

LUDOVICK JACOB MYUMBO

# In Search Of A Better Life

Lived experiences of young women  
who trade sex for livelihoods in urban Tanzania





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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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I dedicate this scholarly work to my mother, Rosemary Kivamba. I never fully understood what a mother goes through on a daily basis, until I conducted this research. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for the sacrifice you made so that I could be where I am today. *Ubarikiwe sana!*



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Ludovick Jacob Myumbo

Tampere, 10 April 2018



# ABSTRACT

This study explores lived experiences of young rural women who trade sex for livelihoods in urban Tanzania. This was important given that there is a lack of qualitative research which allows young women who trade sex for livelihoods to recount their situations in their own voices and from their own perspectives.

Methodologically, the study adopted a qualitative approach. Data was collected through participatory narrative inquiry, which afforded a space for a group of six young rural women who trade sex in Mwanza town to tell stories of their lived experiences. This approach helped them to speak about things that they would never have had a chance to speak about, to reflect upon issues that would have belonged to the realm of taboo, and to talk about subjects that they would not have been willing or able to speak about directly without the process of participatory narrative inquiry.

The study found that young women from rural areas of Tanzania who trade sex for livelihoods in urban centres come from destructive backgrounds, including pervasive experiences of abuse, negligence, lack of care, violent and exploitative relationships, and also a lack of opportunities for well-being. In relocating to urban centres, young rural women hope to find decent work to earn an income. But because they lack qualifications, they end up in informal sectors which offer low wages and expose them to exploitative situations, including sex work. As sex workers, young rural women create groups among their own kind for affection, support, solidarity and identity, and therefore perceive themselves as working women with a vision of a better future.

The study gives an insight that patriarchy in rural areas of Tanzania creates gender inequality to the extent that young women lack opportunities for self-actualization and for a better life. This is important if social work research and practice is to work effectively in ways that can disrupt gender inequality in Tanzania. Second, the approach of this study is relatively new in the world of qualitative research – a new way of thinking about and studying lived experience. In that respect, the study

contributes to methodological approaches in qualitative research, particularly for the effective study of sensitive topics.

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, young women in Tanzania, sex work, lived experience, participatory narrative inquiry, sensitive topic

# TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä tutkimus käsittelee maalta muuttaneiden ja seksityötä elannokseen tekevien nuorten naisten elettyjä kokemuksia kaupunkiympäristössä Tansaniassa. Näkökulma on tärkeä, koska ei ole juurikaan olemassa laadullista tutkimusta, jossa maalta muuttaneet ja seksityötä elannokseen tekevät nuoret naiset kertoisivat tilanteistaan omista näkökulmistaan.

Tutkimus on laadullinen. Aineisto kerättiin osallistavalla narratiivisella menetelmällä, joka tarjosi kuuden maalta muuttaneen ja seksityötä elannokseen tekevän nuoren naisen ryhmälle Mwanzan kaupungissa tilan kertoa tarinoita kokemuksistaan. Tutkimuksen lähestymistapa auttoi heitä puhumaan asioista, joista heillä ei olisi ollut koskaan mahdollista puhua, reflektoidaan kysymyksiä, jotka olisivat kuuluneet tabujen alueeseen ja puhumaan aiheista, joista he eivät olisi halunneet puhua tai kyenneet puhumaan suoraan ilman osallistavaa narratiivista tutkimusmenetelmää.

Tutkimus osoitti, että maalta muuttaneilla ja seksityötä kaupunkiympäristössä elannokseen tekeville nuorilla naisilla on musertavat taustat, joihin sisältyy kaikenkattavia hyväksikäytön, laiminlyönnin, huolenpidon puuttumisen, väkivaltaisten ja riistävien suhteiden kokemuksia, mutta myös puuttuvia mahdollisuuksia hyvinvointiin. Muuttaessaan kaupunkiin maalta tulleet nuoret naiset toivovat löytävänsä kunnollista työtä ansaitakseen tuloja. Mutta koska heillä ei ole pätevyyttä, he päätyvät työhön epäviralliselle sektorille, jossa maksetaan pienempää palkkaa ja jossa he altistuvat monenlaiselle hyväksikäytölle mukaan lukien seksityö. Seksityöläisinä maalta muuttaneet nuoret naiset muodostavat kaltaistensa kanssa ryhmiä, joissa he voivat kokea tunteita, tukea, solidaarisuutta ja identiteettiä ja siksi nähdä itsensä työtätekevinä naisina, joilla on näkymä paremmasta tulevaisuudesta.

Tutkimus antaa oivalluksen siitä, että patriarkaatti Tansanian maaseutualueilla tuottaa sukupuolten välistä epätasa-arvoa siinä määrin, että nuorilta naisilta puuttuvat mahdollisuudet itsensä toteuttamiseen ja parempaan elämään. Siksi sosiaalityön tutkimuksessa ja käytännössä on tärkeää työskennellä tehokkaasti tavoilla, jotka voisivat vähentää sukupuolten välistä epätasa-arvoa Tansaniassa. Toiseksi, tämän

tutkimuksen lähestymistapa on suhteellisen uusi laadullisessa tutkimuksessa – uusi tapa ajatella ja tutkia elettyjä kokemuksia. Tässä suhteessa tutkimus tuo uutta laadullisen tutkimuksen metodologisiin lähestymistapoihin, erityisesti sensitiivisten aiheiden menestykselliseen tutkimiseen.

**Avainsanat:** Patriarkaatti, Tansanian nuoret naiset, seksityö, eletty kokemus, osallistava narratiivinen tutkimus, sensitiivinen aihe

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
PNI	Participatory Narrative Inquiry
RC	Regional Commissioner
SAUT	Saint Augustine University of Tanzania





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# 1 INTRODUCTION

In sub-Saharan Africa, contemporary youth have been described as a generation occupying ‘youthscapes’<sup>1</sup> characterized by destruction, disease and decline – social environments in which their possibilities of living decent lives and fulfilling their goals are bleak (e.g. Christiansen et al. 2006: 9; Stark 2017a: 569). This is true in Tanzania, especially in rural areas, where young women lack opportunities for self-actualization and well-being (e.g. Swantz 1985, 2007; Larsson 2001; Ellis et al. 2007; Iongwa 2011; Hagues and Parker 2014; Buberwa 2016). As a result, young women from rural areas of Tanzania are increasingly relocating to urban centres for better opportunities for their livelihoods. In relocating to urban centres, young rural women hope for salaried jobs, stable incomes, viable lives and predictable futures (e.g. Mbonile 1996; Kibuga 2000; Kiaga 2007; Swantz 2007; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013).

In this context, Swantz (2007) has especially observed that girls and young women in Iramba<sup>2</sup> are relocating to big cities, such as Dar es Salaam and Mwanza,<sup>3</sup> in search of a better life. She has also observed that the circulation of information regarding lifestyles and the availability of ‘employments’ in the urban centres occurs informally through personal networks within the home territories – friends, relatives, agents

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1 Maira and Soep (2005) laid the groundwork for the notion of ‘youthscapes’, which refers to the meanings that young people create for themselves through their engagements with popular cultures, national ideologies and global markets. Borrowing from Arjun Appadurai’s (1990) notions of ethnoscaping, mediascaping and ideoscaping, Maira and Soep (2005) argue that youth are active creators of their own lives or destinies in their own environments and/or spaces.

2 Iramba is one of the six districts of Singida Region in central Tanzania. According to the 2012 Tanzania National Census, the population of Iramba district was 236,282. Residents of the Iramba district are called Wanyiramba (plural; singular: Mnyiramba).

3 The city of Mwanza is located on the southern shores of the second largest freshwater lake in the world, Lake Victoria, in northern Tanzania. With a population of more than 700,000, it is also considered the second largest city in Tanzania and a major port city. The city is known for unusual rock formations such as Bismarck Rock. In the centre of town are colonial buildings such as Dr Robert Koch’s crumbling hilltop house, the 1935 Indian Public Library, and mosques and Hindu temples which reflect the Indian influence in the city.

and town-based brokers.<sup>4</sup> As a result, there is a general lack of reliable information and public awareness about the phenomenon of young rural women relocating to urban centres for better lives (e.g. Mbonile 1996; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013). The operations of local recruitment agents, for example, go uninspected or unmonitored by state authorities. This is especially critical in contexts of human misery and high rates of economic and social deprivation in Tanzania, where young rural women may simply be led or deceived into accepting the promises offered by human traffickers or town-based brokers without being aware of the precarious types of ‘employments’ or conditions that await them in urban centres (e.g. Mbonile 1996; Kibuga 2000; Kiaga 2007; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013).

This study, therefore, is concerned with the living and working conditions of young rural women in Tanzania who relocate to urban centres for better livelihoods. This is critical, given that a young woman from a far-flung rural place might be as much a stranger in an urban centre as a migrant worker from abroad. She might come from an ethnic group that is different from those of her employers; speak a different dialect or language; practise a different religion; be illiterate (in the sense of being unable to read, write or count); or simply be overwhelmed by the customs and beliefs of urban households and/or workplaces – feeling isolated in a strange and volatile environment while trying to strategize for her livelihood (e.g. ILO 2013).

Furthermore, a young woman from a rural area with little or no formal education may experience restricted access, or be denied access altogether, to information and services relevant to her personal and/or work life. Her situation may become even worse if the terms and conditions of her ‘employment’ are fluid, undefined and unwritten, all of which happens in informal sectors in Tanzania and across sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. ILO 2013). In such complex, fluid and undefined circumstances, a young rural woman may lack the means to speak out about instances of mistreatment and exploitation, and may have no way to seek redress for abuse and maltreatment.

Because of such constraints and barriers, including a lack of qualifications, young rural women may find themselves in informal ‘employments’ which offer low wages and expose them to exploitative and inhuman environments. In other words, they

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<sup>4</sup> This family-and-relative recruitment modality, referred to by Kiaga (2007) as *undugu* (a brotherhood set up with the aim of providing cooperation to foster cultural, social and economic ties), is a fundamental recruitment modality for domestic workers in Tanzania, drawing on kinship networks and social relationships.

may feel compelled to engage in unconventional livelihood strategies, such as sex work,<sup>5</sup> for their survival. However, there are no substantive qualitative studies in Tanzania which explore and understand the lived experiences<sup>6</sup> of young rural women who engage in sex work for livelihoods in urban centres.

It is therefore perhaps fair to say that the existing information about young rural women who sell sex in urban Tanzania often comes from the perspectives and voices of ‘outsiders’, whether those be elite urban residents, policymakers or other privileged commentators. As a result, we rarely hear the voices of young rural women who trade sex in urban centres recounting their situations from their own perspectives. This shortcoming leads to stereotypes which perpetuate skewed perceptions and connotations, categorizing such young women as deviant and vicious (e.g. Matthews 2008), thus reducing them to numbers for the purposes of creating an ‘other’ to be controlled (e.g. Quinn and Macrae 2005; Quinn and Rosenthal 2012).

This does not mean that the existing information and perspectives about young rural women who trade sex in urban Tanzania are unfair or untrue. They might be entirely true. However, to insist only on other people’s perspectives or on negative aspects of the narratives about these young women risks voicing only part of the story, with the result that our understanding of their lived experiences might be curtailed. Partial or isolated stories often lead to stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are blind and incomplete (Adichie 2016: 87). Stereotypes make one story become the only story, and therefore limit any deep

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5 Sex work in this study is the provision of sexual services for money or goods. Sex workers in this study are adult women (above 18 years of age) who receive money or goods in exchange for sexual services, and who consciously define those activities as income-generating even if they do not consider sex work as their occupation. Sex work in this study is both formal or informal, in the sense that in some instances it might only be a temporary (occasional) informal activity where sex is exchanged for basic, short-term economic needs, and this is less likely to be a formal or full-time occupation (UNAIDS 2005). In addition, sex work in this study takes many different forms, ranging from the more visible street sex work to brothels and escort services. Since child sex work (17 years of age and below) raises different and additional issues, I shall restrict my discussion to adult sex work.

6 Lived experience designates first-hand accounts and/or impressions of living as a member of a group or society (e.g. van Manen 1990; Boylorn 2008: 489). It refers to individuals’ unique outlooks and perspectives, which are shaped by subjective factors of identity such as race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, political associations, roles and other characteristics that determine how people live their daily lives in a group and/or society (Boylorn 2008: 489). In other words, lived experience signifies individuals’ unique accounts in a society in comparison with others (Boylorn 2008: 490). These unique accounts can be life-affirming or negating, depending on one’s experiences of ordinary and everyday events (e.g. Bchner 2002; Boylorn 2008: 490).

exploration of the ‘multiple interpretive possibilities’ and ‘discourses existing beneath or alongside the primary narrative’ (King 1998: 1).

## 1.1 Relevance of the study

It is important here to explain my interest in carrying out this study, bearing in mind that questions could be raised as to whether a male researcher (from a highly patriarchal background) can effectively study and understand the lived experiences of young rural women who sell sex for their livelihoods in a patriarchal society. What might be the source of my motivation?

My personal encounter with young rural women who trade sex in urban Tanzania occurred during my years of working with local communities in Mwanza town as part of the outreach programmes of St Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), with which I have been associated since 2009. In one of the centres we often visited, I met a young woman from Iramba who had been lured into sex work by men who target new arrivals for sexual gratification. I was moved to tears when I heard her many stories of abuse and exploitation. I passionately wanted to do something about this state of affairs. I decided that I wanted to know more about such young women’s lived experiences, especially those who were trapped in the sex industry for their livelihoods. As a person who had been socialized into patriarchy, I felt that I bore more responsibility for disrupting men’s oppression of women, which is perpetuated through male privilege, male roles and exaggerated masculinity (hegemonic masculinity and macho images of masculinity). Thereafter I sought to purposefully provide a platform on which young rural women who sell sex in Mwanza town would share stories of their lived experiences, so as to offer me better prospects to understand and articulate their situations.

The main objective of this study, therefore, is to understand the lived experiences of young rural women who trade sex for their livelihoods in urban Tanzania. The study is guided by the following research question: *what are the lived experiences of young rural women who trade sex for their livelihoods in urban Tanzania?* Although this question does not address all the urban areas in Tanzania, but only in Mwanza, it largely covers two important issues facing young rural women who trade sex in urban Tanzania: their everyday lived experiences (both past and present), and their experiences in their



workplaces, including how they negotiate to find employment, the types of employment available to them, and the other viable options for their livelihoods. All these issues are raised to inform us not only about how young rural women strategize for their livelihoods in the face of multiple constraints and barriers, but also how they comprehend agency in their respective environments, as well as how they envisage and shape their own futures.

To achieve the above objectives, the study adopts a qualitative approach. Data is collected through participatory narrative inquiry (PNI), which affords a space for young rural women (from Iramba) who trade sex in Mwanza town to tell stories of their lived experiences. PNI is sought to help the participants to think critically and to explore world views, values, concerns and feelings in relation to their own lived experiences. In that sense, this approach is designated to assist the participants to speak about things that they would never have had a chance to speak about, reflect upon issues that would belong to the realm of taboo, and talk about subjects that they would not have been willing or able to speak about directly without the process of narrative inquiry. Ultimately, the approach in this study is sought to help the participants to make sense of their complex situations and redefine themselves (find meaning in their lives).

In addition, the approach that this study takes is very important in a context where women's voices have been restricted and opportunities for them to speak about themselves and their lived experiences have been almost non-existent (e.g. UNICEF 2006). This study, therefore, opens new avenues and trajectories for young rural women who trade sex for livelihoods to speak about themselves and their lived experiences, which in turn could help to reduce stereotypes and therefore help us (particularly social workers and policymakers) to work effectively in ways that will benefit not only marginalized young rural women but also Tanzanian society at large.

## 1.2 Significance of the study

The findings from this study reveal the constraints which hinder young rural women's opportunities for self-actualization and their abilities to control their own sexuality and lives as a whole. The study also reveals how both men and women in Tanzania resist, accommodate, adapt to and conflict with each other over resources, space, rights and responsibilities. Hence the study provides better prospects for

disrupting gender inequalities more effectively in society. Hopefully, therefore, this study will aid a reformulation of relevant policies and good practices with a view to either correcting or improving the situations of young rural women who trade sex for livelihoods in urban Tanzania and across sub-Saharan Africa.

Furthermore, the narrative inquiry approach that this study takes is relatively new in the world of qualitative research: a new way of thinking about and studying lived experiences (e.g. Riessman 2008; Kurtz 2014). Therefore, this study contributes to methodological approaches in qualitative research, especially on sensitive topics. This is particularly important for the social work profession, which has a ‘unique commitment to a contextual understanding of people, an explicit value-base that emphasizes human rights and human dignity, a commitment to serving marginalized and oppressed people, and a mission to foster a more just society’ (Witkin 1995: 427). In that vein, it is hoped that this study will set a new scene for social work in Tanzania<sup>7</sup> by examining the best practices for the recovery of the repressed voices of weaker segments of society.

### 1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis has six chapters. Chapter one (this chapter) outlines the objectives, relevance and significance of the study. Chapter two presents the contexts of the study. In this chapter I particularly show the dichotomy which exists between rural and urban areas in Tanzania. I also present the current configuration of rural-urban migration in Tanzania, showing that young women from rural areas are increasingly moving to urban centres on their own to fulfil their social and economic needs. In this connection, I comment on ways in which urban centres present not only challenges but also new avenues, opportunities and trajectories that are beyond the reach of young women in rural areas.

Chapter three presents the conceptual framework of the study. In this chapter I examine patriarchy as a theoretical concept which explains gendered power relations

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<sup>7</sup> Social work training in Tanzania is still in its infancy, and it has been observed that ‘recognition of the value of professional training in social work’ is not widespread in society (Opoku 2017: 92). Mabeyo (2014: 121) attests that little has been documented in Tanzania regarding the social work profession. She emphasizes that in the face of ‘multifaceted problems, the social work profession in Tanzania must assume very important roles in addressing poverty, empowering communities, and restoring people’s problem-solving and coping capacities’ (see also Burke and Ngonyani 2004).

and dominance. In so doing, I capture the existence of a system of social inequality which not only creates gendered power relations, but also perpetuates discrimination and subordination. The point here is that although men and women may live together intimately, gender remains an active principal source of organization, which not only creates gendered powered relations, but also leads to inequality and subordination.

Chapter four presents the methodology of the study. It includes the method and process of data collection, and the ethical implications. I explore here a process of narrative inquiry which innovatively blends participatory and narrative approaches to afford a space for participants to tell stories of their lived experiences. I also show the appropriateness of participatory narrative inquiry for exploring multifaceted and complex lived experiences.

Chapter five presents the findings of the study. Here I describe the lived experiences of the participants (their stories), from their childhood relationships in rural areas to their current situations in the urban centre. I also disclose the aspirations and imagined futures of the participants, explaining how, despite a barrage of hardship and opposition, the participants continue to renegotiate their identities and actively imagine a better future for themselves through sex work.

In the final chapter, I provide a synthesis of the major findings of the study. I also discuss the implications of the study in relation to the theoretical framework and other relevant literature. Above all, I highlight the key contribution of the study not only to social work, but also to a broader formulation of conceptual and methodological approaches for similar and comparative studies in Tanzania and across sub-Saharan Africa.

## 2 THE RURAL-URBAN DISPARITY AND INTERACTION IN TANZANIA

In this chapter I describe the contexts in which the study is situated. I firstly present the spatial structure of development which has left rural areas with a limited or non-existent supply of basic services and utilities (water, electricity, health and educational services). Then I relate that structure to the current situation in Tanzania in which many young women from rural areas are increasingly moving to big cities on their own to fulfil their social and economic needs. I also comment on the ways in which urban centres present not only challenges but also new avenues, opportunities and trajectories that are beyond the reach of young women in rural areas.

### 2.1 Lack of basic human services in rural areas

It should be known that in Tanzania, as in sub-Saharan Africa generally, the colonial spatial structure of development focused strongly on a small number of coastal ports and/or towns for the export and import of goods (e.g. Mbonile 1996; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; cf. Gugler 1969: 135; Adepoju 2004). These coastal ports and towns eventually became urban centres or metropolises which presented not simply a large city, but an administrative core that offered economic, political and cultural activities as well as better basic services and infrastructures. The rural areas, on the other hand, presented peripheral or non-metropolitan spatial entities outside the large centres or cities, with fewer economic, political and cultural activities, and also with inferior human services and infrastructures. In other words, rural or peripheral areas were placed at the bottom of the heap in terms of receiving basic services and utilities (e.g. Mbonile 1996; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; cf. Berry 2005: 399–400).

The above spatial structure of development has remained relatively unchanged in Tanzania even after independence (e.g. Mbonile 1996; Adepoju 2004; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; cf. Findlay and Findlay 1987). In that respect, the colonial spatial structure of development, which focused strongly on a small number of coastal ports or towns, has been held in Tanzania as a perfect scheme of development, thus

leaving rural areas with a limited or non-existent supply of basic services and utilities (water, electricity, health and educational services) (Msigwa and Mbongo 2013). As a result, many rural dwellers, mostly men, have been continuously flocking to coastal cities such as Dar es Salaam for employment and/or better livelihoods, leaving behind their wives, children and the elderly, who are expected to maintain the homestead, which involves engaging in subsistence farming for survival (Mbonile 1996; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; cf. Gugler 1969: 138).<sup>8</sup>

In connection with the above, Msigwa and Mbongo (2013) have claimed that rural-urban migration has become something of a *rite de passage* for young men from rural areas of Tanzania, as is also reported in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Gugler 1969: 137). This implies that, in order to earn a living and be able to provide for their homestead, young men from rural areas of Tanzania have tended to relocate to urban centres where better human services and utilities are found. This situation in Tanzania relates to Jones-Dube's (1995) observations in Botswana, where indigenous men have been flowing to urban centres for their livelihoods: this has become a cultural practice amongst Botswanan men to earn a living and be able to provide for their homesteads (see also Izzard 1985; Ingstad 1994).

However, recently it has been reported that many young women from rural areas are also increasingly relocating to big cities independently of their families to fulfil their social and economic needs (e.g. Mbonile 1996; Kibuga 2000; Kamala et al. 2001; Moyer 2006; Kiaga 2007; Klocker 2007, 2011; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013). What is central here is that the colonial pattern of rural-urban migration, which was male-dominated and long term in nature, is increasingly being reconfigured (Mbonile 1996; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013). In other words, rural-urban migration has now been feminized, and gender as a social construction that organizes male-female relations is fundamentally influencing the processes and effects of labour migration in Tanzania to include young women, particularly those from rural areas (Mbonile 1996; Kibuga 2000; Kiaga 2007; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013).

This is especially conceivable in contemporary Tanzanian society, where both men and women are connecting faster and more reliably through phone calls, text messages and even images (e.g. photographs and television), giving rural dwellers an

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<sup>8</sup> In colonial times, only indigenous men were required to migrate temporarily to urban areas in order to work as cheap labour, and also to develop locations where colonial enterprises were situated while the rural or 'reserve' areas were systematically left underdeveloped.

idea of the structures and environments of the urban centres (e.g. Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; Stark 2013; cf. Oucho and Oucho 2010: 8). With these rapidly changing means of communication, and also improved systems of transport, the distances that once existed between the rural and the urban are now being reconstructed and placed within the reach of every person. Such a translocal environment provides opportunities for rural and urban dwellers to meet (say at a local bar or restaurant) and learn about each other (Msigwa and Mbongo 2013), as also reported in Zimbabwe (Andersson 2001). In their interactions, it is likely that rural dwellers may provide updates about what is considered rural life, while urban dwellers may provide information regarding lifestyles in urban areas. Thus the decision to move from a rural to an urban area or vice versa is no longer one-dimensional, but is influenced by a complex host of interwoven sources and processes (Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; cf. Oucho and Oucho 2010).

In addition, many women in Tanzania have become heads of households, and therefore have become providers for their families, which pushes young rural women to opt for different life strategies within and outside their own environments so as to be able to provide for themselves and their families (e.g. Swantz 1985; Bond 2005; Ellis et al. 2007; Msisha et al. 2008; Iongwa 2011; Hagues and Parker 2014; Osorio et al. 2014). In that sense, women who relocate to urban centres play important roles in their families as caregivers and managers of remittances (e.g. Mbonile 1996; Dungumaro 2013; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013). It is in this context that young women from Iramba district leave their homes to go to urban areas (mainly Dar es Salaam and Mwanza) searching for a better life for themselves and also for their families left behind (Swantz 2007). The same is reported in Iringa and Makete districts, where uneducated and unmarried young women relocate to urban centres to work as domestic servants for their own livelihoods and also for their families back home (e.g. Kibuga 2000; Kiaga 2007; Klocker 2007, 2011). This situation in Tanzania parallels Hamer's (1981) accounts of Diola girls and young women in Senegal who leave their rural communities in the dry season to work as maids in big cities so as to acquire wealth for themselves and their families back home (Gugler and Ludwar-Ene 1995: 262).

While it is true that both men and women in rural areas of Tanzania suffer from the effects of gross underdevelopment, living lives of chronic poverty,<sup>9</sup> rural girls and young women take on a bigger share of that suffering (e.g. Swantz 1985, 2007; Klocker 2007, 2011; Hagues and Parker 2014; Osorio et al. 2014; Buberwa 2016). Although this theme will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, it is important to highlight here some of the constraints and restrictions that are faced by young women in the rural areas of Tanzania. In the rural areas, girls and young women (and females in general) are faced with a threefold regime of work and responsibility. First, they are responsible for most domestic chores in the private sphere of the home; second, they are expected to organize and carry out subsistence agriculture to feed the family; and third, where possible, they are expected to engage in income-generating activities to obtain cash (Ellis et al. 2007; Osorio et al. 2014; Buberwa 2016; cf. Jones-Dube 1995: 333). However, the cultural and socio-economic situation restricts what they can achieve as women, as they are often restricted in terms of access to financial and natural resources such as land and bank services (Ellis et al. 2007; Osorio et al. 2014). With all these constraints and restrictions, some young rural women feel obliged to move to urban centres for their livelihoods, even when they would have preferred not to do so (Mbonile 1996; Ellis et al. 2007; Kiaga 2007; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013), as is also reported in Botswana (Izzard 1985: 268; Jones-Dube 1995: 333).

It is therefore the prospect of accessing better opportunities or a better life in the urban centre that pushes young rural women to relocate outside the confines of the rural communities into which they have been socialized (Mbonile 1996; Kiaga 2007; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013). In this context, the urban centre provides them with viable alternatives to subordination, among other things (Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; cf. Tienda and Booth 1991). For example, the relocation to urban areas of commercially adventurous young rural women has led to a situation where men can now stay home to look after children (Mbonile 1996; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013). It is also true that this situation has increased rural women's participation in economic activities, affording them forms of independence and autonomy (Mbonile 1996; Kibuga 2000; Kiaga 2007; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; cf. Pittin 1984; Ingstad 1994).

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9 In the context of Tanzania, Stark (2017a: 588) defines the 'chronically poor as those who have suffered from long periods of material want and who are unable, due to lack of education and other social and economic capital, to benefit from economic growth or development efforts'.

For many rural dwellers, towns present not only better services and utilities, but also easier means of survival in comparison with the available options in their home areas (Msigwa and Mbongo 2013). It is in urban centres that one can find extensive parks, cricket fields, golf courses, good hospitals, good schools, good systems of transport, clean water and electricity, to mention but a few facilities (most of which were established in colonial times for the exclusive use of colonial masters, and which also acted as *cordons sanitaires*<sup>10</sup>), all of which attract rural dwellers as indicators of a better life (Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; cf. Drakakis-Smith 1993). Although agriculture is still important in Tanzania, the rural areas that represent the main source of agricultural production receive little or no attention at all in terms of supply of basic services and utilities such as water, electricity, health and educational facilities (Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; Osorio et al. 2014). This is especially critical in light of the evolving assumption that the land-based economy in rural areas needs to give way to an economy based on industry and information in urban centres (Osorio et al. 2014; cf. Berry 2005: 400). In that context, it is not difficult to see why rural dwellers, including young women, depart for urban centres that offer them better socio-economic amenities and prospects (Mbonile 1996; Kibuga 2000; Ellis et al. 2007; Kiaga 2007; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; Osorio et al. 2014).

## 2.2 Dynamics in urban centres

It is reported that the rural exodus of both men and women, outlined in the previous section, is a common denominator in the rapid growth of cities in Tanzania in the past few decades following independence (Lawi 2013; cf. Sommers 2010: 319). However, the capacity of these cities to accommodate increasing numbers of residents in terms of employment and access to basic amenities remains quite limited (Sommers 2010: 319; Lawi 2013). Bryceson (2006: 24) reports a ‘deplorable’ condition of urban slums in East and Southern Africa, including Tanzania, where water-related diseases such as scabies, dysentery and cholera are commonplace. She also makes the important comment that ‘the common assumption that urban

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10 ‘*Cordon sanitaire*’ comes from a French term which, literally translated, means ‘sanitary cordon’. It originally denoted a barrier implemented to stop the spread of infectious diseases. It can be used interchangeably with the term ‘quarantine’, but although these terms are related, ‘*cordon sanitaire*’ refers to the restriction of the movement of people within a defined geographical area. The term is often used metaphorically in English to refer to attempts to prevent the spread of an ideology deemed unwanted or dangerous, such as the containment policy adopted by the Dutch (Boers) in South Africa.



dwellers enjoy better health than rural dwellers does not apply to the urban poor' (Bryceson 2006: 24).

Several studies support Bryceson's (2006: 24) observations, adding that both young men and women from rural areas who relocate to urban centres for better livelihoods often end up living in slums and poor neighbourhoods where rents are low (e.g. Mbonile 1996; Lawi 2013; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). In these neighbourhoods they also encounter a wide range of problems, maybe more so than anybody else (Msigwa and Mbongo 2013). The concrete problems include a lack of availability of basic services such as shelter, water, food, schools and health services (e.g. Lawi 2013; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). In addition, there is sometimes stiff and intense competition with the host communities for resources and services (water, food, education, health, employment), leading to exclusion and segregation of the new incomers (Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; cf. Aina 1995: 50). Moreover, the newcomers remain vulnerable to intense exploitation and denial of basic human and employment rights by employers who at times, particularly in domestic work, use force, abuse and violence (e.g. Kibuga 2000; Kiaga 2007).

