

# Women's experiences of street trading in Cape Town and its impact on their well-being

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# Abstract

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Street trading forms a large subsection of South Africa's informal economic activity, creating opportunity for self-employment and sustaining livelihoods (Mitullah, 2003; Skinner, 2008). Yet, street traders face various barriers including societal marginalization and pervasive poverty, threatening their well-being. The scarcity of occupational therapy literature around informal economy occupations limits the profession's understanding about what engagement in such occupations entails. While available literature around work in the informal economy emphasises economic contributions to development, there is limited evidence that informal business owners effectively escape vulnerability. From an occupational perspective, little is known about how these occupations are experienced and their implications for well-being. This study will inform contextually relevant conceptions of participation in the informal economy occupation of street trade, providing necessary knowledge for social and political practices of occupational therapy. The study aimed to describe women street traders' experiences of street trading and, how they perceived these related to their well-being. The objectives were to identify personal and external factors that promoted or hindered their well-being whilst engaged in street trading. An ethnographic inquiry was carried out with four women street traders identified through purposive recruitment. It involved semi-structured and photo elicitation interviews, and participant observation. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for inductive and thematic cross case analysis and field notes were made following interviews and participant observation. One theme and three categories emerged in the findings. The theme, 'Togetherness: steering against the current towards a better life', revealed the impact of interpersonal connectedness as participants attempted to steer towards valued lives against various barriers. The first category, 'Taking the helm', described the women's actions to determine valued livelihoods. 'Facing tough conditions' detailed the personal and external barriers they encountered while attempting to direct their lives towards positive outcomes through street trading. The third category, 'We're in the same boat' demonstrated the significance and the positive and negative impact of interpersonal connectedness for street traders. Conclusively, the study revealed how the contextually situated nature of this occupation translated to nuanced and fluid experiences of well-being in street trading, where well-being was deeply tied to valued social connectedness and significance of collective well-being.

**Key words:** street trading, informal economy occupations, well-being.

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## Definition of terms

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**Informal businesses:** Small-scale businesses with low entry barriers that are unregistered and engage in unregulated economic activities contributing to Gross Domestic Product (International Labour Organization, 1972)

**Informal economy:** An economic sector comprised of businesses that have low barriers to entry and small-scale operations, which are labour intensive, family owned, reliant on skills acquired outside of formal schooling and operate in unregulated and competitive markets (International Labour Organization, 1972)

**Livelihoods:** A means of living comprised by various activities and material and social resources (Chambers and Conway, 1992).

**Occupation:** Contextually situated means for human transactions with environment that give rise to meaningful doing, being and becoming (adapted from Wilcock, 1999; Dickie, Cutchin and Humphry, 2006).

**Occupational alienation:** The outcome when people experience daily life as meaningless or purposeless (Townsend and Wilcock, 2004: 252).

**Occupational apartheid:** The exclusion of individuals from occupational engagement due to oppressive systems (Pollard, Sakellariou and Kronenberg, 2009)

**Occupational deprivation:** Prolonged or extremely restricted access to meaningful occupations arising from contextual (cultural, institutional, physical, political, or social) and not personal factors (adapted from Whiteford, 2000).

**Occupational injustice:** Condition resulting from impinged occupational rights to engage a variety of occupations equitably and with decision-making power towards meaning, enrichment, social inclusion and health (Townsend and Wilcock, 2004).

**Occupational science:** The study of the occupational nature of people and how they adapt to the challenges and experiences of their environments through the use of occupations (Polatajko et al., 2007: 64).

**Street trade:** Informal trading of various menial commodities and services, occurring from informal structures (adapted from Mitullah, 2003)

**Survivalist street trade:** Street trading that occurs due to necessity for survival rather than in response to business opportunity (Von Broembsen, 2008).

**Well-being:** The freedom and ability to pursue, with dignity, the life one values as meaningful (adapted from Sen, 1999 and Wilcock, 1999 and 2001).

**Work:** Productive, meaningful activity that is rewarded, usually financially (Ross, 2007).

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

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## 1.1. Background to the study

South Africa's economy has both formal and informal components. In response to high unemployment rates the informal economy has become increasingly attractive for many. Informal businesses are those operating outside of regulated, competitive markets, with low barriers to entry and relying on skills acquired without formal training and operating (Devey, Skinner and Valodia, 2006; Von Broembsen, 2008; Skinner, 2008). Informal traders typically engage in unregistered, unrecorded economic activity contributing to the national gross domestic product<sup>1</sup> (Ligthelm, 2005 and Devey, Skinner and Valodia, 2006; Von Broembsen, 2008). Informal businesses include work such as trading and hawking, production and construction, services and illicit activities (Morris and Pitt, 1995). Street trading is one of the largest and most significant sub-categories of informal trade in South Africa (Valodia, 2001; Mitullah, 2003; Devey et al., 2006; Skinner, 2008; Brown, Lyons and Dankoco, 2010; Berner, Gomez and Knorringa, 2012).

The occupation of street trading constitutes 41,5 % of South Africa's growing informal economy (Davies and Thurlow, 2010). It is recognised as a significant means for survival, with the potential to sustain the livelihoods of the vulnerable and marginalised in society (Woodward et al., 2011 and Von Broembsen, 2010). In African cities street trading has been a substantial contributor to informal economic activity serving to minimise the impact of social exclusion (Mitullah, 2003), fostering entrepreneurship, making a significant economic contribution and sustaining the livelihoods of traders and their families (Bromley, 2000). Informal street traders are predominantly black women driven to the informal sector in desperation for work (Lund et al., 2000; Ligthelm, 2005; Berner, Gomez and Knorringa, 2012). Women typically engage in less profitable, survivalist types of informal street trade that perpetuate their marginalisation and vulnerability within an increasingly competitive informal economy (Skinner, 2008). The informal economy is thus seen to have potential to advance the social and economic development of vulnerable women in South Africa. The scale and the development

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<sup>1</sup> There is an estimated 1 to 2.3 million informal business in South Africa contributing between 7 and 12% to South Africa's GDP (Dewar, 2005).

significance of informal economic activity in South Africa suggest the need to generate knowledge about the links between informal economic occupations and human well-being.

Much of the focus in the literature on the informal economy is on transitioning to formal employment or formal sector work, where economic growth is perceived to potentiate development and well-being (Von Broembsen, 2008; 2010). However, the reality for informal businesses is that many do not achieve economic growth or 'graduation' into the formal sector, often remaining survivalist (Von Broembsen, 2010; Woodward et al., 2011; Berner, Gomez and Knorringa, 2012). In a context such as South Africa where unemployment rates are high and work opportunities are scarce for women (Devey, Skinner and Valodia, 2006), informal self-employment such as street trading presents an opportunity for women to earn a living and survive. Understanding the value of informal sector occupations for health and well-being may require consideration beyond economic and business perspectives. An occupational perspective provides a unique lens for understanding women's efforts to survive against the backdrop of high unemployment rates.

Occupational therapists (OTs) understand that humans are occupational beings, acknowledging the imperative to gain and share information about the health consequences of engagement in diverse occupations. This information promotes the benefits of engaging in occupations for well-being (Wilcock, 2001). Occupational science contributes to knowledge about human occupation and its implications for health and well-being. While occupational therapists and others across the world are progressively developing occupational science to conceptualise the value of human occupation for health, there is still much to learn about the working of occupational injustice, deprivation, alienation or imbalance as ill-health (Wilcock, 2001). The potential for social transformation through a practice that engages politically with occupational injustices is increasingly being developed (Pollard, Sakellariou and Kronenberg, 2008; Galheigo, 2011b). Yet, there is a scarcity of occupational therapy and occupational science literature and research on the topic of human occupations in the informal economy.

Influenced by Amartya Sen's (1999) capabilities approach (CA), well-being is defined in this research as the freedom and ability to pursue, with dignity, the life one values as meaningful. Occupational therapy affirms that well-being can be achieved through occupations that foster belonging, connecting and contributing in all aspects of life

(Whalley Hammell, 2009). Furthermore, the profession holds that well-being can be achieved through opportunity and choice to engage in meaningful occupations that meet individuals' needs (Doble and Santha, 2008; Whalley Hammell, 2009), and that enable one to do, be and become that which they value (Wilcock, 1999). Concepts of well-being inform judgments about how life should be (Aldrich, 2011), making well-being integral to human rights (Iwama, 2012) and social development (Sen, 1999). Wilcock (2001) noted the failure to acknowledge human need for occupation for its own sake, calling occupational therapists to look beyond material and economic perspectives when considering human occupation. Therefore, this study investigates the informal sector occupation of street trading to consider its implications for well-being that may exist beyond economic and material factors.

### **Personal interest in the study**

My interest in the topic of street trading and its relevance for occupational therapy surfaced during my participation in a postgraduate social justice course. Conversations on social justice and the informal economy in South Africa, paired with my observations of street trading in the City of Cape Town where I live, raised questions about how such occupations are understood in occupational therapy. I was particularly interested in experiences of street trading within the Central City Improvement District, which envisions "...an inclusive, vibrant, sustainable, productive and diverse city centre that retains its historic character and reflects a common identity for all the people of Cape Town" (Cape Town Partnership, 2013). The central city area of Cape Town is associated with abundant entrepreneurship activities (Cape Town Central City Improvement District, accessed 2013), making it an appropriate location for the study.

## **1.2. Rationale, purpose and relevance to occupational therapy**

The overarching purpose of this research project is to use an occupational perspective to understand women's experiences of street trading activities and to identify how these experiences impact on their well-being. An occupational perspective on street trading serves three key purposes: To increase awareness of the importance of the occupation to well-being, beyond medical science perspectives of health (Wilcock, 2001); to contribute to contextually relevant conceptions of participation in survivalist occupations such as street trade (Whalley Hammell and Iwama, 2012) and; to be a steppingstone

towards occupational therapy practice for social change and development in local contexts (Galheigo, 2011a). Each of these purposes is described below, accompanied by a rationale for the relevance of this ethnographic inquiry for occupational therapy.

Occupational therapists base their work with individuals on the concept that occupation has the potential to enable well-being (Reid, 2008; Whalley Hammell and Iwama, 2012). Occupational science provides occupational therapists with knowledge about the things people do (human occupation) and how occupations are performed and experienced (Hocking, 2000). In this way, occupational science facilitates occupational therapists' understanding of how human occupation affects health and well-being. However, further research into the relationship between well-being and occupation is needed (Whalley Hammell, 2009), particularly in developing contexts that are characterised by high unemployment, poverty and structural underdevelopment. Research to understand the relationship between occupation and well-being in developing contexts is also important since injustice, marginalization and deprivation is common amongst the growing numbers of survivalist traders in Sub-Saharan African cities (Mitullah, 2003; Skinner; 2008; Brown, 2010). Such research could guide OTs in their purpose to enable or increase participation in everyday occupations towards well-being, whilst avoiding being restricted to health-care services (Whalley Hammell, 2009) and embracing a social practice (Galheigo, 2011a). Thus, as South African OTs gain knowledge about informal economic occupations they will increasingly be able to identify the barriers and enablers to wellbeing. To the researcher's knowledge, occupational therapists have not yet explored their role beyond health care services with individuals working as survivalist street traders.

A second purpose for researching women's experiences of street trading and its impact on their well-being, is to contribute to contextually relevant conceptions of participation in occupations within the informal economy. Enabling equitable occupational engagement towards wellbeing and health is the purpose of occupational therapy at large (Whalley Hammell, 2009). This research seeks to gather information and draw conclusions about the aspects of street trade that enable and/or limit such occupational engagement. More knowledge needs to be generated that could be useful to co-create an enabling environment for equitable occupational participation of marginalised citizens such as street traders. Furthermore, Whalley Hammell and Iwama (2012) call for a critical occupational therapy practice that considers the contextual conditions affecting individuals' ability to participate equitably and meaningfully in occupations. Understanding contextual conditions is especially relevant in occupational therapy

today as the profession depends on new knowledge and practices- that are informed by social, political and historical contexts- to attend to local needs and contribute to policy-making (Galheigo, 2011b).

Finally, the information put forward about the relationship between street trading and well-being is purposed to serve as a steppingstone towards occupational therapy practice for social change amongst survivalist women street traders in Cape Town. OTs working in the global south<sup>2</sup> are developing a critical practice to attend to issues of vulnerability and deprivation (Galheigo, 2011a). A critical practice of occupational therapy with street traders requires the generation of knowledge about street traders' experiences of this occupation and how these experiences are influenced by embedded contextual factors. Research to expand on this practice has to gain insight into the strategies that people use for survival, acknowledging that these are entrenched in historical, political, cultural and social contexts (Galheigo, 2011a). Thus, generating knowledge about how functional and contextual barriers or enablers to participating in street trading contribute to well-being will enhance a critical practice of occupational therapy.

### **1.3. Research question**

What are women's experiences of street trading in the Cape Town Central Business District (CBD) and how does this contribute to their well-being?

### **1.4. Aim and objectives**

#### **1.4.1. Aim**

To describe women street traders' experiences of street trading and, how these relate to their sense of well-being.

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<sup>2</sup> The global south denotes the developing world (not necessarily the geographical south) and represents spaces experiencing poverty, deprivation and injustice (Kacowicz, 2007).

### 1.4.2. Objectives

- To identify individual factors including strategies used to address well-being) that promote or hinder the women's well-being whilst engaged in street trading.
- To identify external factors (including contextual influencers) that promote or hinder the women's well-being whilst engaged in street trading.

## 1.5. Summary

This chapter has provided a background to the research by introducing the topic of occupations in the informal economy and my personal interest particularly related to women involved in street trading in the Cape Town city centre. Limited occupational therapy and occupational science research on occupations in the informal economy was identified as restricting occupational therapists' viewpoint on how such occupations might contribute to well-being or ill-being. Thus, the study purposed to describe women street traders' experiences of street trading and, how these relate to their sense of well-being. The next chapter provides a review of the literature around informal economic occupations, focusing in particular on the barriers and opportunities, the gendered implications and the significance of women's street trading in South Africa.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

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The literature reviewed describes the informal sector as an important space for economic activity, in particular for those who are unable to participate in productive occupations in the formal economy. Survivalist street trading is situated as an informal productive occupation. The opportunities and barriers to street trading are presented with a focus on structural factors that affect the 'doing' of this occupation. . Furthermore, literature is presented which describes the relevance of this occupation for women and its significance in bringing about well-being or ill-being.

