.

Having addressed women's work experiences as an important aspect to be considered in a gendered theology of work, in a Christian context it is necessary to address such experiences in relation to God.

6.3 Women's work experiences in relation to God

The second important aspect to be considered in a framework for a gendered theology of work, is women's work experiences in relation to God. As discussed in section 5.6, three particular work experiences in relation to God emerged from the fieldwork findings. First was the notion of work as a blessing or a curse, second was the expression of God as sustainer and provider, and third the notion of God as worker.

In considering the women's work experiences in relation to God, it was found that existing theologies of work tend to focus largely on the positive nature of work, as discussed in section 4.4. For example, Gideon Goosen's book, *The Theology of Work* (1974), presents a positive view of work, arguing that work is a God-given task for humans to dominate the forces of nature and "collaborate with the Creator in continuing the work of creation" (Goosen, 1974:58). According to Goosen (1974:58), those aspects of work that are "dehumanizing" and not creative, should actually not be classified as work. Work produces a service to God and others (Goosen, 1974:58).

Similarly, as asserted in section 4.4, Taylor (2008:3) states that the Bible affirms the goodness and beauty of good, simple, quiet hard work. He states, "Paul commends working quietly and earning a living (2 Thess. 3:11). He says that believers should 'aspire to live quietly, and to mind [their] own affairs, and to work with [their] hands'. Why? Two reasons: (1) so that they 'may walk properly before outsiders' and (2) 'be dependent on no one'" (Taylor, 2003:3). Similarly other scholars (e.g. Volf, 2001; Larive, 2004; Jensen, 2006), focus mainly on the positive nature of work.

Whilst it is helpful to understand the positive, it is also important to remember that work has a dual nature. This is how Nolan (1991:160) outlines his theology of work, as either a blessing or a curse, depending on the experience of the worker, as discussed in section 4.6. If the experience of the worker is rewarding, fulfilling and recognized, then this is viewed as a blessing, but if on the other hand, the experience includes working long hours, earning starvation wages, engaging in unpaid or unrecognized work, then these experiences present work as a curse, or as a dehumanizing experience (Nolan, 1991:160). Nolan (1991:161) comments that the theology of work is not the experience of those within the academy, instead it is secondhand information to them. Our existing theology of work therefore remains secondhand to those within the academy (Nolan, 1991:162), but firsthand to those who daily live the experiences and can thereby inform the academy. Although a worker's theology is discussed within the academy, Nolan (1991:163) makes it clear that there is very little or almost no filtering of this discussion into the life of the church.

As alluded to in 6.2 of this chapter, the dual nature of women's work experiences has been reflected especially in their prayers (these prayers were discussed in detail in section 5.6). It is their prayers that become a sacred place for women to truthfully articulate their inner thoughts and feelings about their work experiences. It is their prayers that cannot be questioned or probed and these become a safe space for women to express their laments and negative work experiences. As asserted by Rakoczy,

Central to all discussions of spirituality is prayer, both personal and communal. How do women pray when their consciousness has been awakened both to the truth of themselves as authentically God's creation and to their inadequacies of their inherited images of God? What does prayer mean? What shape does it take? (2004:399).

It is through the prayers of these women that begin to emerge out of their shadow selves, their counterfeit selves and pretend selves, where "each woman prays as her unique self. No one can pray the words of another's heart" (Rakoczy, 2004:399). As these unique prayers of women were reflected on, the one aspect that becomes common to all is the dual nature of their work experiences.

Second, women's work experiences in relation to God reflect that God is their sustainer and provider, helping them to cope with the huge workloads they encounter daily. As asserted in section 5.6, all twenty women, despite their particular work roles, stated that it is with God's sustenance that they are able to cope. It was especially Volf (2001) and Cosden (2006a) who addressed the aspect of God who through the Spirit, empowers and enables people with the grace and strength to carry out their work tasks (see section 4.4) For example, Volf states, "All human work, however complicated or simple, is made possible by the operation of the Spirit of God in the working person: and all work whose nature and results reflect the value of the new creation is accomplished under the instruction and inspiration of the Spirit of God" (2001:114). Women's experiences in this study reflected that God's providence and sustenance to cope with these work roles form a significant component of such experiences.

The third work experience of women in relation to God is the notion of God as worker. As discussed in section 5.6, participants acknowledged God as a worker. For example, one participant stated, "The Bible itself says that God worked. God worked for six days and on the seventh day He rested, so this means that God believed in work". However, as discussed in section 4.4, while existing theologies represent God as worker (see Volf, 2001; Taylor, 2008), this is often within a spiritual context, without giving attention to the everyday work activities carried out particularly by women. To illustrate this, for example, existing theologies reflect that God was the first worker who created, designed, fashioned, engineered, molded, and crafted the entire universe. The Bible text often used to support this is, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). This often progresses to show that in the first two chapters of Genesis, God was actively at work, creating all that exists, and God's work is characterized as "good" (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25) and "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Clichés such as those used by the Psalmist declaring that God "who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4), reflect God at work, and others using the words of Jesus who said, "My Father is working until now, and I myself am working" (John 5:17), all support the notion of God as worker. God's work is essentially creative and is quite often reflected as different from the work that humans do. The universe is the work of God's hands. Human beings, as the bearers of the divine image, reflect God in their work and work is intrinsic to what it means to be human, and because of the image of God as worker, work of all kinds should be portrayed as having intrinsic value.

While such Biblical reflections are used to reflect God as worker, it is often in the setting of grandeur and splendor, creating very little space for women themselves to identify with the mundane routine and monotonous toil of the work roles that they experience in everyday life. The ordinary, everyday routine labour which never comes to an end, like sowing and reaping, cooking and cleaning, those aspects that are considered the normal, fitting and the inevitable lot of humankind are lost within the overtones of grandeur. It is without this kind of work that people cannot be fed and clothed and kept healthy, and without which societies and households could not be organized. While the image of God as worker tells us something about the locus of human work, the focus on “all that is very good” (Gen. 1:31) deters us from the encumbrance that every day work can potentially place on women.

The modern language of God, as architect, craftsperson, or as designer, fits well within a contemporary setting, however, most of these images have little to do with everyday life. It is important for a gendered theology of work to employ images from the world of work that give shape and dignity to the lives of their listeners. The use of Biblical images for God drawn from the world of work would do an enormous amount to overcome the gap between faith and work and between God and everyday life that women experience.

6.4 Women’s work experiences in relation to faith

The next important aspect to be considered in a framework for a gendered theology of work is women’s work experiences in relation to faith. As discussed in section 5.7, women practice their faith in three particular ways, namely, through prayer, through worship, and through their attitudes in work.