Because of the above situation, rural-urban migrants (both young men and young women) find themselves in difficult positions and end up becoming socially immobile and inflexible (e.g. Swantz 2007; Lawi 2013; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013). The situation is even worse for young rural women migrants: for example, finding formal work can be particularly difficult for them, as there are few jobs, and they especially lack the qualifications that are needed for employment in the formal sector (e.g. Lawi 2013; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017a, 2017b; cf. Sommers 2010: 320). Due to this precarious situation, many young rural women migrants position themselves and make a livelihood by depending on 'small-small' money, or perhaps by bartering items (e.g. Bryceson 2006; Moyer 2006; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017a, 2017b), as also reported in South Africa (Leclerc-Madlala 2003: 214). When other options fail, sex work becomes the most immediate means of survival for many of them (e.g. Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Luke 2003; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017a, 2017b).

The above description of life in urban Tanzania chimes with Swantz's (2007) observations about young women from Iramba district who are commonly employed in urban centres as domestic servants, and also as barmaids, sometimes by

force (see also Mbonile 1996; Kibuga 2000; Kiaga 2007; Lawi 2013; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013). When things turn sour within the limited tasks of domestic or bar work in urban centres, Nyimba young women find an escape through sex work (see also Kibuga 2000; Kiaga 2007; Msisha et al. 2008). This can mean that in the context of limited choices, sex work may become the only available option for the livelihood of these young rural woman migrants (see also Swidler and Watkins 2007; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017b). In this context, therefore, young rural women migrants feel compelled to ‘choose’ sex work for their livelihoods (see also Moyer 2006).

In her recent study in two low-income neighbourhoods of Dar es Salaam (home to some of the worst living conditions that meet UN-Habitat’s (2010: 14–15) criteria for a slum), Stark (2017a: 569) has found that sex work, which she often prefers to call transactional sex<sup>11</sup> or transactional intimacy, provides a ‘youthscape’ or space ‘in which men are expected to provide materially for female sexual partners, a situation from which many poor women derive all or part of their income, and poor men derive social respect and a masculine self-esteem’ (see also Swidler and Watkins 2007; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017b). In other words, sex work or transactional sex offers ‘a space in which impoverished urban youth renegotiate their identities and actively imagine for themselves a better future’ (Stark 2017a: 570). This is especially true for young rural women migrants. In that context, sex work is a consequence of women’s poverty and economic dependence on men where women’s bodies are seen as ‘goods’ to be exploited for both pleasure and material gain (e.g. Haram 1995, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017b). Moreover, in structures of gender inequality where men hold the money and the power to buy women for their own sexual drives, sex becomes a ‘commodity’ used by poor women to bargain with those who are wealthier or more powerful for survival purposes (e.g. Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Beckham 2013; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017b).

On the other hand, Maganja et al. (2007) have found that transactional sex (in this case sex work) is common among the rural-urban migrant youth in Dar es Salaam and is seen as part of life. In that respect, young rural women migrants quite often exchange money and other goods in all types of sexual relationships (Maganja et al.

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11 According to Stark (2017a: 571), transactional sex is not the same as prostitution. Instead, it is better viewed as a continuum of relationships, with sex work at one extreme, and the provision of needs by a primary male partner (permanent boyfriend or husband) at the other (see also Hunter 2002, 2010; Luke 2005; Maganja et al. 2007; Swidler and Watkins 2007; MacPherson et al. 2012).

2007). Whether casually or long term, many young women migrants in the slums in Tanzania are positioned to expect money and goods from partners, and either add other partners or break off relationships when men cannot perform economically (e.g. Maganja et al. 2007; Stark 2017a: 569). In some cases, financially struggling young rural men migrants appear to expect their partners or girlfriends (mostly young rural women migrants) to earn money by sexually servicing wealthy men. This is in addition to situations in which young women migrants are obliged to get pregnant by elite urban men in the hope of forging bonds of security and stability, as it is thought that rich men are likelier to marry the mothers of their children (Moyer 2006: 186). Haram (2005) remarks that women (particularly young rural women migrants) who may be considered sex workers by outsiders see themselves as single mothers trying to make ends meet by strategically entering and exiting partnerships with wealthier men, including the fathers of their children (see also Kielmann 1998; Hollos and Larsen 2008; Wamoyi et al. 2011). Building on years of ethnographic work in northern Tanzania, Haram (2005) argues that it is not the exchange of sex for money per se that violates social norms in urban Tanzania; rather, it is the public acknowledgement or flaunting of extramarital relationships that is condemned and brings 'shame' (mostly to women). As long as people (especially young women) maintain secrecy in their sexual relationships, they also maintain respectability.

Since sexual exchange implies that young rural women migrants enter multiple partnerships with powerful men in urban centres (mostly in slums) so as to make enough money for their livelihoods, it is now condemned because of increased risks for HIV/AIDS pandemic (e.g. Beckham 2013: 12; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). In this connection, Setel (1999) argues that HIV/AIDS is perceived as a disease of rich men in urban centres, because if a man has money, he can pursue as many partners as possible, especially those who desperately need money for survival purposes. Young women, on the other hand, can most easily access the commodities of modernity by having sex with richer men (Setel 1999), as also reported in South Africa (Leclerc-Madlala 2003). Arguably, such practices are more about satisfying 'wants' as opposed to meeting 'needs' and may reflect a desire to acquire what Handler (1991) refers to as 'symbol capital', in this case the symbols of a modern and successful life (see also Leclerc-Madlala 2003: 214).

In addition, Stark (2017a: 581) has found that, in urban centres in Tanzania, wealthy men and their female partners (mostly young rural women migrants) are motivated

by *tamaa*<sup>12</sup> rather than exclusively by poverty in their participation in sex work (transactional sex), and this leads to an increased risk of HIV/AIDS. The poor youth that Stark (2017a: 581) interviewed in low-income neighbourhoods of Dar es Salaam (mostly young rural women migrants) perceived ‘rich men as using their disposable wealth to attract women by purchasing for them the non-necessities of a middle-class consumer lifestyle such as cosmetics, jewellery, expensive clothing, mobile phones and visits to the hair salon’.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, some of her interviewees reported that they had begun sexual activity before puberty, between the ages of nine and 12. When they were asked why, the typical answer was that girls and young women were motivated by either poverty or *tamaa* to seek multiple partners (Stark 2017a: 582). Thus, through sex work, young women in the slums of Dar es Salaam, especially young rural women migrants, ‘seek to enter into sexual networks – often involving multiple partners – in which they ideally increase their social, emotional and economic capital’ (Stark 2016: 15). This is especially true of persons from the poorest communities who have no other means of accessing this capital (see also Swidler and Watson 2007; Thornton 2009).

However, an increase in one’s social, emotional and economic capital is useless when it is paralleled with heightened risks of HIV/AIDS. East and Southern Africa generally have dreadful statistics for HIV/AIDS, ‘with urban prevalence rates double those in rural areas and higher than anywhere else in the world’ (Sommers 2010: 320). It is also reported that more females than males are infected with HIV and affected by AIDS (Sommers 2010: 327). For young rural women migrants, the scope of the health catastrophe of AIDS is huge, not only for them as potential victims of the pandemic, but also for their dependants: children, spouses, siblings and the elderly residing upcountry (see also Kamwengo 2007: 112; Dungumaro 2013).

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12 *Tamaa* is a Kiswahili word, functioning both as a noun and a verb and denoting lust, greed, envy, excessive desire and a readiness to obtain desired things through means not considered socially acceptable (see Setel 1999; Plummer and Wight 2011: 204–205; Wamoyi et al. 2011). Although *tamaa* is described as positive when it motivates a person to struggle diligently towards his/her goal (see also Setel 1999: 100), it becomes negative when someone seeks to take ‘a shortcut’ or the ‘easy way out’. In reference to transactional sex or sex work, the *tamaa* of both men and women is always depicted negatively (Stark 2017a: 582).

13 From poor women’s perspectives, however, these goods and services are not necessarily luxuries. Instead, they are necessary in a cultural context in which a sophisticated personal appearance is needed to attract male partners with money. Men that Stark (2017a: 589) interviewed ‘admitted that they prefer – and are more likely to offer gifts to – women who are well-groomed’ (see also Maganja et al. 2007; Wamoyi et al. 2011).

Nevertheless, it should also be pointed out here that despite these challenges, the lives of young rural women migrants in urban centres may have positive aspects, and it is not all despair and disaster (Sommers 2010: 327). Much as urban life for many is tough and sometimes threatening, it also offers young rural women migrants options and pathways which are often unavailable in rural areas (Sommers 2010: 327). Urban benefits include the possibility of finding stable work, earning wages, learning skills, joining networks, being free from overbearing and rigid social and cultural customs and practices, being innovative, and breaking away from family control (Sommers 2010: 327). Framed differently, the city can be a place to shed the onerous gender restrictions and views which are deeply embedded in families and communities in rural places (see also ILO 2013).

Urban life can also offer young rural women a platform from which to open themselves up to new experiences, which are needed for human growth, development and reinvention (e.g. Haram 2003, 2005; Stark 2013, 2017a). This is especially true in contexts where some young women use sex work as a means to obtain consumer goods from wealthier men so as to enhance their social status (e.g. Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Luke 2003; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Stark 2013, 2017a). Negotiating life in the city may be difficult, and surviving may hardly be easy, but there is also a chance of attaining a level of success that would be out of the reach of young women in rural areas (e.g. Sommer 2010: 318; Wamoyi et al. 2011).

## 2.3 Contexts in which decisions are made

Scholars who have scrutinized the dynamics of the social spaces in which women trade sex have revealed that sex workers endure working conditions that stigmatize them, criminalize them, and subject them to risks which may cause physical and psychological disorders (e.g. Høigård and Finstad 1992; Sharpe 1998; Hubbard 1999; Phoenix 1999; Porter and Bonilla 2000; Sterk 2000; O'Neill 2001; Hubbard and Sanders 2003; Bailey et al. 2010). It is therefore important to explore the social contexts in which young rural women make decisions to leave their homes and risk living in fragile conditions in urban areas (trading sex in urban centres). It is not a natural instinct for human beings to consciously choose hazardous, dehumanizing and perilous environments such as those operating in and through the violent and unsafe sex industry – and such choices should certainly not be understood as

indicative of skewed personalities or perceptions (e.g. Douglas 1992: 41; Agustín 2002).

Douglas (1992: 42), therefore, argues for a contextual approach to understanding risk through qualitative work that explores cultural and individual interactions. If risk is about people's interactions with their communities and environment, and not a reflection of their characters, then it is the interaction between social groups and the environment that needs to be the focus of an understanding of risk-taking behaviour. In addition, responses to danger or risk should not be quantitatively categorized as 'rational' or 'irrational', but sense should be made of them within their geographical spaces and social contexts through qualitative approaches (Douglas 1992: 42).

Getting into the 'world' of young rural women who trade sex in the city by letting them recount their lived experiences avoids judgement and reveals the dilemmas that are embedded in decision-making processes. Listening to the voices of the 'implicated' therefore dispels stereotypes and allows a better grasp of the processes surrounding their departures from rural homes to urban areas (cf. Dickson-Swift et al. 2006). To understand how they interpret the environment and evaluate the degrees of risk involved, it is imperative to take note of their personal reactions as they unfold within the space where their dilemmas are handled and lived out in day-to-day life.

## 2.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have shown how and why young rural women in Tanzania are increasingly flocking to urban areas, even at the risk of being considered deviant by their families and communities. Contrary to previous assumptions that women are not part of the rural-urban linkages in social and economic dynamics, the chapter paints a different picture. In moving out of rural settings, young women employ agency to challenge a development model which ignores rural settings in favour of urban areas, which often offer better social services and utilities, even if there is stiff competition.

On the other hand, different forms of gender inequality in patriarchal societies also trigger the relocation of subjugated young rural women. In rural areas, young women are often faced with huge numbers of household chores, and are expected to carry

out subsistence agriculture to feed the family, and to take part in economic activities for cash. This combination of interlocking burdens is an incentive for relocation to urban areas for those who desire to claim forms of autonomy and freedom and to create a different future. However, young rural women who arrive in urban areas often end up in slums, where the opportunities and services they seek remain rudimentary, and they live under strained conditions where shortages and diseases abound. Those with little or no literacy lack the qualifications to access more protected forms of work. The upshot is that they are forced to look for ways to survive. This may range from petty businesses which provide small amounts of daily cash to the bartering of items. This sort of work is irregular and fluid. In other cases, the next option for survival becomes sex work.

While it is true that young urban people, especially young women from rural areas, face diverse barriers to better livelihoods, they may also be perceived – and may think of themselves – as more privileged than their counterparts in rural areas. Despite the difficulties, they might access pathways and routes that would have been unavailable in their previous rural contexts. Openings and prospects may include finding viable work, accessing some stable income and acquiring more literacy. Additionally, the city can offer degrees of freedom from gender-related norms and practices, thereby opening up pathways for reinvention and shaping futures in different ways. In other words, there is a chance that one can achieve a level of success that would have been forever out of reach in a rural area.

### 3 BEING A WOMAN IN A PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY: A CONCEPTUAL REFLECTION

In light of chapter two, we can conclude that the spatial structure of development in Tanzania, which has left rural areas with a limited or non-existent supply of basic services and utilities (e.g. water, electricity, health and educational services), compels young rural women to relocate to big cities in search of better livelihoods. This conclusion is important, but it does not answer other questions which also require clarification – in particular, the question of gendered power relations rooted in patriarchal societies in Tanzania. It is important, therefore, to consider how patriarchy plays a role in the decision-making processes of young rural women who leave their homes and risk living in fragile conditions in urban areas. In this chapter I aim to bring to light young women's struggles for livelihoods within the contexts and dynamics of patriarchy in Tanzania.

#### 3.1 Patriarchy as an integral system that controls women and nature

Patriarchy can be defined as a system of male dominance (Lerner 1986; Biaggi 2005). This definition, however, does not illuminate but rather obscures the complex set of factors that interact to create, recreate and sustain a system that controls women and nature. Christ (2016: 214) argues that unless the whole complex set of factors is well understood, we will not be able to effectively understand, challenge and dismantle a system that controls and dominates women and nature. In that respect, I find Christ's (2016: 214) multipronged definition of patriarchy very pertinent:

Patriarchy is a system of male dominance, rooted in the ethos of war which legitimates violence, sanctified by religious symbols, in which men dominate women through the control of female sexuality, with the intent of passing property to male heirs, and in which men who are heroes of war are told to kill men, and are permitted to rape women, to seize land and treasures, to exploit resources, and to own or otherwise dominate conquered people.



It is important to this definition that patriarchy is an integral system which controls women's sexuality, property and lives in general. However, cautioning against a single-cause explanation, Lerner (1986: 53) argues that patriarchy is neither a universal nor an all-embracing phenomenon, because different kinds of relationships have always existed between men and women throughout history. The main task in this chapter, as suggested in the introductory section, is to outline the system that creates inequality and allows subordination of the sort that discourages women from speaking about what, who, where and how they are (Walby 1990; Christ 2016). It is against this background of patriarchy that this study attempts to explore how young rural women in Tanzania optimize their life options in patriarchal society, both as unique individuals and as social beings who interact differently through various markers such as gender, ethnicity, class and culture (cf. Singer 2004: 438).

What is at issue here is that it is hard to justly comprehend women's struggles for their livelihoods unless they are placed within the contexts and dynamics embedded in patriarchy in Tanzania (see also Janeway 1980: 582). In other words, the conceptual framework of this study aims to show how men and women in Tanzania on the one hand resist, adapt to and accommodate the embedded forces of patriarchy (gender relations), and on the other hand handle conflicts over resources, space, rights and responsibilities in everyday life situations (see also Kandiyoti 1988). This resonates well with critical and emancipatory theorists who argue that it is in daily lived experience that various forms of power, privilege and oppression are produced and reproduced, and that the use of such experience is therefore important for a critical analysis of power relations in any given society (e.g. Gramsci 1977; hooks 1989, 2004; Pease and Fook 1999; Dominelli 2002a; Pease 2010; Sewpaul 2013a: 117).

It is important to state that in employing patriarchy as a theoretical framework for this study, I am not suggesting that it is in the nature of all men to dominate women, or of all women to be relegated to the private sphere. Nor do I imply that it is inscribed in our blood and/or nature that women are born to be relegated to the private sphere and be restricted to managing emotions and recreating motherhood (Parkes et al. 2016: 161). I am aware that some men – for example, those whose societies are arranged along maternal lines (sometimes referred to as matriarchal societies<sup>14</sup>), or whose education and socialization emphasize love and care for

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14 In Goettner-Abendroth's (2009; cf. Christ 2013) theory, matriarchal societies recognize that human beginnings lie in the bodies and nurturing of mothers. These societies are organized around the mother

creation – have resisted the subjugation of women throughout the history of humanity, and that there are some cultures that never became patriarchal or would not be categorized as such (Christ 2016: 216–217).

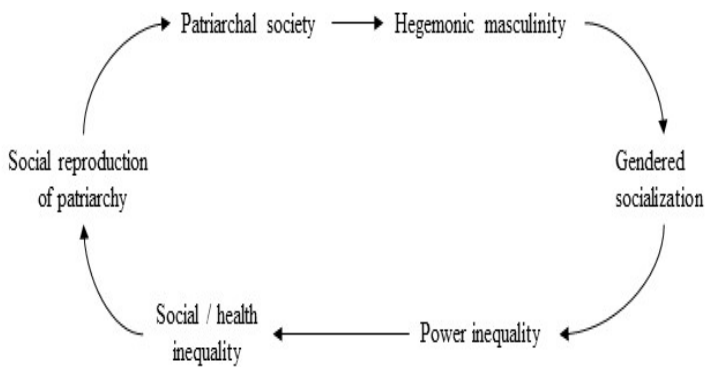
The concept of patriarchy deployed in this study, therefore, departs from the usual value-laden, monolithic and ideologically determined discourses that focus on individual men who dominate women and nature (e.g. Kandiyoti 1988: 274–275; Walby 1990: 20). It anchors the problem of violence against women in social contexts, relations or conditions (a set of structured and institutionalized social relations<sup>15</sup>), rather than in individual attributes designed by nature (e.g. Hunnicutt 2009: 553; Opoku 2017: 63). Therefore, patriarchy is depicted here less as a single structure and more as an event which unfolds within a much wider realm embedded in social relations in human societies (e.g. Kandiyoti 1988; Joseph 1996). In other words, patriarchy is seen in this study as a human product of social inequality in which individuals either forcefully or manipulatively seize and access power, capabilities, prestige and autonomy differently in moment-to-moment lived experience (e.g. Niraula and Morgan 1996: 36; Szoltysek et al. 2016: 139), as Scott-Samuel's (2009: 160) cyclical pattern of hegemonic masculinity (Figure 1) illustrates.

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principle. She suggests that matriarchal societies are not mother-dominant, but rather are 'egalitarian' 'societies of peace'. She identifies the deep structure of matriarchies using four markers. 1) Economic: these societies usually practise small-scale agriculture and achieve relative economic equality through gift-giving as a social custom. 2) Social: these societies are egalitarian, matrilineal and matrilocal, with land being held in the maternal clan, and both men and women remaining in their maternal clan. 3) Political: these societies are egalitarian, with both grandmothers and uncles holding power within well-developed democratic systems of consensus. 4) Cultural and spiritual: these societies tend to view 'earth as a great and giving mother', as most important and permeating everything; they honour the principles of care, love and generosity, which they associate with motherhood, and which they believe both women and men can and should practise.

15 The term 'patriarchy' has been defined by British sociologist Sylvia Walby (1990: 20) as a set of structured and institutionalized social relations in which certain men dominate, oppress and exploit women. As Walby points out, her use of the idea of social relations implies a rejection of both biological determinism and the notion that all women are oppressed and all men are oppressors.

**Figure 1.** Dynamics of gender inequality in a patriarchal society



Source: Scott-Samuel (2009: 160).

Although there are differences within feminisms (Marxist, liberal, radical, socialist, black, northern, southern or ecological), there is a sort of agreement that while women and men may live intimately together, gender remains a principal source of social inequality (e.g. Turner 1998; Seguino 2007, 2010, 2013). To that end, feminists generally agree that there are active structures which create gendered power relations to dominate women and which are taken for granted through consent (e.g. Hearn 2004: 59; Hunnicutt 2009: 554–555; Christ 2016: 216). As such, all feminists are opposed to the agents of the systematic domination of women (e.g. Jaggar 1983; Jaggar and Rosenberg 1984; Warren 1987).

Despite the widespread criticisms, particularly from radical feminists (e.g. Stoller 1968; Firestone 1974; Brownmiller 1975; Butler 1990) and socialist feminists (e.g. Oakley 1972; Hartmann 1981; Mies et al. 1988; Walby 1990), patriarchy continues to legitimize itself in many societies around the world. What is at issue here is the persistent presence of accumulations of power by certain men, the doing of power and dominance in many men's practices, and the fact that these matters have continued to be neglected, accepted and not resisted, or taken for granted and/or unrecognized (e.g. Hearn 2004: 51, 2012, 2014). In that respect, hooks (2004: 18–19) explains that the gender roles assigned to us as children, which guide how we should operate for the rest of our lives, obscure our understanding of the complex set of factors that interact to create, recreate and sustain a system that controls

women and nature. It is in the family that the socialization processes observed for boys and girls are designed and rigorously applied to instil a feeling of superiority mostly in boys, while girls are groomed to undergo and accept subjugation (see also Walby 1990). In other words, the gender roles which are assigned to us as children reinforce the notion that patriarchy is the nature of things – and like other laws of nature, this too cannot be changed (e.g. Parsons 1937, 1951; Engels 1940; Murdock 1949; Bowlby 1953; Parsons and Bales 1955; Mitchell 1971; Freud 1977).

In some societies in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, girls and young women are often socialized to believe that it is their obligation to be chaste, modest, submissive and obedient to their male counterparts in order to uphold family honour (e.g. Dangarembga 1988; Adichie 2003; Gill 2011). In this context, some women have themselves become efficient gatekeepers of oppressive and violent structures, such as mothers-in-law who possess a large amount of power over daughters-in-law in extended family systems (e.g. Bakare-Yusuf 2003; Stafford 2011). As a result, the man's status as head of the household entitles him to unquestioned obedience from the rest of the family, and the differences between the genders are legitimized from there onwards to other institutions of society such as religions, workplaces, education, judicial systems, the market, mass media, politics, social welfare and healthcare, to mention but a few (e.g. Bernard 1981: 3; Brittan 1989: 4; House et al. 1998; McDowell and Pringle 1992; Ellenor et al. 2009). In other words, the ideology of family honour has led to androcentric and patriarchal thinking in such a way that gender discrimination is now inscribed in our blood. This ideology obfuscates rather than reveals men's subordination of womenfolk (Sewpaul 2013a: 116).

It is in the above context that the concept of hegemony can be usefully employed. Hearn (2004: 52) explains: 'hegemony involves both the consent of some men, and, in a very different way, the consent of some women to maintain patriarchal relations of power. At least some powerful men are dominant in the construction of women's consent and the reproduction of men's consent.' Men's power is often construed, rather simply, as a capacity, the ability to dominate or influence others through reward or punishment (see for example Dahl 1957; Lukes 1974; Weber 1978; Wrong 1979; Hearn 2004, 2012, 2014). Once this form of power is recognized, our analysis can rise to another level to understand how some people's interests never reach the formal levels of decision-making or agenda-setting (Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Hearn 2004, 2012, 2014). Then our analysis goes to a third level, stressed by Lukes (1974: 34), to view people's 'real interests' as distorted by ideological conditioning

(see also Hearn 2004, 2012, 2014), which is often sanctioned by religious language and symbols (Christ 2016: 222).

In the above perspective, in some societies in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, some powerful men are viewed as semi-divine beings, or as ordained by gods (Christ 2016: 222). These semi-divine beings often enforce laws believed to be divinely ordained and use them as legitimate tools through which to take control over others, especially women. The practice of *trokosi* in Ghana, for example, validates the use of virgins to work as slaves in religious shrines, to atone for crimes committed by relatives and appease the gods (Aird 1999; Bilyeu 1999). These girls work in the fields but are also subjected to sexual acts with religious heads at the shrines (Stafford 2011). Although *trokosi* was criminalized in Ghana in 1998, it is still carried out in many parts of the country. People fear that if they do not follow *trokosi*, they will anger the gods and provoke bad luck (Benninger-Budel and Lacroix 1999; Stafford 2011). Thus people are unlikely to protest against patriarchy or even recognize it as oppressive and unjust. In that respect, Stark (2014: 2) recommends:

When examining the internal dynamics of patriarchy (familial or intimate patriarchal relations), it is more fruitful to look at agency in terms of anthropologist Sherry Ortner's (2006: 145) 'cultural projects' rather than in terms of oppression or empowerment, since women encultured into such a system generally do not necessarily wish to be free of it.

Ortner's (2006: 145) concept of 'cultural projects' assumes that the agency of subordinate individuals must be examined in terms of those individuals' culturally specific interests and goals. In other words, domination over subordinates may not be an end in itself, but might be carried out in the service of cultural projects pursued by more powerful individuals in everyday cultural practices (projects) which 'infuse life with meaning and purpose' and through which 'people seek to accomplish valued things within a framework of their own terms' (Ortner 2006: 145). Therefore, what is seen as resistance by subordinates against the power of dominants could really be about subordinates protecting their own cultural projects – or even safeguarding the right to have such projects in the first place (Stark 2014: 2).

### 3.2 Patriarchy and colonialism

In their examination of the current gender divide (gender sexism) in sub-Saharan Africa, some scholars have suggested that patriarchy works in a dialectical

relationship with colonialism to oppress women in private and public spheres of life (Diop 1989; Amadiume 1997; Oyěwùmí 1997; Shoola 2014). The issue here is that patriarchy in sub-Saharan Africa has been reinforced through external processes of colonization which encompass ‘colonial legislations, land rights, naming after father, monogamy and the class of western elites and moral contact’ (Diop 1989: 19). Diop (1989: 17) argues that, before the external processes of colonization, patriarchy and matriarchy existed in two different geographical zones, the southern and northern cradles. The southern cradle represented Africa and was matriarchally organized, while the northern cradle comprised nations of the Western world and was patriarchally organized. According to Diop’s (1989: 12) logic, the southern cradle valued the ‘emancipation of women in domestic life, the ideal of peace and justice, goodness and optimism’, while the northern cradle valued ‘moral and material solitude’ to the extent that ‘women were denied their rights and were subjugated under the private institution of the patriarchal family.’ While the culture in the south respected women to the extent that ‘wives were mistresses of the house and keepers of the food,’ the culture in the north despised women, and these values came to Africa through the process of colonization (Diop 1989: 13).

Shoola (2014: 14) similarly associates the current gender divide in sub-Saharan Africa with colonization, particularly in education, which has resulted in higher illiteracy rates among women than men. It is due the legacy of colonialism that more men are educated and given roles overseeing the public realm, while the private realm is reserved for women who have no education and are ‘forcibly confined’ to household tasks that are in most cases demeaning (Shoola 2014: 4). In the same line of thought, Schmidt (1991: 732–733) argues that the current gender divide in sub-Saharan Africa has resulted from the unequal structures left behind by colonialists, who often hired men in the public sector while women were left in the private sphere of the family to engage in subsistence farming for survival. This differentiation has been detrimental to the status and rights of women because roles in the public sector are more highly valued and paid than unpaid domestic duties (Schmidt 1991: 732–733). While a division of labour of this kind was not unknown before colonization, as women had a long history of tending to domestic duties, the ways in which it was enforced and delineated during colonization was certainly not the norm in precolonial times (see Shoola 2014: 6).

Patriarchy has therefore generated controversy at many levels in sub-Saharan Africa, largely because it upsets the matriarchal society which – in common with the

celebrated *ubuntu* philosophy – regards a person as a person through other persons (Tutu 2004; Bolden 2014: 799). Against this background, patriarchy is contentious because it disrupts the core values of solidarity between members of society (Tutu 2004; Bolden 2014: 799). It is in this context that Bakare-Yusuf (2003) has documented a highly charged debate amongst feminists in Africa on the subject of patriarchy. The debate is between two camps: radical African feminists<sup>16</sup> (e.g. Afonja 1991; Ogundipe-Leslie 1994; McFadden 1999) and those who support the ‘dual sex-role’ system<sup>17</sup> (e.g. Sudarkasa 1987; Oyěwùmí 1997, 2000; Nzegwu 2001).

However, like many other feminists around the world, feminist scholars in Africa generally agree that there are active structures which create gendered power relations so as to control women’s personhood and property (Dangarembga 1988; Adichie 2003; Kabwila-Kapasula 2009). For example, both Adichie (2003) and Dangarembga (1988), like Fanon (1967), depict an exploitative system that works through culture, religion, law, identity, power and control – an institutionalized system in which men are enabled to dominate women through vertical and horizontal channels (father-daughter and mother-daughter relationships, and formal, organized educational and religious institutions) (Kabwila-Kapasula 2009).

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16 Many radical African feminists have used the term ‘patriarchy’ to refer to the organization of social life and institutional structures in which men have ultimate control over most aspects of women’s lives and actions. For example, men have access to and benefit from women’s labour more than the reverse (Gordon 1996: 7). These feminists are not unaware of the abundant evidence of women’s power and authority in precolonial religious, political, economic and domestic spheres; however, they often argue that such power was highly circumscribed and subsumed by male authority (Afonja 1991; Bakare-Yusuf 2003).