### 2.1. A profile of informal trading in South Africa

#### 2.1.1. Describing street trade

Street trading involves the trade of numerous goods (such as clothing, food, cosmetics, accessories, flowers/herbs and household products) and the provision of services (such as repair, barbering and pay phone services) across various spaces within cities. Displaying their products on tables, racks, in stalls or on their person, traders operate from a variety of strategic points, such as transport nodes, on streets or within areas such as markets where trade is permitted. Street traders typically have no tenure over their sites of trade resulting in more temporary forms of trading structures (Mitullah, 2003). A large number of such informal retail businesses arise out of necessity to secure a livelihood and not simply opportunity (Woodward et al., 2011). These are known as survivalist businesses (SEDA, 2008; Berner, Gomez and Knorrington, 2012). While informal retail literature speaks about opportunist and survivalist businesses, Von Broembsen (2010) argues that there is little distinction when it comes to the business's viability for growth and the generation of sustainable earnings.

#### 2.1.2. Contextualizing street trade in South Africa

A review of the literature on street trade in Africa reveals how socio-historical, political and economic factors have set the scene for street trade in South Africa (Skinner, 2008). Economic systems such as globalization and trade liberalization resulted in high

job loss amongst women working in textile and production industries in South Africa, driving them into the informal sector to secure their livelihoods (Lund, Nicholson and Skinner, 2000), as well as reducing informal traders' customer base. Urbanization and migration (often associated with conflict across Africa) have also contributed to the growing number of street traders in South African cities (Skinner, 2008). Socio-historically, black people were prevented from participating in formal business activities during the apartheid regime. This drove a majority of black South Africans to start their own unregulated businesses (Lyons and Snoxell, 2005; Padayachee, 2006; Skinner, 2008). Furthermore, Apartheid's refined anti-street trade laws marked the historical-political landscape of street trading with repression, persecution and prosecution (Rogerson and Hart, 1989). While the governance of street trade has become less oppressive through supportive policies (such as the 1991 Business Act and the 1995 White Paper on the National Strategy for Development and Promotion of Small Businesses in South Africa), it is critiqued for ongoing colonial approaches to urban and infrastructure planning and legislature around street trade (Skinner, 2008). Indeed, research suggests that government and other supports of the informal economy are sporadic and ineffective (Skinner, 2000; Mitullah, 2003, Devey, Skinner and Valodia, 2006).

Across Africa negative attitudes about street traders have been tied to societal perceptions of informality associated with nuisance, poverty, unemployment and poor governance (Bromley, 2000; Lyons and Snoxell, 2005; Skinner, 2008). An absence of street traders on city streets has been associated with improved beautification of and investment in the city (Bromley, 2000). These attitudes towards street traders have led either to the political neglect of street trade activities or to policies and regulations that render street traders powerless (Lourenço-Lindell, 2004; Tranberg Hansen, 2004).

## **2.2. The prospects and challenges of street trading**

### **2.2.1. Street trading as opportunity for social and economic development**

The informal retail economy continues to be one of few options for viable sources of income in the context of poor formal employment levels in South Africa (Woodward et al., 2011). In the debate about whether informal self-employment is an entrepreneurial or survival strategy, Temkin (2009) indicates that some traders prefer the independence

and opportunities for initiative of informal trade to low waged formal sector employment and subordination to employers. While street trading affords a low barrier to entry into income generation and self-employment, real opportunities for development through street trading remain untapped. This occurs since informal business support paradigms tend to focus on business interventions (Von Broembsen, 2010). Von Broembsen (2010) poses that enhancing opportunities for social and economic development through informal trade requires micro-enterprise paradigms addressing the entangled nature of household and livelihood activities, the survival strategies of livelihood activities and the need for non-market interventions to have real impact on people's livelihoods.

### **2.2.2. Barriers experienced by street traders**

The literature evidences a plethora of difficulties that street traders face in their everyday participation in this occupation. These include disenfranchisement, particularly for foreign African nationals in South Africa (Brown, Lyons and Dankoco, 2010)-, lack of capital, crime, poor infrastructure/services, high competition and location costs, inadequate skills (Skinner, 2000; Mitullah, 2003), limited financial support, and poor access to markets (Mitullah, 2003; Ligthelm, 2005).

Much of the literature describes restrictive political and economic paradigms as contributing to the barriers that individuals face in informal retail (Mitullah, 2003, Skinner, 2008, Von Broembsen, 2010). In effect, the ongoing consequences of urbanization, privatization and various economic adjustment programs are continuous factors acting on individuals' participation in street trade (Mitullah, 2003; Skinner, 2008). For example, urban street traders experience increased competition and taxation with declining customer numbers resulting from low disposable income levels (Lyons and Snoxell, 2005). High competition levels are also attributed to increased availability of similar goods due to trade liberalization (Skinner, 2008) and the "copycat mentality" whereby traders copy one another's goods and location (Woodward et al., 2011: 67). With a variety of odds stacked against them, street traders tend not to graduate from survivalist businesses to small scale enterprises. Rather, street trading acts as a buffer to prevent deeper states of poverty and to sustain the basic livelihoods of traders and their families (Von Broembsen, 2010; Berner, Gomez and Knorrinda, 2012).

An excavation of the literature on street trade has indeed revealed a large number of barriers to occupational engagement due to issues of power, poor political support, negative perceptions and daily physical constraints. These factors lie outside of street traders' control suggesting the potential for traders to experience occupational apartheid. In fact, the social structures and culture resulting in the burden of multiple roles and limiting women's employability in formal markets (Skinner, 2008; Von Broembsen, 2008) can place them at particular risk of occupational apartheid.

### **2.3. The gendered implications of street trading**

The role of women in street trade is significant not only due to the prevailing number of women engaging in this occupation (Lund et al., 2000; Ligthelm, 2005; Berner, Gomez and Knorringa, 2012) but because of their noteworthy economic contributions and position as a vulnerable group. The gender-related development discourse of the early 1980s has deemed women's productive activity in the informal sector as contributing significantly to the economies of developing countries (Moser, 1989). In addition, women are a designated group for economic empowerment in South Africa (South African Department of Labour, 1998). However, research indicates that there are limited services for women micro-business owners (Skinner, 2000).

Women street traders face the difficulty of juggling multiple roles, including home and community maintenance as well as reproductive roles, with productive street trading activities (Von Broembsen, 2008). Household and reproductive activities and poverty drive women into flexible and low risk economic activity, restricting income generation (Von Broembsen, 2010). Indeed, men are noted to sell and earn more through informal retail than women do (Woodward et al., 2011).

### **2.4. Work and well-being**

Occupational therapists are concerned with work because it is an important productive occupation that influences an individual's sense of well-being (Stone, 2003; Christiansen and Matushka, 2004; Van Niekerk, 2004; Larson and Ellexson, 2005;) and identity (Stone, 2003; Jakobsen, 2004; Ross, 2007). How one defines work is defined as both subjective and value laden, fashioned by a range of personal, historical, societal, cultural and geographical aspects (Miller, 2004; Ross, 2007). Work occupations support productivity and participation, each identified as fundamental for

well being (Larson, 2005). Furthermore, work can contribute to an individual's identity and self-esteem (Christiansen and Matushka, 2004). Occupational therapy literature indicates how work can influence ill-being. For example, those excluded from work activities experience occupational marginalization, meaning individuals are sidelined from participating in the occupation of work, and subsequently lose access to some of the necessary resources for sustaining their livelihoods (Stone, 2003; Jakobsen, 2004). In addition, those experiencing overemployment, underemployment or unemployment experience occupational deprivation and occupational marginalization, placing them at risk of ill-being (Townsend and Wilcock, 2004).

The World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of health reveals the connection between health and well-being. WHO (2003) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Individuals are thus healthy when experiencing holistic social, physical and mental well-being. Aldrich's (2011) review of occupational therapy literature on well-being describes well-being as comprising opportunity for continued being, becoming, belonging and meaningful doing. She also identified descriptions of well-being in the literature to include contentment, life satisfaction, health, good quality of life, social support, coherence and integration (Aldrich, 2011). Well-being is related to having the opportunity and choice to engage in meaningful occupations that meet individuals' needs (Doble and Santha, 2008; Whalley Hammell, 2009), to meaningful belonging, connecting and contributing in all aspects of life (Whalley Hammell, 2009) and, to the ability to do, be and become that which one values through occupational engagement (Wilcock, 1999). This means that meaningful engagement in street trading –that is engagement which meets their needs and enables belonging, connecting and choice– can enhance women street traders' well-being. The construct of well-being and how it is afforded through occupations is discussed further in chapter 3.

## **The value of street trading and the role of occupational therapy**

In addition to street trade forming a significant sector of South Africa's growing informal economy (Davies and Thurlow, 2010), its provision as a means to sustain livelihoods and contribute to well-being is important (Von Broembsen, 2008). When occupations meet occupational needs they have the potential to contribute to the development of

human potential towards well-being (Watson and Lagerdien, 2004; Doble and Santha, 2008).

The high correlations between poverty and informal business (Skinner, 2008) and, the reliance of street traders on their own labour, time and skills as important livelihood resources may imply occupational patterns that have a negative impact on well-being (Duncan, 2009). Such difficulty in achieving choice, meaning, development and enrichment through occupational engagement is an issue of occupational injustice (Townsend and Wilcock, 2004), while the conditions restricting occupational participation in street trading towards well-being is an issue of occupational rights (Whalley Hammell and Iwama, 2012). Hence, street traders are at risk of occupational injustices, impinged occupational rights and thus compromised well-being.

The relationship between occupation, health and well-being is foundational to occupational therapy theory (Law, Steinwender and Leclair, 1998). Furthermore, the occupational therapy discourse around well-being has been challenged to include the inequitable conditions of people's lives that prevent equitable occupational participation and well-being (Whalley Hammell and Iwama, 2012). Occupational justice has emerged as a key component of occupational therapy for promoting health and well-being through occupation. This occurs through occupational therapy practice that pursues and upholds individual's rights to experience occupations as enriching and meaningful, to develop through participation in occupations, to exert choice and control through occupations and to experience the benefits of occupations despite social exclusion (Townsend and Wilcock, 2004). Occupational therapy's concern with promoting occupational justice and upholding occupational rights positions the profession to address the injustices affecting women street traders ability to experience well-being.

The power issues and injustices noted in the literature (see section 2.2) suggest that occupational therapists should approach generating knowledge on street trading through a political lens. Recent occupational science literature evidences the need to be equipped to describe how occupational participation is restricted through social, economic, political and historical issues besides impairment (Kronenberg and Pollard, 2009). This awareness has been termed the "political nature of occupational therapy" (Kronenberg and Pollard, 2009:63). Generating knowledge about street traders' experiences requires a critical approach that is openly aware of broader contextual issues, directly addressing how they may impact street traders' well-being (Whalley Hammel and Iwama, 2012).

## 2.5. Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter indicates that street trading is a dominant occupation in the South African informal economy. The literature revealed various contextual and personal barriers to street trading in South Africa, as well as the opportunities it holds for the marginalised and vulnerable, primarily through enabling survival and sustaining of livelihoods. A profile of informal street trading in South Africa was provided, indicating the prevalence of women engaging in this occupation. Literature on the gendered implications of this occupation reiterated the significance of considering women street traders. Finally, by identifying the link between work and well-being, the literature expressed the need to focus on work occupations that can contribute to the health of individuals and society. It is argued that street trading is an important occupation for occupational therapy consideration in South Africa today, particularly in relation to a developing social practice of occupational therapy towards the development of well-being and occupational justice in society.

# Chapter 3: Research design

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## 3.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the theoretical underpinnings and methodological approach applied to the study. Firstly, I present the theoretical frameworks that guided my understanding of the occupation of street trading and the use of ethnographic research methods. Secondly, I detail the process followed for generating, managing, analyzing and interpreting data consistent with ethnographic principles. In addition, the methodology section describes the research field, the ethical principles upheld in accessing the field and in obtaining approval from participants as well as a brief introduction to each participant.

## 3.2. Theoretical premises of human occupation

Theoretical premises on human occupation are framed within occupational science and occupational therapy literature that addresses action theory (Cutchin, 2004; Cutchin et al., 2008).

### 3.2.1. Understanding human occupation: Theories of action.

Knowledge about occupational science and its description of human occupation has shed light on how to inquire about women street traders experiences of street trading and well-being. First envisioned by Elizabeth Yerxa, occupational science was seen as an emerging discipline and extension of occupational therapy knowledge drawing from occupational therapy philosophies (Wilcock, 2001). Occupational science has grown to draw on theories from many disciplines (such as sociology, psychology and philosophy) in order to understand how people adapt to contextual challenges through their use of occupations (Polatajko et al., 2007). Occupational science is concerned with the things people do (human occupation) as well as understanding how occupations are performed and experienced, identifying occupation as embedded within cultural, temporal and ecological contexts (Hocking, 2000).

There has been some shift in thinking around how occupational therapists conceptualise occupation. Occupational therapy literature acknowledges the challenge to understand the things people do by looking at people's experiences of occupation (Jonsson, 2008; Hammel, 2009) and identifying how occupations add meaning to people's lives (Hasselkus, 2011). Understanding the subjective meaning of occupations for individuals helps occupational therapists to identify how an occupation influences well-being (Hammel, 2004), informing and enabling occupational therapy practice that enhances well-being in the lives of those we work with. Kuo (2011) argues that altering intersections between people and their contexts shapes everyday life experiences. In this way, people's experiences, and the meaning they hold, are transactional. Participating in an occupation is regarded as a transactional experience involving the social, physical and cultural context as a functionally relating whole (Dickie, Cutchin and Humphry, 2006). Occupation is thus a means of human-context transaction that enables people to function in complex systems (Dickie, Cutchin and Humphry, 2006). This transactional definition of occupation will be further explained drawing from occupational science interpretations of theories of action.

According to Cutchin (2004) Dewey's transactional perspective is useful in understanding occupation as a transactional experience. Dewey's transactionalism paired with other theoretical perspectives on human action in context facilitates a holistic understanding of occupational experiences of street traders that can shed light on how these experiences affect their well-being. Before elaborating on a transactional view of occupation, it is necessary to expound on the theories of action informing a transactional perspective.

Action theory is used to describe the ways humans act within and through their contexts (Cutchin et al., 2008) and has been instrumental in shaping occupational science thinking around human occupation. Action theory is complex and a thorough description of the theory would require more text than is suitable for this section. For the purpose of this study I have drawn on Cutchin's interpretation of the works of Dewey and Bourdieu, which will be discussed under three central tenets of habits, context (including power and politics) and creativity (Cutchin et al., 2008). Thereafter I describe occupation as arising from person-context transactions.