As illustrated in section 5.5, all twenty women expressed prayer as an important faith practice that enables them to cope with their work roles. These prayers become a valuable resource in actually understanding the impact of their work experiences on their livelihoods. However, on closely examining the individual prayers of these women, it was revealed that their prayers are much more than a faith practice that helps them to cope. Nine of the twenty women chose to write down individual prayers which revealed the tension that exist in their work experiences. Several examples of these prayers were referred to in section 5.4, but to

illustrate this, for example, is one such prayer that epitomizes the dual nature of women's work experiences as revealed through this prayer.

Example One:

Thank you Oh Lord for helping me to carry my huge work load. I know that I often become so angry for this burden that I bear alone, but help me always to remember that you created me in a special way so that I am able to cope. I often feel so tired and weary and feel like giving up, but your strength helps me through each new day. Help me to realize that even though men may not understand the burdens or the workload we bear as women, and even though it feels so unfair sometimes, I know that other women understand since many of them are in the same situation, but most of all, you Oh Lord understand our tired and weary bodies. Thank you for strength, in Jesus name, AMEN.

Upon closely examining these prayers such as the example above, what began to appear is the tension between the positive and negative elements of their work experiences, which was briefly alluded to in section 6.3. It is actually in these prayers that women feel liberty to express the laments of their hearts in dealing with the huge workloads that they bear. For example, in this prayer, one can almost hear the plea for God's strength to cope with these workloads. The burden of carrying these workloads alone is manifested in the prayer, with the acknowledgement that whilst men may not understand the strain of these workloads, it is fellow women and the Lord who do understand the extent of women's involvement.

Rakoczy (2004:401) asserts that authentic prayer has three dimensions, namely, wholeness, right relationships and empowerment in the Spirit. She expresses the prayer of right relationships as being a prayer of solidarity with all persons but especially with those in need (Rakoczy, 2004:401). She states:

Perhaps because women so often experience themselves as "outsiders" to the power and authority structures of ecclesial and civil bodies, their prayer and prayerful work for justice begins with empathy for those oppressed. As women we have all been there', have all experienced some kind of demonic effects of patriarchy. We can thus pray with those experiencing injustice even as we do what we can to build new structures of right relationships (Rakoczy, 2004:401).

The prayers of the women in this study become their safe space for them to fully express the tension of their work experiences, with women often praying for those who are experiencing the injustice of being overburdened with their work roles. Whilst this tension was not as prominent in the semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions, it becomes clear that when women are allowed to reflect individually, without the intimidation of their responses being probed, their reflections reveal the burden of the dual nature of their work experiences.

Another faith practice, for example, is women considering their work to be their time of worship. Whilst scholars have argued that work and worship are two different things with no significant relationship, Mtata (2011) who developed an ‘African Theology of Work’ argues that actually work and worship are interconnected. As asserted in section 4.3, Mtata (2011:7) argues that work becomes central to the shared life within or outside the communion of faith and the experience of work can be either one of affirmation or of alienation, giving the example that in traditional Africa societies, work was carried out by groups of people who worked together, usually with the household constituting a production unit resulting in much work being done in a shorter space of time (Mtata, 2011:37). Mtata (2011:37) shows that there is a deep connection in African societies between the world of work and the spiritual world. Section 5.6 of the study discussed that women revealed a robust connection between work and worship, stating that when they work, they are actually worshiping God.

The third faith practice revealed in the fieldwork of this study is women’s attitudes in work, as discussed in section 5.7. Whilst it may appear strange for this to be a faith practice, the findings of the fieldwork revealed that for women who attempt to model their work roles after God as worker, their attitude towards such roles become significant. Women usually lean toward a positive attitude, sometimes to the extent of work overload, simply because of the pressure of maintaining certain Biblical standards that they were taught, as discussed in section 5.7.

This section has argued that women’s work experiences are intertwined with their faith experiences with three particular faith practices being discussed. Haddad asserts that the associated faith practices of women demonstrate their lived reality, “where these two realms of the spiritual and material merge” (2000:410). It has become clear that the faith practices

of women in this study are interwoven with their everyday lived experiences of work, with the two realms merging.

The three important components to be considered in a framework for a gendered theology have been discussed as women's everyday work experiences in paid and unpaid roles, their work experiences in relation to God, and finally, their work experiences in relation to faith. Whilst these aspects have been considered as important within a framework for a gendered theology of work, each of these aspects are clearly shaped by women's use of the Bible, which becomes the fourth important aspect to consider.

6.5 The Bible: ambiguous but important

It is clear from the fieldwork of this study that women's theological understanding of their work roles are largely shaped by their use and interpretation of the Bible. Patriarchal ideology has forced women into various domestic responsibilities which have been reinforced in a Christian context by the use of the Bible. In my discussions with the study participants, it became clear that the use of the Bible, either appropriately or inappropriately, has largely shaped their understandings of their work roles.

Much of the way we think about Christian women and their roles in the home and in society is handed down through patriarchal culture as well as through Bible instruction, also influenced by patriarchy. Zikmund (2006:22), for example, asserts that women will always remain a part of the male story and will be invisible until they agitate for change seeking ways for the Bible to be read and interpreted so that their roles can be made more visible. The Bible is seen as both legitimizing the exclusion that women encounter, but it is also recognised that it has potential to liberate women (Say Pa, 2006:48). Say Pa (2006:48) asserts that Indian women must thus find fresh ways of reading the Bible that can release them from such marginalization and exclusion.

As demonstrated in section 5.6 of this study, many women claimed to have received teaching about their work roles in their Christian upbringing, through various Bible instruction in women's meetings, through Sunday sermons and through older women in the Christian faith.

The women are readily able to quote Bible texts that reflect their work experiences. For example, the story of Mary and Martha as reflected in Luke 10:38-42, was often referred to during the focus group discussions. As asserted by the women, this story reflects that Martha took the duties assigned to her gender seriously, and that she was pleased in caring for the home and preparing meals. Mary, on the other hand, was understood as a far freer spirited individual, which irritated Martha at times. It appears that on the day that Jesus had visited the sisters, Martha was the one who had worked in the kitchen to prepare a meal while Mary settled at the feet of Jesus to listen to His teachings with the disciples. Martha was overburdened and overworked as she struggled to do everything on her own without any help from her sister. Martha finally demanded that Jesus send Mary to the kitchen to help her. Jesus refused this request, telling Martha that Mary *“has chosen that good part”* (Luke 10:42).