17 According to Nzegwu (2001: 19), for example, separate but parallel spheres allow each sex to control activities and address issues in ways that are beneficial to the entire community: ‘women and men are equivalent, namely equal, in terms of what they do in the maintenance and survival of the community.’ Nzegwu therefore claims that power is distributed equally between the sexes, and that ‘women’s sexual and reproductive capacities [do not] determine their second-class status’ (Nzegwu 2001: 20). The main argument here is that equating sexual difference with sexual inequality amounts to a misreading of sub-Saharan African social structures and the importance of dual-sex organization. The notion of patriarchy is consequently seen by these feminists as an imported and imposed concept in sub-Saharan Africa. They argue that the identification of hierarchical differences in the dual-sex system involves imposing European social categorizations onto sub-Saharan African contexts (Bakare-Yusuf 2003).

### 3.3 Some aspects of patriarchy in Tanzania

In Tanzania, patriarchy stands at odds with Nyerere's (1977: 1) philosophy of *ujamaa*,<sup>18</sup> which teaches people to care for each other as brothers and sisters (Hydén 1980; Hoben and Hefner 1991). As elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, women in Tanzania are often treated and rated as a dependent sex or second sex (cf. de Beauvoir 1974) in need of protection from men (e.g. Mbilinyi 1972; Swantz 1985; Osorio et al. 2014; Buberwa 2016). In that context, women accept a lesser status in exchange for protection and privilege, forming a relationship that can be likened to paternalistic dominance<sup>19</sup> or benevolent patriarchy,<sup>20</sup> as Figure 2 illustrates. Such a relationship diminishes women's potential for self-actualization, especially in rural areas where cultural practices are strong (e.g. Kamala et al. 2001; Ellis et al. 2007; Kibuga 2007; Osorio et al. 2014; Buberwa 2016).

In what follows, I present some aspects of patriarchy in Tanzania by discussing five illustrative practices of male domination and their implications for women's lives. These aspects are son preference, bride price payment, widow-cleansing rituals, restricted rights for women, and the burden of domestic responsibilities. However, these practices vary in different societies in Tanzania, and must be fleshed out with systematic, comparative and empirical content for further discussion. While practices such as bride price payment and widow-cleansing rituals directly affect adult women, they also have a bearing on the pathways available to young women, particularly in how they imagine their futures.

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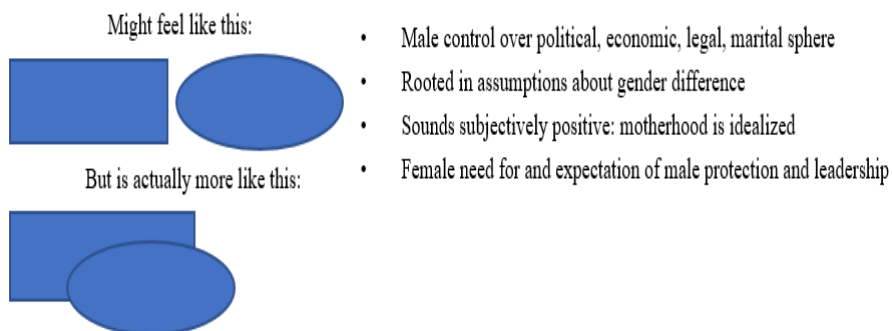
18 *Ujamaa*, the Swahili for 'familyhood', was the social and economic policy developed by Julius Kambarage Nyerere, president of Tanzania from 1964 to 1985. Centred on collective agriculture under a process called 'villagization', *ujamaa* also called for the nationalization of banks and industry, and for an increased level of self-reliance at both individual and national levels. Nyerere set out his policy in the Arusha Declaration of 5 February 1967 (Boddy-Evans 2017).

19 This concept denotes a relation which encompasses other relations, and it has the advantage of being neutral as to the causes of subordination. Although on the surface it may appear that men control women and nature (everything in society, from the political, economic and legal to marital spheres), the concept of paternalistic dominance somewhat neutralizes this control and accepts it as a way of protecting women, who are considered to be incapable of doing anything on their own without men's leadership.

20 This concept refers to the notion that women are willing to sacrifice their legal, religious, political or marital rights, as long as they can expect deferential and loving protection from male husbands, teachers and government leaders. It also idealizes motherhood as women's only important role in society (Radke-Moss 2014).



**Figure 2.** Benevolent patriarchy keeps women away from all forms of power



Source: Radke-Moss (2014).

### 3.3.1 Son preference

Preferring a boy child over a girl is a common practice in Tanzania. Boys are socialized to view themselves as future breadwinners and heads of household, whilst girls are taught to be gentle, obedient, passive and submissive housekeepers (e.g. Mbilinyi 1972; Swantz 1985; Kamala et al. 2001; Haram 2005; Osorio et al. 2014; Buberwa 2016). Moreover, a male child is seen as a ruler of the family by right of birth even when he is not the firstborn; he is automatically considered a potential heir and is charged with the responsibility of protecting his sisters and/or entire family (Swantz 1985; Buberwa 2016). In this way boys are turned into family providers from a very early age and are encouraged to seek attention at home and in the community (see Benninger-Budel and Lacroix 1999). In return, boys grow up expecting to do as they please, while girls and young women shape their behaviour to suit men's desires and whims (Osorio et al. 2014; Buberwa 2016). Such perceptions – even those that are seemingly non-violent in nature – impact on the status, health and education prospects of girls and young women (see Banda and Agyapong 2016).

It has been observed that parents who practise son preference often show more care for sons than for daughters, a situation which leads to acute discrimination (Castillo et al. 2014). For example, a study in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including Tanzania, has shown that, in comparison with household poverty, cultural practices

are stronger determinants of the under-enrolment and school incompleteness of girls, especially in secondary education (Castillo et al. 2014). What often happens is that once a girl reaches puberty, the mother (and also aunts and grandmothers) ensures that she only understands her role as a woman and that she acquires qualities which will make her pleasant but also dependent on her man (future husband); this informal education is considered more important than the formal one (Mbilyi 1972; Rwezaura 1994; Maswikwa et al. 2015). This explains why most women in Tanzania rely heavily on their husbands for support, as they are not expected to stand on their own two feet (Swantz 1985; Osorio et al. 2014).

In addition, girls are pushed to marry as early as possible as a way to reduce the chances of sexual promiscuity, another form of controlling girls' sexuality (Longwa 2011; Myers and Harvey 2011; Stark 2017a). Stark (2017b: 1) explains that 'poverty and gendered economic disparities motivate girls to begin transactional sexual activity at an early age, leading parents to favour early marriage as a risk-reduction measure.' In this context, early marriage is treated with impunity, even if it is illegal (Maswikwa et al. 2015). Rather than being challenged or brought to account, marriage brokers are often rewarded for facilitating early marriages (Myers and Harvey 2011). The immaturity associated with early marriage leads to, among other things, trauma and reproductive complications, particularly fistula<sup>21</sup> (Myers and Harvey 2011). Early marriage also reinforces domestic violence, especially in polygamous arrangements (Meyer and Pain 2012). This is because girls or young women are likely to marry men who are many years their senior, and this is often encouraged by senior wives who use younger co-wives as source of labour for domestic and agricultural tasks (Opoku 2017).

### 3.3.2 Bride price payment

Conventionally, bride price, also known as bride wealth, is a form of reward in which the bride's family receives goods, money or livestock as compensation for the 'loss' of a young woman and for the children that she will bear (Benninger-Budel and Lacroix 1999). Traditionally, bridal gifts were meant to unite two families through the new marriage (Benninger-Budel and Lacroix 1999; Hagues and Parker 2014).

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<sup>21</sup> Fistula often occurs when girls and/or young women who are not at the proper stage of physical maturity, usually due to early marriage, try to give birth to a child and experience a prolonged obstructed labour. This results in the formation of an opening through which urine and/or faeces pass freely.

Such gifts were symbolic tokens of appreciation from the prospective husband. There was no price tag attached to asking a girl to marry you (Hague et al. 2011). This traditional practice has existed variously for centuries among communities in Tanzania and across sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Haram 2005; Wighta et al. 2006; Hague et al. 2011; Meyer and Pain 2012: 46; Hagues and Parker 2014; Opoku 2017).

However, the traditional bridal gifts have recently been rebranded as bride price. It is now a contested and hotly debated issue among male family members (Wighta et al. 2006). In a sense, it has turned women into commodities on the market, leading families to treat daughters as sources of income (Wighta et al. 2006). Now bride price consists of a lengthy list of demands by male family members, ranging from huge sums of money, animals and land to clothing, to mention but a few examples. In these debates about exchange, mothers and their daughters are largely ignored or reduced to the status of property (Wighta et al. 2006; Hague et al. 2011).

In some cases, because of bride price, girls and young women have been removed from school to be married off so that the families can get a few cows or sacks of rice – the younger the bride, the higher the bride price paid (Wighta et al. 2006; Hagues and Parker 2014). Although Tanzania's universal primary education policy has seen more girls enrolled in primary school, they tend to drop out for marriage purposes when they reach secondary level. This is also because some parents who cannot afford tuition for their sons marry off their daughters, in order to raise the sons' tuition fees through the bride price (Wighta et al. 2006; Hagues and Parker 2014).

Because of the practice of bride price, some young women are forced to accept marriages and be exposed to violence, with no right to refuse their husbands' demands for sex even in the face of obvious illness or irresponsibility (Meyer and Pain 2012; Hagues and Parker 2014). Some husbands claim greater control in the household, thereby reinforcing the idea of the wife as owned (Benninger-Budel and Lacroix 1999). In such contexts, women are subjected to verbal, psychological and physical abuse (Wighta et al. 2006; Hagues and Parker 2014). Some women regrettably are obliged to remain in these situations as they are unable to repay the bride price (Benninger-Budel and Lacroix 1999). In the case of the husband's death, some young widows are inherited by a brother-in-law, because they are considered already paid for and hence are treated as transferable property within the family (Wighta et al. 2006; Hagues and Parker 2014). This is critical in a context where some courts will affirm a dissolution of marriage only after the bride price has been repaid

in full (e.g. Bond 2005; Meyer and Pain 2012; TAWLA 2013). If some young women escape from abusive marriages, their male family members must either repay the bride price or be thrown into prison (e.g. Bond 2005).

### 3.3.3 Widow-cleansing rituals

In some societies in Tanzania, a widow-cleansing ritual is performed after the death of the husband (Tungaraza 2005; Mwangi et al. 2011; Opoku 2017). The practice requires a widow to have sex with one of the deceased husband's relatives or a 'community cleanser' in order to ward off the ghost of her late husband (e.g. Nyanzi et al. 2009; Agot et al. 2010; Lomba 2014; Perry et al. 2014). Apart from warding off the ghost of the deceased husband, the ritual is also intended to protect the widow from adverse consequences and welcome her into the community anew (e.g. Benninger-Budel and Lacroix 1999; Bond 2005; Tuyizere 2007; Agot et al. 2010; Perry et al. 2014). In some families, the ritual is also connected to the re-establishment of lost purity (e.g. Mwangi et al. 2011; Tuyizere 2007; Opoku 2017: 224).

While the widow-cleansing ritual may be thought to have some social and physiological values (renewal after death, re-establishment of purity, protection for the widow), there remains a question as to whether it genuinely exists to benefit the widow, particularly in a patriarchal society (e.g. Kotzé et al. 2012: 758–759; Manala 2015: 4). Mwangi et al. (2011: 5) argue that widow-cleansing is often sanctioned by elders who maintain that a man who ritually purifies a widow is brave and therefore he is to be celebrated. This observation alone suggests that widow-cleansing rites may not accord with human dignity and respect, and therefore constitute violence against women (Meyer and Pain 2012: 78).

This is especially true in contexts where widow-cleansing involves the 'grabbing' of property from the widow (White et al. 2002). For example, widows are often blocked from working on and accessing resources on the land that was 'theirs' before the death of their husband (Meyer and Pain 2012: 78). In some societies, the property is seized by the deceased husband's sisters for their benefit (Meyer and Pain 2012: 78). This is perpetuated against the widow because she is a woman, and it does not culturally contravene any property rights (White et al. 2002). Due to these practices, some widows are forced to leave their homes in order to seek respite and livelihoods elsewhere (White et al. 2002).

In the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, widow-cleansing has disastrous social consequences (Ewelukwa 2002). As the ritual implies sexual intercourse, the risk of spreading HIV is high (e.g. Agot et al. 2010; Mwangi et al. 2011; Perry et al. 2014). An uninfected widow, for example, may become vulnerable or infected through the practice, and an infected widow is likely to pass on the virus to her inheritors, who may in turn infect their wives and other sexual partners, a practice which can decimate a whole community (Agot et al. 2010).

### 3.3.4 Restricted rights for women

Women in Tanzania have fewer rights compared with their male counterparts (TAWLA 2013; Osorio et al. 2014). This is because some customary laws and cultural norms do not recognize ownership of land by women (e.g. Meyer and Pain 2012: 74; TAWLA 2013; Osorio et al. 2014). Customary practices that favour men over women in land matters, for example, have rendered many women landless, and women's access to land is dependent on the goodwill of men (TAWLA 2013). Even though some legislation in Tanzania protects women's property rights, lack of legal knowledge restricts women's ability to realize those rights (TAWLA 2013). As a result, nearly three quarters of all landholders in Tanzania are men, and when women are owners, they tend to own only smaller plots (Osorio et al. 2014: viii). Women's lack of land entitlements feeds into the thinking that they are not proper farmers, which also limits their access to credit, extension services and other inputs. This results in an endless vicious circle of justifications, where women are not given land because they are thought to be unproductive, and they are unproductive because they have limited access to land and other inputs (Meyer and Pain 2012: 76–77).

### 3.3.5 Burden of domestic responsibilities

Because of gendered power relations, particularly in rural areas, girls and young women in Tanzania face heavy responsibilities: from doing all the household chores to taking part in subsistence agriculture to feed the family, and also engaging in income-generating activities for cash (Ellis et al. 2007; Buberwa 2016). Homestead tasks such as food preparation, fetching water and collecting firewood are full-time jobs. This situation leaves girls and young women with little or no time at all to have formal education or be involved in formal (salaried) activities or jobs (Ellis et al. 2007). As a result, girls and young women, especially in rural areas, lack opportunities

for self-actualization. It makes sense to therefore say that unless these conditions are improved, rural girls and young women will increasingly relocate to urban areas in the hope of reinventing themselves and finding a future.

### 3.4 Patriarchy and sex work

In this section I aim to bring to light the nature, meaning and value of sex work within patriarchy. In doing so, I attempt to present feminists' perspectives in terms of the validity and acceptability of sex work within the constraints of patriarchal relationships. Although some of the literature and quotes used here are drawn from classic writings on sex work, they nevertheless provide a fairly accurate point of reference for my data analysis in chapter five.

Feminists' positions on sex work are more or less divided into two distinct schools of thought or groups. One group advocates the abolition of sex work, and in doing so rejects the notion that women sex workers freely choose a way of life that is stigmatized by much of society, that is physically dangerous at times, that leaves them with little control over their earning power, and that can cause them considerable legal complications (O'Neill 2001: 14–16). Marxist feminists (e.g. Benston 1969; Tong 1984, 2009; Mappes 1987; Bartlett et al. 2014: 599; Bindel 2017: 59) belong to this group. They hold that sex work is a form of exploitation of women, a practice which is the result of patriarchy. Women sex workers are therefore exclusively victims within the patriarchal system of exchange – they do not choose to sell sex and are not responsible for the humiliation and suffering they meet (e.g. Overall 1992: 711; MacKinnon 1987, 1993; Farley et al. 2003). To legalize sex work, therefore, is merely to extend male privilege within patriarchy (Rubin 1984: 301; Overall 1992: 706).

The second group, on the other hand, propagates the rights of sex workers, and in doing so regards sex work as a form of legitimate work or occupation which therefore should not be prohibited or criminalized (O'Neill 2001: 14–16). Liberal and radical sexual pluralist feminists (e.g. Jaggar 1980, 1983; Pateman 1983, 1995; Giobbe 1990; Jackson and Scott 1996; Wahab 2002; Krumer-Nevo 2009; Beran 2012; Weitzer 2012; Bindel 2017: 46) belong to this group. For these feminists, women sex workers are experts in their own field, where they are free to use their bodies accordingly – an important consideration for gender equality (e.g. Bell 1987;

Marlowe 1997; Wahab 2002; Krumer-Nevo 2009; Bindel 2017). Therefore, if legal protection is provided to sex workers, some criminal aspects of sex work can be controlled, which might also reduce social stigma and sexual exploitation (e.g. Rubin 1984; Daly 1985; Bell 1987; MacKinnon 1987, 1989).

However, despite the split in opinions on the validity and acceptability of sex work, most writers, whether feminist or not, appear to make the assumption that there is something more morally troubling about sex work than there is about other forms of work that are traditionally assigned to and often done by women (e.g. cooking, cleaning or childcare, to mention but a few). In other words, many feminists and other writers on sex work find it very hard to say that they ‘respect’ sex work in and of itself (Overall 1992: 708–709). Instead, they tend to believe that sex work is bad for women, both women in ‘the life’ and women outside it: it is an exploitation of women within patriarchal relations of exchange (Tong 1984: 39–46; Overall 1992: 708). This is especially true in sub-Saharan Africa, where women are expected to provide sex in return for money or gifts from men because of heightened gender inequality (e.g. Luke 2003; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Maganja et al. 2007; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Stark 2017a).<sup>22</sup>

The issue here is that, in the context of limited choices, some women feel compelled into sex work for survival purposes (e.g. Haram 1995, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005; Hunter 2002; Silberschmidt 2004; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Plummer and Wight 2011; Wamoyi et al. 2011). Dworkin (1987: 143), for example, argues that sex work is not a simple matter of choice but is, along with rape, one of the ‘institutions that most impede any experience of intercourse as freedom’; it ‘negate[s] self-determination and choice for women’. In the same line of thought, Cole (1987: 35) describes sex work as ‘an institution of male supremacy [...] in the same way as [...] slavery was an institution of white supremacy’, an institution in which ‘lots of women [...] are getting hurt’ (see also Jaggar 1980: 350–351; Rubin 1984: 283). While some sex workers themselves – especially those who have for one reason or another left the work – are willing to grant that some women are in the work by choice, they also insist that many women are not in the work by choice (e.g. Overall 1992: 712; Haram 1995, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005; Hunter 2002; Silberschmidt 2004; Swidler and Watkins

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<sup>22</sup> Historically, men in sub-Saharan Africa have possessed greater economic power and resources than women and have been expected to financially support their wives and families, an expectation still predominant in Tanzania today (Rwebangira 1998; Silberschmidt 2004; Hunter 2010; Plummer and Wight 2011: 211; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Stark, 2016, 2017a).

2007; Plummer and Wight 2011; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017a, 2017b).

From the above perspectives, therefore, some scholars have even suggested that sex work is somehow cathartic for women, in the sense that it helps them to deal with the negative effects of exploitation and/or male violence in a patriarchal society, rather than being an extension of freedom (e.g. Hunter 2002; Silberschmidt 2004; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Plummer and Wight 2011; Wamoyi et al. 2011). In that respect, Bass (2015: 75) writes that ‘just as sex work can be an avenue for some women to take control in a situation where they had none, some sex workers and psychologists see it as a way to triumph over tragedy.’ Receiving money or goods in exchange for sexual services equals empowerment to some women and helps them to feel in control of their own bodies. This means that in a context of male violence and economic insecurity (exploitative conditions of capitalist patriarchy), some women ‘choose’ sex work as a means to their own social and economic freedom and/or independence (e.g. Haram 1995, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005; Hunter 2002; Silberschmidt 2004; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Plummer and Wight 2011; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017a, 2017b).

In the above perspective, Bindel (2017: 59) writes that sex work is ‘a job that women – particularly women doubly and triply disadvantaged by poverty and racism – engage in only under duress or when no other possible option appears to present itself’. In the same line of thought, Farley (2006: 102) argues that sex work is ‘the choice made by those who have no choice’ in patriarchal society (see also Jaggar and Rosenberg 1984; Stoltenberg 1990; Kempadoo 1999). Similarly, Summer (1987: 38), a former sex worker herself, writes that sex work ‘is not freedom, not just another job. It is the abuse of women. It is sexual slavery.’ In sex work, a person’s situation is subject to ‘severe prior constraints’ such that sex work presents the single realistic chance of alleviating her needs. Likewise, Mappes (1987: 261) writes that sex work is a ‘coercive offer’ in the sense that the life circumstances of many women entering sex work often seem to be such that sex work is the only possible way out of impoverishment and lack of opportunity (see also Delacoste and Alexander 1987).

While sex work is exploitative and gendered, like other forms of labour mostly performed by women for men, it is also non-reversible in comparison with other jobs (Overall 1992: 717–718). In other words, it is hard to imagine men working as sex workers in the same numbers as women, or women hiring men as sex workers



at the same rate as men now hire women, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Haram 1995, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005; Hunter 2002; Silberschmidt 2004; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Plummer and Wight 2011; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). Unlike other forms of labour mostly performed by women, sex work is dependent both for its value and for its very existence upon the cultural construction of gender roles in terms of dominance and submission (see Overall 1992: 719).

While it is true that poor women are compelled to have sex with wealthier men to meet their basic needs, it is also true that in sex work there is a continuum between 'survival sex' and sexual transactions in which women strive to obtain desired consumer goods in order to enhance their social status (e.g. Nyanzi et al. 2001; Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001; Kuato-Defo 2004; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Luke 2003; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). In her recent study on transactional sex and mobile phones in a Tanzanian slum, Stark (2013: 15) found that some girls engage in sex work (transactional sex, in Stark's terms) because there is 'no food at home' or 'they have nothing to eat from morning to evening,' but other girls enter sex work because they desire fashionable clothes and shoes, jewellery, skin-whitening lotions, and visits to the hairdresser.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence of this, recent literature has moved from viewing women who participate in sex work as passive victims to acknowledging that some women whose basic needs have already been met are active agents who use their sexuality to exploit men's economic advantages to their own ends (see also Haram 1995, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004; Nyanzi et al. 2001; Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Luke 2003; Maganja et al. 2007; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017a, 2017b).

What is central to the above discussion is that sex work is an inherently unequal practice which epitomizes men's dominance: it is a practice which is constructed in a system that reinforces male supremacy (e.g. Delacoste and Alexander 1987; Overall 1992; MacKinnon 1993, 1987; Farley et al. 2003; Farley 2006). What is wrong or bad about sex work does not just reside in the sexual exchanges themselves, or in the circumstances in which they take place, but in the system of patriarchy itself. In other words, what is bad or wrong with sex work is not just that it is the servicing of sexual

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23 While these desires are on the one hand fuelled by a global consumer culture, on the other they can be seen as 'needs' in a cultural context where personal appearance is perceived to be important for attracting male partners with money. The men that Stark (2013: 15) 'interviewed admitted that they prefer – and are more likely to offer gifts to – women who look sophisticated and well-groomed' (see also Maganja et al. 2007).

needs, but that it is women's servicing of men's sexual needs under the constraints of patriarchy (e.g. Delacoste and Alexander 1987; Overall 1992; MacKinnon 1993, 1987; Farley et al. 2003; Farley 2006).

### 3.5 Summary

This chapter has shown that patriarchy is not just about the domination of women by men, but rather is a complex system which interplays with men's need to control women and nature. In other words, patriarchy is depicted here less as a single structure and more as an event which unfolds within a much wider realm of social relations in human societies – a set of structured and institutionalized social relations in which certain men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Thus patriarchy is a human product of social inequality in which individuals either forcefully or manipulatively seize and access power, capabilities, prestige and autonomy differently in moment-to-moment lived experiences.

The notion of patriarchy employed in this study, therefore, departs from the usual value-laden, monolithic and ideologically determined discourses that focus on individual men who dominate women and nature. In other words, patriarchy here anchors the problem of violence against women in social contexts, relations or conditions rather than in individual attributes designed by nature. Understanding patriarchy as a set of structured and institutionalized social relations helps us to capture the processes and struggles that women go through as they attempt to negotiate their lives in the face of resistance and oppression. As a result, we can finally grasp a cross-section of intersecting features beyond the binaries of rational/irrational and oppressor/oppressed, which gives us a more comprehensive reading of gender-related processes and a more realistic vision of how to disrupt or challenge the unjust system which controls women and nature.

## 4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The everyday lived experiences of young rural women who end up working as barmaids and sex workers in urban Tanzania are tedious and challenging. Researching a sensitive subject of this nature raises complex ethical questions, because of the possibility that the outcome might reveal habits and behaviours that do not conform to dominant ideologies and practices (e.g. Cowles 1988; Lee 1993; Dickson-Swift et al. 2007; Banks 2013, 2016). Thinking about these issues means anticipating the likelihood of uncovering the pain, stress, stigma and suffering lived by participants (e.g. Goffman 1963; Hochschild 1979, 1983) who are frequently abused and violently treated, and also branded as ‘fallen’ and impure women (e.g. Moore 1973; Freed 2003; Johnson and Clarke 2003; Jackson et al. 2007; Dickson-Swift et al. 2007, 2008; Bloor et al. 2010). In this chapter, therefore, I describe the methodological aspects of my research. In doing so, I also examine issues that arose during the research, and how the participants and I handled ethical questions while managing emotional states of sadness, irritation and fear.

### 4.1 Approach of the study

From the very beginning of my research, I wanted to create a space for young rural women (from Iramba) who sell sex in Mwanza town to congregate and tell stories of their lived experiences, both past and present, and also their future aspirations. I envisaged that, in such a space, a new set of social and cognitive processes would unfold, with far-reaching effects on the lives of the young women and on society at large. Moreover, such a space would be cathartic<sup>24</sup> in the sense that the participants

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<sup>24</sup> Sex work is considered dangerous, traumatic and dreadful work. It inflicts exclusively harmful consequences on women’s lives. However, sexuality is considered a taboo in Tanzania. Therefore, sex workers are not expected to talk about and/or reflect on their lived experience of selling sex, as that would belong to the realm of taboo, and they would not be listened to if they did dare to talk about it. As a result, they often suffer from deeply held feelings of abuse, violence and exploitation. In the context of this study, therefore, catharsis was seen as an explosive release of deeply held negative feelings which could occur when the young women (sex workers) started to experience validation and were given an opportunity to speak about their lived experience and to confide those experiences in

would talk confidentially about their world views to someone who is interested, caring and understanding, and they would also work through and express their emotions so as to discover their own confidence and validate themselves (e.g. Howarth 1998; Gair 2002; Johnson and Clarke 2003; Dickson-Swift et al. 2006; Darra 2008; Johnson 2009: 200).

In other words, I wanted to open up avenues for the marginalized and silenced to speak about themselves. The aim was to allow them perspectives, voices and agency in articulating their stories, so as to counteract the abundant dominant prejudices in discourses about young rural women who sell sex for their livelihoods in urban Tanzania. Atkinson et al. (2003: 80) write that giving ‘a voice to subjects includes the representation of individuals and groups who have been muted and marginalized. It implies the expression of their unique experience, usually through the reproduction of personal testimony and narrative.’ In the same line of thought, Blatt (1981) argues that ‘a person is defined by the stories he [she] tells about himself [herself] as well as by the stories that are told about him [her].’ Bogdan and Biklen (1998: 204) describe facilitating voices as ‘empowering people to be heard who might otherwise remain silent’ or who have been silenced by others. Similarly, Ashby (2011: 27) argues that ‘a commitment to voice attests to the right of speaking and being represented’ (see also Britzman 1989).

In light of the above, therefore, I needed an approach that would lead me to ‘de-experience’ and ‘de-world’<sup>25</sup> the world of young rural women who work in the sex industry in Tanzania (see also Safranski 1998: 146; Guignon 1999: 5–6). Such a method would deeply immerse me in the world of the participants, so as to let their voices and agency surface, with the hope of gaining in-depth understandings of their lived experiences. In that vein, an inductive approach to qualitative methods appealed to me because of its capacity to free the voice from whatever disables it

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someone knowledgeable, interested and caring, alongside the opportunity to work through and express their emotions.

<sup>25</sup> The terms ‘de-experience’ and ‘de-world’ are used here in Heidegger’s (2001) sense, which presumes that if we reduce our understanding to an objective opinion, bracketing out all prior experiences and emotions, then we may ultimately bracket out the meaningfulness of the experience we are trying to explore; we de-experience the experiences and de-world the world as we encounter others in their present situations (e.g. Safranski 1998: 146; Guignon 1999: 5–6). In the context of this study, this means that I wanted to be present to the participants or just be there with them (e.g. eating, drinking and sometimes dancing with them, and when possible visiting their workplaces and their homes too), which would offer me better prospects to understand and articulate their situations, both past and present.

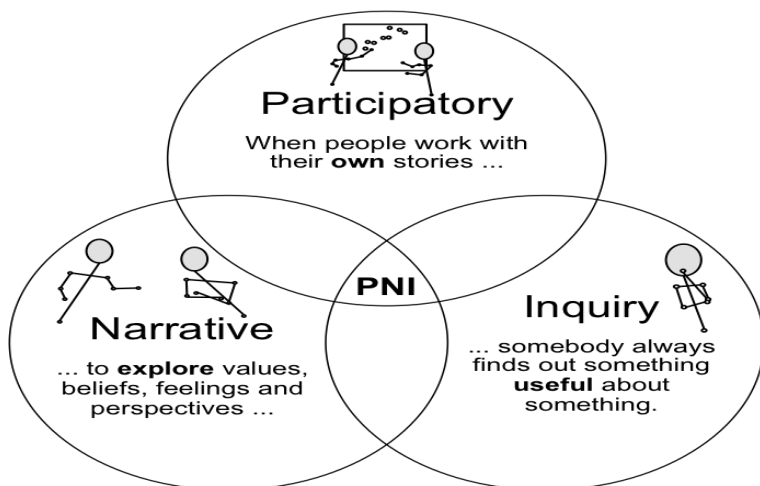
from coming into being, and to face facts about the self (e.g. Creswell and Clark 2007; Mazzei and Jackson 2009: 1).