## Habits

Human action is complex and habitual. Our actions emerge through our habits, which are the building blocks of our character (Cutchin et al., 2008). Habits are more than repetitive behaviours or automatic responses they are subconscious and flexible predispositions to act (Dalton, 2004; Cutchin et al., 2008). Since habits shape the predispositions to act, understanding the women street traders' habits can provide useful insights into the occupation of informal street trading. Despite their differing contributions regarding habit, both Dewey and Bourdieu acknowledged that habits are formed through development in and among integrating social, political and cultural systems that inform social norms. These socially constructed morals, behaviours and habits are sub consciously internalised to govern actions. Bourdieu emphasised the social and political aspect of habits, noting how habits can be influenced by the existing social structures, such as the State and can restrict action (Cutchin et al., 2008). Therefore, occupations are portrayed as sociocultural habits articulated through the spaces we live in (Cutchin, 2007), again highlighting occupation as a mode of functioning in complex systems of life through person-context transactions (Dickie, Cutchin and Humphry, 2006). Street trading is thus a way for the women to transact with their contexts and to function within complex systems, informed by sociocultural dispositions.

## Context

Evidently, habit and context are intricately intertwined in theories of action. Both components intersect continuously and are therefore described in this way. Dewey noted that habit arrangements are adjusted to promote more agreeable transactions with one's environment, termed functional coordination (Cutchin et al., 2008). Humans transpose their habits to different contexts, adjusting them strategically and yet unintentionally towards harmony with that context (Cutchin et al., 2008 and Dalton, 2004). Action theory perceives the conditions of our contexts (or situations) to be influential in structuring habit formation. Situations are sketched by past experiences and perceived futures, holding potential for future experiences and demanding action (Cutchin, 2004). Thus, occupational therapists may view the way individuals act through occupations, nuanced by contextual influences and experiences, as a means for harmonious function within their complex systems. Occupational engagement towards harmonious function within a context can be considered in terms of its influence on street traders' state of well-being or ill-being.

Occupation can be seen as a means of flexible coordination with arising situations in one's transactions with their context (Cutchin et al., 2008). In fact, Dewey (1987) described maintaining functional coordination between habit and context as the overarching motive for activity. He perceived that goals do not motivate action rather they guide and direct action towards functional coordination (Garrison, 2002). Thus, the action of street trading itself should not be seen as the overall goal of the women's engagement. Rather, acting simply because they are alive (Garrison, 2002), the women act through doing street trade towards harmony between their habits and context. Here action theory extends traditional occupational science views that volition and personal causation motivate action, drawing context into play. Goals serve as indefinite ends of action that continue to guide choice around action while never being the ultimate motive for action (Cutchin et al., 2008). According to Bourdieu, valued resources contributing to dimensions of power in context can also motivate human action. From Bourdieu's (Swartz, 2002) political perspective on context, the women street traders' actions would be influenced by unequally distributed economic, social, cultural and symbolic resources of social class.

The unequal distribution of various resources, whether social or material, introduces the role of power dynamics into the contexts through which action occurs. Power affects action in that one's ability to appropriate capital<sup>3</sup> is associated with their position in given fields<sup>4</sup> where habits give rise to action. These fields are structured spaces where people compete for capital (Cutchin et al., 2008). One's position influences the way he/she acts in a field and is also related to his/her position within other fields (Swartz, 2002). The concept of position and access to resources as influencing action and occupation draws attention to political components of the occupation of street trade. Occupational therapy has only recently begun to consider the kind of practice that might address the political nature of occupations. A political practice of occupational therapy is one that considers forces with the power to shape human well-being, beyond the biomedical realm (Pollard, Sakellariou and Kronenberg, 2009). A political practice fits with the call for critical occupational therapy (Whiteford et al., 2005) and occupational therapy in the social field (Galheigo, 2011a). Recognizing that social and economic conditions contribute to street traders' occupational lives, occupational therapists must adopt a practice that will enable them to handle the occupational injustices that bring

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<sup>3</sup> Capital is any objectively valued resource within a field (Swartz, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Fields are spaces where actions occur and which either reproduce or challenge capital and power (Swartz, 1997)

about situations of ill-being. Pollard, Sakellariou and Kronenberg (2009) pose that political forces of conflict and cooperation are present in individuals' and groups' occupational histories, creating inequalities and injustices. They call occupational therapists towards deeper political awareness in their practice in order to lobby for the resources needed to promote occupational engagement and well-being. I have aimed to apply this political awareness in my approach to this ethnographic study, particularly in generating knowledge around the factors influencing street traders' experiences of their occupational participation and their well-being.

### **Creativity**

A third key tenet in Dewey and Bourdieu's theories of action is creativity as it determines how habits are formed in contexts. Imagination is an aspect within human creativity that enhances and directs action towards future possibilities (Cutchin et al, 2008). Fesmire (2003:65) describes Dewey's construct of imagination as "the capacity to concretely perceive what is before us in light of what could be". Imagination challenges old habits by allowing one to rehearse consequences and choose appropriate courses of action (Cutchin et al., 2008). The flexibility and intelligent strategies individuals use to act in their fields reflects the creativity of action (Dalton, 2004). Individuals are strategic improvisers responding to opportunities and constraints in their situations (Swartz, 2002). Bourdieu viewed habits as shaping action through past experiences, identity and dispositions in ongoing creative processes, implying that creativity is also habitual (Cutchin et al., 2008). In the continuous transaction with context, human occupation can be seen as a means and space for creative improvisation towards desired 'ends-in-view' (Kuo, 2011). Indeed, occupational therapy has identified the role of personal factors in shaping individuals' unique capacity to become who they have the potential to be. In approaching this study, creativity was identified as one such personal factor, which could interact with the street trading environment in the development of the women's capacity to be and do what they have the potential to be and do (Wicks, 2005). I was thus interested to see how the women's creativity emerged in their habits in the occupation of street trading.

### **Occupation emerging from person-context transactions**

Understanding that all action is spatially, socially and historically disseminated and considering what has been presented about the transactional way habits (including

creativity) and context flow through one another (Garrison, 2002), it is clear that what people do and how they do things occurs in and through context. Dewey posed that humans and contexts do not merely interact but transact (Garrison, 2002). Dewey's transactional perspective on systems depicts that a system cannot be fully understood until all its constituents are seen as a unified whole transacting with one another to sustain the system (Garrison, 2002). Acknowledging that person-context transactions create the every day experiences of occupation (Kuo, 2011) and affect the development of what a person may become through occupational participation across the life course (Wicks, 2005) can have implications for the conception of occupation. Transactionalism enables a holistic consideration of the systems at play in street traders experiences of and through their occupations and how they may or may not contribute to well-being.

A transactional view of occupation thus has the potential to enrich and broaden occupational science research and the profession's conception of street trading's impact on well-being.

### **3.2.2. Capability approach and occupational justice in defining well-being**

While the connection between health and well-being seems obvious, it has been argued that occupational therapy definitions of well-being are predominantly influenced by medical perspectives, constraining the scope and impact of our profession (Wilcock, 1999). Despite indicating the significance of social and medical aspects of well-being, both the WHO and occupational therapy definitions of well-being (provided in section 2.4) leave certain aspects of the construct undefined. Determining what is 'well', 'good', 'quality', 'satisfactory' and 'meaningful' raises important questions around value judgements and subjectivity. How these criteria are evaluated and determined may differ across cultures and according to who names the well-being. In light of these discrepancies, well-being philosophers have questioned the existence of certain primary goods or the validity of listing criteria for well-being, as well as whether to consider well-being as experienced by the majority (Aldrich, 2011). There are some challenges in agreeing on a universal concept of well-being within occupational therapy and occupational science (Aldrich, 2011). Should well-being involve basic capabilities<sup>5</sup> or consider how capabilities are used within diverse contexts? Should it involve a list of ideal qualities that may not necessarily be attainable or rather broad, flexible qualities?

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<sup>5</sup> Capabilities are the doing and being that one is able to achieve (Robeyns, 2005)

Finally, should well-being be conceived through what is applicable to the majority or should it exclude atypical capabilities? (Aldrich, 2011). Such questions around the value judgements in defining well-being are shared with social development and social justice theorists in their attempts to understand well-being.

### **The capability to be well**

Amartya Sen (1999) made significant contributions to social justice theory of development and well-being through his capabilities theory. Sen's contributions have shaped the development of how well-being was framed for this study. His conception of development as the freedom to live a good life led to the development of the Capabilities Approach (CA). The CA is a framework for evaluating well-being (Robeyns, 2005) based on Sen's suggestion that practitioners consider what people are free to do and what they actually do (Anand, Hunter and Smith, 2005). CA's conceptualisation of well-being as the "effective opportunities to undertake the actions and activities that they want to engage in, and be whom they want to be" (Robeyns, 2005:95) draws similarities with Wilcock's (1999) concerns about how occupations enable people do, to be and to become. Sen referred to 'functionings' as beings and doings and perceived them as constituent of valuable life. Functionings speak to the realised things people can do while capabilities refer to the effectively possible things people can do (Robeyns, 2005). Functionings involve basic 'beings and doings' such as being adequately nourished, as well as more complex personal aspects such as community participation or a positive sense of self (Anand, Hunter and Smith, 2005). Drawing from the CA (Robeyns, 2005) and Wilcock (1999), it is inferred that what individuals do and are able to do, who they are and are able to be and what they have the opportunity to become will influence their state of well-being. Indeed, these components require the consideration of factors beyond personal function to include contextual influences on well-being.

### **The justice of well-being**

Occupational justice complements social justice views on well-being by considering the injustices in people's occupational lives and how they may affect their capabilities to live a good life. Occupations are seen as a means "... through which humans exert citizen empowerment, choice, and control" (Townsend and Wilcock, 2004:80). An occupational justice lens considers differing needs, strengths and potentials and allows one to

perceive the capabilities the women have to experience well-being in their work as street traders. Occupational justice contends that individuals have the right to experience occupations as enriching and meaningful, to develop through participation in occupations, to exert choice and control through occupations and to experience the benefits of occupations despite social exclusion (Townsend and Wilcock, 2004).

The theoretical perspectives described in this section have informed several key premises for my ethnographic study of women street traders. Firstly, human occupation is a complex phenomenon and is more than a therapeutic means to recovery from disease or disability. It evolves through the ongoing transactions between individuals and their contexts as they move towards experiencing harmony within their situations. Occupation can therefore not be considered separately from the contexts in which it unfolds. Occupation can make significant contributions to one's experience of ill-being and well-being, where well-being involves the freedom and ability to pursue the life he/she values as a good life. Finally, the transactions between person and context giving rise to occupation are laden with political and social nuances that come to bear on how individuals experience well-being through occupational engagement.

### **3.3. Methodology**

An ethnographic methodology provided an appropriate means for exploring the phenomena of survivalist street traders' experiences as it allowed a degree of immersion in the field where they engaged in street trading (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007; Murchison, 2010). Ethnographic inquiry enabled an understanding of the occupational dimensions of the street trade culture in the Cape Town CBD from the perspectives of the traders themselves and from within their own unique context (Spradley, 1979). Ethnographic inquiry allowed me to investigate the transactional nature of the occupation of street trade through the opportunity to witness traders' 'doing' street trading and to see how the occupations of street trading unfold within a unique urban context. This allowed me to gather data that would indicate what these experiences mean for traders' well-being. If South African occupational therapists are to affect well-being in the lives of women street traders, we will need to generate knowledge about how this occupation affects their well-being in specific contexts in South Africa (Aldrich, 2011).

### 3.3.1. Gaining entry

In order to obtain ethical approval, I submitted a proposal detailing my intended ethnographic study. The proposal was reviewed and approved by the University of Cape Town, Faculty of Health Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (REF 451/2011). Once ethics approval had been obtained (discussed later in this section). I initiated contact with two stakeholders representing street traders, namely StreetNet<sup>6</sup> and the City of Cape Town's department of Economic and Human Development (EHD)<sup>7</sup>.

#### Access through stakeholders

The first step of gaining entry into the research field was becoming knowledgeable about the way in which street trade was governed and organised in the Cape Town CBD. This involved initial online research of the coalitions and organizations involved with street traders.

In addition to navigating entry, this process also allowed me to begin to gain insights into the systems in which street trade occurred.

Both the EHD and StreetNet directed me to street traders they identified as gatekeepers<sup>8</sup> within the field by providing contact details for street trade coalition leaders. I was able to contact several coalition leaders through a contact list provided by StreetNet. Two coalition leaders in particular, Farieda and Simaan (pseudonyms), served as gatekeepers to important information about the field and culture of street trading.

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<sup>6</sup> StreetNet is an international alliance of street traders aiming to promote the exchange of ideas and information on the issues street traders, hawkers and market vendors face. StreetNet is involved in promoting policies and actions towards improving street traders' lives (StreetNet, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> The EHD is the local government department directly involved with street traders through programmes for informal trading and business support facilities (including permit provision for street trading, informal trading policy development and other aspects of local economic development).

<sup>8</sup> Gatekeepers are individuals in positions of authority (such as street trade coalition leaders) whose approval can be key for gaining access to participants and entry into a research field (Murchison, 2010)

The City of Cape Town Informal Trading By- Laws regulates street trade in Cape Town (City of Cape Town, 2002). These laws include regulations about trading plans submissions, permit acquisition and where and when street trading may occur. The by-laws deem pedestrian malls, designated trading areas and markets as appropriate spaces for street trading in Cape Town (City of Cape Town, 2002). While it was not necessary to gain permission for accessing these public spaces, I remained sensitive to the privileged access I had to observing street traders and their experiences. By fostering rapport and trust with street traders in the field I was able to optimise the accessibility afforded me by relevant gatekeepers.