The women stated that they have often heard many use such a narrative to teach that Martha’s worry over preparing a special meal showed that her priorities were misplaced, and that Martha stands for all of the too-busy individuals of today who expend their energy doing good things and have no time to deepen their relationship with God. In section 4.4, it has been discussed that various scholars have used narratives such as this to argue that spiritual work is better than any other work and that all other work activities are considered unimportant (for example, Jensen, 2006). It is such interpretations of Biblical narratives that have caused the work roles of women to become undervalued and unappreciated. Indeed, work can be contemplative and become an opportunity to meditate, to pray, to grow spiritually, to serve others, and to love God. While such narratives are helpful in understanding the interaction between Jesus and women, they do become unhelpful when they are misused and negatively interpreted, as illustrated above. In addition, women mentioned that this particular text is also used to demonstrate how women should actually carry out their responsibilities, in cooking, cleaning and serving others, but should do so without grumbling or complaining like Martha did. This particular example has been referred to because it came up on numerous occasions during the focus group discussions.

Another example mentioned by the participants is the woman in Proverbs 31³¹ who has been depicted to them as the ideal woman. When we closely examine this ancient Biblical ideal of womanhood, we do not find the stereotyped housewife who is occupied with ‘dirty dishes, drenched napkin’s and stacks of laundry’, with her daily life dictated by the demands of her husband and children. Nor do we find a hardened, overly ambitious career woman who is forced to leave her family to fend for itself in order for the financial burdens to be met each month. What we do find is a picture of a strong, dignified, multitalented, caring woman who is an individual in her own right. This woman has money to invest, servants to look after and real estate to manage. This ideal woman is depicted as her husband’s partner, and she is entirely trusted with the responsibility for their lands, property and goods. She is pictured as a woman who has attained the business skills to buy and sell in the market, along with the heartfelt sensitivity and compassion to care for and fulfill the needs of people who are less fortunate. This woman cheerfully and energetically tackles the challenges that each day brings. But what about today’s women who find themselves in such diverse, complex lifestyles? As pointed out by the women, Christian teaching has often taught the value of becoming this ‘idealized Proverbs 31 woman’. But as discussed in the focus groups, the interpretation and teaching of this text seldom focused on the fact that she was valued and respected, which gave her the inner strength to carry out her role.

Readings of the Bible as outlined above have added to the existing cultural expectation of what is expected of women. It has been traditionally expected that women should have the responsibility for the care of others simply because they have the biological function to reproduce. Often the Bible has been used to re-enforce such teaching. So while the use of the Bible has been a resource for women in shaping their understanding of work as well as offering emotional support, it has also reinforced their oppression.

Biblical texts and traditions such as those mentioned above have been used to sustain the cultural status quo of women’s roles. Rakoczy asserts that it is such interpretations that need to be exposed for their patriarchal biases and that new methods of interpretation need to be developed which can help women to ‘hear good news’ (2004:143). Rakoczy states:

³¹ Madipoane Masenya (2004) has done extensive work on rereading Proverbs 31 in African-South Africa, asserting that the Bible is a valued book for women in this context. She chooses Proverbs 31:10-31 in particular stating that it illustrates the view of the ideal woman in African-South Africa Christian communities.

While some women maintain that the Bible as the Word of God is given to us in these particular words, the reality is that everything that is written is interpreted by the writer. There are no ‘objective’ texts that come to us straight from the mouth of God, but the worldview and perspective of the writer influence what is said and how it is said (2004:143).

Rakoczy (2004:14) further makes reference to *The Women’s Bible* which was edited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton published in two volumes (1895, 1898). She commends this publication as the “most important achievement in the nineteenth century by women whose concern was to expose the patriarchal perspective of the Scriptures” (Rakoczy, 2004:149). According to Rakoczy (2004:150), *The Women’s Bible* captured three critical arguments, first that the Bible has been used throughout history until present day to keep women in subjection and stifle the full development of their personhood. Second, that both women and men read Scriptures and both have internalised its authority. The final argument in *The Women’s Bible* is that “since all reforms in society are interdependent, religious reforms, including the Scriptures, are necessary” (Rakoczy, 2004:150). The argument that Rakoczy makes is that these three underpinnings are still valid today, where “the Scriptures are used by men to support the continuing oppression of women in church and society” (2004:150). Rakoczy therefore summons women about their “urgent responsibility to interpret the Scriptures and critique the patriarchy and kyriarchy which permeate it” (2004:150). “Since the Scriptures were written in a patriarchal historical setting we should not be surprised that they are permeated by that ideology” (Rakoczy, 2004:154).

Russell (1985:12) concurs that fresh insights are needed to raise the consciousness of women, causing them to challenge Biblical interpretation that reinforces patriarchal domination. “From this perspective the Bible needs to be liberated from its captivity of one-sided male interpretation” (Russell, 1985:12). She clarifies that she is not just referring to the use of “inclusive language” but also “inclusive interpretation” that will lead to changing thoughts, values and actions around women’s roles (Russell, 1985:13). Any attempt to make such changes implies a transformation in the way the Biblical text is interpreted. Sakenfeld asserts, “Biblical interpretation is a political act, an act with consequences for the church and the world” (1989:164). Women experience the consequences of such political acts which have resulted in them being disempowered and oppressed by Biblical interpretation. This

study reveals that Indian women's theological understanding of their work roles is shaped by the Bible to a large extent. Such understandings are permeated by myopic interpretation and patriarchal ideologies, causing women to remain acquiescent in assuming such work roles. Such ideologies need to be challenged and changed so that the ambiguities of the Bible are effectively addressed.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided a framework for a gendered theology of work arising out of the lived experiences of Indian Christian women. As asserted in section 5.4, women's experiences in paid and unpaid work include long hours spent in such roles and unfair divisions of labour that are impacted by culture and religion. It has been these experiences that have pointed the way toward certain important aspects to be contained in a framework for such a theology. These elements have been identified, first, as women's work experiences, second, as women's work experiences in relation to God, third, as women's work experiences in relation to faith and finally, the use of the Bible as an important resource in constructing theological understandings.

It is hoped that a theology such as this will pave a way to responding theologically to the multiple roles that women bear. There is no guarantee that such a study will cause women to become less involved in their particular work roles, but such a study will challenge existing systems and structures as intended by Strategic Gender Interests, thus causing women's work roles to be more shared and valued. As already overtly stated, a creation of such a theology must be an on-going effort, thus empowering the church with a tool to reflect on the notion of work from a gendered perspective.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUDING THE STUDY

7.1 Introduction

This study has attempted to offer a framework for a gendered theology of work, investigating and understanding the paid and unpaid work experiences of Indian Christian women in Pietermaritzburg. Whilst the notion of ‘work’ is understood differently in various contexts, this study has argued that Indian Christian women are actually involved in three categories of work, namely productive, reproductive and community work as asserted by Caroline Moser (1993). Existing theologies of work³² have focused on the aspect of work from a position of class analysis or considering aspects of ethics, with very little gendered analysis in such theologies. It is the paid and unpaid work experiences of Indian Christian women that have been investigated as they inform a framework for a gendered theology of work. The previous chapter has outlined a framework for a gendered theology of work, proposing the inclusion of four important aspects. Having a broader understanding of the lived work experiences of women as they inform a gendered theology of work, this study will fall short if it does not adequately assimilate, interpret and apply such findings to contemporary institutions. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to summarize and conclude this study as well as to offer recommendations for further research.