I also chose an inductive approach because it would allow me to explore the experiences of young rural women who trade sex for their livelihoods from a new and different perspective, with freedom and openness as to the findings (Creswell and Clark 2007: 23). Creswell and Clark (2007: 23) emphasize that one of the essential characteristics of an inductive approach is the discovery of knowledge and theory by working bottom-up, using participants' views to decipher broad and interconnected themes. Additionally, an inductive approach recognizes the authenticity and existence of the researcher's imagination, and remains open to what is yet to emerge (e.g. Nardi and Brachman 2002: 2–7; Brachman and Levesque 2004).

In contexts where little previous exploration of social relationships and group behaviour has been done, an inductive method is useful for capturing the conditions and contexts which affect individuals' lives (Crooks 2001). In this respect I found Kurtz's (2014) PNI a very pertinent approach. PNI is an inductive approach, blending participatory and narrative approaches (see Figure 3), in which groups of people gather and work through stories of personal experiences so as to unravel their complex situations (Kurtz 2014: 85). PNI takes seriously social contexts, beliefs, feelings and perspectives in obtaining new knowledge (Kurtz 2014: 86). It emphasizes 'meaning' as something that exists in its own right, and not as something we just find out there; meaning is given as human beings interact and interpret their conditions in a particular social context (e.g. Schwandt 1994; O'Leary 2004).

I largely became captivated by the PNI process because it is founded on the ideas that 'to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it' and that reality manifests itself through multiple and intangible mental constructions which are socially and experientially based (Schwandt 1994: 118). A researcher using the PNI process proposes paths along which to look, but does not point at what is to be seen (Blumer 1954: 7). In other words, the researcher or inquirer collects stories, asks questions, and lets the participants look at, think and talk about the patterns themselves. He/she does not decide for the participants what the stories might mean (e.g. Schwandt 1994: 118; Kurtz 2014: 87).

**Figure 3.** Blending participatory and narrative approaches to form PNI



Source: Kurtz (2014: 87).

Furthermore, the PNI process provides a narrative mode through which the participants make a sensible reading of the ‘world’ based on authentic experiences (Abbott 2008: 6). This is because narrative can be, and often is, an instrument that provokes affective thinking about events through talking about them and hearing them being told (Abbott 2008: 11). For Abbott (2008: 3), ‘memory itself is dependent on the capacity for narratives,’ for ‘we do not have any mental records of who we are until narrative is present as a kind of armature, giving shape to the records that are in our minds.’ Without the told narrative, opinions might be formed, but the magic and value embedded in storytelling for shaping memories disappears (Kurtz 2014: 87). In this way, PNI is also rooted in humility, open-mindedness and patience. Indeed, inquiring and casting out the known demands humility (Jun 2015).

With the PNI process, participants also enter each other’s world views and frames of reference to generate insights. Interactively linked, they unearth the meanings of each other’s actions, beliefs and values (Grbich 2003: 16). What come to the fore through the PNI process are not abstract concepts, but the meanings of the experiences and perspectives of the research participants (Maykut and Morehouse 1994: 44). Consequently, the PNI process is considered suitable when the researcher seeks to uncover a deep understanding of participants’ lived experiences (Grbich 2003: 16).

More importantly, the PNI process parallels social work practice, which has a ‘unique commitment to a contextual understanding of people, an explicit value base that emphasizes human rights and human dignity, a commitment to serving marginalized and oppressed people, and a mission to foster a more just society’ (Witkin 1995: 427; cf. Shannon 2013: 103). Social work’s main goal is ‘to promote social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people’ (Ng 2014: 127; see also IASSW 2014). PNI does exactly that too, and therefore is an emancipatory process in so far as self-exploration allows people to become confident, cultivating values such as communication, problem-solving and negotiation (Sewpaul and Raniga 2005). In that respect, the participants in the PNI process become active in both the reconstruction and deconstruction of knowledge that is vital for social change (e.g. Freire 1970, 1973; Stewart 1994).

Consistent with qualitative epistemologies, narrative inquiry involves a close look at the lived lives of the participants as they interact with others and/or the environment. In other words, the lived experiences of the participants are socially and experientially constructed. This brings me to Dewey’s (1916: 133) concept of experience. He understands ‘experience as something which can be understood only by noting that it includes an active and a passive element peculiarly combined’. Actively we do something *to* something; passively we do something *with* something, and we expect consequences, some of which may make us suffer (Dewey 1916: 133). Dewey elaborates that experience involves change, but unless this change is connected to a consequence – ‘which can be either positive or negative’ – it can be a ‘meaningless transition’ offering little or nothing to learn (Dewey 1916: 133). For experience and learning to take place, one has to look deeper into oneself, as well as to interact with another context or environment, be it people, objects, the natural world or ideas (see also Ellett 2011: 4).

Ellett (2011: 4) summarizes Dewey’s (1938) concept of experience into two main principles: continuity and interaction. ‘Continuity is the experience a person has which will influence his or her future, for better or worse,’ while ‘interaction is the situational influence on one’s experience’ (Ellett 2011: 4). In other words, ‘one’s present experience is a function of the interaction between one’s past experiences and the present situation’ (Ellett 2011: 4). Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 17) inventively expand Dewey’s principles to provide grounds for attending to experience through a three-dimensional approach: interaction (personal and social),

continuity (past, present and future) and situation (context, environment, place), as Table 1 illustrates.

**Table 1.** The three-dimensional space of narrative structure

Interaction		Continuity			Place
Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	Situation
Look inward to internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions	Look outward to existential conditions in the environment with other people and their interactions, purposes, assumptions and points of view	Look backward to remembered experiences, feelings and stories from earlier times	Look at current experiences, feelings and stories relating to actions of an event	Look forward to implied and possible experiences and plotlines	Look at the context situated in a physical landscape or setting with topological and spatial boundaries with character's interactions, purposes and different points of view

Source: Adapted from Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 17; cf. Wang and Geale 2015: 197).

In order to understand a person's lived experience, therefore, a researcher or inquirer is urged to take a three-dimensional approach to interaction (social and social), continuity (past, present and future) and situation (context, environment, place) (see also Denzin 1970: 9–10; Schön 1983; Clandinin and Connelly 2000: 50; Ellett 2011: 4). This must simultaneously be negotiated in four directions: 'inward and outward, forward and backward' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000: 50). Inward here means 'toward the internal conditions such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000: 50). Outward means 'toward the existential conditions, that is the environment' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000: 50). Backward and forward refer to 'temporality – past, present, and future' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000: 50).



Thus PNI provides a close look at the lived lives of participants as they interact with others and/or the environment. It provides a framework through which people can make meaning of their everyday lived experiences, particularly individuals whose 'voices' are restricted and/or constrained (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). In other words, PNI is both a phenomenon and a method which examines people's interactions in a given context and helps us to understand their lived experiences (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). Stories which give meaning to people's lives are central to PNI, and stories are thus treated as data (Jensen 2008: 2).

It can therefore be said that the relationship between narrative inquiry and narrative analysis is not only that both methods use stories as their basis for analysis; they both study how stories are socially constructed, and both prompt the reader to grow and 'think beyond the text' (e.g. Riessman 2008: 13; Ellett 2011: 7). While meaning has a tendency to be interpreted in narrative inquiry, and is constructed in narrative analysis, both methods focus on the details, the 'how and why a particular event is storied', with 'particulars and contexts' coming to the fore (e.g. Riessman 2008: 12–13; Ellett 2011: 7). In that respect, 'narrative methods in qualitative research exist in the tension between the tales we live and the tales we tell' (Geelan 2003: 8). This tension is what makes narrative inquiry both exciting and challenging (Ellett 2011: 8), as explained in the following section.

## 4.2 Data collection

There are obstacles and challenges which emerge when PNI is linked to institutions of higher education (McIntyre 2008). One which is obvious is the difficulty of negotiating power between the researcher and the participants (Pannowitz 2008: 224). Researcher-researched relationships are a challenge in terms of how knowledge and objective facts are selected and made use of (e.g. Grant et al. 1987; Karnieli-Miller et al. 2009). The less obvious but perhaps most burdensome difficulty is about the positioning of a researcher who guides the research and communicates differently in and through markers such as gender, education and social status (Narayan 1993: 671–672).

Drawing from these challenges, I became aware right from the very beginning of this research of the need to clarify the different roles and identities which I embody. In my mind, I anticipated the possibility of questions arising as to how a male

academic researcher – himself a product of patriarchy – would understand the lived experiences of young rural women who trade sex in a patriarchal society. I therefore saw the need to clarify how I would negotiate my roles as a researcher, and how I would remain as unbiased as possible towards the participants (see also Strathern 1987; Langford 2000).

Consequently, the first step into the research was to seek ethical authorization from both the Research Ethics Committee of SAUT and the office of the Regional Commissioner (RC) of Mwanza. I clearly outlined the purpose and intended outcome of the research. I especially explained how I would handle the possible challenges of the study, keeping in mind that the research would raise issues which belong to the realm of taboo. I outlined the methodology and its appropriateness. I underscored the importance of the participants' informed consent. I finally obtained permission to conduct the research.

As soon as permission was granted, and knowing from some of the literature that young rural women who relocate to urban areas for their livelihoods are often employed as barmaids<sup>26</sup> (e.g. Mbonile 1996; Kamala et al. 2001; Kibuga 2000; Kiaga 2007; Swantz 2007; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013), I visited bars in the neighbourhood, and made contact with potential participants in the research (young women from Iramba). This task would fall into what Dickson and Green (2001: 51) call 'bridge activity – something short term to help with entering a site or community, and giving its members a chance "to size you up and get to know you"' (see also Smith 1995: 266).

I soon became acquainted with two young women from Iramba who worked in a popular bar on the main road to Musoma. I introduced myself to the bar manager, who played a role in connecting me with the two young women. I made sure the manager clearly understood the objectives of the research. Once he understood, he introduced me to the young women, and a purposeful dialogue and reflexivity started from there onward (see also Morawski 1994; Stewart 1994; Patton 2002; Morrow 2007; Watt 2007; Shaw 2010).

I recall how difficult the initial contacts with these two young women were as I attempted to explain the research and relate it as humanly as possible. This was not easy, because it required a considerable inner change of attitude and behaviour on

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26 In the context of Tanzania, a thin line exists between barmaid and sex worker.

my part, particularly in my attitude towards the young women, who were surviving in and negotiating a complex body-related industry for their livelihoods. For example, I needed to learn and practise how to ask delicate questions in a non-offensive manner. I also learnt to be patient. In return, the two young women would ask me personal and challenging questions, including about my private life and personal relationships. However, all this happened in a respectful manner under the guidance of the golden rule: to treat others the way you want to be treated yourself.

On occasion, the two young women would talk to me about their issues, hoping that I would be able to access practical support and help. They often portrayed themselves as suffering women in need of salvation, expecting me to personally bring that salvation about. It was hard to explain that I needed to understand their lived experience. As one might imagine, answers of this sort did not go down well with them, and they would fight back by asking ‘so what?’ At times, I felt anxious, afraid that they would lose interest. I faced the challenge of enhancing rapport amongst us – building a considerate and sympathetic relationship of trust (see also Karnieli-Miller et al. 2009: 283). I did this in several ways: acknowledging their difficulties, complimenting their dress, looking at and appreciating their photos, remaining respectful, validating their stories, and offering a meal or a drink. In this way, there was a possibility of breaking the ice and establishing a sympathetic mutual relationship of kinship (see also Selltiz et al. 1965: 576; Stanley and Wise 1993; Alston and Bowles 1998).

Let me add that Oakley’s (1981) ways of doing feminist research were helpful at this stage of ‘building bridges’ while interviewing young women with emotionally intense experiences (cf. Reinhartz 1992). I became conscious of the need to be friendly, courteous, conversational and unbiased. In other words, I had to strike a balance between being humorous and serious. The idea was to put the young women at ease so that they could be themselves and talk freely. I think being associated with SAUT, and being a doctoral student abroad, attracted the young women’s positive attention. A close relationship was born, and we soon started to call each other *kaka* and *dada* (‘brother’ and ‘sister’ respectively).

I was naive, however, to assume that I would find it relatively easy to contact and interview a bar attendant. I soon learned from these two *dada* that there were several groupings of young Nyiramba women in Mwanza town, with different temperaments and social statuses. They told me of the ‘expensive’ or ‘upmarket’

young women who were not bar attendants but often traded sex for their livelihoods. These 'upmarket' young women charged comparatively large amounts of money (over 20 US dollars) per sexual service. They were bit older and had no specific locations, and it was very hard to identify them (meaning that they were invisible). Their clients included elite and well-to-do members of society, tourists and foreigners.

The second grouping was of less expensive young women. These tended to target clients on their doorsteps, near bars, guesthouses, nightclubs or discotheques, and tended to spend a considerable amount of time in bars and sometimes on the streets. For these less expensive young women, everything was negotiable and could be identified, as they openly advertised themselves. The importance of visibility here contrasted with the importance of invisibility for the 'upmarket' group. The third group was made up of young women who operated in 'sex houses' and brothels. They were very young and were more likely to have been either enticed or forced to work in confined places. The last group was of those who had other occupations (e.g. hairdressing) but also took part in forms of commercial sex. They went to bars at sunset to meet potential customers, but also for company and peer support from their associates. Of course, there were also young Nyiramba women in Mwanza town who strategized for their livelihoods through other, conventional options, but these were not the focus of my study.

The existence of different categories of young Nyiramba women who trade sex in Mwanza town posed challenges for my research process. I had not conceptualized the situation before the research began. Some of the places where these young women worked and/or lived, for example, were staffed by men and women who would certainly not be pleased with my idea of researching 'their girls', especially during working hours. I recall how difficult it was when I planned to visit brothels, as this would interrupt the work and/or arouse suspicion. If I bought the time to interact with the young women in the brothels, I would not face strong resistance. However, this would present a number of ethical issues. Most critically, I thought paying an interviewee in a brothel might be fruitless, as she might decide to say what she thought I wanted to hear rather than what she lived and knew. It was not something I was comfortable doing or wished to do in this research.

I therefore decided to use a snowball sampling technique (e.g. Maher 2000: 29) to reach out to the young Nyiramba women in their respective groupings, especially the

‘invisible’ ones. In this respect, my initial relationship with the two *dada* became providentially helpful. The technique was possible thanks to the solidarity that existed amongst the young women. The truth was that these young women knew each other well and met regularly for social and psychological support. I therefore had a rare and important opportunity to ‘enter’ their wider community, in which I became ‘a member of the landscape’ (e.g. Clandinin and Connelly 2000: 63; Trahar 2009: 1).

At this stage, I drew on Witkin’s (2014) advice to be both an internal and an external researcher. As an internal researcher, I became mindful of the cultural and social contexts, especially the dos and don’ts. These protected me and the participants from any potential harm. As an external researcher (a university assistant lecturer and doctoral student abroad), I was perceived by the young Nyiramba women as unbiased and non-aligned with subgroups. In that way, I gained their trust and won their confidence (see also Merriam et al. 2010; Witkin 2014). There is no doubt that my responsive approach also helped me to win their acceptance, and I cannot be grateful enough to the two *dada* for familiarizing me with their associates and taking the trouble at times to explain to their associates the purpose of my research.

As soon as rapport had been built between the young Nyiramba women and me, I purposefully recruited six participants for my research, for several reasons. First, a relatively small number of participants would foster trust more easily during our PNI process. Second, a small number of participants would keep the process personal and active, and would make our contact more direct and consistent (e.g. Ospina 2004). Third, with a small number of participants, we could access thick and rich data, which is an important aspect of qualitative research (e.g. Langdridge 2007). In selecting the six participants, I made sure that the four groups of young Nyiramba women were represented in the sample. I targeted young women aged between 18 and 25 years, an age group that I thought would articulate their lived experiences well.

At this stage, I also sought the informed consent of the participants. We agreed on the use of pseudonyms in order to protect their confidentiality and prevent harm. We also agreed on how to store the data in a protected way. The times and locations for the PNI process were carefully selected with a view to maintaining the safety of all the participants. The place where most meetings took place is located in the north-east of Mwanza, less than three miles from the city centre and adjacent to the main

entertainment spots (hotels, restaurants, bars and dance clubs). The place is considered a marginal location, thus presenting an ambiguous status as a site that is both constraining (lower status and poor) and enabling (providing a safe space) for activities that are morally condemned by the state and the law (see also Hubbard 1999: 27).<sup>27</sup>

Let me add that the participants themselves possessed knowledge of safer and better sites for our meetings – often in bars which were considered peaceful, and at times in the homes of their associates. This often happened when the participants were off work, during their free time (from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.). The PNI process placed us in a friendly and supportive context; we felt protected and confident as a group, and became less anxious. Apart from sharing stories of lived experiences, we spent time together eating, drinking and sometimes dancing. I sometimes stayed with them until midnight. However, this required patience on my part, and understanding from my family and society at large. The PNI process took a total of nine months: six months for the sense-making sessions, and three months for the return phase.

#### 4.2.1 Tools of data collection

Keeping a field diary was important in this process of narrative inquiry. In it, I documented almost everything that I heard, observed and found. My field diary contains the evidence on which my research is based. I always took notes during the sense-making sessions so that I could focus on the person, using journal records (pondering) (see Savin-Baden and van Niekerk 2007; Ellett 2011: 8). I also conducted unstructured open-ended interviews that were dyadic or one-to-one (see Hofmann

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<sup>27</sup> In the past, social science researchers have used accounts of lived experiences to understand why some people live a different life and why some individuals are privileged over others (e.g. Ellis and Flaherty 1992; Bochner 2002; Boylorn 2008: 490). For example, in the early 20th century, several scholars, including those from the Chicago school of sociology, explored lived experience based on social class, ethnicity and race – wanting to know the conditions and situations of people who existed on the margins of society, or of disenfranchised individual or groups (van den Hoonaard 2008: 492). Classic studies such as Harvey W. Zorbaugh's (1929) *The Gold Coast and the slum*, Nels Anderson's (1923) *The hobo* and William Foote Whyte's (1943) *Street corner society* were groundbreaking in the sense that the authors spent time hanging around and participating in the social contexts of people whose lives they were seeking to understand (van den Hoonaard 2008: 492). Subsequently, other scholars studied the lived experiences of people premised on gender, age and sexual orientation, including Howard S. Becker's (1963) *Outsiders*, which explored the 'deviant worlds' of marijuana users and dance musicians, and Elliot Liebow's (1967) *Tally's corner*, which explored the social world of young African-American men in a large city.

et al. 1998: 1; Polkinghorne 2005: 142; Ellett 2011: 8). Written or visual documents such as personal text messages, photos of the participants or artworks, for example, were also collected as important pieces of information. The process of narrative inquiry revealed that statements became more meaningful within the context of a story (see Polkinghorne 1988, 2005; Clandinin and Connelly 2000; Clandinin 2006; Reissman 2008). Therefore, taking notes on where and when the narrative emerged, and the circumstances surrounding it, was very important (e.g. Ellett 2011: 8).

The stories and statements from the participants were first written in Kiswahili,<sup>28</sup> and the data collected was afterwards transcribed into English. Attention was paid to ensure that all the participants were provided with the opportunity to use their own words when sharing their stories, and the exact words were transcribed verbatim in the field diary (e.g. Cordero 2014: 41). On some occasions I transcribed texts immediately after the meeting, to avoid accumulating a backlog or forgetting the material. The process of transcription confirmed the importance of accessing and understanding the contexts so as to correctly situate the lived experiences of the participants (e.g. Berger and Luckmann 1967). Some of the stories and statements were repeated and paraphrased several times to make sure that the interpretations of the participants' words were made correctly. The moral was, no matter how trivial an observation or piece of information seemed, it was to be written down and transcribed in order not to leave out any important information for the research (e.g. Clayton and Thorne 2000). This enabled me to also document my personal biases and frustrations, and to think critically about the process of my study (see also Watt 2007; Cordero 2014: 31).

I chose not to tape-record the participants, for several reasons. First, I was aware of Edwards and Holland's (2013: 71) warning that narrative inquirers should 'think carefully about the analytic status they bestow on recorded accounts' and should 'not fall into mistaking the socially shaped interview performance for a capture of the real and authentic' voice (see also Atkinson and Silverman 1997; Back 2010). In other words, I became concerned about the way tape recorders would cut across the socio-emotional signals between participants and me (or between the participants) in face-

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<sup>28</sup> Tanzania is one of the few countries in Africa that has a common language, Kiswahili, which almost the whole population (about 95%) speak and understand. For many Tanzanians, Kiswahili is the second language, but the number that have it as their first language is rapidly growing. Kiswahili is the language used in parliament, the various ministries, the lower judicial courts, and throughout primary school. Plans also exist to make Kiswahili the language of instruction in secondary schools and universities (Brock-Utne 2002: 1).

to-face interactions (e.g. Hine 2001; James and Busher 2006). This was especially pertinent for this study, the purpose of which is not to discover truth in any absolute sense, but to enrich and broaden understandings of the lived experiences of young rural women who trade sex in urban Tanzania, from their own perspectives. Second, some of the participants were nervous about tape recorders and did not want to be recorded, especially on this sensitive topic, which is concerned with their intimate lived experiences. Therefore, I felt it was not mandatory to make any audio recordings of the PNI process.

When analysing the stories of lived experiences, I organized my data into four main areas: past experiences, entry into sex work, current experiences and future aspirations. In doing so, I was guided by Strauss and Corbin's (1998: 12) recommendation to allow new themes, knowledge or theory to emerge from the data, without any restraints imposed by structured methodologies (see also Thomas 2006: 238; Bulkeley 2010: 78).

#### 4.2.2 Emotional equilibrium

The need to know more than facts, to know how the participants *felt* during their lived experiences, was very important in this research. The logic was that reason alone (objectivity and/or neutrality) can keep the brain operating, but without emotions it would become difficult to gain an in-depth understanding of lived experience of the participants (e.g. Kurtz 2014: 22–23). In that respect, many of the participants' stories contained details about the different forms of abuse they had suffered at the hands of their 'bosses', clients and society at large (see also Jackson et al. 2013: 5). Some of the stories represented, in the participants' own words, lives that had been shattered by incomprehensible acts of cruelty, violence and neglect (see also Jackson et al. 2013: 5). The details given were graphic, containing explicit and vivid descriptions of the dire circumstances to which they were subjected in their everyday lives (see also Jamieson et al. 2011; Jackson et al. 2013: 5).

Moreover, many of the participants' stories described situations that were still ongoing in their lives, reflecting the freshness of the memories. The impact of such stories must not be understated. Listening to and writing them down gave me a heightened sense of trauma – as if it were happening now. This was similar to Moran-Ellis' (1996: 181) experience of reading accounts of child sexual abuse, which made her feel 'much pain by proxy'. Managing the sadness, horror and anger arising from



these stories was incredibly difficult, and I often felt lonely (see also Campbell 2002; Dickson-Swift et al. 2008; Bloor et al. 2010; Coles and Mudaly 2010). While the participants and I were able to enter into a dialogue about the emotional demands of these stories in our various meetings (sense-making sessions), for the most part the emotional experiences were deeply active and privately felt (see also Jackson et al. 2013: 5).

However, I was also well versed in Hochschild's (1979) theory of emotional labour, which provided me with a better tool to conceptualize how to manage our emotional states (see also Ashforth and Humphrey 1993; Grandey 2000). Rosenberg (1990) refers to this as an invocation of altered internal emotional states so as to carry out the cognitive work required for data presentation and analysis. This invocation of altered internal emotional states requires that the researcher or inquirer engages in emotional reflexivity during the process of collecting data and in performing analytical tasks (e.g. Hochschild 1979). Invoking altered emotional states, however, proved very difficult; it required considerable levels of what Rosenberg (1990: 11) calls 'mental self-manipulation'. I recall the enormous cognitive effort required to regulate, control, reduce and sometimes displace feelings of immense sadness and bewilderment as I fought back my tears (see also Jackson et al. 2013: 6).

As a necessary self-care strategy – and an impetus for good research – I also thought that by trying to feel less, I would minimize the emotional distress of the participants (Dickson-Swift et al. 2008). I was particularly aware of Malcolm's (2012: 11) remark that to try to feel something different, or to feel less, especially when there is an impetus to be a 'good' researcher, can lead to ethical uneasiness. There were also concerns that a failure to engage emotionally, to empathize with the experiences of the participants, could itself produce a distorted data analysis (Jackson et al. 2013). In that context, therefore, I followed Gilbert's (2001b: 12) recommendations: 'boundaries must be negotiated and renegotiated, an ongoing part of the research process, as a balance is sought between the dangers and benefits of being too far in or too far out of the lives of the researched.'

To resolve this dilemma, I invited the participants to begin with stories they considered positive or good about their lives (e.g. stories that gave them a sense of pride) before telling the more disheartening stories. This was helpful for the management of our emotional landscape, as it led us to see and think about the participants' lived experiences beyond the incomprehensible acts of cruelty and

negligence (e.g. Kurtz 2014: 4–5). I also encouraged them to metaphorically place the story on a table and invite others to view and internalize it without exposing ourselves to the same degree of emotion as would arise if the story was stated directly (e.g. Kurtz 2014: 4–5). Even though some of the participants' stories were in the present tense, reflecting the freshness of the memories, I encouraged them to use the *past tense* when telling their stories, so as to create an emotional distance from the narrated events (e.g. Kurtz 2014: 4–5).

On the other hand, giving the participants the freedom to choose the stories they wished to tell helped us all to manage our emotional states. It not only provided an emotional safety net, but also afforded the participants the chance to tell stories that had a cathartic benefit, as explained in the previous section of this chapter (see also Howarth 1998; Gair 2002; Johnson and Clarke 2003; Dickson-Swift et al. 2006; Darra 2008; Johnson 2009: 200). It was in this context that the participants spoke about things they had never had a chance to speak about, to reflect on issues that were considered taboo, or to address other subjects they would not have tackled without the PNI process. Ultimately, the participants were grateful for the opportunity to express their deeply felt emotions, to experience comfort, validation and empowerment, and to confide in someone who was unbiased, informed, interested and caring (see also Johnson 2009: 200).

The cathartic benefits happened not only for the participants, but for me too. Throughout the PNI process, I was confronted with the potential costs of masculinity – the rigid culture-specific ideas, roles and behaviours that we (men) have to live with to prove our manhood.<sup>29</sup> The awareness of these straitjacketed notions of masculinity made me more open to reassessing my own roles and responsibilities in my family and society at large. This kind of reassessment is an important step

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<sup>29</sup> Men in Tanzania still occupy a relatively privileged position in relation to women (e.g. Buberwa 2016). Given our relatively powerful position, we (men) are often unaware of the fact that many of our privileges (such as higher incomes, or care and domestic services from women) are derived purely from being male; therefore 'gender', and gender issues, remain invisible and unimportant to us (see also Kimmel 2000: 32). In other words, men, both as individuals and as a group, benefit from what Connell (1987: 79) calls the 'patriarchal dividend' – 'the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women' – which they can call upon when they want to. In that sense, many of us (men) suffer from socially constructed gender stereotypes (see also Jewkes et al. 2015). For example, gender stereotypes put pressure on us to be 'tough' and to be the 'breadwinner', resulting in conditions of labour that are often harsh and that may involve injury, violence, crime and imprisonment. In the context of this study, therefore, cathartic benefits occurred for me as I became aware of the straitjacket imposed upon me by traditional notions of masculinity, and I became more open to reassessing my roles and responsibilities (see also Stocking 2004: vii).

towards gender equality in society. I am now convinced that unless men's practices and attitudes change, the efforts to achieve gender equality will face an uphill struggle in our societies. Ruxton (2004: vii) was right when she remarked that men should seriously consider themselves as agents of change and potential allies in the search for gender justice.

### 4.2.3 Return phase

What often happens with PNI after the stories have been collected and the sense-making sessions are over is that the participants go back to what they were doing before the process started (Kurtz 2014: 543). A return phase, therefore, is designed for the return of stories after the sense-making sessions of the PNI process. I decided to include a return phase within the scope of my PNI process, six months after the sense-making sessions had been held. It was a pleasant experience to meet the participants again, although two had temporarily left the group: one had returned home to see her parents, while the other had gone in search of 'greener pastures'.

After the sense-making phase was over, I had found it very hard to end my 'friendship' with the participants – to return to normal everyday life with the PNI process in my mind. This phenomenon has also been reported in other qualitative research (e.g. Acker et al. 1991; Watson et al. 1991; Cotterill 1992; Lee 1993; Gair 2002; Johnson and Clarke 2003). Watson et al. (1991: 509), for example, use the term 'researcher-friend' to acknowledge that qualitative researchers often get involved in friendship-like relationships with their research participants (see also Dickson-Swift et al. 2006). This is especially critical during research on sensitive topics, when the researcher often becomes 'involved in a growing closeness which creates a blurred line between the role of friend and that of research' (Dickson-Swift et al. 2006: 862, cf. Lee 1993: 107), prompting Stebbins' (1991: 253) question: 'do we ever leave the field?' I experienced the same dilemma in this study. The return phase, therefore, provided us (the participants and I) with an opportunity to discuss the way forward – how we could move on to new things in the future in peaceful ways. In other words, the return phase acted as a time of resolution and safety, but also a time of closure – the denouement of our PNI process (e.g. Kurtz 2014: 545).

In addition, the return phase was a time of reassurance. I took the opportunity to assure the participants that the entire PNI process had not been a ruse to squirrel away their experiences in a place where nobody would ever go. I reported to them

what I had been doing since I had left them (six months previously). They were particularly pleased to hear that I had been analysing and discussing their stories with my research supervisors. It felt to them that they were being taken seriously, heard and valued, and that something good would come as a result of this PNI process. At the end, I offered them my sincere moral support, and I assured them a special place in my endeavours as a social worker. I encouraged everyone in their situation to continue the conversation.