Sensitivity to my privileged access to the culture of street trading was maintained through four channels. Firstly, I drew on key participant discussions and passive observations to inform appropriate interaction with street traders (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007). Secondly, participants introduced me as a mutual acquaintance to surrounding traders prior to participant observation. This assisted with building rapport with traders in the field and contributed to experiencing no notable suspicions regarding my presence. On one or two occasions, others in the field directed their curiosity regarding my presence towards the participant who would convey the purpose of my company. I also encouraged participants' freedom to discuss their engagement in the study with their peers and traders in their area. Thirdly, I consulted participants and a key participant to identify appropriate methods for building rapport and making myself known amongst traders in the field. Such conversations revealed that a friendly, direct approach to greeting and interacting with people in the area would not be seen as unusual. As suggested by Spradley (1980), I reflected on key questions that would facilitate initial entry into the field in an appropriate manner through becoming familiar with street trade in the CBD. These broad questions included, "what are women's experiences of street trading?" "What does street trading entail?" and, "what are the positive/negative well-being outcomes of engaging in street trading?" (Spradley, 1980).

By drawing on reflections from participant observations, I was able to gain a degree of familiarity with the underlying social norms and ways of interacting within the contexts of street trading. For example, I noticed that it was not unusual for traders to have friends, family or even acquaintances sit in their stall for periods of time, either to rest or simply to talk. Reflecting on this observation, I realised that it would be acceptable to conduct interviews in traders' stalls as long as I could be flexible and pause to interact alongside traders with those who entered the stalls to shop or chat.

## Participant consent & ethical principles

Following ethical and stakeholder approval, the final stage for gaining ethical entry into the research field required obtaining participant approval and consent. Participants were informed about the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of the study. Participants' comprehension and grasp of all aspects of the study was essential in upholding their autonomy in the study. All participants clearly understood all aspects of the study through the information sheet provided (Appendix 1) and gave informed consent (Appendix 2). Two of the participants, namely Susanne and Precious were displaced individuals<sup>9</sup>. It was important not to presume their ability to uphold their own autonomy since displaced individuals can experience reliance on others for support, due to previous persecution and limited socio-economic and political power to exercise choice (MacKenzie, McDowell and Pittaway, 2007), resulting in dependency related coercion. In this instance, Susanne was unable to understand the written information about the study, as it was not in her first language. She took the information sheet home and asked her daughter to read it to her. Having a trusted family member read and explain the study information to Susanne prevented dependency related coercion, allowing her to make an informed and autonomous decision to participate in the study (Babbie and Mouton, 2006; Liamputtong 2009). Dependency related coercion of vulnerable groups was further avoided by preventing participants from developing false/unrealistic expectations about study benefits for their lives. The prevention of false expectations occurred through iterative consent and by avoiding the pretense of my role as therapist or problem solver.

Stake (2010) posits that every individual may have a unique and contextually related zone of privacy. Each new piece of information provided by participants, each event recollected and experience described may bring with it new boundaries of privacy. As I developed rapport and trust with participants, they began to share more intimate and sensitive information. Thus, while confidentiality was ensured upfront, it was necessary to iteratively test the privacy boundaries of certain information to avoid exploiting confidentiality agreements and ensure ethical treatment of sensitive information. Being unfamiliar with the tacit rules of street trading, I continuously posed the question to myself, "Will this information expose women street traders in a way that may cause them harm?" (Stake, 2010). For example, in describing the participants in section 3.3.2,

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<sup>9</sup> Those who are refugees, asylum seekers or temporary residents in South Africa

I was concerned that sharing the country of origin for foreign participants may compromise their confidentiality, particularly when this information is paired with other descriptive information about how these participants trade or what they sell. In order to uphold confidentiality I chose to omit foreign participants' nationality, avoiding their identification through the close social networks street traders form and the further narrowing of the sample to women trading in the CBD. Sensitivity around naming foreign nationals is key in maintaining the safety of such participants in light of recent xenophobic attacks in Cape Town. Thus, my concern with the impact of my study on women street traders' was grounded in acknowledging their potential vulnerability. The participants can be described as vulnerable through their restricted ability to protect their own interests due to limited power (Levine, Faden and Grady, 2004). Therefore, the women were informed of their right to leave the research study at any stage, as it was paramount that the participants' rights were upheld throughout the study. The rights of refugees and all non-South African traders in particular were upheld (United Nations, 2013).

In the developing context of South Africa, I acknowledged the sample population, comprising displaced and socio-historically or economically disadvantaged women, as a vulnerable group (Levine, Faden and Grady, 2004; MacKenzie, McDowell and Pittaway, 2007). It was thus of paramount importance that the benefits of the study outweighed any potential harm to participants, and that harm to participants was avoided. Therefore, I set out to make the women street traders the beneficiaries of research outcomes. I identified various local and international support organizations<sup>10</sup> for street traders in the Western Cape in order to arm myself with knowledge that could benefit participants requiring support. Potential participant benefits occurred through referrals and the provision of information requested by participants on street trade coalitions (Babbie and Mouton, 2006).

While participants were not remunerated for their participation, potential long-term benefits were possible, for example through the eventual dissemination of information learned in this study. One way in which I avoided harmful affects to participants was through maintaining empathy and awareness towards sensitive issues that arose when questioning street traders' work and well-being. At times I needed to create space for

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<sup>10</sup> EHD's services and programmes for business support, skills development and informal trading permits or the various local street trader coalitions.

participants to express their emotions comfortably when recounting difficult circumstances around their struggle for survival.

The non-disclosure of the women's private details was of high importance (Liamputtong, 2009). Participants' confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms from the beginning of the research process (Babbie and Mouton, 2006; Liamputtong, 2009). Electronic data was secured by password while documents were stored in a locked cupboard to uphold confidentiality. Field notes were read only by those directly involved in the research, that the participants had consented to reading the information (Liamputtong, 2009). Furthermore, all interviews with displaced participants took place in safe settings and participants' specific trading locations were disclosed (MacKenzie, McDowell and Pittaway, 2007).

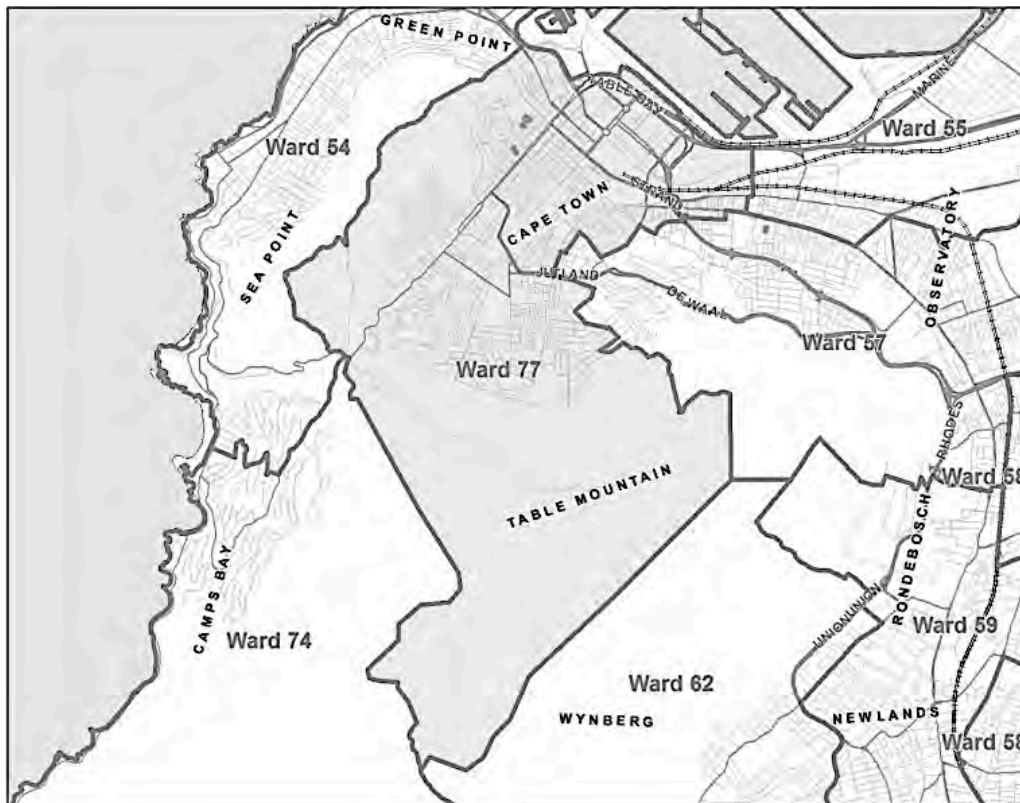
A final note regarding the ethical principle of justice must be made. While bound to the ethical principle to uphold justice, my inclusion of a participant engaging in illegal street trading (illegal in that she did not have a permit to trade) may raise concerns. I have upheld my obligation to disclose criminal activity within the study by presenting that information upfront in the body of this research. I remain bound to the confidentiality contract that the participant agreed to, however if asked by authorities to divulge information regarding this illegal activity I am obligated to inform the participant upfront (Liamputtong, 2007: 36). However, this participant reported frequently experiencing the negative consequences of her illegal activity, which include arrest, a fine and the confiscation of her goods. With this in mind I acknowledge that it was unlikely that there would be a need to report this activity beyond what is disclosed in this research.

### **3.3.2. Population & sample**

#### **Population**

The study population included women working as informal retail traders in the Cape Town CBD. The population fell within the geographical demarcations of Ward 77 (see figure 1.1.) of Cape Town. Ward 77 includes the areas of Cape Town City Centre, Foreshore, Gardens, Green Point, Oranjezicht, Schotschekloof, Signal Hill, Lions Head, Tamboerskloof and Vredehoek (City of Cape Town, 2013).

Figure 1.1: Cape Town CBD Sub Council 16, Ward 77



(City of Cape Town, 2013)

The labour force profile from the 2011 census indicates that there are 381 women working in the informal sector in Ward 77 (Census 2011, accessed April 2013). The sample was selected from the population according to the following criteria.

The recruitment criteria included women who were:

- I. Self-employed, survivalist street traders. The focus was on women who created their own employment opportunities out of necessity. The majority of women self-employed in the informal sector in the Cape Town city centre are retail traders.
- II. Able to communicate in English. This was identified as a necessary criterion in respect to limited financial resources and time available for translation of data in the study. Furthermore, I determined the importance of understanding traders' non-verbal cues and the tone of what was being said during interviews. These essential and enriching components of the data may have

been lost in translation. The limitations of the criterion are discussed in the last chapter

- III. Participating in street trade at the time of data generation. Selecting participants who were actively street trading ensured that their knowledge of the field is recent and relevant (McCurdy, Spradley and Shandy, 2005). Furthermore women needed to have traded for at least one year. This ensured that they had sufficient enculturation (Spradley, 1979).
- IV. Women of 18 years or older were included as the study pertained to adults. Local and foreign migrants were included in the study, as long as they were trading within the Cape Town CBD, as marked out on the map in Figure 1.1.

### Recruitment approach

The sample was selected purposively and dynamically through snowballing. A snowball sample method allowed new participants and potential participants to be identified as the research process unfolded (Babbie and Mouton, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Liamputtong, 2009).

A small sample of 4 women was selected. The literature reviewed (see chapter 2) indicated the unpredictable nature of street traders' lives and the flexibility that traders value. Therefore, I realised that time frames for data collection would need to be lenient and adaptable. A small-scale sample enabled the collection of in-depth data from the unfamiliar occupation of street trade, allowing flexibility within a constrained time frame (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007). Purposive recruitment enabled the inclusion of participants who have limited say in the structuring and organization of traders in the city, by selecting some participants not affiliated with any organization or coalition (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007). A diverse sample was selected to ensure the generation of in-depth and rich data within a small-scale sample. Diversity was achieved through seeking the following characteristics between participants:

- Different assortment of goods sold between participants.
- Differing forms of street trade including city permitted, private permitted and unpermitted street trade
- A variety of locations traded from including the curbside, designated markets and mobile trading.
- Varied social backgrounds amongst participants, including being divorced, married and single.

## Recruitment

Gatekeepers and key participants were integral to the dynamic and purposive selection of participants. There were two primary mechanisms through which they facilitated recruitment. Firstly, they provided information on the location of particular types of trade (such as flower, herbal, textiles and food and beverage trade) and traders (such as foreign nationals or unpermitted traders). Secondly, they recommended potential participants. Gatekeepers Farieda and Simaan recommended and facilitated my initial contact with Kamila who then became a key participant. Kamila was deemed a key participant because of her extended experience as a street trader, being richly connected to other street traders and actively involved in lobbying for street trading through her affiliated coalition. Aware of the inclusion criteria and importance of diversity in the sample, Farieda and Simaan also identified a location where I might find a non- South African participant. Kamila introduced me to Alicia. Later, Alicia assisted me in identifying a mobile street trader, Precious. A brief profile of each trader is given below, followed by a diagram depicting how recruitment unfolded over time.

### *Kamila*

I met Kamila at a small café near the Grand Parade in central Cape Town. Kamila is a playful, fun-loving and outspoken 50 year old woman. She is part of a close-knit family. She is a mother, grandmother, sister and caregiver. At the time of the study she shared a stall with her sister and daughter in the CBD where they sold a mixture of clothing, accessories, skincare products and sundry items. Kamila loved being active and occupied. She was involved in a variety of community and productive activities, however her main source of income was through street trading, which she carried out at various markets in the Western Cape, predominantly in the Cape Town CBD.

Kamila spoke boldly about her hardest times, and fondly about the good days of street trading. After our introductory discussion over a can of Coke she was eager to be involved as a participant in the study and we set up a time for an initial interview at her stall. Kamila quickly became a key participant in the study. She had been an informal trader in and around Cape Town city since she was a child. Being well known and helpful in connecting me to the unique experiences and culture of street trade, Kamila contributed significantly to the degree of enculturation I experienced during the study. Kamila had an opinion on most issues affecting street traders. She was involved in high

levels of StreetNet operations in the Western Cape and lobbied for traders rights through the street trading coalition she is affiliated with.

She involved me wholeheartedly in her street trading activities, including chatting with neighbouring traders in her stall, visiting a wholesaler and providing background information on the people & situations comprising her context. I interviewed Kamila in various cafés near her container<sup>11</sup> or inside her container on quiet days.

### *Alicia*

Alicia is a mother in her thirties, initially from the Eastern Cape Province. While her extended family remained in the Eastern Cape, Alicia lived with her son in government housing scheme outside of the City of Cape Town. She had been self-employed in informal trade for several years. At the time of the study she was trading from a small container in the CBD, selling scarves, hats and beautiful handmade earrings. Alicia was warm and welcoming from our first encounter. She offered me her chair while she sat on a nearby crate and, with eagerness, began sharing her story, leaving little chance for small talk. Understanding the study's information sheet she happily signed the consent form and was excited to get back into sharing her story and her experiences. It wasn't long before I realised that Alicia's warm and welcoming disposition extends to all whom cross her path. Passers-by who asked for money, a slice of bread or a drink of water from her bottle were received with equal generosity. Alicia had worked as a domestic worker and sales assistant but eventually turned to street trading in the last 4 years in an effort to find work through which to sustain a meaningful livelihood for her and her son. Alicia traded 12 hours a day, 7 days a week at her stall on the station deck. She placed high value on having time at home with her son, to cook, watch television and care for her plants. She spoke proudly of the opportunities she had afforded her son through street trading, despite the difficulties experienced along the way. Alicia was not affiliated with a street trade coalition and knew little about their role.