7.2 Hypotheses revisited

This study hypothesized that it is the lived experiences of women’s paid and unpaid work roles that can inform a gendered theology of work. The research question asked, “What experiences of paid and unpaid work of Indian Christian women can inform a gendered theology of work?” These experiences were investigated using four research tools. The findings of the fieldwork revealed that women are involved in all three categories of work as outlined by Caroline Moser (1993). Whilst this remains true, we find that culture as well as existing theological reflection has not created space for a gendered analysis of these experiences.

³² It must be noted that whilst reference is made to existing theologies of work, these are generally short in supply.

This study has shown the validity of the hypothesis by clarifying the importance of the creation of such a theology. In a context which finds women immersed in roles of production, reproduction and community work, it would be negligent if our theological reflection missed the opportunity of offering a response to engaging with these work experiences in order for women to live a more holistic and improved quality of life.

7.3 Summary of the study

This study commenced with outlining the historical background of the participants, who are Indian Christian women in Pietermaritzburg. It then began to identify various theoretical underpinnings of the gender and development debate as it relates to the work roles that women are involved in. Existing theological reflection around the notion of work were considered, after which attention was drawn to the everyday work experiences of Indian Christian women, by way of carrying out extensive fieldwork. It was out of these experiences that four important aspects for a framework for a gendered theology of work were considered.

Chapter one introduced the experiences of two women named Shamilla and Asheera who were participants in this study, asserting that it is such experiences that become central to a gendered theology of work. Shamilla is involved in paid and unpaid work while Asheera is involved in unpaid work only. The purpose of sharing their experiences is to demonstrate the lived experiences of women involved in each of these work roles. Upon sharing their experiences, this chapter then briefly considered the historical background of Indian women such as Shamilla and Asheera. This was followed by a discussion on understanding women's work experiences. Given that Shamilla and Asheera are Christian women, the notion of work within a Christian context was then introduced. The extensive fieldwork process included in the study was also introduced.

Chapter two captured the history of Indian women from as early as indenture, looking at the impact of poverty on Indian women, the impact of culture as well as their experiences of Christianity.

Chapter three discussed women's productive and reproductive roles in communities, giving special attention to the gender and development discussion that led to Moser's (1993) formulation of women's 'triple role', which is a key theoretical underpinning of this study. This chapter also introduced and discussed Moser's (1993) conceptualization of PGNs and SGIs, arguing that structures and systems which keep women confined to the triple roles must be addressed.

Chapter four outlined some key theologies of work. This chapter argued that whilst there are significant contributions towards such theologies, theologians have neglected to address the experiences of workers and have not provided a gendered analysis in their reflection.

Chapter five outlined the fieldwork process, describing the four main research tools, as well as presented the key research findings as they relate to the theoretical and theological framework. The fieldwork findings revealed three important work experiences of women, namely, time spent on work roles, division of labour as well as the impact of culture on women. This chapter also asserted that the work experiences of Indian Christian women are deeply intertwined with their faith practices.

Chapter six analyzed the key research findings and attempted to outline a framework for a gendered theology of work. This chapter asserted that upon investigating the lived experiences of Indian Christian women, there are four important aspects that must be considered in such a theology, namely, women's work experiences, women's work experiences in relation to God, women's work experiences in relation faith, and finally, women's use of the Bible.

7.4 The implications of this study for action

Chapter six of this study outlined four important aspects to be considered in a framework for a gendered theology of work. These include women's everyday work experiences, women's experiences in relation to God, women's experiences in relation to faith and finally women's use of the Bible. It would be ineffective if this study does not include the implications for further study, for the academy, for the Christian community, and for women in particular. There are four specific implications emerging out of this study that need to be considered.

The first practical implication arising out of this study is the need for collaboration between academia and the community. The challenge remains for intellectuals to use opportunities that they have through their privileged access to education, to empower women in the community upon whose experiences such a theology should be built. It is important for academic theologians to allow the practical wisdom of communities to break open their theologies, recognizing that communities also have theological wisdom. It is communities that articulate the lived practices which bestow meaning to the construction of theologies in the academy. For example, in the case of Indian Christian women in Pietermaritzburg, as discussed in chapter two, their encounters and history of indenture coupled with culture has shaped their experiences. Hence a theology of work that does not give consideration to such experiences is inadequate. In other words, a gendered theology of work needs to give consideration to that which is “incipient” (Cochrane, 1999), identifying those aspects that are beginning to emerge or become apparent based on the lived experiences of women’s work. Such experiences need to be given space, where they are embodied and reflected within a theological framework. Hence it becomes the role of the theologian to work in collaboration with the community to effectively activate such a theology in meaningful ways. There must be on-going attempts to find positive points of contact in the context that women find themselves, which enable us to cultivate a gendered theology of work that is born out of the lived experiences of the women themselves.

Second, there is a need to redefine and broaden existing religious and sociological definitions of ‘work’ to mean more than ‘paid employment’ and include unpaid roles which are part of the ‘hidden economy’ and are usually undervalued. Women themselves need to redefine their ‘work’ roles and need to be educated that ‘work’ is a much broader notion than paid roles. As mentioned in previous chapters, the word ‘work’ has traditionally almost always been defined as paid employment. When we ask the question of people “what do you do?”, instinctively, we are asking the question, “what is your paid employment?” This could present a real problem for those who do not have a paid job, but actually spend much energy in household and other activities. In addition to our difficulty in understanding the concept, we are also faced with the cultural dilemma of understanding this notion. Many of these assumptions about what work is, do not fit with the reality of women's lives. The nature of women’s work is such that much of it is not structured into fixed work hours but rather it is

intertwined with all their activities. Because women do a number of things simultaneously, they sometimes have difficulty in identifying what is ‘work’ and what is not.