Listening to the participants speak again about their experiences of the PNI process, I was able to look at my own research with fresh eyes. They spoke about what had gone right and wrong, which gave me a rare and important opportunity to learn and improve my research skills. As participants spoke about aspects of the PNI process (both good and bad), I could see a journey of inquiry rooted in humility, open-mindedness and patience – a complex pilgrimage into the unknown, but also a humbling realization that the unknown can become known (e.g. Jun 2015). I could also see a process that was built on the belief that if we want to understand others, we cannot just stand outside and observe; rather, we have the option to feel their feelings, suffer their sufferings, and enjoy their joy – to be empathetic.

### 4.3 Data analysis

Thematic analysis, in line with the general inductive method, was used in this study. The reason for choosing this method of data analysis was its applicability to a study design whose aim was to describe and make sense of a phenomenon (e.g. Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Thomas 2006). I particularly liked this method of data analysis because it involves relating the facts obtained from the field (empirical data) to concepts drawn from models or theories – that is, it is data-driven analysis (e.g. Merriam 1998; Braun and Clarke 2006). In addition, thematic analysis as part of the general inductive method immerses the researcher in the raw material so as to allow him/her to look for more details and establish patterns of relationships (Braun and Clarke 2006: 79). The data analysis in this study therefore involved six steps or stages of sorting and coding the data into themes in relation to my research objectives (e.g. Creswell 2002; Braun and Clarke 2006; Thomas 2006).

The first step was to generate a large and consolidated body of data that depicted a wide range of lived experiences of the participants – lived experiences before and

after moving to the city. The second step was an iterative process whereby I was required to read and reread the consolidated data so as to identify some repeated patterns, but also to note the differences in relation to my research objectives – and then go back to my consolidated data to look for more details and establish patterns of relationships (e.g. Taylor-Powell and Renner 2003). As suggested by Coffey and Atkinson (1996), I needed to read the transcripts word-by-word and carefully devise and derive codes by highlighting the segments of text that appeared to be important for my study. It was at this stage that the similarities, contradictions, variations and new concepts in my research were coded into categories.

I should state here that I chose not to use any preconceived categories, as suggested by Kondracki et al. (2002). Instead, the categories in this study arose from the data and became the initial codes for the themes of my research (e.g. Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Patton 2002). In the course of doing this, I learned that the coding of transcribed data from a field diary in qualitative research is itself an initial step in the long process of data analysis, as also observed by Merriam (1998). However, I also learned that doing data analysis by using the thematic method can become very messy and complex. I found myself struggling at times, moving back and forth between data and concepts, between description and interpretation, using both inductive and deductive reasoning, and sometimes drawing heavily from many other principles in a broader qualitative paradigm of mixed approaches (e.g. Merriam 1998; Phillion 2002). Although this ultimate methodological positioning was not fully conceptualized before the study began, nevertheless it enabled me to remain open and explore a myriad of possibilities to try to bring the large quantities of text into far fewer content categories in relation to my research objectives (e.g. Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 12–78; Trahar 2009).

After such a long process of sorting and coding the transcribed data from my field diary, in the third and fourth steps I identified four themes which were relevant: past experiences, entry into sex work, current experiences and future aspirations. Since qualitative research is interpretative in nature, I was free to make personal assessments of the data and come up with more relevant themes in relation to my research objectives, thus bringing my own perspectives into the interpretation of the data (e.g. Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2005: 260). In the fifth step, I restructured and revisited the identified themes so as to ensure that the data was sufficiently focused and detailed. In the sixth step, I split the themes into different subthemes so as to be more focused (e.g. Asante 2016).

## 4.4 Credibility and ethical considerations

Any process of inquiry that involves the building of human relationships raises issues of credibility and ethical questions, particularly on issues of power relations between the researcher and the researched (Karnieli-Miller et al. 2009: 283). In other words, there is a question about who the gatekeeper of knowledge is, and also about which objective facts are to be selected and which are to be excluded (Grant et al. 1987). The less obvious, but perhaps the most difficult, question is the positioning of the researcher, especially when factors such as gender, education and social status may weigh on the entire research process (Narayan 1993: 671–672). Hence I had to take ethical issues very seriously in this study. Apart from acquiring ethical authorization from the Research Ethics Committee of SAUT and the office of the RC of Mwanza, I also made a deliberate effort to communicate clearly to the participants the risks that were involved in my research, so as to gain their informed consent. We (the participants and I) then agreed together on how the data would be stored and who would have access to it, and we decided to use pseudonyms as a way of protecting the participants' anonymity and preventing harm to them (e.g. Karnieli-Miller et al. 2009: 183).

My positioning as both internal and external researcher also helped to clear up these ethical questions. As an internal researcher, I became mindful of the cultural and social contexts, especially the dos and don'ts, which protected me and the participants from harm. As an external researcher, I was perceived by the participants as unbiased and non-aligned. The result of this was a climate of freedom, trust and confidentiality (e.g. Merriam et al. 2010; Witkin 2014).

Moreover, my research included a process of reflexivity, not only to account for any power imbalances, but also out of consideration for the validity and reliability of the data (e.g. Hertz 1997; Koch and Harrington 1998; Maxey 1999). With reflexivity, I was made aware of gender stereotypes, and I was often reminded to act only as a catalyst to promote inquiry into issues that affected the participants (e.g. Shacklock and Smyth 1998; May 2000). I should also say here that although it has been claimed that most researchers have organizational and institutional power (Henry 2003), this was not strongly the case in this study (e.g. Grenz 2005: 2110). Quite often, I experienced varying levels of power in different phases of my research. At some stages, I felt that power was fluid and possessed by nobody – neither the participants nor I – an idea also noted by Tang (2002). At the beginning of the study, for example,

I felt powerless while trying to recruit the participants, afraid that they would lose interest in the PNI process. I struggled several times to enhance the sense of rapport between the participants and me, or among the participants themselves, so as to build a considerate and sympathetic relationship – a sense of mutual trust (e.g. Karnieli-Miller et al. 2009: 283).

## 4.5 Summary

In part, this chapter calls for and underscores the need for space and safety when carrying out research which involves dealing with multiple beliefs and delicate feelings. It was with such an awareness that the participants in this study told their stories in a confident way through the PNI process. The main point is that when a person has the space to tell a story, that space communicates a world of meanings and allows an appreciation of the attention given. The space also allows listening and caring, rather than judging and interrogating. As PNI creates emotional distance between the narratives and the events narrated, it is also suitable for researchers who seek to uncover a deep understanding of participants' lived experiences. This chapter has demonstrated the appropriateness of PNI for exploring the lived experiences of young rural women in Tanzania who are forced to look for decent lifestyles in urban areas and who often end up using unconventional strategies for their livelihoods, including sex work.

## 5 RESEARCH FINDINGS: *HER-STORIES*

In this chapter, I bring forth the voices of the participants and place them at the centre of the conversation (and my data analysis). While it is the participants' authentic voices that I aim to bring out, I am also aware that I carry my own personal baggage and perspectives, which might influence how I infer meanings from their voices (from the data) – a temptation to intrude and take over the voices of the participants in my research for my own purposes (see also DeVault 1999: 34; Kincheloe and McLaren 2000; Ashby 2011: 27). With this in mind, I make an effort to refrain from overriding the voices of the participants. In other words, I assume the role of a passenger rather than a driver behind the steering wheel so as to allow the participants' authentic voices to take the lead (see also Ellsworth 1989: 99; Mazzei and Jackson 2009: 1; Ashby 2011: 27). In this way, the participants' agenda becomes the central feature in the process of data analysis (see also Karnieli-Miller et al. 2009: 283).

I begin the analysis of the data by looking at the past experiences of the participants, which encompass their relationships during childhood and adolescence before they relocated to Mwanza town. Then I describe the participants' decision-making processes and dilemmas in relation to their entry into sex work. This is followed by the participants' current experiences of selling sex, especially their experiences of social stigma, trauma and resilience. Finally, I explore the participants' future aspirations in terms of what keeps them going in the face of multiple constraints, hardships and oppression.

### 5.1 Past experiences

The participants were urged to narrate why they had left home, left everything, to go to Mwanza town. In what ways might their choices possibly have been coerced? From the stories narrated, an array of situations which had led them to prefer urban lifestyles were revealed, ranging from broken homes due to the loss of parents or guardians, to gender discrimination, peer influence, the desire for freedom, and



ethnic-based stereotypes (biases), to mention but a few situations. These issues are presented and analysed in greater detail in this section.

### 5.1.1 Broken homes

The participants painted pictures of broken and/or struggling homes in rural areas as a reason for relocation to the urban centre. Some of them described being brought up by harsh stepmothers or cruel and unfair relatives, and in abusive environments, making it almost impossible to lead a sane life:

After the death of my mother, my stepmother was not taking good care of me. She did not treat me well at all, not even giving me food to eat. She only cared about her own children. I would go hungry for hours, sometimes the whole day. I was not allowed to eat anything in the house without her permission, and yet I was the one who cooked for the family. I really wished that my mother was alive. Imagine how hard it was for me to continue living there. (Chiku,<sup>30</sup> 18 years old)

I was 13 years old, living with my father at Kidaru village, when my stepmother moved in to live with us. She started treating me so badly. She would ask why I chose to live with my father instead of running away with my mother. She would tell me, 'you too will leave this place soon of your own accord.' After a while, I noted changes in the way she would treat me, speaking all sorts of bad words and insults; the situation became unbearable. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

The inability of family members to take care of children left behind by deceased relatives was also recounted as an important explanation for the participants' relocation. One participant described how she ran away from home because her aunt was not able to take care of her after the death of her mother:

When my mother was very sick, about to die, my aunt promised that she would take care of me. My mother did not survive, and after her funeral, I was taken to my aunt's home. I was only 10 years old, in standard four of primary education. At the beginning, life went well in my aunt's house. Then all of a sudden, things changed. One day my aunt told me that there was not enough money to pay for my education, and so I was asked to stop school while her own children continued. When I discontinued school, I would work so hard and sometimes go hungry for hours without food, even though there was plenty to eat in the house. I was not allowed to touch anything without my

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<sup>30</sup> The names given here are fictitious, but the ages and occupations are real.

aunt's permission. I would be beaten up following the slightest provocation. Life became so hard that one day I said to myself, enough is enough. (Adama, 22 years old)

Adama realized that the promise made before the passing of her mother had soon been dishonoured by the aunt. Due to mistreatment, Adama escaped and went to search for a better livelihood. Like Adama, Bahati experienced a pitiful situation after the death of her mother, who left her with the burden of caring for two siblings:

I am suffering because my mother passed away when I was just 14 years old. She left me with two young sisters to look after, and I had no job to earn wages. At one point, we had almost nothing to eat, never mind clothes and other provisions. I took my siblings to our grandmother, and then I moved to Mwanza to work so that I could help my siblings and grandmother. It is unfortunate that I ended up in this kind of life. (Bahati, 25 years old)

However, there were instances where the mother was present and yet for some reason was unable to fully care for the children. Sometimes there were tensions in mother-daughter relationships, as presented in the following:

I did not have a good relationship with my mother. Ours was a relationship characterized by a kind of rejection. When I think about it now, I have suspicions that maybe I was an unplanned and/or an unwanted child. My mother did not give me any love, not even physical attention as her real child. She rarely spoke to me, and I neither communicated with nor confided in her. Above all, she was very controlling, never gave me room to be myself. I can say that we never had a mother-daughter relationship at all. I can remember only once when she told me 'I love you'; it was a time when I was very sick, in the intensive care unit of the mission hospital. I thank God that I did not die, but since that day she has never said that again. It was so sad to not be loved by one's mother. What do you expect from that? I had no other option but to leave home and to come to Mwanza to live on my own. (Siti, 24 years old)

The relationship between me and my mother was marked by prolonged periods of physical absence. My mother left me with three siblings while she worked in Singida. We intermittently spent time with her during the year, especially at Christmas. Some years later, she did not return home at all, she would spend five to six years without coming home, no support whatsoever. It was sad to leave my grandmother and siblings, but I thought that I would support them one day if I managed to get a good job in town. (Atupele, 21 years old)

Another participant reported an ambivalent and isolated relationship with her mother. She described her mother as unavailable, unapproachable and closed. Consequently, this participant did not have a relationship with her mother or her mother's relatives, as documented here:

It was sad that my mother died before I had a good relationship with her, as she was very closed-up to herself. When I think about it now, I feel so sad and bad. Worse luck for me, I have got no relatives around me, as my mother did not show or introduce me to her extended family. I do not even think of going back to my village, because I have nobody there except my real father, who does not even care about me. (Chiku, 18 years old)

In several instances, the participants described a lack of people to trust and confide in as one of the reasons for moving out of their localities. In some cases, the very people they relied on for survival turned out to be their abusers. Siti described an emotionally empty childhood: she was the only child of a single mother, and she had no friends to interact with. On top of that, her mother's boyfriend would often sexually abuse her clandestinely. She sought help from her teacher, but was afraid to reveal the whole story:

There was a time when I wanted to tell my schoolteacher about my horrifying life, and I sat and I cried and she said to me, 'tell me what is worrying you, please.' Every time I wanted to tell her the story, I was afraid that the man would kill me if he learnt that I had exposed him. I also wondered whether the teacher would believe me, because of the general perceptions of this matter in our society; you are not believed until it is seen. I kept it to myself, but then I was repeatedly abused [she sheds tears]. I decided to leave home, and I ended up here. (Siti, 24 years old)

Often, the participants described a childhood in which harm was more pervasive than merely the absence of a mother-daughter relationship. Many felt abandoned and neglected, a reality that exposed them to violence. Their vulnerability was apparently due to their social isolation, resulting from a lack of people to trust and confide in. When Kibibi, for example, was raped at 14 years of age, her self-esteem and self-identity were damaged. She talked of the state in which the incident left her: she was a damaged and changed person. Hence her decision to relocate to an urban site:

Having no mother-daughter relationship is horrible; you try to do things on your own without any proper guide. You feel like nobody cares about you any more, and because of that, you do whatever pleases you. Unfortunately, in

such a situation, you risk a lot of things. I was raped because of that, when I was just 14 years old. Soon after that, I felt different from the other girls of my age. I felt like I needed to act as an adult, as I believed that I was robbed of my childhood. Yes, I was not young any more. I completely changed the moment he raped me, everything changed, and I became an adult, going around doing what I do now. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

In the light of the above stories, it makes sense to say that the participants fled their homes because they failed to form meaningful relationships with their parents and/or caregivers and therefore felt abandoned and/or uncared for. This verdict matches several studies which have reported family breakdown as one of the reasons not only for rural-urban migration, but also for entry into sex work (Swantz 2007; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013). Silberschmidt (2001: 658) explains that there have been major socio-economic changes and a breakdown of traditional institutions in Tanzania, a situation which has left girls and women in disadvantaged and vulnerable situations. What has happened as a result is that men have withdrawn from household responsibilities: men's position as heads of households has been challenged, and some men have remained only 'figure' heads of household as they are unable to provide for their families (Silberschmidt 2001: 622). Even though men in rural areas still inherit and own land, and still regard themselves as farmers, their labour input into farm activities has become negligible, and therefore they can no longer afford adequate care and support for their families, leading to family breakdown. Wamoyi et al. (2011) emphasize that 'men's employment initially reinforced their economic power, but in recent decades contraction of formal employment has left men unable to fulfil their newly acquired "bread-winner" role, undermining their status as head of household.' This has also been reported in Botswana (e.g. Mookodi 2004).

Kiaga (2007) suggests that the custom in Tanzania has been that women (wives or mothers) fulfil most of the childcare and household responsibilities while men (husbands/fathers) provide financial support to the family. But in cases of death or divorce of parents, or where the mother is in a disadvantaged and vulnerable position and the father's role in the family is weakened (Silberschmidt 2001: 622), their children, especially girls and young women in rural areas, find themselves in vulnerable situations which influence their decisions to leave home for better livelihoods elsewhere (e.g. Kibuga 2000; Kihaga 2007). This is especially true within the patriarchal set-up, where girls and women are subject to oppressive and violent structures (e.g. Ellis et al. 2007; Hagues and Parker 2014; Buberwa 2016).

## 5.1.2 Gender inequality

Repeatedly, the participants narrated how gender inequality and oppression were interwoven into the social fabric of their family and society. They particularly pointed out that their rural family was organized in such a way that girls were socialized to accept lower status, not only in the family itself but also in the community at large. They underscored how social and cultural notions about ‘real men’ hindered the comprehensive human growth and development of boys, as boys were prevented from learning and developing caring capacities, loading all the heavy domestic tasks and chores onto girls’ and women’s shoulders. These tasks, unfortunately, limited girls’ potential for education and other productive prospects. Consequently, this put them under pressure to leave home in search of a more ‘equal’ life in urban centres. The search for better opportunities and livelihoods is described:

The boys in my family did not do much of the housework. I did most of it on my own, because I am the only girl in the family, and it is expected of me. Housework is to be done by girls. It does not feel good for boys to do housework. The belief is that why should a boy do it if he has a sister? Imagine if you are the only girl in a family, doing all the housework by yourself. It can be hell. It makes you ask yourself so many questions, including a question about your own value in the family. It can only go so far before you decide to leave. (Atupele, 21 years old)

I hated the fact that, as a girl, you are not allowed to get whatever you want, cycling, shopping, and going out of your own accord. I completely disliked staying home the whole day doing housework. Boys do not bother to do housework. They say, this is a girl’s job – if the girls do not do it then who else is going to do it? The boys prefer to be out with their friends. Overall, girls do more housework compared with the boys. This is the reality, but I did not like it when it limited my opportunities, including education and training. (Adama, 22 years old)

It is evident in the participants’ stories that the division of work between males and females perpetuates stereotypical perceptions, constantly categorizing men as active breadwinners while women are branded as passive carers. Yet girls and women work hard as breadwinners to provide for their families, as the following story reveals:

All of us would wake up at 5 a.m. My grandmother and I would go to the fields, first thing in the morning. On our way home, we would carry foodstuff, firewood and water to wash ourselves. Upon our return, my grandmother would go looking for drinking water while I swept the house. Then I would prepare *ugali* or rice with vegetable gravy for the family. In the evenings, I would wash many

clothes, as we were five of us in the home. It was not easy for me to do it all alone, quite unbearable to continue with this kind of life. (Atupele, 21 years old)

Almost all the participants felt that they had been brought up to view themselves as less human and less valuable because they were female. Their contribution to the household was measured only in terms of care work, and this was hardly valued at all. Instead, they were generally considered economic and social liabilities (lacking income-earning capabilities) that only drained the household wealth with no hope of return, as narrated below:

I will never forget the day when my father told me that he was not going to spend money on me any more, for anything, including my education. He yelled at me with lots of anger that I was soon going to be married and become a 'property' of somebody else. He even regretted having invested so much in me, expecting no return on the investment. I really felt so bad about that. From that day, I held feelings of hatred towards my father. I also felt I did not belong to the family any more. I started to think how I could escape from there to be independent. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

As soon as I completed my primary school education, I pestered dad about going to secondary school. For one year, I stayed home doing a lot of housework. Meanwhile my stepmother enjoyed having me around. She would not work, saying it was important for me to learn how to be a good housewife. I cringed every time she said that – because that was the last thing I wanted to hear. One day my father and stepmother sat me down and told me that I was no longer their responsibility. They claimed that I had grown up and wanted me out to start a life of my own. In short, they wanted me out of the family to be married as soon as possible. Since I did not want to get married at a very young age, I decided to leave and came to Mwanza. (Chiku, 18 years old)

They also spoke of how the lives of young women are constantly threatened because discriminatory social norms cause gender-based violence, which is subtly but surely engrained in the social, psychological and cultural fabric their societies. A vivid picture is painted below:

Going to school one dull morning, I met a man who pushed me into the bush and raped me. Later he warned me not to tell anyone or risk being beaten each time I met him. I went to the victim support unit at Kiomboi to report the case. Unfortunately, nobody there believed me, and the man who raped me was not apprehended. I continued to see him around, and because of that, I decided to run away, as I was afraid he would beat or even kill me. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

The above narratives suggest that, in rural areas of Tanzania, girl and young women experience increased hardship due to oppressive and violent structures embedded in social relations within patriarchy. From a tender age, girls are taught to be gentle, obedient, passive and submissive housekeepers, a process which leads to gender inequality in the family and in society at large (Swantz 1985; Buberwa 2016), as also reported in Zimbabwe (Kambarami 2006). For example, the division of labour in the household means that girls and women must work much longer hours than men (e.g. Varkevisser 1973; Setel 1999; Bayles and Bujra 2000). Whilst family work gives women some power in specific spheres (e.g. Vuorela 1987), in general it greatly benefits men who are owners of land (e.g. Akeroyd 1997), a fact which some men recognize (e.g. Bayles and Bujra 2000; Swidler and Watkins 2007: 157). As a result, women are far less able to sell their labour in comparison with men, and remain of lower social status, culturally inhibited from asserting their interests in public (e.g. Akeroyd 1997; Bayles and Bujra 2000). This state of affairs may oblige young rural women to leave their home villages for better livelihoods elsewhere.

### 5.1.3 Peer influence

When answering the question why many young women from Iramba leave home to relocate to Mwanza town, some respondents mentioned the influence of peers in decision-making processes. Some of them reported that their sisters, relatives or friends had coerced them into deciding to move on. Here are some of their stories:

When I was hustling for my life in the village, my friend invited me to come here for work. She introduced me to this kind of life and assured me of making lots of money if I stayed longer in Mwanza, and that she would be there to support me. Since I liked everything about her, her clothes, her hairstyle, her shoes, and above all her freedom, I chose to give it a go. I looked forward with excitement to becoming like her. (Adama, 22 years old)

When my friend returned back home [to the village] from the city, she was very beautiful, with good clothes and shoes. She had money and almost everything. I particularly liked her dresses and hairstyle, she was mwaaaa. I thought inwards that urban life was heavenly. I did not imagine anything horrible there. I thought that even if life was hard there, it still could not be compared to the miserable situation in village, thus I eagerly waited for my turn to go to the city and be like her, this role model of mine. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

I met my auntie's daughter, who had just returned from Dar es Salaam. She wore beautiful clothes and her hair was like that of the girls you see in magazines. She told me how weird and worn out I looked, and suggested I go with her to the city to make money – implying that there was more to life than looking after cows and goats in the village. From there on, all I thought about was going to the city. Later in the week, I packed some personal belongings and bade farewell to my grandmother. I first went to Dar es Salaam for a few years before relocating here. (Atupele, 21 years old)

As she was narrating her story, Atupele also recalled a story about her friend, who had been influenced by a sister to come to Mwanza in search of a better livelihood. Here is the story about Atupele's friend:

She liked school, but she also liked to be on the farm, collecting firewood with her friends amidst lots of joy and laughter together. But one day her own sister convinced her to leave home and join her in building a better life. She accepted her sister's proposal and they both moved to Mwanza. Since they were all new in the city, they struggled quite a lot before settling. They went through a hell of life, including living on the streets for a couple of months before deciding to abandon this kind of life. (Atupele, 21 years old)

In light of the participants' words, it is reasonable to conclude that keeping up with peers is a powerful incentive for young rural women in Tanzania to relocate to urban centres for their livelihoods. However, it is primarily the need for material gain, ranging from wanting to become rich to wanting a new dress (as was repeatedly related by the participants), that mostly influenced their decision to relocate to urban centres, as also reported in previous studies (e.g. Msigwa and Mbongo 2013; Stark 2017a). Thus it is more the desire or need for material gain, rather than the ties of relationships per se, that compels many young rural women to leave their homes. This has also been observed in Malawi (Swidler and Watkins 2007).

It is also important to state here that the rural exodus in Tanzania, particularly among girls and young women, takes place through kinship networks of support, referred to as the *undugu* system (Kiaga 2007: 10). This is a sort of economy of affection among structurally defined groups connected by blood, kin, community or other affinities such as religion, and it emphasizes the support of kin during times of hardship rather than the single-minded pursuit of profit (Kiaga 2007: 10). It can run to the extent of hiring an extended family member in a business to help the family (or community) survive in times of adversity (e.g. Swantz and Tripp 1996: 12; Creighton and Oman 2000: 78; Dungumaro 2013). It is precisely in this context that



peer influence plays a big role in decisions to relocate to urban centres, especially when some urban middle-class women use *undugu* to acquire the surplus labour of housegirls or domestic servants (Kiaga 2007: 10).

#### 5.1.4 Desire for freedom

In the hope of escaping onerous gender restrictions and parental control, some participants dreamt of the ‘freedom’ they would obtain by living away from home. They particularly narrated their deeply held wishes to be independent and free from patriarchal constraints, as expressed here:

I decided to leave home because I wanted to be free from my parents’ control. My mother was controlling. She was treating me like a kid, while I felt that I was old enough to be on my own. I decided to leave home due to that. Yes, I do sometimes go home, but I don’t sleep there because of their attitudes towards me, always judging and wanting to control. (Siti, 24 years old)

I was hoping to do better by myself, because I wanted things that my parents could not afford, things that were not even found in the villages. You know so well how difficult it is to achieve your goals if you are a woman in a patriarchal society. I wanted to have things, nice things for myself, and the solution was to go out to find work, earn money and buy what I wanted. (Atupele, 21 years old)

The participants often used phrases that illustrated how free they felt in comparison with the past. Phrases such as ‘nobody checks anyone,’ ‘you do whatever you like’ and ‘you oversee your own life’ were commonplace. Unlike their controlled peers in the rural areas, the participants cherished the ability to do whatever they liked, despite the consequences of that freedom. They were delighted to be out of the reach of the customs and social arrangements which had restricted and constrained their voices and choices, as narrated here:

Each time when my friend came back home from the city, she seemed to be so free, speaking her mind without any fear. She would also make decisions regarding where she wanted to go and where she wanted to live, and lived the way she pleased. Above all, she would decide freely about entering a relationship, and she would tell the boys off when she did not like them. I wanted to be like her, and I am happy now because I am free. (Adama, 22 years old)

As has already been pointed out in the previous discussion (see sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2), girls and young women in Tanzania are socialized to be dependent on their male counterparts (e.g. Hagues and Parker 2014; Buberwa 2016). They are also taught to be submissive housekeepers, and are therefore constantly under the control of men or other women who have become efficient gatekeepers of oppressive and violent structures (Opoku 2017).<sup>31</sup> At its core, this sort of socialization is rooted in structural gender inequality, which makes women more likely to experience poverty and abuse, and therefore more likely to become more vulnerable to exploitation by men. For example, among the Meru of northern Tanzania, ‘female sexuality and reproduction is ideally controlled by the patriclan and enforced’ (Haram 2005: 60), as also observed among the Gisu of northern Uganda (Heald 1995: 492). This means that women are not only defined in relation to men, but are also defined as dependent on and subordinate to them (e.g. Charvet 1982; McDowell and Pringle 1992). Such cultural practices impact on the freedom, status and prospects of girls and young women, especially in rural areas, where patriarchy is more pronounced. In these contexts, young rural women may feel compelled to relocate to urban centres in hopes of being free from patriarchal constraints – to claim forms of autonomy and freedom and to create a different future (e.g. McDowell and Pringle 1992; Swantz 2007).

### 5.1.5 Ethnic-based stereotypes

In some instances, the participants narrated how women from Iramba district are branded as ‘loose women’ who are very good for servitude, and who are docile, sexually attractive ‘laughing girls’. Because of these connotations, some Nyiramba girls and young women come to believe that they are meant to leave home and work in servitude (domestic work, bar work and also sex work). In this way, sexual exploitation becomes a normalized pathway, as we are told here:

What do you expect of us? It is like inscribed in our blood that as soon as we become adolescents we must leave home and go to urban centres for work [as domestic workers or barmaids]. For us, it is an expected deal which every girl back home longs for. When I was still young, I knew so many women in my own village who went to big cities to work and brought wealth back to their families. Prior to me, my own sisters and some members of the extended

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31 A wider picture of this state of affairs is provided by other scholars, including Mbilinyi (1972), Swantz (1985), Haram (2003, 2005), Osorio et al. (2014) and Buberwa (2016).

family worked here in Mwanza too. They brought us shoes and nice clothes. Through them, and from a tender age, I imagined a better world beyond my rural community. (Atupele, 21 years old)

Stories about young women who had gone to town and become so rich were surfacing at home. As I saw young women who returned from towns dressed in the 'modern' ways, I was eagerly waiting to seize my chance whenever it would arrive. To me, they were successful. I did not care about how and what they had gone through to get where they were. When I heard that my aunt's friend needed a house helper in Mwanza, I did not think twice. I grabbed the chance. I immediately informed mum, and I left home the following day. (Adama, 22 years old)

It should be said here that in Tanzania, ethnic difference has been downplayed by the government since independence in 1961, and national unity has been emphasized through the adoption of Kiswahili as the official language (Stark 2017a: 570).<sup>32</sup> Thus, ethnocentric attitudes are rare in Tanzania. However, there are ethnic-related perceptions and impressions, particularly in the labour market. Both Kibuga (2000) and Kiaga (2007) explain that Iramba district has long had a reputation for 'producing' good girls for servitude ('laughing girls' who are docile and sexually attractive, suitable for domestic and bar work), as do Iringa and Ruvuma Regions. The same finding has been reported in a study investigating the worst forms of child labour in Tanzania (Kamala et al. 2001), where Iramba is depicted as a 'catchment area' for child labour and for sourcing girls and young women for servitude. In these contexts, it is likely that ethnicity is produced (or reproduced) and becomes an identity.