### *Susanne*

I introduced myself to Susanne on a city curb where Farieda and Simaan had sent me in search of a non-South African participant. She is from a North African country and admitted that while she was able to communicate in English, she struggled to read the

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<sup>11</sup> Steel shipping container that serves as a trading structure.

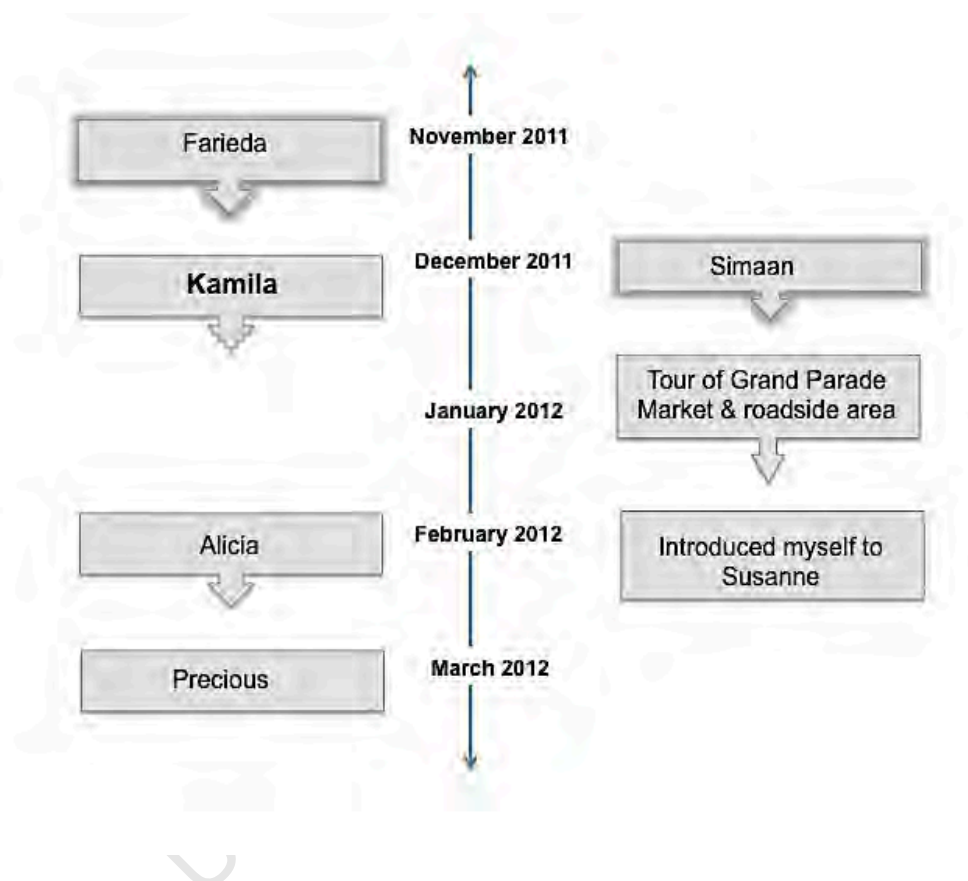
language. I sent the information sheet home with her so that her daughter and neighbour could assist her in reading it. She returned willing to participate, having signed the consent form. Susanne began trading as a child, selling chips and sweets to make pocket money. The money she earned through trading was her way of escaping the restrictions of an oppressive home environment. She moved to Cape Town with her husband a few years ago and during the study she was trading near to her husband's stall on the curbside of a busy main street in the city centre. She sold accessories such as scarves, hats, and bags as well as nail polish and other small items. Interviewing Susanne was challenging, not only because of the traffic and surrounding noise, but because it was difficult for her to talk and watch her stall at the same time. After the first photo elicitation interview Susanne and I decided we would avoid distractions better if we met after work hours at a nearby restaurant. Susanne was surprisingly open about her life experiences pertaining to street trading. She detailed the story of her immigration to South Africa with her husband, the circumstances that led her to move away from home and the barriers she had to overcome to live and work in South Africa. Susanne was not affiliated with a street trade coalition.

### *Precious*

Alicia called me one day to tell me that she had been thinking about our conversation about how the research could best represent the diversity of women who street trade, when she thought of her friend, Precious. Alicia had already shared with Precious what to expect from the research and Precious was eager to be involved. Precious was a mobile, illegal trader. She had been a street trader for only a few years, making her newest to the field of all the participants. She roamed in and around the Cape Town train station like many other illegal traders, finding a space to sell her goods or waiting for the law enforcement to vacate so that she could trade. Alicia foresaw this would make it difficult to interview Precious so she kindly offered the use of her stall for our interviews. I met with Precious one afternoon at Alicia's stall and we decided to go find a nearby café where we could chat comfortably. Precious was well-spoken and well educated. She was trained in the care of children with special needs and had worked for a several months in the United Kingdom (UK) in this field. She preferred that her children go to private schools, in keeping with their experience in the UK. She owned a house in Zimbabwe, which provided a small income through rentals and she engaged in other types of trading, such as selling goods to labourers on farms just outside of the city. Precious provided valuable insight into the experiences of an illegal, mobile street trader in the CBD.

The flow diagram in Figure 1.2 indicates how snowball and purposive recruitment unfolded through the mechanisms of gatekeepers and the key participant (in bold), across a timeline. Each arrow block indicates a participant, with bold arrow blocks indicating gatekeepers. The key participant, Kamila, is indicated in bold.

Figure 1.2: Timeline depicting snowball recruitment



### 3.3.3. Data generation methods

Data generation methods used included semi-structured interviews, photo-elicitation interviews, participant observation and recording field notes. Each participant engaged in an initial semi-structured interview to build rapport and provide a general picture of street trading and the kinds of experiences street traders may have. Thereafter, each participant was involved in three in-depth photo elicitation interviews (described in more detail below) to stimulate dialog about their experiences of street trading pertaining to their well-being. At this point information gained from initial interviews was drawn on to facilitate photo-elicitation interviews. A final interview was completed to clarify information and create space for further comments related to the traders' reflections.

Each interview was approximately one hour; the interview duration was dependent on the participants' availability.

### Initial semi- structured interviews

Interviewing enabled the collection of unique information held by participants, which I would have otherwise been unable to fully observe within a culture as unfamiliar to me as street trading. By interviewing each participant I was able to get an aggregate of information around street traders' experiences of their occupation related to their well-being (Stake, 2010:91).

Semi-structured interviews allowed me to make sense of the multiple meanings of street trading for the participants (Liamputtong, 2009). All interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder (explained further in section 3.3.4.). The interviews contained the following essential elements of ethnography (Spradley, 1979):

- ❖ The explicit purpose of each interview was made clear to the participant
- ❖ A formal, non-authoritarian approach was maintained in directing participants to express knowledge on street trading.
- ❖ I expressed ignorance about street trading and encouraged participants to teach me about their experiences of doing the occupation.
- ❖ I continuously offered explanations about the project's purpose, the kind of information required and how it would be recorded.

Specific knowledge about participants' experiences of street trading and their perceptions were gained through using the following types of questions during the interview process (Spradley, 1980; Kvale, 1996).

- a) Descriptive– Broad questions about participants experiences of street trading.
- b) Follow-up– Specific questions to draw out further information based on research questions and objectives.
- c) Probing– Specific questions inquiring about specific content pertaining to the objectives of the study.
- d) Specifying– To gain precise descriptions from general statements.
- e) Direct - To ensure essential information was obtained.
- f) Indirect - Projecting to provide information through participants' perception of others' experiences or attitudes.

- g) Structuring statements – To maintain the relevant topics of discussion and adhere to the allocated time frame.
- h) Interpreting– Re-phrasing to ensure information was accurately understood.

Initial grand-tour questions familiarised the researcher with women street traders' experiences of their occupation. The following grand-tour questions were used in semi-structured interviews.

- “How did you get involved in street trading?”
- “Why did you start street trading?”
- “What does a day of street trading involve for you?”
- “How would you describe your experience of street trading?”
- “What are some of the benefits or difficulties you experience in street trading?”

Direct, probing and interpreting questions (see Appendix 3) were used in later interviews to gain information through the use of photo-elicitation methods (Kvale, 1996). Information gained from initial interviews was drawn on to facilitate photo-elicitation interviews.

### **Photo-elicitation interviews**

Once good rapport and trust had been established, participants were given low cost disposable cameras for a week. By taking their own photographs participants became co-producers of the data, fostering reflexivity in the research process (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007). Photographs facilitated participants in communicating their experiences as well as enabling me to expand on interview questions (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). With participants taking their own photographs I was able to maintain an inductive approach towards gaining information about this unfamiliar occupation, preventing my focus on taken-for-granted data that may be significant to the women's experiences of street trading. In this way, photo elicitation methods were “autodriven” (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). The photographs provided accounts of the objects, activities, people and collective events pertaining to and comprising the occupation of street trading, demonstrating how the women are connected to what they do (Harper, 2002:13). Photographs also helped to establish how participants' experiences and perceptions of their occupational engagement impact their well-being (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007) and how broader sociopolitical aspects may govern this.

Specific data on how the information within photographs related to well-being and its contextual influences was gathered through photo elicitation interviews (Spradley, 1979). Applying photo elicitation methods involved training the participants in using the method and conducting photo-elicitation interviews.

After the initial semi-structured interviews a time was made with each participant to prepare them for taking pictures and to describe the role of the photos in the research project. Each participant was instructed to take photographs that demonstrated the people, objects, events and situations comprising her experience of the street trading occupation and how these experiences impact her well-being. The photo elicitation training was conducted as follows:

- I asked the participants what etiquette they thought would be appropriate for taking photos of people and things in their own micro culture, to encourage gaining consent before taking another's picture (Wang and Burris, 1997).
- For participants who were unfamiliar with a camera, I demonstrated how to operate and handle the camera, explaining the limited range of a disposable camera and how to compensate for poor lighting with a flash, as well as how to protect the camera (Wang and Burris, 1997).
- Participants were engaged in a conversation around which aspects of their occupational engagement to photograph, drawing on their expert knowledge about how street trading affects their well-being through everyday doing (Pink, 2007:76).
- After a week the participants were met to obtain cameras, to print photographs and to schedule an interview to discuss pictures.

Prior to photo elicitation interviews I spent time analyzing the photos to formulate interview questions that would stimulate further descriptions of the women's street trading occupation. Participants had control over which photograph was discussed and when, flipping through the pile of photographs at their own pace.

The photographs elicited subjective meaning during photo-elicitation interviews that may have otherwise been missed (Schwartz, 1989). The content of the photographs directed the questions elicited, providing a subjective account of how street trading impacted the participants' well-being (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). The photographs provided information about the context where street trading occurred, the structures influencing

occupational engagement and the routines, practices and improvisations involved in street trading. Participants were encouraged to speak freely around any aspects related to or triggered by the events and objects in their photographs.

### **Participant observation**

Moderate<sup>12</sup> participant observation (Spradley, 1980) was carried out before, after or during photo-elicitation interviews, depending on the circumstances. Moderate participant observation was selected as a realistic and appropriate approach to the observing street traders, as I perceived it would be difficult to participate fully in all aspects of street trading without disrupting the women's usual experiences of their occupation. For example, I was able to observe the interactions of street traders with their customers and friends when interviews were paused for a sale or some other interaction. There were a few occasions in which participant observation would happen spontaneously. This occurred on occasions when I would need to wait for a participant to finish packing up before the photo elicitation interview could take place, during which time I was able to observe and generate data around participants' occupational experiences within street trading, pertaining to their well-being.

Moderate participant observation allowed for sensitivity to the immense ethnic, cultural and socio-economic differences between the researcher and street traders (Liamputtong, 2009). Participant observation equipped the researcher to interact appropriately with street traders. By indirectly participating in certain street trading activities (selected by participants), I gained specific descriptive information about participants' occupational engagement.

My observations focused on specific aspects of activities comprising the occupation of street trading and participants' responses and actions to events and situations within their occupation. These aspects assisted in interpreting the relationship between traders' experiences of engaging in this occupation and their well-being. Exciting opportunities for participant observation arose with 2 participants who were eager to share certain experiences of their work with me. Participant observation occurred with the two participants in the following ways:

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<sup>12</sup> Moderate participant observation is peripheral observation where the researcher is identifiable within the field. She is adequately involved in what participants are doing whilst maintaining detachment and objectivity (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010)

1. Accompanying Kamila on a visit to a Chinese wholesale store to purchase new stock.
2. Sitting in Kamila's stall for 2 hours during a busy period of the day, observing sales, interactions with customers and surrounding others as well as observing other traders selling in the same area assisted Susanne in dismantling her iron trading structure at the end of a business day.
3. Interacting with Susanne and neighbouring traders in her area, observing sales during a busy time whilst waiting to carry out a photo elicitation interview.

Participant observation occurred until I had achieved a point of data saturation. Data saturation in the limited time frame of data collection was discerned as a point when recurring themes were noticed during interviews and observations. Therefore, participant observation did not occur with each participant. Regarding data analysis, saturation was reached when no new information emerged from the data.

### Field notes

Field notes were taken immediately after observations and interviews to ensure reliable recall of information (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007). Participant observation times were interspersed with allotted times for writing field notes (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007). In line with the objectives of the study, field notes included:

The researcher's...

- ❖ Feelings, perceptions and experiences.
- ❖ Observations about persons, risks, benefits, structures and processes involved in street trading
- ❖ Observations of well-being in relation to street trading
- ❖ Observations of street traders daily interactions with their context and other actors that may indicate power dynamics.

The participants'...

- ❖ Own words/ folk terms describing street trading as an occupation
- ❖ Self reported subjective meaning of this occupation
- ❖ Self reported experiences of factors outside of their control within the occupation of street trading, which may impact well-being positively and/or negatively (Liamputtong, 2009).