Third, as revealed in this study, it is important to promote ongoing discussion on existing cultural and patriarchal attitudes towards women which leave them overburdened with work. This study showed that women's work and household activities are subsumed under cultural expectation and is not seen as ‘work’. The investigation of the lived experiences of women revealed that they are still by and large dominated by existing cultural and religious ideologies which assume certain roles to belong to women. Existing cultural roles and expectation in a context where women too are equal financial contributors within households, needs to be reconsidered and redefined. As asserted in section 6.2, this must be addressed within the context of ‘justice’ which considers ‘right relationships’ between men and women. This is what Moser (1993) was sanctioning for in her conceptualization of Strategic Gender Interests (SGIs), which aims to address structures and systems that lead to unequal relationships between men and women. For example, reproductive roles have traditionally been accepted as women’s roles since they have the biological function to reproduce. It is the structures of culture and religion that have led to such patriarchal thinking. As a result of such patriarchal ideas, women’s socially constructed job description as stated above is a reminder that their primary role should be that of a mother and a wife. Unfortunately, existing theologies of work, as discussed in section 4.4, have not adequately addressed these cultural aspects that keep women in subordination.

Fourth, there is a need to address the ambiguity presented in the Bible around ‘work’ and ‘work roles’, which have impacted and influenced the way in which Christian society has defined such roles, usually with partiality and prejudice towards women. As addressed in section 6.2, women’s use of the Bible, which largely perpetuates patriarchal ideologies, contributes to their already huge existing work roles. Attempts to deconstruct existing patriarchal interpretation and simultaneously to forge alternative approaches to such texts, remains an ongoing challenge. It therefore becomes important to revisit unhelpful theologies and Biblical teachings around the notion of work, creating space for new Biblical interpretation that is informed by lived experiences. It is considered that the primary problem

is the appropriation of the Bible, rather than the Bible document itself.³³ This therefore gives rise to the need for rereading Biblical texts with ‘corrective lenses’ to overcome cultural misinterpretations and to find new ways of understanding and appropriating meaning.

Having considered four implications emerging from this study, it is essential to recommend ways in which this could be achieved.

First, the use of Contextual Bible Study (CBS)³⁴ could become a useful tool where the embodied theologies of women find forms of articulation. Contextual Bible Study gives attention to the context, the community, to criticality, and to change, proposing four particular commitments (West, 1993:12). These are noted first as a commitment to read the Bible from the perspective of the poor, working-class, and marginalised, second, a commitment to read the Bible collaboratively, third, a commitment to read the Bible critically, using the critical resources of both biblical scholarship and local reading communities and fourth, a commitment to read the Bible for individual and social transformation (West, 1993:12). In light of existing theological notions around the work roles, Contextual Bible Study could become a useful vehicle for mobilising religious resources in the transformation of existing theological understandings that have been shaped by the Bible. Whilst CBS could be useful in creating awareness and transforming existing understandings, this should be done in ways that challenge existing patriarchal and cultural paradigms, as recommended in section, 6.5. Moser’s (1993) purpose in promoting SGIs was to highlight the need to challenge existing gender roles, and find ways to focus on fundamental issues relating to women assuming triple roles. Addressing SGIs is aimed at improving the position of women in society by transforming the imbalance of power. Themes such as ‘transformation’, ‘equality’ and ‘power’ can all form part of the discourse within the application of CBS. It is the deeper structural and systemic concerns that must be addressed in ways that transform existing gender roles.

³³ See Punt (2002:413).

³⁴ Contextual Bible Study is a methodology that was pioneered by Gerald West (see West, 1993) and has been successfully employed since the early 1990s.

Second, such goals could be achieved through the construction of appropriate liturgy. John van der Laar³⁵ (2008:14), comments that the depth of faith, the sense of Christian identity and the poetry of liturgy are being valued in post-modern Christian circles. “Liturgy is spilling over the boundaries between ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ worship forms” (van der Laar, 2008:15). Van der Laar (2008:15) challenges Christian poets, theologians, clergy and laity to express present experiences in fresh, energetic liturgies, stating that liturgy can touch the heart of humanity. Empowering women themselves to write such liturgies based on their lived experiences could become a tool for creating awareness of such experiences. To illustrate this, for example, as discussed in section 5.6, allowing women to write down their own prayers created space, unleashing their internal reflections and feelings, thus such a resource needs to be continuously explored. The prayers of women in particular, whether liturgical or in more informal settings, become a powerful tool to understand their pain, suffering, and challenges, enabling women to surface beyond their counterfeit and pretend selves to a place of authentic reflection. Encouraging women to become more involved in liturgical writings, especially prayers, becomes a safe platform for self-expression.

Two possible forums that such implications could be addressed is first the church, which serves as a respected authority in the lives of these women. Second, theological institutions (particularly seminaries involved in training ministers) can play a fundamental role in promoting such action. Furthermore, it is also necessary for curricula to be transformed in order to include women-articulated theologies.

7.5 Recommendations for further research

This study has limited itself to a homogenous group of Indian Christian women in Pietermaritzburg. Further research could seek to understand the experiences of other cultural groups, since we have clarified that culture does play an important role in our theological reflection and experience. Whilst it would have been of great value to hear the voices of other women, the limitations of this study have not made this possible.. In hearing the voices of Indian Christian women in Pietermaritzburg, it would be negligent not to mention that the depth of the work experiences of each of the women involved in this study cannot be

³⁵ John van der Laar is a minister, writer, musician, and the founder of Sacredise, a liturgical consultancy and publishing ministry.

adequately quantified in any measure. Inasmuch as various tools were utilised to gauge the categories of work that women are involved in, these tools were not able to capture the physical, mental and emotional strain that such involvement places on women, hence this becomes important for further research.

Another important area for future study is the notion of ‘decent work’ as it impacts on gender roles. The notion of decent work was briefly mentioned in section 4.2, outlining the important pillars and rights upon which the decent work agenda is built. As such, it becomes important to further investigate the work experiences of women in light of the ‘decent work agenda’.

As a gendered theology of work begins to emerge, it is hoped that this will help to alleviate the huge burdens that women carry. While such a study cannot guarantee that women will become less involved in their particular work roles, it is hoped that teaching styles in the church and academy will be impacted in ways that cause women’s work roles to be more shared and valued within households and communities.

Appendix 1 Informed Consent



“Towards a gendered theology of work: A case study of the paid and unpaid work experiences of Indian Christian Women in Pietermaritzburg”

I am a PhD student at the School of Religion and Theology at University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg, and I am conducting a study on the above topic, under the supervision of Rev Dr Beverley Haddad. The objective of this research is to investigate the paid and unpaid work experiences of Indian Christian Women that worship at St Paul’s Anglican Church., Pietermaritzburg.

Arising out of your responses to the questionnaire filled out on 21 February, I am inviting you to participate in the next three phases of this study, which is as follows:

1. Time Study diary – this is a record sheet of activities of typical 24-hour day. This will be a sample of four days (spread over a month), and is simple, yet beneficial exercise to the researcher and to yourself.
2. Following that will be semi-structured interviews, which will require about an hour of your time, which will be at your convenience.
3. Finally, toward the latter part of the year, there will be focus group sessions which will take the form of discussion groups – there would be a maximum of three sessions.