The danger of such identifications is the cultivation and activation of ethnic-based stereotypes (Quinn and Rosenthal 2012: 248).<sup>33</sup> When such stereotypes are activated, they tend to influence and shape the future impressions of individuals. Not surprisingly, when all one knows about an individual is that he or she belongs to a particular social category, the stereotype associated with that category can determine the perceiver's impression of that individual, and this explains why some participants in this study conceded that they belonged to a society that has a reputation for 'producing' good girls for servitude. They repeatedly referred to themselves in such

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32 Tanzania has a large number (estimated at 120) of different ethnic groups, and intermarriage across ethnic lines is more common in Tanzania than anywhere else in Africa (e.g. Nyang'oro 2004: 38–39; Deutscher and Lindsey 2005: 165; Stark 2017a: 570).

33 See also e.g. Locksley et al. (1980), Higgins and Bargh (1987), Bodenhausen (1988) and D'Agostino (2000).

terms: ‘we are Nyiramba girls,’ it is ‘part of us’, it is ‘expected of us’, ‘we must leave home’ at one point – it is in the nature of things (given and normalized). As a result, there is a general lack of public awareness about the Nyiramba young women who relocate to urban centres for better lives, and the operations of local recruitment agents, for example, go uninspected or unmonitored by state authorities.

## 5.2 Entry into the sex industry

Data that fell into this category arose when the participants were invited to recount their reasons and/or motives for entering sex work, bearing in mind the risks<sup>34</sup> which are associated with the sex industry in Tanzania. While abject poverty was named as a primary motivation for entering this exploitative industry, other reasons also existed. They included previous experiences of sexual abuse, ‘weird’ customs, deception, autonomy over one’s body, failed ‘relationships’ and low levels of education. Thus the process of entering the sex industry was far more multifaceted than a simple distinction between voluntary and involuntary motives would suggest, as we find in the following subsections.

### 5.2.1 Poverty and financial privation

Most of the participants had grown up in families with scarce social and economic capital. Obtaining the basic needs of life such as food, clothing and shelter was a struggle. They often portrayed themselves as unfortunates who had to exchange sex for a living. They repeatedly used phrases such as ‘hungry stomach’, ‘a crime to be poor’ and ‘dire need of money’ in explanations of their lifestyle. In some narratives, sex work was described as a ‘constrained choice’ made in specific circumstances for financial purposes. At this stage, they would speak about themselves as bold and brave enough to opt for sex work:

I got into this work soon after my mother’s death. We depended on her for food, clothes and education – for everything. She left us helpless: two little sisters and I. We had nothing to eat, never mind clothes and other things. I decided to take my siblings to our grandmother before I moved to Mwanza

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34 My usage of the term ‘risk’ here takes into account the hazardous contexts in which sex is sold. It acknowledges that sex work poses threats of physical, emotional and psychological harm to girls and young women who take part in the industry (Høigård and Finstad 1992; Phoenix 1999; Sterk 2000; O’Neill 2001).

to work, so that I could help them in return. When I moved here, the only available jobs were in bars. It was so tough to work there at first; I did not know how to get enough money for myself and for my siblings. I gradually learned to get cash from sex for myself and my family back home. (Bahati, 25 years old)

Atupele had a different story. She first said that she did not know the people who had coerced her into sex work. She then modified her story and said it was the need for money which had compelled her into sex work:

I worked as a housemaid in Dar es Salaam before I became a barmaid. I was paid very little as a barmaid while I was working for many hours: from 2 p.m. to midnight, and sometimes the whole day. I wondered how I could make enough money for myself and my family. Then I befriended a woman who initiated me into this way of life. She told me that if I wished to earn 10 times higher than what I was earning as a barmaid, I should follow her to Mwanza. I agreed to come with her here, as I was in a dire situation for cash for myself and the siblings. It all started there. (Atupele, 21 years old)

The above narratives concur with previous studies in Tanzania which have explained sex work as a consequence of women's poverty and dependence on men (e.g. Haram 2005; Maganja et al. 2007), as also reported in other countries of sub-Saharan Africa (Swidler and Watkins 2007). This is also acknowledged by feminists and other writers around the world (e.g. Jaggar 1980: 350–351; Rubin 1984: 283; Bindel 2017: 59). All these studies have singled out financial deprivation as the primary motive for women's entry into sex work – suggesting that women enter sex work primarily, and often exclusively, for economic reasons in the context of limited choices.

At its core, sex work is rooted in structural gender inequality in which women are more likely to experience poverty and abuse, and therefore likely to become vulnerable to sexual exploitation by wealthy men. In other words, it is often men (in patriarchal society) who manage, regulate and police sex work in the sense that they see women as disposable sex objects to be used and abused (e.g. Charvet 1982; Farley et al. 2003). Even in cases where women who sell sex operate independently, the gendered aspect remains: it is mostly men who buy and women who sell sex (e.g. Scorgie et al. 2012). Thus it is men who normalize sex work and keep women in the sex industry (e.g. Stilwell 2002; Bucardo et al. 2004; Farley 2006: 102; Gerdes 2006: 142). It is in this context that Setel (1999) has found in northern Tanzania that some rich men use their wealth to pursue and have sex with poor young women who need money to survive or to gain social status.

## 5.2.2 Previous experiences of sexual abuse

Some of the participants were in the sex trade because they had been sexually abused as children and/or teenagers, well before reaching a reasonable age of personal judgement. Some spoke of being raped several times, sometimes by their own family members and/or acquaintances. To some, abuse became a 'norm' and a mode of life, and trading sex had an objectivity in itself:

Many of us were sexually abused as children, even before we moved here, sometimes by our own people, the people we trusted so much, we ran away from that. Imagine your own relative or someone you trust rapes you and feels justified in doing so. I felt virtually thrown out of the house, thrown away, that day when he raped me. That is when you get the feeling of being useless, holding no value at all. It is like you are given a ticket to do anything with yourself and your body, and in fact nothing worse would ever happen to you than being raped by your own people. (Siti, 24 years old)

It signalled, in the participants' narratives, that sex work falls along a continuum of sexual abuse, a lifelong experience of sexual violence since childhood. From their childhood, they learned to harden their hearts in order to deal with any sort of horrific experience, as described in the following stories:

For me, having sex for money is not worse than being raped by my own relative. It feels the same as it did when my cousin had sex with me when I was still very young, sometimes by force. Or when my boyfriend did that by force, or that businessman, or the cops in their office, or the man in the bar even when I did not like it. It is all the same. I did not feel any of them. I have learned how to block things out. I mind-block it and within an hour or so I forget about it all. It is like being an actress, then life goes on. (Bahati, 25 years old)

Having been raped before, it somehow prepares you for this work. It really makes a big impact on you, as it would not be if you had not been abused before. You feel like nothing worse would ever happen to you again. The only thing that remains with you is shame, ashamed of myself, sometimes feeling dirty about myself. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

Another participant associated her previous experience of sexual abuse with the lack of self-esteem which led her into sex work, as narrated below:

I probably would not have been so uncaring, so reckless about my life and myself, if I had not been raped before. I do not know if it is depression or not,

but I am often anxious, drinking and smoking drugs, but also taking the kind of risks that I do by sleeping with all kinds of men, sometimes without condoms. (Siti, 24 years old)

Childhood experiences of sexual abuse were often compounded by other factors, such as ill treatment by employers, which pushed the participants to make radical choices. The participants explained that some girls in domestic service opt for sex work after experiencing sexual exploitation in their employers' homes. This sexual exploitation leaves them with the feeling of being damaged forever and unworthy of human respect, obliging them to enter a trade in which they can negotiate to some extent, as we learn here:

I used to work in a hotel when I first came to Mwanza. If I did not provide sexual favours to the managers, they would not promote me. If I refused to give in, I would receive very little pay and sometimes no pay. Additionally, I would be insulted and threatened with dismissal when I protested. It happened countless times that I had to dance to their tune or risk losing the job, and it became a way of life. I feel better now because I have freedom to decide who to have sex with, how much, where and when. (Adama, 22 years old)

I used to work as a housemaid, but the boys would want to have sex with me. If I refused, they would create false accusations that would result in my being expelled from work, and from the house. Because I was afraid of being kicked out, I did as they wanted. Yet, even when they had used me to their satisfaction, they would intensify their accusations and I would be told to leave the home. I did not want to continue with that life, and I opted for this one. It is better now than my previous experiences, for sure. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

The employer will pick you for the job [housemaid, barmaid, maid in a hotel] only when he thinks he can mould you as per his wishes. In the bars, for example, many employers would often pick newcomers who would not resist their demands for sexual favours. I went through that myself when I just started to work in the bar. You get the feeling of being battered, and you don't feel good doing that when you are not hired for it. I wanted some respect and because of that I choose to operate on my own. (Chuku, 18 years old)

The participants also recounted that in comparison with the available jobs in town, sex work gave them more autonomy over their own bodies, as implied in the following stories:

I also worked in hair salons, doing a lot of work under strict supervision. It was so laborious to wash and give massages to people, even when you did not want to touch them. Yes, you need the money, but the horrific conditions that

you go through make you feel like a little slave. One woman came to our salon and promised to do something for me. I did not know that she was also from Iramba, as I had not seen her before. She connected me to a rich man who gave me a huge sum of cash after I sexually serviced him, and I got attracted and accustomed to it. I only go to work in the salon when don't have clients here [in the bar]. I prefer this work to the hairdressing, because I earn more here in a shorter period of time. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

One of my colleagues in the restaurant where we worked advised me to dress up decently to impress the boss. I did not know what she meant by 'impressing the boss'. I saved some money, bought shoes and clothes, and one day dressed up as advised. I wore a sleeveless blouse and went to work. Indeed, the boss noticed me and liked the attire. Days later, the boss arranged to meet in a hotel, but when he started to misbehave I refused, and I escaped. I was then dismissed under the pretext that my work in the restaurant was not satisfactory. He even refused to pay for the time that I had worked there. My friend thought that I should have given in to the boss, as I would enjoy some favours from then on. I was aware that going to the police to report the incident would be a meaningless and expensive act, and would expose me to the possibility of more mistreatment. From then on, I learned a lesson. The reasons why I opted for this kind of life was to escape the manager's wrath. (Bahati, 25 years old)

I left the bookshop because I was not getting enough money, and above all my employers and/or co-workers would demand sex, sometimes by force. My situation was horrible there, you try to get used to it but it is not easy. I did not like the fact that they would often talk rubbish. I would really feel bad. Every boss wanted sexual favours in exchange for something, and it was disgusting at times! I thought that I have dignity too. In the end, as I could not survive without money, I got myself into this way of life and I feel freer here than previously. (Chiku, 18 years old)

Many writers on sex work agree with the participants in this study that sex work falls along a continuum of violence against women under male rule and hegemony (Farley 2004, 2006, 2012). For example, Stoltenberg (1990: 59) explains that 'every act of sexual objectifying occurs on a continuum of dehumanization that promises male sexual violence at its far end.' In other words, women enter sex work after enduring incest, abuse and rape by family members or acquaintances (e.g. Farley and Kelly 2000: 15; Christ 2016: 214).

Indeed, Farley (2004) argues that what incest is to the family, sex work is to the community. Accustomed to frequent violence and exploitation, some women come



to think that sex work is in the nature of things or a role they ought to play well for their own survival (e.g. Farley and Kelly 2000: 15). Thus, sex work is a 'choice made by those who have no choice' in patriarchal society (Farley 2006: 102). In the same line of thought, Malarek (2009: xii) writes that sex work is 'sexual terrorism against women at the hands of men and little is being done to stop the carnage' (see also Silbert and Pines 1981, 1982, 1983).

### 5.2.3 Ignorance and deception

Some of the participants in the study entered sex work because of a lack of comprehensive information. Sometimes they were intentionally deceived by their associates. Adama's story reveals how her friends persuaded her into sex work:

I had a friend who was in this work before me. She knew me well, and everything about my family. Above all, she knew my struggles, and was sympathetic and eager to help. She introduced me to her friend, and we went around together to places in Mwanza. My friends knew men around, and one evening when we were in a bar, I was introduced to a rich man who showed interest in me. It all started from there and since then I have been changing men as I please, but for the sake of money. You get used to it and it becomes part of your life. (Adama, 22 years old)

Similarly, Siti narrated how she was led into sex work by a friend from the same village. Here is her story:

I met Sheila at the market. I knew her so well; in fact, she is a former schoolmate, although she was ahead of me. We were all happy to meet again in town, and we shared many stories about our previous life in the village. One day I went to her house and she said: 'I see that you are going through a tough time, my friend, I have a job which will pay you a lot of money, but if you want. This is what you have to do.' She explained how she makes money by trading sex in Mwanza. She offered to support me if I decided to follow her path. I did not have the means to earn money, so I accepted her lure and it all started from there. (Siti, 24 years old)

In some cases, however, the participants entered the sex industry as soon as they arrived in the city because of deception by relatives and friends, as described here:

A woman from my own village invited me to Mwanza to work in a restaurant. To my surprise, she took me to a friend who owns a bar and left me there, even without telling me a thing. I knew almost nothing about this city, and I

expected her support, but she was nowhere to be seen after she left me there. That night, the bar owner wanted sex from me. He said that I was still fresh from the village, and so I was still very innocent and pure. Indeed, I was very innocent; I did not know anything about working in bars, or anything about life in town. I just accepted his proposal, thinking that it was something special for me, after all, he was going to be my boss. It went on like that for a while, but once he had enough of me, he discarded me and told me to find other men if I wanted cash. I don't blame him; I blame the woman who deserted me. (Siti, 24 years old)

The stories also revealed that friends and relatives who trade sex in Mwanza recruit young women without fully disclosing what is expected of them in the city. Adama has this to say:

I was surprised that my own friend did not tell me the whole truth about life in the city. She convinced me and I believed that life was so nice here, that I would work in a hotel, wear nice clothes, eat good food, and above all make lots of money. I was excited to come to Mwanza for those reasons. It is true that I got the work in the hotel, but I was paid so little there, and above all I was often subjected to sexual abuse, forced to sleep with the managers to keep my job. Why did she not tell me about all that? Who knows, maybe I would not have moved here in the first place, maybe I would have taken my education very seriously, it is so annoying at times. (Adama, 22 years old)

In some of the narratives, the participants used terms such as 'cheated', 'forced' or 'lured' to describe how they become involved in sex work, as narrated below:

When I just moved here, my own friend took me to one lady and told me that 'from today onward you will stay here and work here.' My friend took money from the lady in my presence, and left me without even saying a word. As soon as my friend left the house, I was forced to have sex with clients. I didn't know that I was sold to work there. I worked there for a couple of weeks before I was helped to get out of there by a client who took me to his home. (Atupele, 21 years old)

I stayed in my friends' home for four days when I just came here. But when I saw that everybody was trading sex, I also wished to be part of it as they were rich, and their house was nice and neat. One of my friends brought me a man and I had sex with him for cash. I then started doing it on a regular basis. (Chiku, 18 years old)

As I sat at the bus station, a lady noticed me and asked me a lot of questions. I told her everything about me, that I did not have a place to stay and I had no money for food and the like. She told me not to worry and promised to

arrange work for me. I followed her to her home as she seemed to be very good. Later in the evening, she introduced me to a lady whose work is organizing casual sex. Imagine, I was very new in the city, they took advantage of my situation. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

The previous discussion (see section 5.1.3) of kinship networks of support is also relevant here. It has recently been observed in Tanzania that *undugu* is more practised now than at any time before; this reflects not only an adherence to rights, duties and moral obligations to support one another, but also a lack of alternatives for access to resources, especially the labour market, outside the circle of kin (Creighton and Oman 2000: 78). In that context, young rural women are increasingly being lured to leave their homes and go to urban centres for employment, and they often end up in sex work (e.g. Kiaga 2007; Swantz 2007; Lawi 2013; Msigwa and Mbongo 2013).

Such deception into sex work is also occurring in a context where young people in Tanzania ‘naturally want to participate in the global consumer lifestyles which allow them to display a stylish urban appearance through fashionable clothing, cosmetics, jewelry, fast food, mobile phones, and so forth’ (Stark 2014: 8). The same has been observed in Durban, South Africa, where young women enter sex work as part of ‘exploiting their desirability in an effort to attract men who can provide them with expensive commodities such as jewelry, cellular phones, fashionable clothing and opportunities to be seen as passengers in luxury automobiles’ (Leclerc-Madlala 2003: 213–214). In these contexts, sex work is arguably more attractive to young women in terms of satisfying their ‘wants’ as opposed to meeting their ‘needs’, and may reflect a desire to acquire what Handler (1991) calls ‘symbol capital’, in this case symbols of modernity and a successful life (see also Leclerc-Madlala 2003: 213–214; Maganja et. al. 2007; Stark 2017). In other words, the desire to be ‘modern’ seduces young rural women to participate in sex work, ‘the only job for which women as a group are paid more than men’ (MacKinnon 1987: 24–25).

#### 5.2.4 Failed relationships

Some participants reported experiences of failed relationships with their partners or boyfriends as reasons for their entry into sex work. Since most of them had no prior experience of being loved, they had hoped to find love with their partners. However,

they were often abused in their relationships, mistreated and sometimes beaten. As a result, they often felt rejected by their partners:

The man was less bothered about me, and above all he did not care anything about my relatives. He only needed sex from me. He often came home very late in the night and drunk, and would demand sex even when I was not willing for it. He did not care about my feelings at all. Sitting home and waiting for a man who does not care for me and my family was not an option. I waited for him to leave home, then I collected my belongings and I went away. I initially tried to do so many things on my own to earn money, but it was not happening. I can cook, so I tried to make chapatis and *maandazi* for the students in the nearby school, but I could not get enough money for myself and my brothers. I decided to be brave enough to opt for sex work, and I can finally manage to support my brothers. (Atupele, 21 years old)

He left me when I told him that I was pregnant. In fact, I was not pregnant at all, I just wanted him to spend money on me. I have had no contact with him since he left me. I have heard that he is now happily married. It is almost two years now since I lost contact with him. When he left me, I had nowhere to go, as I totally depended on him for everything. Above all, I think that I loved him very much. I felt abandoned but also misused when he left me. Maybe I should not have lied to him in the first place. Since then I got this feeling that I will never get a man to love me again. I just feel that all men are the same, they would use and then leave you on your own. I think I cannot be loved like other women. (Bahati, 25 years old)

My man stayed elsewhere, he did not come home regularly. Because of that, other men would approach me, and in fact I would go with them to get money. One day when he came back, some neighbours told him the whole stuff. He came home so angry and asked me about the things that I was doing in his absence. I tried to calm him down to explain myself, but it did not help. Instead, he beat me horribly that night. I thought of going to the police, but I knew they would do nothing because I was not officially married to him. I had to leave him as soon as possible, and I continued with other men. (Adama, 22 years old)

My boyfriend left me because I was illiterate. He abandoned me after he used me so much. It feels bad; you feel cheated, misused and abandoned. At one point, I lost hope, I did not think I am worth anything, that is when you start going around with all kinds of men, and it becomes part of you. (Chiku, 18 years old)

Sexual abuse and violence in relationships, as reported in this study, are produced and exacerbated in the process of socialization which rigorously instils a feeling of

superiority in most boys (men) while girls (women) are groomed to undergo and accept subjugation (e.g. McDowell and Pringle 1992; Gill 2011: 222; Osorio et al. 2014; Buberwa 2016). As a result, boys (men) grow up expecting to do as they please; hence violence and abuse are legitimized from there onward. However, this situation can only continue to a certain extent before girls and young women devise ways to escape their abusive partners or boyfriends, which leads to their entry into sex work (e.g. Haram 2003, 2005; Maganja et al. 2007).

### 5.2.5 'Accepted' way of life

Listening to the stories of the participants, I sometimes got the impression that sex work is considered 'fairly okay' among Nyiramba women, and this somehow made them participate in it, sometimes too easily. Atupele's story tells it all:

My mother worked here too before she returned home when she was pregnant, in fact carrying me in her womb. She was the only pillar of support in my grandfather's household, doing almost everything for the big family because of this work. By the way, she still does it in Singida town, and it is like everybody knows about it. I think this work [sex work] is quite okay with us. It helps us a lot to provide for our families. (Atupele, 21 years old)

The story above alludes to some preconceptions that some ethnic groups are traditionally linked or associated with sex work. Girls born into these ethnic groups are somehow preordained to become sex workers. They are socialized to think that it is okay to be involved in sex work as long as you get money. Many young women in these societies lack the determination to escape these ethnic stereotypes, as expressed in the following story:

After my mother's death, my relatives left me on my own, thinking that I am a girl, then I have my body to survive. Assumptions of this kind still exist in our village, and I don't know when they are going to stop thinking that girls can survive on their own because they have their bodies. I think I was allowed to do what I am doing now by my own relatives, who left me to do whatever I wanted as long as it pleased me. I do this to help my sisters with their education, and everybody knows that I am educating them in good schools, but they seem not to bother where I get the money. I don't want my sisters to go through my experience. (Bahati, 25 years old)

However, this does not mean that Nyiramba do not acknowledge that sex work poses threats of physical, emotional and psychological harm to their girls and young

women who take part in the industry. In relation to sharing their occupation with members of their families, some participants recalled how the news broke the hearts of their loved ones, especially their mothers, who were more sympathetic towards their plight than their fathers. Atupele's story says it all:

Mum knows that I am selling sex in Mwanza town. I don't know if she has told my father about it, and I hope she hasn't. I was very straightforward with my mother because I wanted her understanding and support. I cannot say that she was pleased about it, not at all, she nagged when I told her about my life and said to me, 'you are at the age where I cannot tell you what to do.' She then ended with the phrase, 'I am so disappointed that you will soon perish if you are not careful.' Her words were so strong, too cutting and painful to hear, especially as they are from my own mother. I still hear those words every time I am with a client. (Atupele, 21 years old)

The previous discussion about ethnic-based stereotypes (see section 5.1.5) is relevant here too: Nyiramba girls and young women have long had a reputation for being 'good girls' for servitude (domestic and sex work) (e.g. Kamala et al. 2001; Kibuga 2000; Kiaga 2007). In these contexts, sex work can be somewhat accepted as a livelihood strategy (e.g. Haram 2003, 2005; Stark 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017a). The situation of Nyiramba young women correlates with Haram's (2005: 56) observation in her recent ethnographic work in northern Tanzania. She has found that it is not the exchange of sex for money per se that violates social norms in Tanzania; rather, it is the public acknowledgement or flaunting of extramarital relationships that is condemned and brings 'shame' to women (not men) in society. As long as women maintain secrecy in their sexual relationships, they also maintain respectability. This explains why people from Iramba (including parents and caregivers) seemed not care where and how their 'daughters' got the money to provide for their families, as long as they maintained secrecy in their sexual relationships in the urban centres (see also Wamoyi et al. 2011: 17). This has also been reported in Botswana (Helle-Velle 1999: 387).

## 5.2.6 Low levels of education

At some points, the stories of the participants added that poor education as well as a lack of training and qualifications had impacted on their chances of finding alternative forms of employment. The majority of them had dropped out of school at the age of 14 years or younger, with no formal training or qualifications. As a

result, many of them entered sex work because they lacked the education and skills required for conventional jobs. Listen to Adama's story:

I don't have any education; my primary school was simply in pieces... I think I learned nothing there... I can barely read and write, never mind the skills that are required for formal work. It was impossible for me to get any decent work here when I had just come. I started off as a housegirl, but the situation there was very bad for me... One day I gathered the courage to ask a woman from my own village if she could help me to find a better job, as I guessed she might be working at a very good place. She smiled at me and said I should just find time to be with her and follow what she does. I followed her, and that first night I earned 25,000 Tanzanian shillings. I was fascinated by the idea that I could almost match my salary as a housegirl, in a single night. I realized that I had to use this body properly to get money before I get old. (Adama, 22 years old)

Overall, girls do more housework compared with the boys. This is the reality, but I did not like it when it limited my opportunities, including education and training. (Adama, 22 years old)

Such stories reflect the widely acknowledged reality that uneducated youth in Tanzania find it very hard to secure any decent work (formal employment), and this is especially critical for young rural women. As a result, these women are often compelled into the informal sector, including sex work, so as to alleviate their financial hardship (e.g. Haram 2005; Maganja et al. 2007; Stark 2017), as also reported in other countries of sub-Saharan Africa, (e.g. Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Luke 2003; Dunkle et al. 2004; Silberschmidt 2004; Swidler and Watkins 2007). Not surprisingly, almost all the participants in this study acknowledged difficulties in finding alternative forms of work, as they had none of the qualifications that are required for formal employment. Hence they felt compelled to 'choose' sex work and did not feel responsible for the humiliation and suffering they met (see also Rubin 1984: 301; Overall 1992: 711).

### 5.3 Current experiences

Following their entry into sex work, the participants experienced different forms of violence which had much in common with other kinds of violence against women (gendered violence) such as sexual harassment, stalking, rape, battering, torture and

other injustices. In what follows, I relate in detail the participants' lived experiences of sex work.

### 5.3.1 Social stigma

The stories of the participants contained vivid examples of how they were often depicted as deviant, vicious, depraved and fallen – forever damaged by immorality, and beyond redemption. They recounted experiencing a dilemma in the sense that they tried to be normal, to feel that they were doing 'fairly okay' for their own and their family's survival, yet they felt deeply stigmatized, as described here:

People here don't like what we do, they completely hate us and a lot of them look down on us and think, oh, what a whore she is. I don't feel I am what they think, but the social stigma that is attached to what I do is very powerful, and to be honest I sometimes feel watched. I also fear the way people look at me when I go out there. It is like everybody hates what I do and condemns me to death. It is quite sad to be seen that way for the rest of your days. (Bahati, 25 years old)

When the participants were asked which specific aspects were linked to social stigma, they initially answered that sex work is illegal, basically. But this was followed by statements such as 'whether illegal or not, it is highly unwelcome in Tanzania.' As a result, they felt ashamed for being deviants from the social norm and were often forced to live hidden lives or to lie about themselves, often leading to burnout and depression. The narrative below highlights some of these issues:

When I am at a party, keeping to myself, and I overhear someone asking, 'what do you do for a living?' I become anxious, and my mood changes instantly. People ask questions when they suspect something about your life, and I don't feel like telling them anything about myself. Yet, it is like everyone knows everything about me even without telling them. You just know it, as they often want me to touch, kiss them and the like. You get looked at as a hooker all the time, and it enters your head. (Adama, 22 years old)

The negative energies people projected onto them through labels such as 'whore', 'hooker' or 'slut' sometime clashed with the personal desires and wishes of those who may have thought better of themselves – a clash between external perceptions and inner perceptions (self-acceptance):



I don't talk about my work to people unless they are working themselves. It is awkward to share or socialize with people who are not in a similar situation because they look down on you all the time, humiliate and ostracize you, which makes you feel horrible and afraid to speak about your life. I don't understand these 'normal people' any more, they are in a different world than ours. It is like we are living in two different worlds, we have our world and they have theirs, and that is it. I only discuss my working life with my 'associates' because they understand me well and they support me. (Bahati, 25 years old)

In some instances, the participants described experiences of being objectified and misused, comparing themselves to a torn and dirty piece of cloth, as expressed here:

I think we should come out in the open and talk about our experiences as often as possible. I feel inside me like a rag, and it is hard to come out and speak about myself. It feels like no one cares about me any more. I don't think there is someone out there who loves me really, except my brothers and maybe God, that is how I see it. I have been used, I feel rubbish and garbage! It is like people can just come, get me, use me and throw me down there like a dirty piece of cloth, and it is like I will remain a 'whore' for the rest of my life. I have finally reached a point where I feel I have less in common with non-working women, and it keeps me going, though it is not easy at all. (Atupele, 21 years old)

Negative labelling creates a disconnection between the labeller and the labelled, leading to an 'I-it' relationship in which the labelled becomes an object rather than an intrinsically valuable person. Such disconnection limits opportunities for establishing equal relationships in social contexts, as stated here:

As far as my relationship with friends who are not in the life is concerned, I can say that it has not changed so much. I feel that I have kept relationships with the friends outside my 'world' who accept me. I try to behave normally when I am with them. What I do is to try to be different depending on where I am and what I am doing. I have several pairs of masks which I wear accordingly. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

Involving oneself in sex work has detrimental effects on one's marriage prospects. The participants said that prospective husbands or partners viewed them as delinquent and fallen women, and this either reduced or erased their opportunities for marriage, as the stories below demonstrate:

Men only want sex and not love from us, and they are probably right, having traded sex for all these years, who can really love me? To be honest, I feel that

I cannot make love any more but only have sex for money. Imagine, you have been out all night and your man comes to you and wants you to show or at least express love, the last thing that you want at that moment is to touch him and/or be touched, you want your space, your peace, and the first thing you need is to rest. It is very hard to think and imagine a love relationship with someone in this situation, how can you think of love really, your body feels rotten and you can't pretend to love a man in this situation. As a result, the man may not like it and can even be violent or leave you for good. (Siti, 24 years old)

I don't know how I am going to stop and have a normal relationship. I have slept with... I can't even remember how many of them, hundreds and hundreds. It is a lot of people you have slept with, and it is soul-destroying. But now it is all that I know, I cannot stop it. Even if I won the lotto today, I would not stop it. The truth is that I don't trust men any more and I think they don't trust me too, that is why I am in this life. I only see myself in this life. I cannot get the idea of sex work out of my head any more. I feel messed up as far as my sexual life is concerned, that is why I became what I am now. (Bahati, 25 years old)

The above narratives show that sex work does not generally tally with traditional social norms in Tanzania, as also reported in other studies (e.g. Renzaho and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2009; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Beckham 2013). Wamoyi et al. (2011: 17) write that women in Tanzania are generally expected to maintain their sexual respectability, and this norm is particularly important in relation to negotiating sex work. There are several widely used terms for women who are thought to be sexually disreputable, such as *wasimbe* (women living independently of a man, or unmarried/separated mothers; singular *msimbe*), *wahuni* (which covers a wide range of socially sanctioned behaviours but in this context refers to being 'promiscuous') and, most derogatory of all, *malaya* (prostitute(s)), which refers to women who explicitly solicit sex, and who have sex with many partners with relatively little selectivity or discretion (Wamoyi et al. 2011: 17).