### Reflective journaling

A reflective journal was used to record, interrogate and suspend personal assumptions to avoid their influence on interpretation. Such assumptions were that:

- ❖ Street trading occupations could impact street traders' well being positively and negatively.
- ❖ Street traders in South Africa typically have low education levels while traders of other African nationalities may have high levels of education.
- ❖ Women participate in street trading out of desperation for paid work due to limited formal work skills and lack of occupational choice.
- ❖ Women would be able to articulate how engaging in this occupation impacts on their lives.

Reflective journaling was used to clarify thinking around the research topic as data was generated. Reflective journaling facilitated the internal dialogue around my previous assumptions while maintaining awareness of emergent assumptions during the research process (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007).

#### 3.3.4. Data management

Data in the form of digital audio recordings collected during interviews was transferred into a secure folder on my personal laptop under pseudonyms for each participant. Each recording was transcribed verbatim and all field notes were typed up. All typed documents and recordings were stored in secure folders on my laptop, each under the pseudonym of the respective participant. All folders were backed up online and on a hard drive. All data was managed electronically. An online data analysis application, Dedoose ([www.dedoose.com](http://www.dedoose.com)), was used to manage the data.

#### 3.3.5. Data analysis

I immersed myself in the data from the early stages of research by listening to the digital audio recordings, transcribing each interview and reading the transcript to identify key points of interest to proceed with next layer of questions (Kvale, 2009). This allowed me to improve on subsequent strategies during data collection and allowed for the initial development of categories (Liamputtong, 2009). Early immersion improved my knowledge of the data and fostered thorough analysis following the completion of

data generation (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007). Thematic analysis was used to make sense of the data of street traders' experiences by identifying patterns of meaning related to traders' wellbeing (Liamputtong, 2009). Thematic analysis was carried out inductively to ensure that categories were derived from the data rather than my own assumptions (Murchison, 2010). Data analysis occurred through various steps in 2 stages: Preparation and Organising (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Steps for organizing data were guided by Liamputtong (2009).

#### *Preparation: During data collection*

1. All data was read through more than once to make sense of transcripts and what participants were saying (Liamputtong, 2009)
2. Key excerpts were identified as units of analysis
3. Open coding at this stage allowed initial headings to be assigned to excerpts
4. Memos were made from the early stages of analysis to note interesting concepts and to document links within the data as they emerged.
5. The research question was revisited and aspects unanswered in the data at that point were considered. Where necessary, interview questions were re-structured and the research design was re-evaluated to ensure use of the most appropriate data collection methods for answering the question (Murchison, 2010)

#### *Organising: Following data collection*

1. Codes were developed from aspects of the data that spoke to:
  - The contexts of street traders' experiences
  - How participants perceived, described and defined street trading and their well-being
  - The meanings ascribed to well-being and to street trading
  - Turning points in their experiences perceived to contribute to well-being
  - Street trading activities and routines
  - The doing in street trading that was linked to well being
  - Significant events related to street trading
  - Conditions for street trading
  - Participants' strategies for achieving well being
  - Social norms and relationships involved in street trading

2. Code names were refined and similar data was grouped into clusters of concepts. Clusters of concepts were grouped into sub categories. Sub categories were organised and re-organised until the right fit was found, ensuring all categories represented the women's voices.
3. Sub categories were refined by eliminating the overlap of concepts and re-arranging sub-categories into relevant categories where necessary (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007).
4. A central theme was identified through three categories that spoke to the research question. This theme holds the essence contained in the data as a whole, organised into categories, subcategory and clusters of concepts (Murchison, 2010).

### **3.3.6. Data interpretation**

#### **Rigour, quality control & verification**

Certain criteria of rigour were upheld within the naturalistic paradigm underpinning the study. These criteria guided me in ensuring the integrity and legitimacy of the research process (Tobin and Begley, 2004). My unfamiliarity with the micro-culture of street trade raised my awareness for a good fit between the participant views and my representation of their views (Tobin and Begley, 2004). Credibility was safeguarded throughout the research process through early immersion in the data, member checking and reflexivity (Liamputtong, 2009). By immersing myself in the data from the early stages of the research process, I began to ensure that my understanding and representations of the data accurately reflected the participants' realities and experiences and not my own assumptions. Autodriven photo elicitation methods were one way of bolstering the credibility of the study, ensuring that the data generated was true to the participants' experiences and their realities (Clark, 1999).

In addition, member checking was used to ensure that my representations of participants' realities carried their voices. Member checking required actively suspending my assumptions regarding what I understood from participants' experiences, involving in-the-moment clarification of key points as well as checking my interpretations and how these informed the development of categories and themes. Reflexivity emboldened my ability to suspend my assumptions through the practice of making explicit my beliefs, interests, values or personal history that may have

influenced data interpretation (Liamputtong, 2009). These assumptions are mentioned under 'Reflective journaling' on page 38. Personal beliefs and experiences of well-being were held loosely and reflected on during data interpretation, through the use of a research journal. Experiences of well-being were presented and interpreted according to participants' descriptions and not my personal values or interests. By suspending my perceptions of street traders shaped previous interactions them, I was able to present the participants' voices on their experiences and not my own.

Credibility of the research information was further safeguarded through corroborating different sources and methods for substantiating key claims, in a process called triangulation. The methods used for obtaining data were corroborated through employing a variety of data generation methods. This allowed the continuous checking of interpretations against the data for validation (Liamputtong, 2009). The data itself was validated through including a variety of data sources (audio recordings, photographs and field notes) to corroborate information (Flick, 2006).

The generalizability of the research is a common measure of a study's validity. However, the naturalistic paradigm of this qualitative inquiry would contest the transfer of these women's street trading experiences onto other individuals or contexts. Therefore, I have provided detailed information about the setting, methods, participants and process of the research (Holloway, 2008; Liamputtong, 2009). While detailed information may only imply some degree of plausible transferability, it creates a thick description of a particular group of women in the specific contexts in which they trade, at the time of the study.

Beyond ensuring that the data represented the women's voices about their experiences within street trading, it was also important that the data gave a dependable account of the research process. A dependable research process is one that is logical, traceable and clearly documented (Tobin and Begley, 2004). Data consistency over time was ensured through an audit trail and peer review (Holloway, 2008). This occurred in external clarifications of my decisions (Liamputtong, 2009) inherent in procedures of supervision in the research process. During data analysis I recorded the various steps involved in working with the data from one stage of analysis to another. These steps were recorded in a separate document to provide a traceable record of how data was grouped into clusters of concepts, collapsed into subcategories and categories (see Appendix 4). Such audit trails facilitated the unmistakable linking of the findings to the

data itself. Audit trails ensured confirmability through a supervisor, to safeguard that findings were not determined by my own perceptions and biases (Tobin and Begley, 2004; Liamputtong, 2009).

Similarly, peer review occurred through having an expert peer check field notes and transcripts to validate my findings and decision-making (Holloway, 2008; Liamputtong, 2009).

### **3.4. Summary**

In this chapter I have described how the CA and action theories guided my approach to the research topic and to understanding and interpreting the findings of the research. I have also detailed the practical design of the ethnography, including methodology, ethical considerations, the means for maintaining credibility of the research project and findings, and the description of how data was handled. In the following section I will present the data generated during the ethnography and the findings of the research.

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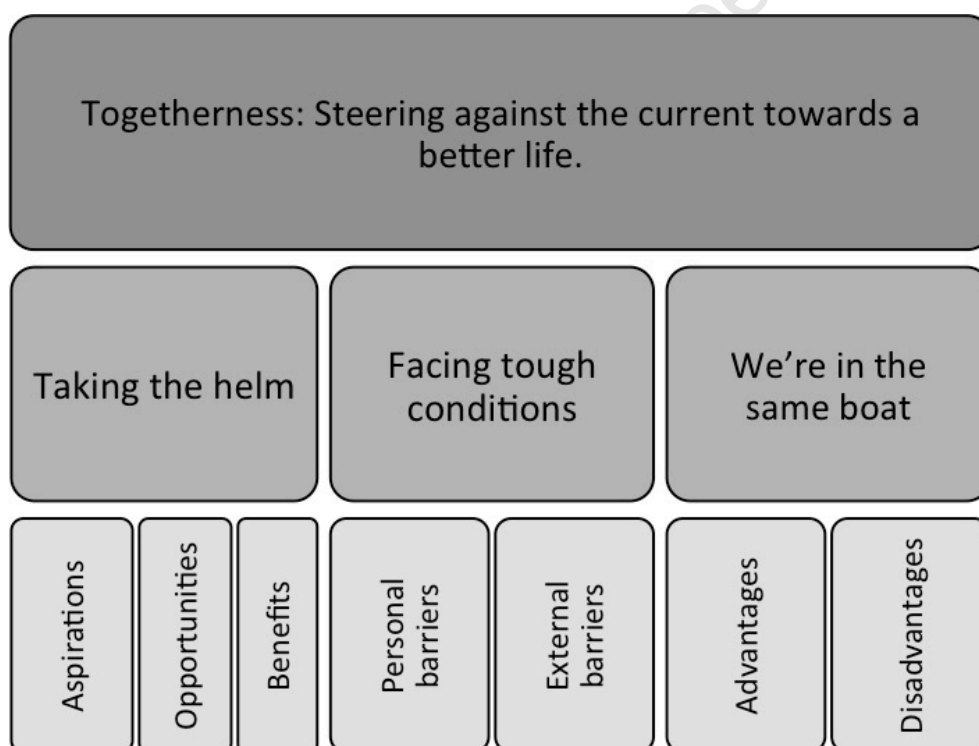
# Chapter 4: Findings

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## 4.1. Introduction

Inductive analysis of the data arising from the cross case interviews, photo elicitation and participant observations revealed one central theme, 'Togetherness: steering against the current towards a better life'. The findings as depicted in Figure 1, indicate how the theme is thread together by three categories namely, 'Taking the helm', 'Facing tough conditions' and 'We're in the same boat'.

**Figure 1: Findings**



Using a nautical metaphor the theme and categories reflect the qualitative essence of women street traders' experiences of navigating a livelihood in a fluid context. Women's experiences of the occupation of informal street trading are much like boat's journey: continuous, unfolding and influenced by the 'contextual seas' that have to be traversed. From the data it was evident that the direction of the women's journey is towards a

'better' life, a life they value, which includes attaining a holistic set of desired goals and, in so doing, living a meaningful life. The data revealed that the women's daily income generating occupation is integral to the life they value through fostering their availability for their families, their freedom for making choices and their ability to meet their daily needs.

In the next section of the chapter the theme is introduced. Thereafter each category and its sub-categories are described in detail providing plausible evidence for the theme that emerged.

## **4.2. Theme: 'Togetherness: steering against the current towards a better life'**

The categories served as three threads which knit together into the central theme, 'Togetherness: steering against the current towards a better life'. The theme captures the women street traders' overall experiences of the potential for a better life and the difficulty they suffered. Taking the helm evidences the women's experiences of employing the resources and opportunities available to them to directing their lives towards something other than the situations of difficulty they found themselves in. While the women encountered various benefits described in this category, they seemed invariably restricted from holistically achieving the lives they valued. The women were restricted by the various barriers described in 'Facing tough conditions', which limited their benefits of steering towards a better life or drove them to trade off one aspect they valued for another. The women's view of all individuals being connected, as depicted in 'We're in the same boat' suggest that the women's experiences were connected to one another. Thus, the women valued a life in which the collective could thrive, through their ability to help their families and those around them to live well. The 'togetherness' aspect of the theme suggests that these survivalist street traders were not steering towards individual or economic prosperity but towards living well collectively with others in society. The women street traders were therefore steering against conditions that restricted their personal and business development as well as their living well together with others in their sphere. 'Togetherness: steering against the current towards a better life' speaks to the women's experience of steering towards a better life for the collective.

The categories described next illustrate how the women's street trading activities and the contexts of these activities impacted how they could live the lives they valued.

### 4.3. Category 1: Taking the helm

The women's descriptions of their street trading experiences conveyed a story of self-determination and action in steering their lives towards what they valued for themselves and their families. 'Taking the helm' gives voice to the women's approach to making a way for themselves to survive and towards attaining the things they value for their lives. The valued life the women aim towards becomes apparent from the subtext of the women's stories presented below as well as the data indicating their choices. It is important to discern that 'Taking the Helm' does not mean that the women have full control over their lives, instead this category indicates the women's action or approach towards exerting some degree of control; aiming to determine positive outcomes for their lives despite the conditions they may face, much like a ship steering through rough seas.

Each of the women's stories are marked with difficulties such as poverty, abuse and illness, which they sought to escape, willing a different life for themselves. Therefore, the description below begins with painting a picture of the women's difficulties and the course they were on, before uncovering the subcategories describing how they came to take the helm, aiming towards a valued life. The three subcategories comprising 'Taking the Helm' are detailed thereafter.

#### Susanne

Susanne's mother passed away when Susanne was 10 years old, with a parting request that her daughter ensures she can take care of herself. Thereafter Susanne grew up in an abusive home environment with her father and stepmother. The following excerpts describe Susanne's experience of abuse and the lack of support she received from her family in avoiding abuse.

*“And when the brother from my father was coming in the house...when they come they say you must go in the room, in the room. We go in the room. So they can’t understand, they don’t know what’s happened really. And when myself I was going to them to explain, they don’t believe me. So I say ok I don’t care people don’t help for my problem, I can’t fight with them, let me take care of my own self...”*

Susanne began street trading as a way to steer her life out of the abusive environment she found herself in, and towards independence.

*“Don’t make like I did get the choice and then I do this [street trading]. I didn’t get the choice, I do it because there was not way and I said let me find this way...”*

### **Kamila**

As a single mother, Kamila is the primary breadwinner for her children and grandchildren who live with her. Kamila’s past is filled with stories of struggle including poverty and abuse.

*“Because I got my grandchildren uh, that is with me...um I don’t have a husband. I’m divorced. And for me, even at 54 I can’t sit still and wait on people to give me this and give me that. Because my mom left me a legacy...we can do things with our hands. So...to, to put bread on the table...we don’t need to...so...it’s in me!”*

Kamila’s words express her desire to take action in securing her livelihood, not wanting to rely on others. She values a life in which she is able to make her own way to survive, using her own hands.

*“I never slept in the dark, my children never slept in the dark because I like, I-I’m skarrel man. I make a way”*

In the excerpt above, Kamila proudly describes herself as “skarel”<sup>13</sup>, recounting her self-determination in taking hold of what she values, in this case providing for her family through her own business.