You are assured of confidentiality and you are also given the right to withdraw from this study at any time, without giving a reason. Your participation in this study is voluntary.

Although there is no financial payment or any other incentive for your involvement in this study, your insights will be important to how women’s theology is discussed in the church and academy.

Rowanne Sarojini Marie
P O Box 793
Howick, 3290
033-3435709
0719610560
rowannem@smms.ac.za

Professor Beverley Haddad
School of Religion and Theology
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X01, Scottsville, 3209
033-2606172
haddad@ukzn.ac.za

**Please keep the information letter and one copy of the declaration. Then sign the second copy of the declaration and submit it together with your completed questionnaire.
Thank you for your assistance.**

INFORMED CONSENT:

Title of Study: “Towards a gendered theology of work: A case study of the paid and unpaid work experiences of Indian Christian Women in Pietermaritzburg”.

I,, understand the contents of the information letter for the above study, and I consent to participate in the study.

Signed:..... Date:.....
Participant

Signed:..... Date:.....
Researcher

Appendix 2

Questionnaire conducted by Rowanne Marie (UKZN) at St Paul's Parish on 21 February 2010

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Contact Details:.....
4. Educational Qualifications: (Please \surd the appropriate response)
Primary Education.....
Secondary Education.....
Tertiary Education.....
Other (Specify).....
5. Marital status? (Please \surd the appropriate response)
Single.....
Married.....
Widowed.....
Divorced.....
Separated.....
6. Number of people living in this household including respondent:
7. Who does most of the domestic chores in this household?
Myself.....
Husband.....
Son.....
Daughter.....
Domestic worker.....
Other (Specify).....
8. Who takes care of the children in this household?
Myself.....
Husband.....
Son.....
Daughter.....
Domestic worker.....
Other (Specify).....

9. What is your work status? (Please ✓ the appropriate response)

- Paid employment in the formal sector.....
- Paid employed in the informal sector.....
- Unpaid care work such as housework, child care, cooking.....

10. What is your monthly income?
(Please ✓ the appropriate response)

- R0 – R999.....
- R1000-R2999.....
- R3000-R4999.....
- R5000-7999.....
- R8000-R10 000.....
- R10 000 or more.....
- Not prepared to disclose.....

11. At what time does your working day start? (*Including formal/informal/ and unpaid care work*)

AM

12. At what time does your working day end? (*Including formal/informal/ and unpaid care work*)

PM

13. From your cultural understanding as an Indian woman, whose responsibility is it to prepare meals for the family?

- Wife.....
- Husband.....
- Both husband and wife.....
- Children.....
- Other (Specify).....

14. Whose responsibility is it to do domestic chores in your household?

- Wife.....
- Husband.....
- Both husband and wife.....
- Children.....
- Other (Specify).....

15. Whose responsibility is it to take care of children in your household?

- Wife.....
- Husband.....
- Both husband and wife.....
- Elder Siblings.....
- Other (Specify).....

How would you respond to the following statements?

16. *Work is a curse from God* (tick one only)

- Strongly agree.....
- Agree.....
- Undecided.....
- Disagree.....
- Strongly Disagree.....

17. *According to the Bible, it is the woman's responsibility to carry out all domestic chores in the home.* (tick one only)

- Strongly agree.....
- Agree.....
- Undecided.....
- Disagree.....
- Strongly Disagree.....

18. It is the husband's role to be the bread winner in the family, and the wife should stay at home and take care of the children and carry out all domestic chores.

- Strongly agree.....
- Agree.....
- Undecided.....
- Disagree.....
- Strongly Disagree.....

19. Women should not work full-time and leave their children in the care of others

- Strongly agree.....
- Agree.....
- Undecided.....
- Disagree.....
- Strongly Disagree.....

20. Women need to work in whatever way they can in order to supplement the income of the family.

- Strongly agree.....
- Agree.....
- Undecided.....
- Disagree.....
- Strongly Disagree.....

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire!

Appendix 3

SAMPLE OF 24-HOUR TIME STUDY DIARY

Date:

Name:

TIME	ACTIVITIES	LOCATION
4am – 5am		
5am-6am		
6am-7am		
7am-8am		
8am-9am		
9am-10am		
10am-11am		
11am-12pm		
12pm-1pm		
1pm-2pm		
2pm-3pm		
3pm-4pm		
4pm-5pm		
6pm-7pm		

7pm-8pm		
8pm-9pm		
9pm-10pm		
10pm-11pm		
11pm-12am		
12am-1am		
1am-2am		
2am-3am		
3am-4am		

Researcher: Rowanne Marie (UKZN)

Appendix 4

Semi Structured Interviews:

The participants of these interviews are twenty women that have been involved in the time diary exercise. This will be open-ended discussion, giving the participants opportunity to discuss as freely and as widely as possible, with the researcher probing when necessary.

Question One

Tell me more about the details recorded in your twenty-four hour time diary.

Question Two

Is this a reflection of a typical day in your life? If not, how would you describe a typical day in your life?

Appendix 5

Focus Group Questionnaire

(The focus groups will be made up of twenty participants. There will be two focus groups each consisting of ten participants. The first focus group will include participants involved in paid work and unpaid work, while the other will include those in unpaid work only. Participants will be given the opportunity to discuss their lived experiences of paid and unpaid work. The following questions shaped around questions thirteen to seventeen of the questionnaires would be discussed during the focus groups).

Question One

Discuss the details of your responses in question 13-15 from the questionnaire.

(From your cultural understanding as an Indian woman, whose responsibility is it to prepare meals, do household chores and take care of the children in the home?)

Question Two

Discuss the details of your response in question 16 from the questionnaire.

Work is a curse from God

Question Three

Discuss the details of your response in question 17 from the questionnaire.

–According to the Bible it is the woman’s responsibility to carry out all domestic chores in the home”

Question Four

How does your work as a woman relate to your faith in God?

Question Five

Is there a Bible verse that reflects your understanding of work as a woman?