Similarly, Haram (2005: 26) writes that sex work is denounced in Tanzania primarily because it goes against the 'cultural logic of secrecy in sexual life'. This implies that it is not the exchange of sex for money per se that violates social norms in Tanzania; rather, it is the public acknowledgement or flaunting of extramarital relationships that is condemned and brings 'shame' to women (not to men). In other words, it is the explicit solicitation of sex (to have sex with many partners) with relatively little selectivity or discretion that is condemned and brings 'shame' to women. As long as

women maintain secrecy about their sexual relationships (in this context sex work), they also maintain respectability (see also Beckham 2013: 13).

In addition, sex work is illegal in Tanzania and is therefore criminalized (Government of the United Republic of Tanzania 1981; Beckham 2013: 32, 46). Because sex work is criminalized, some people come to believe that stigmatizing or even abusing a sex worker is justifiable, as she is seen as a criminal who deserves no good. As a result, sex workers suffer discrimination, abuse and social stigma from many facets of society, including police and health officers (Beckham 2013: 2), as also reported in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Ngugi et al. 2012; Scheibe et al. 2012; Scorgie et al. 2013). This explains why some feminists, particularly liberal and radical sexual pluralist feminists, argue against the criminalization of sex work (Bindel 2017). In their views, if sex work is legalized, some criminal aspects of it can be controlled, which could also reduce social stigma and sexual exploitation (e.g. Rubin 1984; Daly 1985; MacKinnon 1987, 1989; Bell 1987).

### 5.3.2 Trauma and resilience

The participants reported traumatic experiences while trading sex, regardless of their previous experiences of sexual abuse. The stories below describe their dreadful and distressing situations:

I am scared each time I go to meet clients. First, you don't know the person, you meet once or twice, say in a bar, and there, off you go. Second, you don't know his behaviour, never mind what he might be carrying in his belongings. Worse still, he dictates where to go, and you don't know the area well. This way of life is risky and frightening. (Chiku, 18 years old)

I don't know what may happen to me in the middle of the night. Whether you know him or not, it doesn't make things any easier, he is always a stranger. Let us say you perhaps know him a little, fine, but he can turn against you any time. In his mind, you are only a whore who deserves no good at all. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

It is disgusting to feel the sweat, the smell, whatever! It is like, oh gosh, why am I doing this? I don't like to sleep with a man who stinks, I do it only for money. Truthfully, I am beside myself when lying with him, I feel rotten, hate myself and life as a whole. (Siti, 24 years old)

Even though not all men who buy sex are violent, it seems plausible that what they purchase is the ability to be more powerful in the likelihood that their presence and actions will not be questioned or sanctioned in the sex industry. Threats and vulnerability lurk, even when outright violence does not occur. In their narratives, participants described two key observations about their encounters with clients – predictably so, in a society that expects women to surrender their inner will and to resist ugly feelings during sexual acts, as narrated here:

When I cooperate with the client, he is likely to treat me nicely. When you try to be good to him, to show him that you care, the likelihood is that he will also ‘care’ in return and behave sanely. In that way, some clients have even expressed love, telling me that I am wife material. I am not saying that this is always the case, not at all. Some clients will be rude, hard and beastly, regardless. In most cases, when the client realizes that I have been in this life for a while, he becomes so aggressive and abusive. It is like he is disappointed that I am not as innocent as he thought or expected. Then it becomes so difficult to negotiate with him, you need to be tactful and brave to get what you want from this kind of person, or end up more damaged. (Adama, 22 years old)

Whether you enjoy sex sessions or not, clients expect you to appear smooth, to be pleasant, to be nice and to smile, despite your emotional inner state. When you don’t do that, you risk losing customers. It is like offering services in a hotel as politely as possible in order not to lose clients or attract fresh customers. You get many clients when you have a good reputation for service delivery. Our clients want you to respond to their sexual drives, and expect gratification from us. I think many are from broken relationships, in need of our talents to heal and console. I believe what I do is a healing job. In the process, I have developed sympathetic and caring skills, although money is the prime motivation. (Atupele, 21 years old)

This is how some participants described the various expected and unexpected emotions experienced while trading sex:

When I am with a client, I put on a happy face, regardless of the inner feelings and movements. I am obliged to be charming, flirtatious, admiring, encouraging, sensual, upbeat and mischievous. After all, we are paid to be nice. You need to be smart, a good actress, so that it does not overwhelm you. You need a strong mind to survive. I can be a person in one room and completely be someone else in another. I am able to switch off emotionally so that it does not get to me. I have got this great way of blocking things out. I mind-block everything and within an hour, I have forgotten all about it. It is like being an

actress, you blank it out to try to make sure that you are not affected with the mess. (Bahati, 25 years old)

If you tell me that being in this life is beating yourself up psychologically, I cannot help but resent it. I have suffered so much more in other situations too. I have been humiliated in other situations too. I think I have got this strong willpower to cut myself off from traumatic experiences to survive in this life. (Siti, 24 years old)

You are constantly acting, and it becomes part of your entire life. It is like a theatre or a movie, when the client arrives, I start to show the movie. I play the role as best and as perfectly as I can. What I always do is to maintain a space where the client does not enter to see. I often pretend to be intimate with clients because they want that, but I protect myself by hiding my truest feelings. Setting up boundaries for myself is essential. (Bahati, 25 years old)

In spite of their brave and hardened selves, most of the participants still felt defenceless in the face of attack, as narrated here:

I know how to please men, and I do so to the best of my knowledge. Then when I come home at night, I scrub and wash off the dreadful experience of sex work, feelings of being molested and battered. It is unbearable to be misused and abused, though. Each time I think about it, it is as if I am being raped again. You negotiate a price with a stranger, sometimes very ugly, agree with him, he picks you up, you pull down your pants, and then finished, next please. It becomes too ugly a reality to take in, the imagination of it brings you screeching to a halt. A few weeks ago, my best friend was raped in the room next to mine, and I never heard a sound. The man muffled her and walked out like nothing was wrong. I am struggling to block the thought because I fear I might be next. (Siti, 24 years old)

I have got a sort of split personality. In the daytime, I try to be myself, I do my shopping and try to live a normal life, trying to live like any other woman in society. I don't want to be categorized as a hooker, although at night I become a real hooker, a complete whore, a slut, if you like. When I wake up with the double personalities, I realize that I am not what I wish to be and what I want to be. Those times are the hardest, believe me! Trying get some light; finding ways of distancing oneself, finding escape routes, blinkers, drugs and the like, yet you will never get rid of dreadful feelings of being a sex worker, you remain miserable to the core. (Adama, 22 years old)

In some of their narratives, some of the participants described near-death experiences when they found themselves completely vulnerable and confronted by their own mortality:

The man beat me almost to death because I refused to have ‘unusual sex’ with him – ‘sex from behind’. He tried to seal my mouth. I grew angry and fought back. I know I can be very brave and strong. I know I am a fighter and a survivor. I pushed him down and escaped. When I think about it now, I feel disgusted and sometimes angered. (Atupele, 21 years old)

Traumatic experiences of violent sex made some participants rather cynical and bitter:

I feel very cynical, bitter and hardened from a very young age. When I first started it, I cried my eyes out every day and I would wash with bleach. It screwed my mind up and I became hardened in heart and soul. This is when you get to hate men. I really hate men, all men in fact, they are all the same [she laughs]. I have a completely different outlook on and about them. I think I cannot trust a man any more, ever! I simply feel cold in my heart about them. I will never trust a man because of the things I have seen and experienced. You see sickening things, and they stay in your mind for ever. (Siti, 24 years old)

Such traumatic experiences of selling sex, as narrated above, confirm that sex work is dangerous and dreadful. It exclusively inflicts harmful consequences on women’s lives (women both ‘in the life’ and ‘out of the life’) (e.g. Bartlett et al. 2014: 599; Bindel 2017: 59). What is central here is that sex work is a form of exploitation of women, a practice which is the result of patriarchy (Christ 2016). Within patriarchy, sex work reinforces stereotypical views where women are seen as disposable sex objects to be used and abused by men (e.g. MacKinnon 1993; Farley et al. 2003). In this context, sex workers are less likely to experience sexual gratification with their clients (Overall 1992: 712). This implies that, whether it is by choice or not, sex work is violent, traumatic and demeaning, not only to women who are in the life but also to those who are outside.

Furthermore, sex work is a form of emotional labour that ‘requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind’ (Hochschild 1983: 132). This means that sex workers are obliged to employ surface acting so as to try to experience some gratification and/or find enjoyment in their work (Hochschild 1979, 1983; Savitz and Rosen 1988; Ashforth and Kreiner 1999; Aalbers 2005). Hence Albert (2001: 122) writes that ‘a good prostitute was able to get a man to forget he was a paying customer during sex’ (see also Rafaeli and Sutton 1987: 29; Monto 2000: 77; Wood 2000: 14). Yet,

according to Hochschild (1983: 132), the emotional labour of sex work ‘poses a challenge to a person’s sense of self’.

### 5.3.3 Lack of legal and social justice

Almost all the participants were reluctant to report the violence meted out to them for fear of being mocked, and also for fear of provoking punishment from law enforcement agencies. Even when they managed to report the violence they experienced, the police tended not to take them seriously:

If we go to the police to report abuse, we are made fun of, and we are sometimes told, ‘you deserved it,’ ‘you are lucky you survived.’ We are then chased away. If you insist, you are beaten or forced to have sex. When you report the abuse to government officials, we are warned of harassment in retaliation. I brought a case to the department of social welfare against a policeman who had physically assaulted me, only to be rearrested a week later by the same policeman. (Atupele, 21 years old)

I went to the police to lodge a complaint. The police officer asked me to come in, then I saw another police officer drinking alcohol and smoking. He inquired about me. He was told everything about my awful experiences in the brothel. After a while, he took me to a room and forced me to have sex with him instead of helping me. They raped me in turns before they warned me not to reveal it to anybody, threatening to shoot me if I opened my mouth. My colleagues were infuriated as to why I had gone to the police station. (Chiku, 18 years old)

Because sex work is illegal and socially reprehensible in Tanzanian society, at least in daylight, social welfare officers and some prosecutors rarely take the complaints of the abused seriously. In the participants’ narratives, we see a fear of prosecution for contravening norms and laws:

I went to the social welfare office to seek help because a man had battered me. The social welfare officer was sympathetic and took the case to court. When the prosecutor heard the story, he complicated issues by demanding that I give either money or sexual favours. When I refused to collaborate, he threatened to arrest me for selling sex if I continued to be adamant. (Chiku, 18 years old)

In addition, due to the criminalization of sex work, there is a power imbalance between sex workers and other members of society. This is why some police officers

manipulate sex workers, wrongly interpreting laws in order to arrest and harass them, and sometimes forcing them to pay arbitrary fines even when they have not contravened the law:

A police officer demanded that I give him money instead of being arrested. When I told him that I had only 10,000 Tanzanian shillings in my handbag, he demanded that I give it all to him. Although the government condemns what we do, it is its own officials who are economically benefiting a lot from our earnings. (Siti, 24 years old)

The lack of protection from police, social welfare officers and magistrates leaves sex workers vulnerable to abuse and violence, from clients and from the public at large, as pointed out in this story:

All the people out there will condemn you, showing no sympathy at all. They inflict as much pain as possible and go unpunished. Some men will even insult you as if they have never gone after us. The very same persons will come to you for sex in the dark and then would turn against you in the light. They appear reasonable when they need sex, showing sympathy when approaching you, but once they get what they want, they will dump you, saying ‘you are just a whore,’ and they will walk away without shame. (Adama, 22 years old)

As result, the criminalization of sex work limits the possibilities of accessing social and health services. Viewed as criminals and fallen women, sex workers are discriminated against in healthcare settings, as noted below:

It is awkward for us to go to health centres and clinics, because of the way we are treated there. It is hard to tell the health officers who we are because of the negative and indifferent ways they react to us. We must lie about ourselves to be treated like other patients, and because we always hide some important information about ourselves, we don’t get proper treatment for our health problems. (Bahati, 25 years old)

The participants cited broader challenges in public health services in Tanzania as barriers to receiving healthcare and treatment. These included long waiting times, high user fees and shortages of medicine:

When I became ill and went to the health centre, the health assistant did not treat me like a human being. She sent me to another clinical officer who did not have time for me. I waited for hours and left without any treatment. We are despised in the hospitals because of our lifestyle. The health officers kick us out, saying, ‘we do not have time for whores.’ If one of us dies, they believe,



it would be good for society, as our numbers would reduce. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

When he heard about my story, the doctor was like, 'let me come back.' A few minutes later I saw hordes of nurses coming and peeping into the room where I was. They were looking disdainfully at me. When the doctor came back, I asked him, 'have you said anything to these people? So do I have no right to confidentiality?' He did not answer but instead ordered me to leave the room. (Siti, 24 years old)

In some cases, the participants narrated instances where health providers prescribed treatments which were only effective for people in monogamous and long-term relationships. Atupele narrated how she was refused treatment because she could not bring a partner along:

When you go to the hospital, the health workers would say, 'we will not treat you unless you come with your husband or partner.' But we don't have husbands and they don't even understand. It happened to me and I tried to explain to them about my situation, but they became even more aggressive. I left and went to a pharmacy to buy painkillers. (Atupele, 21 years old)

The denial of basic human rights for sex workers, as narrated here, results from their being seen as criminals who deserve no good (e.g. Nnko and Pool 1997; Haram 2005; Wighta et al. 2006; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Beckham 2013). Since sex work is illegal in Tanzania, violence and abuse against sex workers is somehow sanctioned. Beckham (2013: 34–35) writes that sex workers are stigmatized in the wider community, and in most legal and healthcare services, because they are seen as deviants who deserve no mercy (see also Scorgie et al. 2012). The criminalization of sex work, therefore, creates an enormous power imbalance between sex workers and other facets of society, including police officers. This leads to situations where police officers improperly arrest and detain sex workers, and also sexually and physical harass them (Wamoyi et al. 2011). This is also documented in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Elmore-Meegan et al. 2004; Mgbako et al. 2013: 1426). Abuse by law enforcers makes it more difficult for sex workers to receive appropriate services, especially legal and healthcare services (e.g. Scorgie et al. 2012, 2013; Beckham 2013; Mgbako et al. 2013).

## 5.4 Future aspirations

A fair number of the participants thought that their present life was better than their previous life. They cited economic independence, access to social networks, increased mobility, and the ability to support their families back home as signs of better livelihoods. However, they still had unfinished business and unmet aspirations. Therefore, they wished to abandon sex work only if other options became available, mentioning possibilities such as setting up small businesses or investing in farming. Some had already taken concrete steps to become entrepreneurs, but still wanted to achieve more, to earn cash before moving into an alternative lifestyle and/or returning home.

### 5.4.1 Economic independence

Economic independence was highly valued among the participants, in some ways more so than social status. For them, having one's own income is far more important than depending on men through marriage – particularly for those who are not seen as wife material, as narrated here:

Marriage and/or having children is not a priority for now. I first want to have cash and be on my own. Marriage will be something I will think about after I have earned enough and when I find a man who accepts me on my terms. I guess I have not been lucky yet, I have not accumulated enough wealth and have not met the right guy yet. So far, no one has asked me for marriage, and neither do I wish to marry any of my clients. I don't want to be in a normal relationship while I am still in this life. (Bahati, 25 years old)

Although some clients would ask me for marriage, I feel I am not ready for it. It is a weird feeling to deal with, at least for now. I used to dream about marrying my former boyfriend, but life changed drastically for me, and I am different now. At the moment I see marriage as a condition where two people are forced to plod along and live under one roof for the rest of their lives. I think I am not ready for that, and I face a different reality now, a reality that I have accepted, to make money and gain economic independence (Adama, 22 years old)

The fact that several of the participants hailed from fragile families may have affected their views of marriage. Previous experiences of control will have provoked a heightened need for independence. This does not mean that they want to live

individualistic or materialistic lives. On the contrary, they cherish family life; but they see autonomy as a fundamental prerequisite for marriage:

My decision to marry will be determined by the ability to take care of my children. I think getting married just for the sake of it does not command respect. Having seen what my family has gone through, I don't want to start a marriage and bring children into this world if I can't provide for them. I don't want my kids to experience the kind of life I experienced, and I don't want them to suffer the loss of respect as I have. After I have acquired wealth, I shall decide when to marry and when to have children. I am still unmarried because I have not generated enough economic clout yet. (Chiku, 18 years old)

For most of the participants, success in life was measured by the accumulation of material wealth. The need for money is the prime reason why many are in the sex trade, even if they know that it goes against social norms and that there are several risks to face. Until the material questions are answered, exiting the trade is not viable for the participants:

Some of my friends have saved enough to allow them to cater for basic needs and plan the future with a sense of agency. As for me, I haven't got much, and I haven't fulfilled my dreams yet. I think I am so unlucky, my landing in the city was a bit rough. But I have not lost hope yet; my time will come. (Atupele, 21 years old)

I don't know what is bad about exchanging love for money. It is thanks to it that all my sisters have been able to study in good schools. I still support the family in all ways. It makes me laugh when some people think that I am a bad girl because of what I do. Of course, it is very ugly work, but it gives you what you want, and I still hope for the best. (Bahati, 25 years old)

The above narratives show that, while it is true that poor women are compelled to have sex with wealthier men to meet their own basic needs (personal and family needs), it is also true that in sex work there is a continuum between 'survival sex' and sexual transactions in which women strive to obtain desirable consumer goods in order to enhance their social status (Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Stark 2017a) What is implied here is that in the structure of gender inequality where men hold the money and the power, sex is just one commodity among others used by poor women to bargain with wealthier or more powerful persons (see e.g. Preston-Whyte et al. 2000; Leclerc-Madlala 2003: 213–214; Stark 2017a: 570). In other words, sex work offers 'a space in which impoverished urban youth [in this case young rural women in urban centres] renegotiate their identities and actively imagine for themselves a better

future’ (Stark 2017a: 570). No matter how ugly and dehumanizing sex work is, it is a commercial enterprise within capitalist patriarchy, and evidence strongly suggests that women who engage in it do so primarily, and often exclusively, for economic reasons, albeit in contexts of limited choice (e.g. Overall 1992: 709).

Thus Hollibaugh (1988: 24–25), a former sex worker herself, writes that ‘the bottom line for any woman in the sex trades is economics [...] It always begins as survival – the rent, the kids, the drugs, pregnancy, financing an abortion, running away from home, being undocumented, having a “bad” reputation, incest – it always starts at trying to get by.’ Similarly, Bass (2015: 75) writes that ‘just as sex work can be an avenue for some women to take control in a situation where they had none, some sex workers and psychologists see it as a way to triumph over tragedy.’ This means that in a context of men’s economic power and women’s economic insecurity, women may feel compelled to ‘choose’ sex work for survival and financial gain (see also Overall 1992; Kempadoo 1999; Farley 2006: 102).

#### 5.4.2 Adequate support for the family

Although most of the participants sent money back home for expenses such as food, clothes, furniture, healthcare, education and the like, they still felt that their remittances had not improved their family’s situation. They were particularly disappointed with the poor living conditions of their families back home:

I often send money back home for my three brothers and grandmother, but I don’t think that their life has changed much. The community there think that I have money to radically alter the life of the family. Yes, I have tried to live up to their expectations by sending cash as often as possible, but the family still live in the same old house, have not much land for agriculture, and they cannot even afford to run a small business by themselves. To be honest, I think that I have not done enough to substantially change the living standards of my relatives. It somehow annoys me when I think about it. (Atupele, 21 years old)

Feelings of unfinished business, of not having gathered enough resources to support the family back home and aid oneself, hold many young women hostage in the sex industry. As a result, the participants were determined to work hard so as to earn more cash for their immense familial and personal needs. I often heard phrases such

as ‘unfulfilled dreams’, ‘obstacles to developing my family and myself’, ‘but still hoping to fulfil my dreams’, as in the following story.

I feel that I have not done enough yet for myself and for my family back home. I have the feeling that my dreams have been shattered, and yet I still hope that I will one day realize them, no doubt about that at all. I am pretty sure that time will come, a special day when my goals and dreams will be realized, and the day of blessing is fast approaching. At least I know that I don’t want, and I am not ready, to return home empty-handed. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

Studies have shown that sex workers often begin sex work as ‘mothers’ or because they assume the responsibilities of mothers (e.g. Delacoste and Alexander 1987; Zalwango et al. 2010; Basu and Dutta 2011), which also gives them respectability in society (e.g. Kielmann 1998; Allen 2002; Haram 2003; Hollos and Larsen 2008). Haram (2003) has observed that some women in Tanzania who are considered sex workers by outsiders (other members of society) see themselves as single mothers who strategically enter and exit partnerships with men for material gain for themselves and their families. In that context, sex work is just one job among others used by poor women (‘mothers’) to gain income and be able to support themselves and their ‘children’ or other members of the extended family (see also Mbonye et al. 2012; Scorgie et al. 2012; Zalwango et al. 2010).

While it is true that poor women do feel compelled to have sex with wealthier men to meet their own basic needs (personal and family needs), it is also true that in sex work there is a continuum between ‘survival sex’ and sexual transactions in which women strive to obtain desirable consumer goods in order to enhance their social status (e.g. Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Stark 2017a). This means that, although sex work can be extremely difficult, when it is driven by both ‘poverty’ (survival) and ‘want’ (desire for consumer goods), some women may find it hard to exit it or may simply decide not to leave it unless they have other means to alleviate their lack of income for their well-being and social status.

### **5.4.3 It is not all bad, after all**

Sex work can be seen as morally contagious, and women who trade sex are often treated as outcasts. Even the police, who are there to protect the community, can be unreliable in this regard. As a result, sex workers often lack recognition as active members of the community, and are exposed to abuse and violence. However, sex

workers constantly seek and find comfort, support and happiness in groups of their own kind, as told here:

The society always judges us as fallen women. If I get raped and I tell a person who is not in this life, he/she will think I am lying. People out there only think of one thing: a sex worker does not get raped. They don't understand that we are constantly raped, even though we do business. Therefore, we don't talk to people who are not in the life, we form groups of support for ourselves where we talk to each other and gain relief. The networks give us strength and the courage to keep going (Bahati, 25 years old)

When we are in the group, we can share the problem because we are sisters, so you can share anything. I can't share with my neighbour who is not in this life, because it is going to be shared with others, and at the end I will be left vulnerable to social stigma and rejection. So, when we talk in the group, we know that nobody is going to take the issues outside. The support that we gain from each other makes life bearable and sometimes enjoyable. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

Belonging to a community or group of one's own kind, where members regard each other as sisters, is also acknowledged in other studies (e.g. MacPherson et al. 2012; Stark 2017a) as an important element for sex workers. This enables them to feel accepted, trusted and cared for, and also to experience a sense of solidarity and togetherness which sustains and nourishes them in the face of oppression and exploitation. In addition, the group dynamic provides an identity for sex workers in the sense that they perceive themselves as working women, which outweighs all the horrific experiences and suffering involved in selling sex (e.g. Pretorius and Bricker 2011). In other words, the group provides sex workers with a safe space which affords them temporary freedom from the emotional strain of sex work.

## 5.5 Summary

This chapter has shown that young women in rural areas of Tanzania are not sufficiently cared for by their parents or relatives, and also lack opportunities for self-actualization (e.g. education, healthcare and salaried jobs). In that respect, young rural women feel that they were brought up to view themselves as less human and less valuable just because they are female. For instance, some members of extended families in rural areas cannot afford adequate care for girls and young women left behind by deceased parents; the orphans fail to find people to trust and confide in,

which leads to their being vulnerable and often subjected to oppressive and abusive relationships. When young rural women report violence against them, they are not believed or listened to, and are even abused by law enforcers.

The decision to relocate to urban centres, therefore, is influenced by the desire for freedom (or independence), both social and economic. In addition, previous experiences of abuse (particularly sexual abuse) leave some young rural women feeling hardened against future abuse, which contributes to their decision to leave home and also to engage in sex work in urban centres. Moreover, the need for money to support oneself and one's family compels young rural women to engage in sex work so as to gain an income. Nevertheless, some young rural women also participate in sex work because of peer influence, ignorance and/or intentional deception. In comparison with other laborious and degrading work in urban centres, sex work gives young rural women more autonomy over their bodies, and in selling sex, young rural women are able to provide for themselves and their families back home. In the end, the young rural women who trade sex in urban centres form groups of their own kind for support and solidarity, and these groups give them an identity and the strength of character to keep going in the face of multiple hardships and oppressions.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to understand the lived experiences of young rural women from Iramba who trade sex for their livelihoods in Mwanza town in Tanzania. This was important in light of the fact that there are no substantive qualitative studies of this kind. What has been missing as result of this lack of studies is the authentic voices of young rural women who trade sex in urban centres talking about themselves and their lived experiences from their own perspectives. This absence has resulted in skewed perceptions and connotations, leading to the labelling of such women as deviant and vicious, thus reducing them to numbers for the purpose of creating an 'other' to be controlled and/or blamed.

The main argument of this study has been that in order to fully understand the lived experiences of young rural women who trade sex in the urban centres of Tanzania, it is necessary to place their struggles for livelihood in the context of the rules of patriarchy. Patriarchy has been depicted in this study as a complex system which interplays with men's need to control women and nature. In other words, the notion of patriarchy captures a set of social relations in which individuals either forcefully or manipulatively seize and access power, capabilities, prestige and autonomy differently moment-to-moment. Central to this conceptual framework is the recognition that even though men and women in Tanzania may live together intimately, gender remains an active principal source of organization which not only creates gendered powered relations, but also perpetuates inequality and subordination.

The study has attempted to answer the question: *what are the lived experiences of young rural women who trade sex for their livelihoods in urban Tanzania?* Although this question did not address all the urban centres in Tanzania, but only in Mwanza, it largely covered the everyday lived experiences (both past and present) of young rural women in Tanzania who relocate to urban centres in search of better lives, including their experiences in workplaces, how they negotiate to find employment, the types of employment available to them, and other viable options for their livelihoods. All these aspects have indicated ways in which young rural women strategize for their



livelihoods in the face of multiple constraints and barriers, and also how they comprehend agency in their respective environments, as well as how they envisage and shape their own futures.

Methodologically, the study adopted a qualitative approach. Data was collected through a PNI process, which afforded a space for a group of six young rural women who sell sex in Mwanza town to tell stories of their lived experiences. The approach significantly helped the participants to speak about things that they would never have had a chance to speak about, reflect upon issues that would belong to the realm of taboo, and talk about subjects that they would not have been willing or able to speak about directly without the process of narrative inquiry. Ultimately, the approach of the study helped the participants to make sense of their complex situations and redefine themselves.

The study has made a number of significant findings (observations), including the following:

- (1) Young rural women (particularly from Iramba) prefer urban life for their social and financial well-being.
- (2) Young rural women relocate to urban centres because they are not sufficiently cared for by parents or relatives, and also because they lack people to trust and confide in.
- (3) Members of extended families in rural areas are not able to afford adequate care for the children left behind by deceased relatives.
- (4) Young rural women feel that they were brought up to view themselves as less human and less valuable just because they are females.
- (5) Young rural women are not believed or listened to when they report violence against them, and are even abused by law enforcers.
- (6) Peer pressure and a desire for freedom are powerful incentives not only for young rural women's relocation to urban centres, but also for their entry into sex work.

- (7) Young rural women need money to support themselves and their families, and this too is a very strong motive for their entry into sex work.
- (8) Previous experiences of abuse leave some young rural women feeling hardened against future abuse, which also contributes to their entry into sex work.
- (9) Some young rural women are led into sex work through ignorance and/or intentional deception.
- (10) Failed relationships with boyfriends or partners lead young rural women either to have low self-esteem or to feel forced to provide for themselves through sex work.
- (11) In comparison with other laborious and degrading jobs in urban centres, sex work is the only job that gives young rural women more autonomy over their bodies.
- (12) Young rural women who sell sex in urban centres are able to provide for themselves and for their families back home.
- (13) Young rural women who sell sex in urban centres form groups of their own kind (sex workers) for support, solidarity and identity, which helps them to keep going in the face of multiple constraints, hardships and oppression.

All these findings indicate the ways in which young rural women strategize for their livelihoods in the face of multiple constraints and barriers, comprehend agency in their situations, and envisage and shape their own futures.

However, the participants singled out patriarchy, which is most pronounced in rural areas of Tanzania, as the strongest motive for their relocation to urban centres and for entry into sex work. They clearly stated that the patriarchal structures in rural areas denied them opportunities for self-actualization, which compelled them to relocate to urban centres in the hope of finding salaried jobs, stable incomes, viable lives and predictable futures. However, since they lacked the qualifications, skills and abilities that are needed for employment in the formal sector, they were relegated to the informal sector, which offered little pay and exposed them to unconventional and dehumanizing livelihood strategies, including sex work. Thus it was primarily

patriarchy which ‘socialized’ them into forms of delinquency and into being ‘objectified’, which led them to engage in sex work for survival purposes. From their perspectives, sex work fell along a continuum of violence against women in the patriarchal society of Tanzania.

## 6.1 Reflections on the results

The study has shown that young rural women in Tanzania relocate to urban centres mostly in order to resist patriarchal attitudes and practices which violate, oppress, subordinate, humiliate and dominate women. In relocating to urban centres, young rural women hope to become economically independent and therefore live a liberal lifestyle. As a result, they engage in sex work so as to generate an income for their own social and economic independence.

The view that young rural women relocate to urban centres for economic independence, and ultimately end up in sex work, is also supported by previous studies in Tanzania (e.g. Haram 1999; Ellis et al. 2007; Maganja et al. 2007; Plummer and Wight 2011; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Beckham 2013; Stark 2013, 2016, 2017a, 2017b), and by other studies in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Schoepf 1992; Seeley et al. 1994; Balmer et al. 1997; Preston-Whyte et al. 2000; Hunter 2002; Stilwell 2002; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Luke 2003; Silberschmidt 2004; Swidler and Watkins 2007). What is central to all of these studies is that in the context of limited choice, both relocation to urban centres and entry into sex work are ‘constrained’ choices made by those who have no alternatives for their social and economic independence (Farley 2006: 102).