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<sup>13</sup> Someone who is an assertive, ‘go-getter’ in business

## Alicia

Alicia entered street trading because she was underpaid and unsatisfied in her previous job as a sales assistant. Below she describes a situation where she took action to improve her circumstances. Alicia had been evicted from her stall on the Station Deck during the Fifa World Cup in 2010.

*“I can’t manage to stay at home because my son by that time he study here at Camps Bay High. I wake up early ne, I went to Parade-there is another market called Parade in that side.”*

*“Because I know Camps Bay High is very expensive, you know...December I know mos, during December sisi I wake very very early. I came to sell the sunglasses; I know the sunglasses is moving, very moving during December. And then, if I start from 6 o’clock until 7 o’clock at least...I managed to make some money, I put in the bank so that my son can go to Camps Bay High”*

After struggling to get a space to trade in the Grand Parade Market, Alicia started to trade illegally, making use of what she had to generate an income.

*“I sit, I take my bag-it was a small sport bag-I take my bag I put it down. Sisi if it was like this, something like this. I put my stuff I put my stuff I sell, I sell. God is great, I manage to make hundred and something, out of that small stuff!”*

Alicia’s story displays the positive, active approach she took to steer her life towards valued goals. These goals were at times survivalist (such as meeting basic needs) and other times according to personal aspirations, such as sending her son to Camps Bay High School.

## Precious

Escaping the poor economic situation in Zimbabwe, Precious moved to Cape Town to start her own business in an effort to earn a decent living. She describes the difficulty her family faced after relocating as follows.

*“Because I’ve got 4 children and by that time my husband has gone back home in Zimbabwe to go and try and find out whether he can start a project*

*there ... because he was not working at home, in fact he was working but the company was not paying-sometimes they pay him half-half. Because we've got 4 children to look after it was difficult for us, so it was only me with the children so I have to have something"*

*"...the problem which made me to think we need extra money was that we put our children in a private school because I was once overseas, so to put my children in a public school...I wanted them to have a better education like what they had in overseas ..... So this guy told me, 'ok while you are going home make the research, just act like a customer find out and look around what these ladies are selling'. After that I made the research I asked the guy, he was selling fruit, I ask 'ok I want to sell socks'-it was almost winter- 'I want to sell these things do you know where I can order?'. He said, he just gave me direction"*

#### 4.3.1. Sub-categories: Aspirations, Opportunities, Benefits

Three subcategories stood out from the data as describing how the women took the helm of their lives through street trading. Figure 2 depicts these subcategories as including the women's 'Aspirations', the 'Opportunities' taken in street trading and the 'Benefits' experienced in taking the helm. The clusters of key concepts within each subcategory are also reflected. The data within these subcategories begins to paint the picture of the kind of life the women value and the life they are steering towards

Figure 2: Taking the helm (Category 1)



#### 4.3.1.1 Aspirations

Each woman referenced her dreams for economic, personal and family progress to achieve the kind of life she values. These aspirations served as a compass, guiding the women in setting the course they aimed to steer towards. 'Aspirations' ranged from meeting basic needs to ambitious dreams. Two key clusters of concepts comprised the women's aspirations, such as their dreams and beliefs, both pertaining to their economic, personal or family aspirations.

Dreaming of a better life expressed the women's hopes and desires to live beyond merely surviving day to day. While at times the women expressed the desire to simply meet their daily needs, analysis revealed that the desired end goal for these survivalist traders is not simply survivalist living. In the excerpt below, Precious expressed her aspirations for a career that can guarantee her ability to meet her household's basic needs.

*"I wish I could have enough money then I can just do 3 years of nursing and make sure that I will buy bread and butter"*

Furthermore, she aspired beyond a survivalist lifestyle to one in which she could do the things she wants when she wants.

*"I want to say oh I want to spoil myself to go on holiday, to do my hair whenever I want"*

Susanne dreamed of a life free from dependence on an abusive family, being able to provide for herself and perhaps to be the one they turn to for help in the future.

*"That was what put me to work very hard, because I was already in my mind think one day they gonna sit and they gonna ask me, '[Susanne] please can you help me with some amount money?' and they going to forget I was the child they used to beat, they used to ask her like the...like the dog, 'go and do that, go and do this'..."*

Their beliefs enabled them to pursue their aspirations. Aspects such as faith, hope, volition, family legacy and memories of better days informed the women's beliefs about

what was possible. For example, Susanne recognised how her faith helped her to believe she could survive.

*“...That day there’s no business. It’s like that, so you just ask God to help you when you go from the house. Any money, he can give you”*

The women believed that they could grow their street trading into profitable businesses. For Kamila, her aspirations in and through street trade stemmed from a family legacy of street trading and a belief in generating income through making things with her hands.

*“Even at 54 I can’t sit still and wait on people to give me this and give me that. Because my mom left me a legacy...we can do things with our hands. So...to, to put bread on the table (pause) we don’t need to (pause), so it’s in me!”*

The women’s aspirations, shaped by personal factors, were critical in their response to the emergent opportunities in and through street trading.

### 3. Opportunities

‘Opportunities’ include the unfolding advantageous circumstances the women sought out and their ability to recognise possibilities towards the life that they valued. For example, Precious saw the opportunity in South Africa to start her own business.

*“I would start business but because of the economic situation in Zimbabwe it didn’t work very well so I decided to come here, come and find a job in South Africa Cape Town”*

The women also discerned street trading opportunities from difficult circumstances. For example, Susanne was able to see poor weather conditions as an opportunity to sell a different kind of stock and possibly generate good income.

*“Because sometime if I open I can have the customer for the umbrella, then I’m going to make also good business. So the rain’s not the reason for me to stay home”*

Alicia, Kamila and Precious described recognizing the opportunity to survive through difficult economic conditions.

*“Then I woke up, I saw the girls they just putting on the floor all the stuff like this one, they put the cloth, they put the things on the floor... And then they asked me, ‘take your stuff, take your cloth and just put it here’” (Alicia)*

*“I did try to get a job and so and...it just didn’t work because every time you lose your job and then you just fall back on buying and selling. That will never get out of me.” (Kamila)*

*“I used to work in a restaurant in um Woodstock but because our restaurant was closing we were not getting profit-it was at the district, um near Cape Town- so...I used to buy some oranges to this guy from our country every time, then I don’t know what came into my mind to ask him how do I get a place to sell here” (Precious)*

The women persistently seized emerging situations that potentiated the life they valued. They took hold of possibilities towards economic development, personal safety, meaningful social relationships and personal skills development.

*“I sell clothes at home. Then like tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and the day after-after then I’m selling party packets at home” (Kamila)*

*“I started selling hats for the children after work” (Precious)*

*“You see there is a packet of chips was something like R1.50, I start with those things...When I was getting like R10 I just put some away, some away. It was like that. I did that business more than 2 years. Just selling those chips one rand fifty cents, one rand fifty cents, one rand fifty cent and lollipop also.” (Susanne)*

Here, Kamila and Precious indicate how they created opportunities towards economic development through diversifying their income generating activities, while Susanne describes taking a seemingly small opportunity and growing it towards financial gain.

The women described the opportunities they took in order to feel safe and secure while street trading. For Precious this meant setting her goods out in such a way that they were ready to be picked up in a hurry so that she could flee law enforcement when necessary. For Alicia, it meant trading in the city centre as opposed to the locations<sup>14</sup> where she lived in order to avoid theft, credit lending and even harm to her person.

*“We don’t put all the things on the floor...we have got our reasons in case law enforcement comes there we have got some more things in our bags, ja so we can survive” (Precious)*

*“So is dangerous to sell in the location. Is very dangerous. Whether, besides that ok they can shoot you, one maybe one person is gonna come to me said, ok she want earrings. Earrings is R10 she take that earrings for credit is not gonna give me that R10.....That’s why I decide ok I don’t want a business in the locations let me got to Town” (Alicia)*

The women gave voice to the opportunities they uncovered within street trading towards developing their skills. Kamila described an opportunity presented her as a child through acquiring the resources that she and her mother would use to sustain their livelihoods.

*“So this lady gave me a box with beads in, with a little booklet in. And um, my mom...everything started there. We making beads, and...she’s making coat hangers”*

Finally, they take hold of opportunities that foster meaningful social relationships, such as Kamila sharing her stall with her sister and daughter,

*“So now we divided the shop um partly for me and for her and my sister also puts her stuff in there so then we share the rent.”*

Likewise, Susanne took the opportunity to build relationships through trading alongside other individuals from her home country. The costs around taking these opportunities will be described when presenting the category ‘We’re in the Same Boat’.

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<sup>14</sup> The informal settlements and poorer outlying areas surrounding Cape Town

#### 4.3.1.3 Benefits

The women's stories contained evidence of the benefits experienced in their journey as street traders.

The women's stories indicated they developed a positive self identify by seizing opportunities, enduring difficulties and fulfilling their role as workers. For example, Alicia perceived her own strength in her ability to take care of and support her son through her occupational engagement as a street trader and mother.

*"You have to work hard, you have to stand up and tell yourself now I'm a big lady...no one support me, I have to support my son.....That is what I like, it just give me a strong- I'm very strong now I'm powerful, I know the life how the life is; its not easy."* (Alicia)

The women spoke with confidence about the benefits of street trading that enhanced their abilities within their roles as business owners and as women.

*"We are not stealing from people, we are not selling drugs we are not-we are selling people's needs; people what they want to use. Because us they say we are cheaper"* (Precious)

*"I come here to do business, I know what is the business (unclear) because for me-for me he says its more easy for me to make the business more than him."* (Susanne)

*"So that is how I make my money. I know people will come back to me because they know I'm selling good stuff to them"* (Kamila)

*"Now me I'm trying to show these outside people: not all of South African ladies are like that, some they have got a head to think, a hands to do something like me."* (Alicia)

Kamila and Alicia's comments portray their positive sense of self due to their experience of others' perceptions of their successful street trading.

*“Ooh you talking about..aunty [Kamila], klein aunty [Kamila], die raasbek wat so baie praat. Then you will know who is aunty [Kamila] and because all people love me” (Kamila)*

*“They always come to me, [Alicia] I have got this problem!’ I solve the problem” (Alicia)*

The women spoke positively and proudly about the financial benefits of street trading

*“It went very well and I managed to buy my children cellphones and everything” (Precious)*

*“I work hard, very early I collect my money, collect my money I go and buy my son books, two books-It was six books but I’m finished all the books now.” (Alicia)*

Lastly, the benefit of developing and exercising their functioning within street trading surfaced from the women’s voices. The women described how they learned specific skills for and through street trading. Susanne learned how to street trade as a child by asking other children who were already selling on the street.

*“There was other children doing it, I just ask them how it is working”*

Alicia developed creative ways to read trends that informed what goods to make and sell.

*“I just watch Generations, ok...they wearing-maybe lets say Karabo- they wearing this style of earrings. You have to watch those things Generations and then you have to buy beads”*

Alicia’s comments below demonstrate that she developed knowledge and skill within street trading through experiential learning, rather than higher education or training.

*“... I know now I can’t just go to study how to make a business. I know how to make a business, really”*

*“You have to learn something- you know now I’m making earrings, eh bracelet eh necklaces you have to learn something.”*

In addition to the functioning developed through street trading, the women expressed ways in which their creativity was exercised through their work. Each women was able to exercise and express some of her personal creativity either through the layout of her stall or the display of her goods as in Susanne’s case; through the ability to make something with their hands as Alicia describes or; in Kamila’s case through creative ideas to optimise the resources available.

*“No you must just think in your mind, what you want to do...its like, sometimes we don’t fix the same way everyday. Ja because you must see, if one week you put like that its not fine, the following week you must just think about what you going to do” (Susanne)*

*“You buy buttons, you clean, you buy everything for those one studs and everything-you put it you join it and then? So lovely and then you make a nice thing like this one you see in the board, its all hand made.” (Alicia)*

*“My friend one day he brought us big boxes of this small, small toys. And I decided ay man I can mos make party packets with this.” (Kamila)*

The women unanimously identified experiencing freedom as a benefit of street trading. Being self-employed, the women were able to choose how to manage their own time and money and to plan and run their businesses according to what they valued. The following excerpts give voice to the benefits of the freedom afforded by street trading.

*“Its very, very flexible like now, like now I’m talking to you right now (laughs) its an advantage for me, I can do what I want, I can go shopping with children in the morning then I can start selling in the afternoon.” (Precious)*

*“There’s no one writing a big letter from here to here; ‘Alicia must clean windows, must do this da da da’ I make my time for myself. I set up my time myself” (Alicia)*

*“Ok sometimes you make a nice sale and you say ‘ok now I had it for the day’ and you pack up and go...it’s entirely up to you” (Kamila)*

Below Susanne, Kamila and Alicia give voice to the benefits of experiencing freedom of decision making around their businesses and spending.

*“Ja and then I just tell him, ‘its better for you to make your own and leave me to do my own because I’m ready to be free’. Ja I don’t want somebody to say ‘no you must do like that and that’. Because since I’m young I’m trying to make my business alone” (Susanne)*

*“When I sell my party packets in Manenberg I always take a R100 for myself because there for that 3 days I can afford to take a hundred rand to buy me something” (Kamila)*

Alicia speaks about the benefit of getting instant cash and the freedom she experiences in accessing a salary.

*“If somebody come buy its cash, its not a credit or whatever. I don’t have to wait a month so that I can get my salary” (Alicia)*

The data around the aspirations, benefits and opportunities clearly reflects the women’s approach to their lives through street trading. The women’s aspirations indicated their desire for freedom and to live beyond basic survival in order to thrive. Through taking opportunities the women’s value of economic development as well as growing and developing capabilities became apparent. Additionally, the benefits of street trading described by the women illustrate their value for a life wherein they are: free to make decisions, able to form a positive sense of self, to express creativity and to experience a sense of purposefulness and significance within their work. This category also evidenced how the women take hold of their situation, attempting to steer towards positive livelihoods. However, the conditions the women steer against had a significant impact on the outcomes of their efforts to steer their lives and their experiences of their journey.