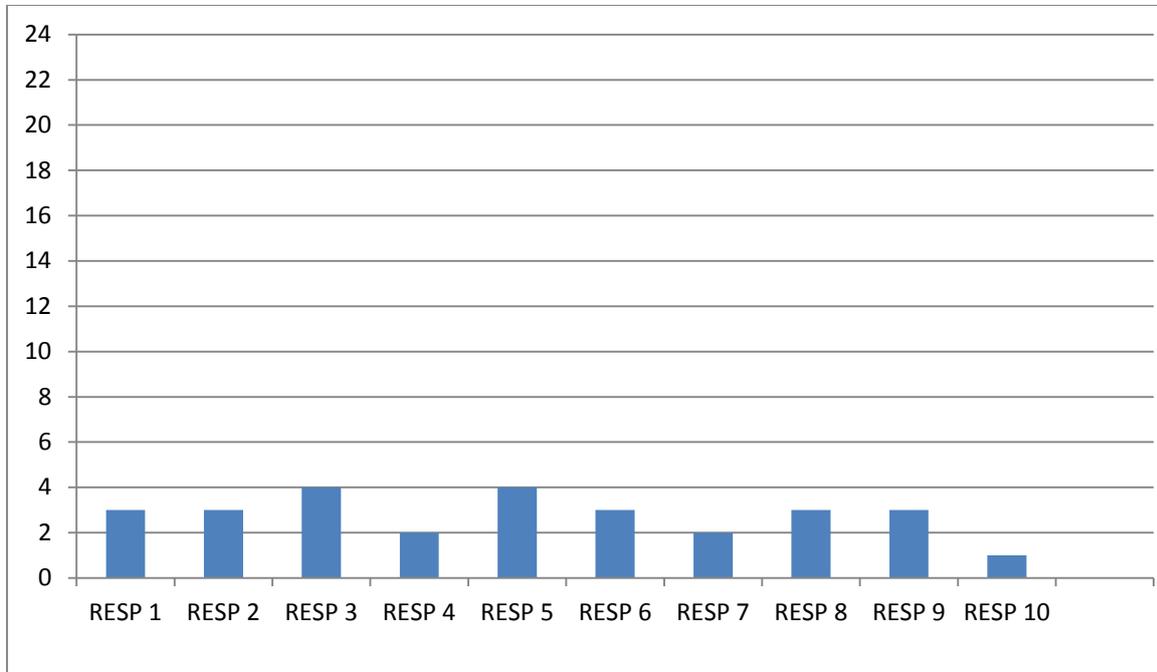
Conclusion of Focus Group Session:

Would you like to write a prayer about your work experiences as a woman?

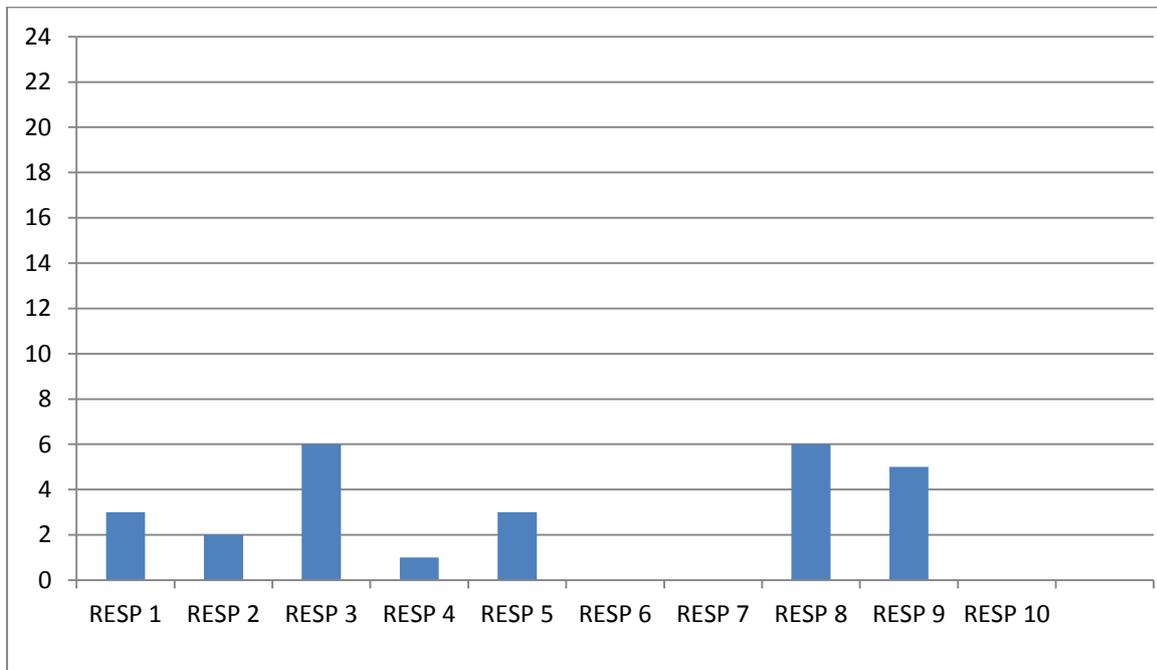
Appendix 6

Samples of Time Diary Graphs: Women involved in unpaid work only

HOURS SPENT ON PREPARATION OF MEALS, INCLUDING PREPARING LUNCHES FOR FAMILY AS WELL AS SHOPPING FOR GROCERIES

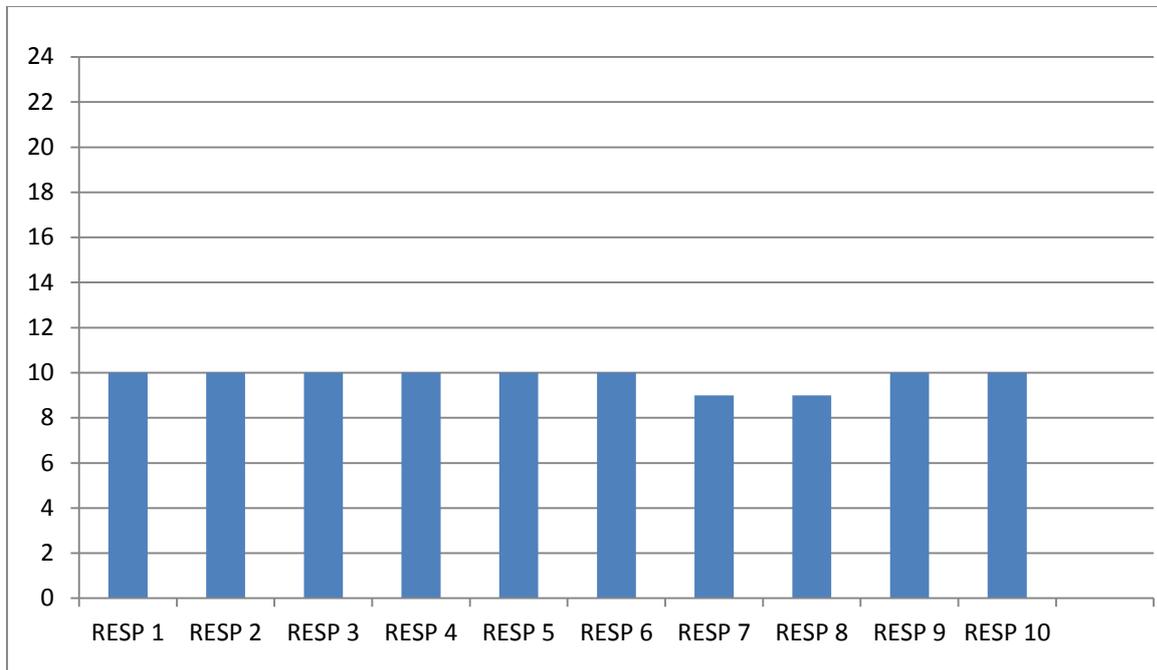


NUMBER OF HOURS SPENT ON CARING FOR CHILDREN/GRANDCHILDREN (INCLUDING HELP WITH HOMEWORK)