The above situation explains why some scholars have even suggested that sex work, in the context of limited choices, is somehow cathartic, in the sense that it helps women who have no choices in patriarchal society to deal with the negative effects of exploitation and violence (e.g. Hunter 2002; Silberschmidt 2004; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Plummer and Wight 2011; Wamoyi et al. 2011). For example, Bindel (2017: 59) explains that sex work is ‘a job that women – particularly women doubly and triply disadvantaged by poverty and racism – engage in only under duress or when no other possible option appears to present itself.’ Similarly, Summer (1987: 38), a former sex worker herself, writes that in sex work, a person’s situation is subject to “severe prior constraints” such that sex work presents the single realistic

chance of alleviating her needs'. Mappes (1987: 261) remarks that sex work is a 'coercive offer' in the sense that the life circumstances of women who enter sex work seem to be such that sex work is the only possible way out of impoverishment and lack of opportunity (see also Delacoste and Alexander 1987; Farley 2006). Bass (2015: 75) summarizes it all: 'just as sex work can be an avenue for some women to take control in a situation where they had none, some sex workers and psychologists see it as a way to triumph over tragedy.'

In her recent study on transactional sex and mobile phones in a Tanzanian slum, Stark (2013: 15) has observed that while it is true that many poor women in Tanzania are compelled to have sex with wealthier men to meet their basic needs, it is also true that some young women engage in sex work so as to obtain luxury consumer goods in order to enhance their socio-economic status (see also Nyanzi et al. 2001; Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001; Luke 2003; Kuato-Defo 2004; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Stark 2016, 2017a, 2017b). This is especially true under the oppressive and destructive forces of capitalism and the neoliberal economy where everything, including sex, is a commodity waiting to be bought and sold (e.g. Parker et al. 2000; Preston-Whyte et al. 2000). This seems even truer in sub-Saharan Africa, where neoliberalism has indiscriminately devastated lives and communities (e.g. Dominelli 2002b, 2004; Sewpaul and Hölscher 2004; Sewpaul 2005). Sewpaul (2013b: 17) explains that the neoliberal economy in sub-Saharan Africa entails massive imports which undermine local creativity, production and prices. Consequently, unemployment rises, which places enormous strain on the poor young rural women who become targets for trafficking to feed the clandestine sex industry in urban centres (see also Dominelli 2002b, 2004; Sewpaul and Hölscher 2004; Sewpaul 2005, 2006, 2008).

We can therefore discern that the relationship between patriarchy and (neoliberal) capitalism is one of relatedness (e.g. Schoepf 1992; Lim 1997; Parker and Easton 1998). The two are not the same, but they work together and adapt to one another in propagating gender and economic inequalities, and in obscuring poverty and driving marginalized women further into dangerous lives. Within capitalist patriarchy, the female body can be used as a way to get money for economic survival (e.g. Preston-Whyte et al. 2000; Cheng 2007), for a trip abroad (Brennan 2007), or for love and attention (Padilla et al. 2007). That sex can be traded implies that it has value such that it can be turned into a means of production in capitalist patriarchy (Altman 2002), especially in contexts where sex work remains the only viable option

for livelihood (e.g. Dalla 2002; Gould and Fick 2008). In this context, Setel (1999) has found in northern Tanzania that some rich men use their wealth to pursue and have sex with poor young women who need money to survive. In the same vein, Maganja et al. (2007) have found that married and unmarried women in Tanzania consider themselves lucky to have bodies as 'goods' to be traded for both pleasure and financial gain (see also Wamoyi et al. 2011).

In addition, sex work in capitalist patriarchy enables women to provide for and head households (e.g. Haram 2003, 2005; Ellis et al. 2007; Swantz 2007; Msisha et al. 2008; Iongwa 2011; Wamoyi et al. 2011; Beckham 2013; Stark 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017a, 2017b; Hagues and Parker 2014; Osorio et al. 2014). The need to support siblings and relatives back home, for example, is a common feature of young rural women who trade sex in urban places in Tanzania (e.g. Haram 2003, 2005; Wamoyi et al. 2011) and across sub-Saharan Africa (Delacoste and Alexander 1987; Pheterson 1989; Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf 2008). Young women who trade sex in urban centres become caregivers and/or managers through remittances. This is a version of being responsible and concerned for the family, just as mothers are in sub-Saharan African contexts (e.g. Zalwango et al. 2010; Mbonye et al. 2012; Scorgie et al. 2012). Just as one becomes a woman not by being born anatomically female but by performing socially determined femininities (Connell 2002), one also becomes a mother not by giving birth but by practising 'motherhood' (Walker 1995). The task of 'motherhood', therefore, pushes young women from poor backgrounds into the sex industry so that they can support themselves and their families back home (Akujobi 2011).

It is in the above context that some young rural women who trade sex in urban centres claim to have a deep sense of comfort, especially when they adopt proactive behaviours which make them feel part of society again. Being able to provide for oneself and one's family back home seems to outweigh all the horrific experiences of sex work, as some young women who sell sex feel justified and find a sense of comfort in their work (e.g. Weiner 1996; Kalichman et al. 2005; Pretorius 2009; Pretorius and Botha 2009; Pretorius and Bricker 2011). In addition, young rural women who sell sex in urban centres form groups of their own kind, where they gain a deep sense of belonging to a 'community' and therefore become socially accepted and perceive themselves as working women (Brown et al. 2006). It was particularly in contexts of this nature that most of the participants in this study referred to themselves as 'we' – 'we' are young women from Iramba, it is expected of 'us', it is

part of ‘our’ life – suggesting a sense of solidarity that kept them going in the face of hardship and oppression.

However, it should also be stated here that even though sex work offers social and economic independence for poor young rural women, and even though some scholars contend that trading sex is just one form of unpleasant labour among many others in the neoliberal economy, similar to factory work (e.g. Hardman 1997; Smith and Marshall 2007), this study has shown that sex work is a nightmare and it hurts. It is a nightmare because it is a way of life that is stigmatized by much of society, that is physically dangerous at times, that leaves young women with little control over their bodies or earnings, and that causes them considerable legal and health complications (see also Bartlett et al. 2014: 599; Bindel 2017: 59). In other words, sex work can be extremely difficult for young rural women in Tanzania; it is a form of exploitation of women who are exclusively victims within the patriarchal system of exchange. Whether it is done by choice or not, sex work is a practice which is constructed within a system that reinforces male supremacy where women service men’s sexual needs and desires (e.g. Overall 1992; Farley et al. 2003; Farley 2006). In other words, sex work is an extension of male privilege within patriarchy (e.g. Rubin 1984: 301; Overall 1992: 706), but because it is driven by poverty, young rural women cannot simply decide to leave it unless they have other means (better options) to alleviate their lack of income.

## 6.2 Reflections on the research process

PNI afforded me a space to become immersed in the ‘real world’ of the participants (see also Dickson-Swift et al. 2006: 854; Johnson 2009: 196; Kurtz 2014). Indeed, my interactions with the participants became so immersive that some ethical questions were raised, particularly regarding the issue of boundaries in qualitative research of such a sensitive nature (see also Dickson-Swift et al. 2006: 854). As I think about it now, I have no doubt that Gilbert’s (2001b: 12) recommendations were helpful: ‘boundaries must be negotiated and renegotiated, an ongoing part of the research process, as a balance is sought between the dangers and benefits of being too far in or too far out of the lives of the researched.’ The participants and I talked openly about the issue of boundaries as an impetus for good research (e.g. Malcolm 2012: 11), which also helped to protect us from becoming emotionally

overwhelmed (see also Goffman 1963; Bennett et al. 1993; Gilbert 2001a; Lonne 2003: 293; Green et al. 2006: 450; Malcolm 2012: 11).

However, I was also concerned that the creation of boundaries might lead to distorted data collection and analysis (see also Dickson-Swift et al. 2008). I was particularly worried that to expect a value-free position of neutrality for the sake of objectivity might lead to what Shacklock and Smyth (1998: 6–7) call an ‘obscene and dishonest position’. I wanted instead to see the research process not only as an intellectual exercise, but also as ‘a process of exploration and discovery that is felt deeply’ (Gilbert 2001a: 9). After all, one of the fundamental aspects of being human is the capacity to feel, show and express emotions (Gilbert 2001a). In that vein, I sought to be as reflexive as possible<sup>35</sup> (see also Connell 1987; Ely et al. 1991: 179; Kimmel 2000), part of which meant being honest and ethical, and avoiding the elevation of researchers as “‘shamans” of objectivity’ (Ruby 1980: 154). In other words, I allowed myself to have certain feelings, but also to deny or put aside emotions which I saw as inappropriate for my research (see also Gilbert 2001a: 12).

One effect of allowing oneself to have certain feelings in qualitative research is emotional upheaval. Indeed, the participants and I were often exhausted and overwhelmed emotionally, and were left drained at times – a reported threat to qualitative researchers who explore sensitive topics like this one (e.g. Parker and Ulrich 1990; Cannon 1992; McCosker et al. 2001: 4). Although it was so difficult at times, nevertheless, I was particularly encouraged by Taylor and Bogdan (1998: 48) who urge that in order to enter the world of those who are suffering, researchers ought to employ empathy, which ‘penetrates people’s defences’ and makes them ‘open up about their feelings’. In other words, ‘if we accept that qualitative research

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35 That is, to just be aware that, as a man, I occupied a relatively privileged position in relation to the young women (the participants) (see Lang and Smith 2004). Given our relatively powerful position, we (men) are often unaware of the fact that many of our privileges (such as higher incomes, and care and domestic services from women) are derived purely from being male; therefore ‘gender’, and gender issues, remain invisible and unimportant to us (see Kimmel 2000: 32). In other words, men, both as individuals and as a group, benefit from what Connell (1987: 79) calls the ‘patriarchal dividend’ – ‘the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women’ – which they can call upon when they want to. One effect of the patriarchal dividend is that most statistics, institutions and interventions, although they appear to be gender-neutral, are shaped around men representing the ‘norm’, and therefore miss out on a whole range of emotions and experiences that are immensely rewarding and socially valued, due to gender stereotyping. For example, in most cultures men are not expected to show affection and express their vulnerabilities in distress. Societal pressure to uphold stereotyped notions of masculinity means that men must often suppress this aspect of their human persona.

work is emotional work, we also ought to accept the embodied nature of the work' (McCosker et al. 2001: 4). The need to do so is important in all qualitative research, and particularly in sensitive studies like this one.

It is therefore fair to suggest here that research based on rigid professionalism is not only inappropriate but can also 'create unnecessary boundaries and unrealistic expectations' (Green et al. 2006: 450). Fook (1993) argues that maintaining professionalism at all costs can be counterproductive to good practice. This literature encouraged me to consider boundaries in my research as stretchy pieces of elastic or a continuum between the 'professional' and the 'helpful friend', rather than setting up a binary dichotomy between professional and non-professional, as is found and emphasized in some research (see also Green et al. 2006: 449–451).

Indeed, professional distance is important in qualitative research, but it can also be flexible and elastic while still ensuring competent and appropriate practices (Green et al. 2006: 449–451). The idea of the elasticity of boundaries allowed me in this study to imagine, initiate and build rapport with the participants; it also allowed me to access the participants' stories of lived experiences (see also Payne 1994; Taylor and Bogdan 1998; Goodwin et al. 2003; Scopelliti et al. 2004). Therefore, elasticity, flexibility and reflexivity all came together and formed the mechanism through which I watched over the ethical aspects of my study.

I would like to add here that a sense of humour played a major role in this study in allowing disclosure (see also Freud 1960). It was thanks to this sense of humour that the participants felt free to express themselves in ways which would not have been possible if the human touch had been missing from our exchanges. Our discussions were regularly punctuated by light-hearted laughter and jokes, and this increased as the PNI process progressed. Describing certain experiences or expressing certain views as jokes enabled the participants to try to confront some situations, discussing them as 'only jokes' rather than invoking censorship. Humour was also used in this study as tool which helped us to distance ourselves from situations that appeared to be too emotional (see also Wellings et al. 2000: 260). For example, the participants frequently made joking references to themselves, saying, 'we are Nyiramba women [laugh], it is part of us,' as a way to cope with experiences of humiliation, servitude and pain.

In the above context, the participants also found the research process quite therapeutic. Indeed, some aspects of their stories became strikingly similar to those



of therapeutic interviews (see also Gale 1992; Hutchinson and Wilson 1994; Coyle and Wright 1996; Dickson-Swift et al. 2006, 2008; Emmerson 2006). At times I felt confused as to whether I should accept or avoid being placed in a therapeutic role, because of my lack of skills to administer therapy. This concern has also been raised by other qualitative researchers (e.g. Etherington 1996; Grafanaki 1996; King 1996; Coyle 1998; Mauthner et al. 2002).

Nevertheless, I was encouraged, especially by Duncombe and Jessop (2002: 112), to involve some therapeutic aspects in this research, because even skilled researchers may find it difficult to draw neat boundaries around 'rapport', 'friendship' and 'intimacy'. In that respect, I converted myself into an active listener and encouraged the participants to use the storytelling as therapy in itself. As indicated by Kvale (1996: 155), listening can be an essential strategy if we want to understand the other person positively, warmly, with interest and respect, and this is very therapeutic (see also Hutchinson and Wilson 1994; White 2001; Emmerson 2006). This is especially important for social workers who uses perspectives such 'person-in-situations' or 'person-in-environments' to view their clients within their physical and social environments (e.g. Barker 2014; Clark 2018; Thompson and Stepney 2018).

As I make this final reflection, I am aware of the moments when I wished I could do more than just listen or offer compassion to the participants. I experienced frustration at times that I was unable to radically change the structures which oppress people in general and women in particular, in Tanzania and across sub-Saharan Africa. However, I understand that eradicating oppressive structures and achieving gender equality will require systemic changes in policy and modes of social interactions at all levels of society: home, workplace, school, public services, media and so on. This is because men continue to occupy positions of power and privilege in patriarchal social systems, and men's supremacy is still justified on the grounds of religion, biology, cultural tradition or organizational mission. Since men continue to benefit from these 'patriarchal dividends' (Connell 1987: 79), there remains a strong resistance to gender equality among certain men, which makes it hard to radically change oppressive structures in society (see also Hearn and Morgan 1990; Hearn and Collinson 1993; Hearn and Parkin 1993; Breines et al. 2000; Hearn et al. 2002; de Keijzer 2004; Kaufman 2004).

I am also aware of the criticisms made against PNI inquirers or researchers, who have been accused of presenting narratives as if they were the only authentic source

or mode of representing autobiographical accounts (e.g. Atkinson and Delamont 2006: 166; Fox 2008: 341). This criticism is understandable, but the purpose of the PNI process in this study was not to discover truth in any absolute sense, but to enrich and broaden the understanding of the lived experiences of young rural women who trade sex in urban Tanzania, from their own perspectives. In addition, the PNI process in this study worked through the gathered stories and looked for supporting evidence from other literature (see also Polkinghorne 2007: 476). In other words, the PNI process in this study was interested in the 'voices' of the participants and sought input which fitted their contexts (see also Johnson 1995: 43; Plumwood 2002; Josselson 2006: 5; Kreitzer 2012: 183).

Moreover, the PNI process in this study was concerned with the creation of a space where participants would acquire practical life skills such as communication, problem-solving and negotiation – a pedagogical practice which leads to emancipation (e.g. Finn 1994: 25; Sewpaul and Raniga 2005). Put differently, a chief aim of the PNI process in this study was to develop 'living knowledge', where the researcher is a catalyst who looks with participants at issues which directly affect them (Swantz 1996).

I am also aware of the danger of drawing sweeping conclusions from a small-sample design in qualitative research (e.g. Freidson 1975; Glesne 2005; Creswell 2014). This research, however, was not about the generalization of findings, but about articulating a summary of the lived experiences of a group of young rural women who had relocated to an urban centre for better livelihoods and ended up using unconventional livelihood strategies, including sex work, in Mwanza town, Tanzania. A useful theoretical justification for this is provided by Weller and Romney (1988) and Romney et al. (1986). Their consensus theory approach allows populations within a larger society to be reflected through small samples in qualitative research if appropriate sampling techniques are applied (see also Langdrige 2007; Trotter 2012).

Finally, I would like to say that this study has presented males as the culprits in the oppression of young women in patriarchal society. However, it is also known that some women collude with the patriarchal system and become abusers or efficient gatekeepers of oppressive and violent structures, such as mothers-in-law who possess large amounts of power over daughters-in-law in extended family systems (e.g. Bakare-Yusuf 2003; Stafford 2011; Opoku 2017), or the female agents who

recruit young women for sex work (e.g. Kiaga 2007; Swantz 2007).<sup>36</sup> The rationale behind this study, however, was to expose a system that creates inequality and allows subordination (e.g. Kandiyoti 1988; Walby 1990; Hunnicutt 2009; Christ 2016). Violence against women is rooted in cultural and social conditions, and not in the supposedly innate natures of persons who dominate, rule and control women and the world in general.

### 6.3 Implications for social work research and practice

Social workers have been urged to explore a wide range of sensitive topics so as to enhance their understanding of issues that affect people's lives in society (e.g. Ife 1997: 142–146; Green et al. 2006: 451). Research is described as sensitive if it requires a disclosure of behaviours or attitudes which would normally be kept private and personal, or if it tackles issues which might result in discomfort or offence for those taking part in the research (e.g. Renzetti and Lee 1993; Wellings et al. 2000; Dickson-Swift et al. 2006; Green et al. 2006). Therefore, the attempt to comprehensively understand the lived experiences of young women who trade sex in a society where sexuality is considered taboo proved to be immensely sensitive and complex (see also Okiria 2014).

In order to successfully research such sensitive topics, we social workers are advised to develop participatory practices or approaches which situate effective communication at the heart of our social and educational enterprises (Altpeter et al. 1999). Effective communication includes a form of personal interaction based on language, thought and action which produces an appropriate climate that allows persons to clarify their situations and generate personal solutions. This relates well to a social-critical paradigm which combines reflection and practice to free a person

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<sup>36</sup> I am also aware that many men suffer from socially constructed gender stereotypes. For example, gender stereotypes put pressure on men to be 'tough' and to be the 'breadwinner', resulting in conditions of labour that are often harsh and that may involve injury, violence, crime and imprisonment. Progress towards gender equality is undermined by boys' and men's expectation of receiving services from women; by difficulties in accepting new roles (e.g. as carers) and sharing power with women; by cultural or political support for existing unequal power structures; and by male hostility to gender equality programmes (e.g. Sweetman 1997, 2001; Chant and Gutmann 2000; Pease and Pringle 2001; Cleaver 2002; Ruxton 2004: 4). Macho images of masculinity also lead men to engage in unsafe sex that jeopardizes their partners' and their own well-being. Men are also victims of many forms of personal and institutional violence – and hence men have a great deal to gain from moving towards gender equality: it is an important step towards reducing violence in society.

at the same time as it transforms the situation (e.g. Freire 1970, 1973; Rogers 1980; Habermas 1984). When effective communication takes centre stage in the process of social intervention, ideas such as reflexivity, critical thinking, conscientization<sup>37</sup> and emancipatory learning become relevant (e.g. Freire 1970, 1973; Hutton 1995; Mayo 1997; Thompson 1997, 2000b; Foley 1999).

According to this perspective, reflexivity builds confidence in individuals so that they are in a better position to understand issues that affect their lives and to learn to choose so as to build a future (e.g. Giddens 1990; Beck 1992). The role of social workers, therefore, is to present both the opportunities for emancipation and the dangers of oppression (e.g. Ferguson 1997, 2003, 2004), thereby allowing participants to make coherent choices (e.g. Althof and Berkowitz 2006; Sewpaul et al. 2011, 2015; Sewpaul and Larsen 2014). The transformation of participants happens when they begin to speak and become privileged sources of information (e.g. Freire 1970, 1973; Rogers 1980; Habermas 1984). As such, they are seen less as subjects than as participants who are actively doing something positive about their individual and collective well-being (e.g. Hall 1981; Vio Grossi 1981; Yeich 1996). In this study, I attempted to restrict my role to empowering, avoiding interference and self-indulgence (see also Donzelot 1980; Foucault 1980; Parton 1991; Gill 1995; Taylor and White 2000).

As a consequence, I am able to make the following recommendations for social workers in Tanzania. While the young women in this study can be considered adults – independent, autonomous, and able to make decisions, to defend and protect themselves and those in their care – it is crucial for social workers to be aware of the oppressive and abusive relationships which plague many young rural women in patriarchal society. There is a need, therefore, to explore and comprehend the factors or even structures that prevent freedom and independence, especially for young women in rural areas in Tanzania. If unfair structures are not disrupted and broken, there remains the danger of perpetuating stereotypes and the culture of blaming ill-

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37 This term is associated with the Brazilian adult educator Paulo Freire, and relates to the development of critical consciousness as a form of emancipatory learning. It is based on asking questions about the root causes of social and political problems, rather than focusing on the symptoms, in order to plan strategies to address them. According to Freire, oppressed (excluded) people need to develop critical consciousness in order to challenge the ideas of the dominant groups who are their oppressors. They need to be able to critically assess the kinds of ideas, contexts and relationships which are usually taken for granted or accepted as inevitable, in order to question the root causes of their oppression (e.g. Freire 1970; Thompson 2000a).

treated and weak individuals. Social workers are therefore encouraged to be actively present and engaged with affected (ill-treated and weak) individuals, letting their voices be heard and assisting them in legal proceedings. This is 'akin to the notion of partnership between social worker and client' (Green et al. 2006: 450).

The participants in this study lacked the opportunity for specialized therapy; the only form of therapy available to them was found in solidarity in their own groups. Group settings provided networks and useful links with people who shared similar lifestyles. The groups also provided a non-judgemental space where understanding and acceptance were palpable. In such spaces, corrective and collective experiences occurred, and silenced voices spoke up. Given that this positive energy existed in the groups, it is fair to suggest that social workers in Tanzania could offer therapeutic opportunities in collaboration with other service providers. A combination of resources could be organized which would have far-reaching and life-giving effects on the vulnerable, such as young rural women who trade sex in urban centres for their livelihoods. Social workers who are committed to empowerment and social change should consider using group dynamics as a major part of researching and healing wounds (see also Altpeter et al. 1999: 31).

When the participants in this study sought medical attention, for example, ill-prepared clinicians appeared appalled at the stories they heard, and many did not honour the confidentiality and agency of their clients. If clinicians are to work effectively with victims of abuse and violence, it is critical that their work is collaborative. This opens up a key space for social workers to collaborate with clinicians, particularly in Tanzania, where social work is in its infancy. Social workers can assist by providing knowledge regarding the phenomenon of sex work and offering coping strategies, validating the difficulties of survivors and affirming their humanity. Through joint training, best practices and procedures can be identified for the benefit of both professionals (clinicians) and affected individuals (in this case young rural women who trade sex in urban Tanzania).

The chance to tell stories in this study provided the participants with the cathartic benefit which occurs when a person starts to experience validation and an opportunity to confide her experiences in someone knowledgeable, interested and caring, alongside the opportunity to work through and express emotions (see also Howarth 1998; Gair 2002; Johnson and Clarke 2003; Dickson-Swift et al. 2006; Darra 2008; Johnson 2009: 200). While at times it was noticeably painful for the

participants to recount their abusive relationships, they particularly noted that the sharing of stories of their lived experiences was part of a healing process and a source of empowerment. Hence, it is important that a platform is provided for young rural women who sell sex in urban centres to continue to tell their stories through supportive group outlets for their wellbeing. A community of survivors, therefore, could be established which would provide the young rural women who trade sex with an opportunity for healing, regaining control, and most importantly giving meaning to their lived experiences.

Unlike many topics that have received more public exposure, issues of gender violence are like the proverbial elephant in society's living room (Cordero 2014: 175). Many of the participants in this study had lived through violence at home as children. Their experience of abuse and violence had either gone unnoticed or been dismissed. It was important, then, that they talked about it and brought about a certain awareness. Without public awareness and the willingness to face gender violence, it is likely that coming generations will suffer the same abuse. For that reason, social workers have a major role to play in encouraging and persuading discussions and debates which will confront oppressive structures with the purpose of tackling and disrupting gender violence and promoting social justice (see also Althof and Berkowitz 2006). Schools are a good place to start, by giving schoolchildren and adolescents an education which teaches them how to keep safe and build healthy relationships of equality to avert future violence (see also Giroux 1997). This sits well with emancipatory pedagogy, which is formed in solidarity and in collaboration with the interests of the least powerful in society (e.g. Martin 2000; Sewpaul et al. 2011). Collaboration allows space where the least powerful can gain control over their lives and experience greater equality and social justice (e.g. Hall 1985; hooks 1989; Dominelli 2002a). In that regard, social workers have a choice: either to stand with the marginalized for liberation, or to retreat and contribute to the status quo of the privileged oppressors.

Finally, in relation to the above, it is also important that social workers in Tanzania take Kaufman's (2004: 19–20) recommendation very seriously: to work with men or involve more men in the search for gender equality and/or to find solutions to gender inequality and poverty. Targeting men, especially those who have powerful roles in society or within institutions, may lead to systemic changes in policy and modes of social interactions at all levels of society: home, workplace, school, public services, media and so on (e.g. Connell 1995; Cornwall 1997; Hearn 2012, 2014;

Hearn et al. 2015; Rydstrom and Hearn 2017). This will also help to create wider consensus and support on issues which have previously been marginalized as of interest to women only – in that sense, changing hegemonic masculinity (e.g. Hearn 1992, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2002, 2004, 2012, 2014). Ruxton (2004: 5) argues that ‘unless men’s practices, attitudes, and relations change, efforts to promote gender inequality will face an uphill struggle.’ More men have to be encouraged to move out of the confines of rigid gender divisions at home, at work and in the community (e.g. Cornwall 1997). In other words, if we want to reach a ‘tipping point’ where gender issues become visible, it is essential that the benefits of gender equality for men as individuals and as members of families and communities become more widely acknowledged and publicized (Stocking 2004: vii–viii).

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# 8 APPENDICES

## 8.1 Letter of permission from the Department of Sociology, St Augustine University of Tanzania

ST. AUGUSTINE UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA  
P.O. BOX 307, MWANZA, TANZANIA



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

SAUT/DSOC/5/1

Date: 19.5.2015

REGIONAL COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE  
P.O. BOX  
MWANZA

Dear Sir/Madam,

### REQUEST FOR DATA COLLECTION

This is to certify and confirm that **Mr. Ludovick Mnyambo** has been an assistant lecturer at St. Augustine University of Tanzania, department of Sociology. He is current doing his PhD in Social Work at the University of Tampere. His research title "**Participatory Action Research: A Transformative Process among Nyiramba Girls of Tanzania**". However, the main focus is on Nyiramba girls who work as "Loose women" (Brenmaids and Prostitutes).

We shall appreciate if you allow him to launch his research process in Mwanza Municipality. Do not hesitate to reach me should you need more information about him.

Yours faithfully,

Nestor Jorani

Held- Sociology

+255 967 900 242

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
ST. AUGUSTINE UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA  
P.O. BOX 307, MWANZA  
TANZANIA

8.2 Letter of permission from the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies Research and Consultancy, Publications and Short Programme, St Augustine University of Tanzania

**ST. AUGUSTINE UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA  
DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES RESEARCH AND  
CONSULTANCY, PUBLICATIONS AND SHORT PROGRAMME  
P.O. BOX 307 MWANZA, TANZANIA**



15<sup>th</sup> May 2015

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**REF: LUDOVICK MYUMBO**

The Directorate of Postgraduate Studies, Research and Consultancy, Publications and Short Programmes introduces Mr. Ludovick Myumbo of St. Augustine University of Tanzania who is currently doing research for his PhD. The research title is:

***"PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH: A TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESS  
AMONG NYIRAMBA GIRLS OF TANZANIA".***

We would appreciate any help you can give the researcher with his research.  
Kindly assist him to achieve his goal.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Sr. Dr. Hellen A. Bandiho in blue ink.

**Sr. Dr. Hellen A. Bandiho**  
**Director, Postgraduate Studies, Research and Consultancy,**  
**Publications and Short Programme**


**DIRECTOR OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES  
RESEARCH, CONSULTANCY, PUBLICATIONS  
PROGRAMME AND SHORT PROGRAMMES  
ST. AUGUSTINE UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA  
P.O. BOX 307 MWANZA, TANZANIA**

Tel: 255-28-2552725, 2550560, 2550090 Fax: 255-028-2550167  
E-mail: [hbandiho@yahoo.com](mailto:hbandiho@yahoo.com) Website: [www.saut.ac.tz](http://www.saut.ac.tz)

8.3 Letter of permission from the Regional Administration and Local Government, Mwanza Region

UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA  
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE  
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

IRAZA REGION:  
Graphic Address: "IRIGOOH"  
Telephone No: 028-2500684/2500689  
C: 028-2501057/2541242  
url: eastmwanza@primorad.go.tz.



REGIONAL COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE,  
P.O. BOX 119,  
MWANZA.

reply please quote:  
Ref. No. DA. 333/372/01/

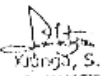
Date... 19/05/2015

District Commissioner,  
Mwanza

RE: RESEARCH PERMIT TO Ludovick Jacob Mumbo

The Named person above is a student of the St. Augustine University of Tanzania.  
He has been granted a permission to conduct a research in Mwanza Region.  
Research topic is: participatory Action Research: A Transformative Process  
Among Nyiramba Girls of Tanzania

Kindly we ask you to provide permission.  
Thanking for your cooperation.

  
Y. R. Mubanga  
For: REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY  
MWANZA