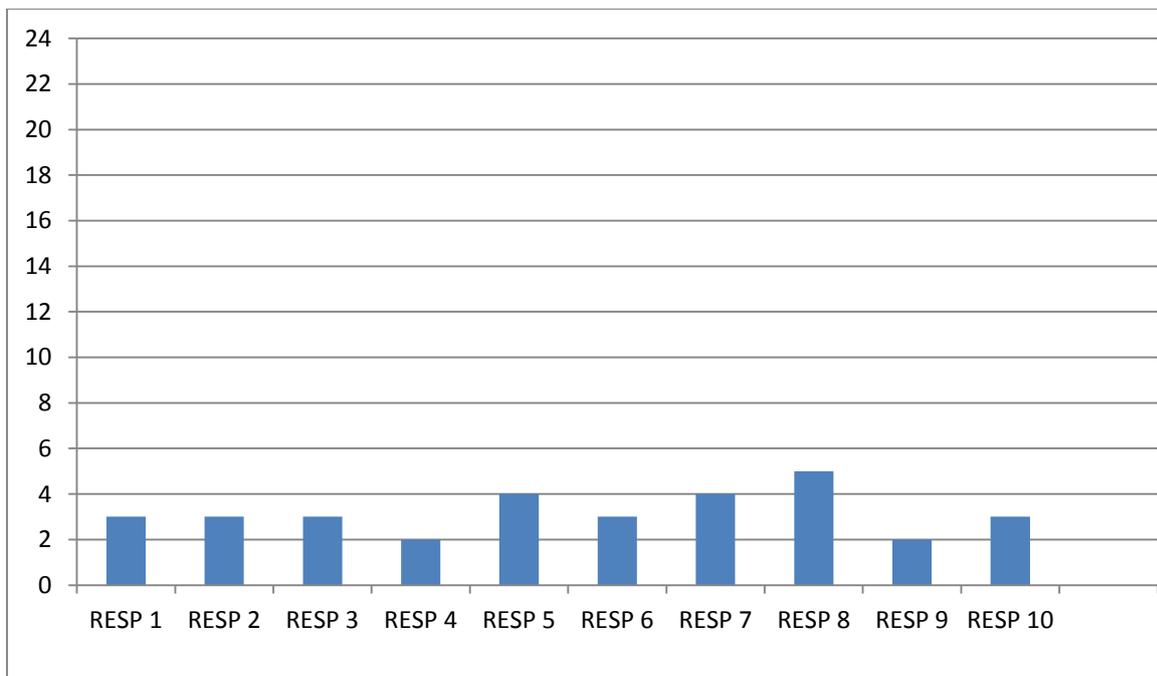


Women Involved in Paid and Unpaid Work – Weekday Diaries

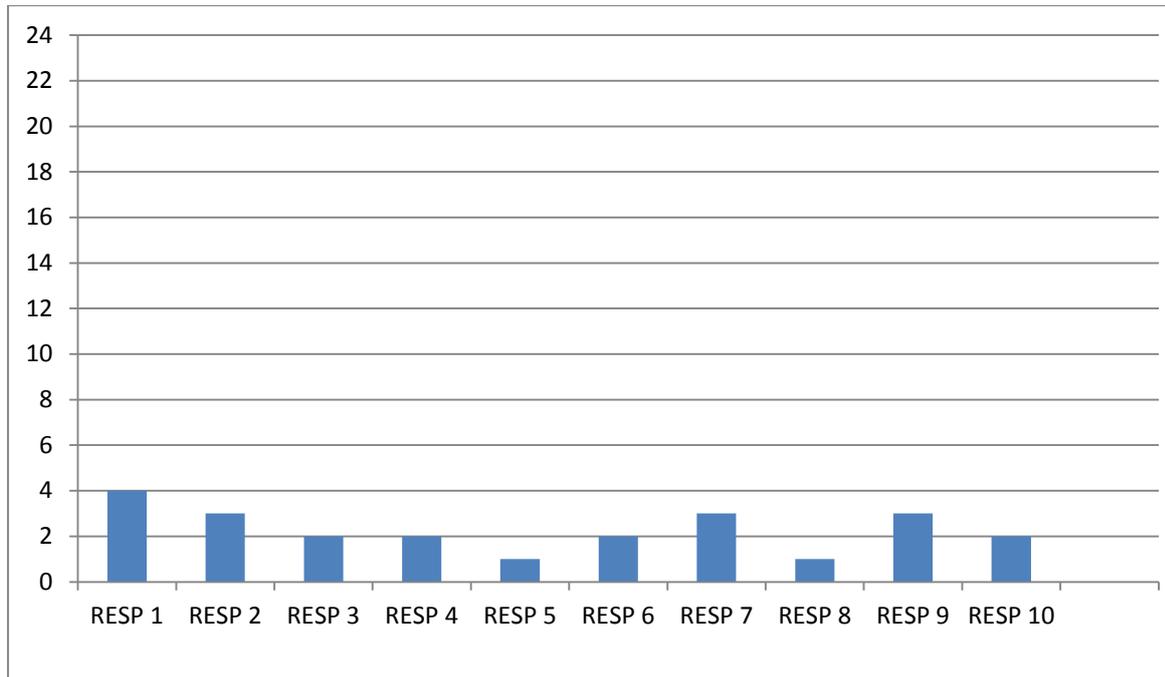
HOURS SPENT IN PRODUCTIVE WORK:



CHORES BEFORE AND AFTER PRODUCTIVE WORK: (INCLUDING PREPARING LUNCHES, CLEANING, WASHING, COOKING, TAKING CARE OF CHILDREN, HELPING WITH HOMEWORK)



TIME FOR SELF (INCLUDING PERSONAL GROOMING, RELAXING, READING, WATCHING TV, PRAYER TIME)



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Oral Source:

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27 May 2011.

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Yanano, S. *Natal Witness* 11 April 201, ~~When~~ "When daddy stays at home".