#### **4.4. Category 2: Facing Tough Conditions**

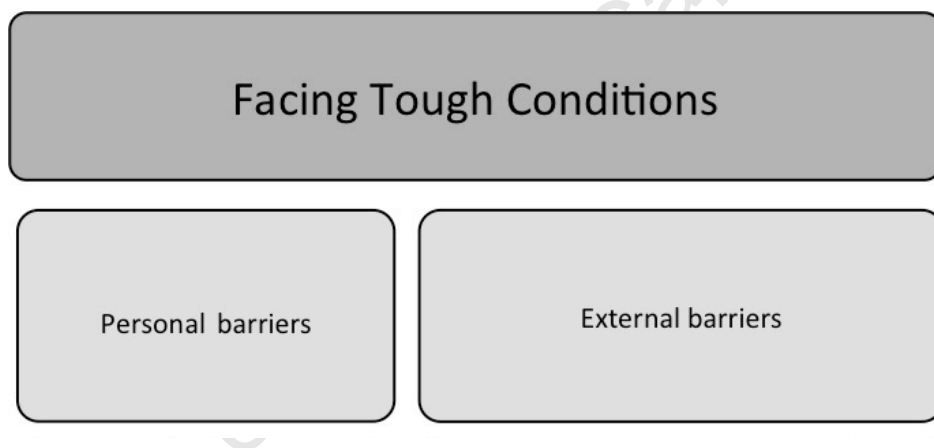
The women’s attempt to steer towards a better life was not synonymous with actualising that life, much like taking the helm is different to reaching one’s destination.

The conditions that the women faced played a large role in their ability to achieve the life they valued. Thus, a second category was apparent from the women's experiences, particularly around the difficulties they had to overcome in their endeavors to live the life they valued. The tough conditions the women described include personal and external barriers.

Personal barriers evident from the data were the limited human, material and financial resources available to the women, as well as the costs they experienced in the pursuit of a valued life through street trading. External barriers included social, economic, political and physical restrictions.

Figure 3 depicts the subcategories constituting the difficult conditions the women described facing as street traders.

Figure 3: Facing Tough Conditions (Category 2)



### **Subcategories: Personal and External Barriers**

#### **4.4.1.1 Personal barriers**

'Personal barriers' refers to the individual, restrictive factors evidenced from the women's stories. They indicated that their limited human, financial and material resources made it difficult for them to achieve the lives they valued. They described experiencing limitations in their own human resources because of restricted training and formal work experience.

*“And the problem-especially me maybe I can’t get the job before getting-I can’t say I can do this or that one because I didn’t learn for those things so...”*  
(Susanne)

Another personal barrier linked to limited human resources is the demand on the women to fulfill multiple roles. The women described how the requirements of their roles as breadwinner, worker, and caregiver resulted in compromises impacting their business or family life.

*“If somebody ask me, ‘do you know your kid?’ I don’t say yes I don’t say no. Ja, because I don’t see them...sometime when I come home they sleep already”* (Susanne)

The women were the primary breadwinners of their households. Thus, limited human resources in the form of support from a husband or other family members diverted the full responsibility for meeting household and business needs to the women. The responsibility of sole provision was described as stressful, indicating the impact of street trade on well-being.

*“We are suffering really. Imagine: you are not married, you are single, you are supporting your children, you don’t have another income... only get income here, if you sell R50 you gonna buy bread only bread, and transport. And then what about the rest?”* (Alicia)

Furthermore, the women mostly faced the high physical demands of street trading work on their own.

*“I arrive in Ceres about quarter past 8, we have to walk until 5 o’clock we will be walking, selling, we just relax for 1 hour to eat lunch, we don’t have breakfast because we’ll be running out of time”* (Susanne)

*“...to be a trader is very hard...it is ugh it’s harde werk. Its hard work!”* (Kamila)

Susanne described the physically challenging task of pushing a trolley filled with stock and structural components of her stall.

*“And you see to push the trolley with those stuff is not easy. It’s shaking all the time and you need to push again, you must uh double the power in your body before you do that because it’s not really easy”*

The women also described limited material resources, such as public transport, as hindered their ability to live the life they value. Kamila detailed how relying on public transport resulted in limitations on her choice and control around how much stock she could buy and when she could buy it, as well as restricting her control over her time use.

*“We, I don’t have a car. I don’t have a car that I can bring my, take my stuff in and out”*

*“Um, I’ve got money on me, I don’t have transport to go fetch my socks –and that’s in Bellville south”*

*“...Because some of the guys [taxi drivers] when they see you got bags with you, they don’t pick you up”*

*“Its difficult-its difficult because you have to wait for a taxi and then the taxi don’t want to stop then he just don’t want to stop.”*

Susanne and Alicia’s stories showed similar experiences of limited choice and control over time management when relying on public transport.

*“Yoh those taxi they took us long! Because sometime in the-they like to stop, wait for the customer and you got no choice.” (Susanne)*

*“I wish I can get enough money so that I can buy myself a car to save the time, you know? To save the time.” (Alicia)*

Limited personal financial resources restricted the women’s choices about their street trading activity, such as the time spent trading and the goods stocked.

*“It’s all about you have to have money to survive, so you can’t stay one day at home” (Kamila)*

*"We sell earrings if you have got enough money to order earrings but me I don't have enough money" (Precious)*

*"Yes, it is because I have to use the money in my house also, for food and for rent-house rent. I have to use it for this and I have to buy stock. I don't have a certain amount of money that is coming in, you understand?" (Kamila)*

Precious and Kamila's experiences also revealed how limited financial resources and inconsistent income make it difficult to cover household and business expenses sufficiently. For the women, limited financial resources meant limited margins to buffer against shocks. Kamila's story of struggling to replace stolen stock further illustrates the personal barriers of poor financial buffers.

*"I had to go make a loan for that R1500 right? Now I have to start work, now you have to pay back that loan, you have to pay again for your stall, for the boys, for the storage...at the end of the day when you see then...you, you..you just can't go forward because you don't get enough time to pay, to repay the loan." (Kamila)*

Lack of financial resources caused stress around provision and survival and put the women at risk of ill health.

*"But now things are changing so it's so stressful because sometimes, some of the days you don't get enough money to buy some of the things that we want in the house" (Precious)*

*"...Especially here mos, sometimes I don't have enough money to buy me a plate of food, you know that food is like the healthy one? I bought myself a bread, and a butter and I drink a cold drink that's it." (Alicia)*

Furthermore, Kamila explains the negative impact on her morale and emotional well-being when limited resources forced her to rely on others.

*"Um, because this make you depressed. Here I'm very depressed, I was depressed like....my sugar was low, I didn't wanna go ask that girl for a drink" (Kamila)*

The women also made personal trade offs and experienced costs as they sought out the lives they valued. Limited resources and the struggle for daily survival required trade offs of one important component for another. Such trade offs cost the women some potential for the life they value.

*“So is not easy to come and work to the street, you have to work hard, you have to wake up early you have to tell yourself everyday you have to pray.”*  
(Alicia)

Susanne illustrated the potential costs involved in juggling her role as a breadwinner and wife.

*“Because like if I leave my house because of my work it can affect also my marriage. Ja so I need to manage it.”*

Kamila described a similar trade-off, acknowledging that while street trading helped her to provide for her family, it also cost her time with her family.

*“It does, it help me to support my family but on the other side I’m neglecting my family because I’m...I have to work every day.”*

Susanne expounded on the kinds of difficult choices and potential costs experienced.

*“Sometimes when there was-uh, when the law enforcement was coming and then I was have the stuff I was like, ‘I need to run with my stuff I need to take care of my baby’. Sometimes it was difficult, sometimes I say uh-uh its better for them to take it and then I’ve got her. Sometimes I say no it’s the police, they can’t do nothing to my baby, if they see my baby they gonna take care...let me go and hide my stuff and come back”*

Here she refers to the difficult decision to either abandon her goods or her baby in order to escape law enforcement and avoid being fined or having her goods confiscated. Precious explained how the cost of surviving through street trading can be a criminal status.

*“When you start selling you know what you are putting yourself into. Ja, you are doing something which is illegal which you are not allowed to do but you need to survive”*

*“Some of the South Africans who doesn’t even want to have eh legal places to sell because they say ‘oh we don’t need to pay rent”*”

Precious described how, for unpermitted traders, illegality is an opportunity cost of aiming for a better life. While Precious preferred not to pay rent (note excerpt above), she experienced hardships associated with illegal trading.

*“The law is the law you can’t change the law just because you need money but sometimes it’s so painful because sometimes you are under pressure”*

Another trade off was the hand-to-mouth approach to business. The women explained the urgency of constantly restocking their stalls to improve their chances of sales, to the extent that for every sum earned more goods were bought.

*“I need to sell so that I can get money to order that’s the way we operate”*  
(Precious)

*“Because if you make like R20 now you need to go and buy, you can’t save”*  
(Kamila)

*“And then every day I sell maybe 2 pairs of socks I run down to the shop I buy it again so that I can make my table full you know? “ (Alicia)*

This hand-to-mouth approach to business perpetuated their experiences of limited financial buffers against unplanned expenses as they struggled to save.

*“Because if you make like R20 now you need to go and buy, you can’t save”*  
(Susanne)

The subcategory ‘Personal barriers’ thus captures how the women’s limited resources make it difficult for them to move beyond basic survival and towards thriving. Furthermore, the women’s personal values come at a personal cost or result in trade offs making it difficult for them to holistically live out the life they value. In addition, they

described a myriad of external barriers they face in their efforts to steer towards this valued livelihood.

#### 4.4.1.1 External barriers

Various external forces altered the women's course towards the life they valued. Social, political, economic and environmental barriers intersected with and influenced the women's stories at multiple points.

The women experienced involve marginalisation, exclusion and exposure to difficult social contexts. They described feeling socially excluded through others' negative perceptions of them. All of the women had traded without permits at some stage in their journey and they described their experiences of criminalization and mistreatment as illegal vendors. Precious' comments depict the discrepancy between her reasoning for the validity of her illegal trading and other's perceptions of this activity.

*"People like us foreigners who prefer to have legal things but because there's... we don't have any choice, we need to survive"*

*"We are like criminals but we are not doing anything wrong"*

Kamila portrayed the difficult experiences associated with illegal practices of street trading, such as trading outside of the permitted area.

*"Sometimes you stand on a place where you not supposed to be then law enforcement comes, chasing you away, taking your stuff, issue you a fine."*

Alicia and Susanne experienced mistreatment by law enforcement officers in the form of verbal and physical abuse, as well as destruction of their property.

*"They are very rude while they came there some of the stuff they kick, some of the stuff they break like so, which is...they are not allowed to do that I think so"*  
(Alicia)

*"December 1, I did get a big fight with the traffic...myself...and it's those kinds of things I don't like to do but I did them because they push me over and I did hurt myself"* (Susanne)

The women described being exposed to other forms of mistreatment within their social context. Their stalls and goods were harmed through theft, violence and looting. Susanne explains how her position on the curb exposed her goods to damage by surrounding traffic or vehicles parking nearby.

*“Sometime they [vehicles] damage our stuff. Ja they just push our canopies...”*

Alicia’s stall was looted during a municipal workers’ strike.

*“You know if there’s a strike no work also because those people they are gonna come and take our stuff”*

Kamila hinted at her lack of control regarding exposure to theft.

*“If they come for me to rob me at my stall there’s nothing I can do”*

According to the women Cape Town city officials’ believed that street traders de-beautify the city. Kamila recounted her experience of traders being relocated for the Fifa World Cup because their stalls appeared messy.

*“During the world cup so everything must be beautiful because Cape Town is the Cape Town ...and then they didn’t want us there because we look like lappies<sup>15</sup>, lappies like everybody’s got different colours of these sails and so”*

The women also encountered social marginalisation through in their experiences of xenophobia. Alicia (a South African) described a scenario in which a potential customer was discouraged from visiting her store because of her nationality.

*“That lady she came right through to my stall she want to buy something from my stall and then that guy said, ‘ay why you want to do that, why you want to waste my money? Go to my brother!’... ‘Don’t buy to that girl, go to my brother, don’t waste my money’ and then that lady she go to that guy that Nigerian...”*

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<sup>15</sup> “Los lappies” translates to loose rags, describing the messy appearance of the multiple stalls of various colours on the Station Deck.

On the other hand, Susanne expressed the loneliness she experienced as a foreigner without social support.

*“You don’t have somebody to come and help you...Because everything you need to do in South Africa, you going to try to speak yourself, try to read yourself or try to understand by yourself...”*

There were also high levels of competition amongst street traders. Kamila described an example of a strained relationship with another trader due to the similarity of their stock.

*“This lady on the parade that hates my guts because I don’t want to-I didn’t want to tell her where I get my panties from because she wants to she’s selling the same”*

Exposure to issues within the social context not only impinged on the women’s choice and control in aiming for a better life, but it caused negative behavioral and emotional responses. Kamila spoke about the prolonged effect of crime on her behavior.

*“If they come for me to rob me at my stall there’s nothing I can do. Its making you...Ag...sometimes its taking...it...it taking all the ugliness out of you, man...making you...swear”*

The women faced political barriers including the legislation, policy and the mechanisms enforcing these in relation to street trading. In particular, they described the lack of government contribution to their street trading endeavours.

*“Government doesn’t contribute to us-its about time I think that government must contribute to us too.” (Kamila)*

Alicia echoes Kamila’s sentiments about how those in power (“...on top ones”) give little consideration to street traders.

*“We give them what they want, they on that seat on top ones, you on the ground yoh shame! That is how South Africa is.”*

The women also faced limited political support through legislative barriers. While local policy requires the women to have permits to trade legally, they expressed difficulty in accessing permits.

*“Wena it’s difficult to get a permit” (Alicia)*

The women possessing permits had limited choice about what to trade and where, as Precious illustrates below.

*“You know the problem with them they can send you to Tokai, what you going to do in Tokai? We want to sell where we see people around”*

*“You can’t just put stuff because you want to put it. You must only put what the permit ask you to put...that’s the problem”*

While the women found permits restrictive, they also described unpermitted trading as having costly consequence with law enforcement. Thus the mechanisms of law enforcement posed further political barriers, for example being fined for trading illegally, as Alicia describes below.

*“There is a lady that just sell here...just on the street, on the road. But they are not allowed to do that the law enforcement are gonna come they gonna fine them”*

Subsequently, the women attempted to flee law enforcement to avoid confiscation of their goods or being fined, both of which they could not afford.

*“When we’re sitting there we’re telling them [law enforcement] you are just giving me a ticket but I don’t have money to pay for these things.” (Precious)*

Furthermore, Precious’ statement below provides an example of how the unpermitted traders would abandon their stock to avoid the consequences of encountering law enforcement.

*“Ah if law enforcement comes I leave everything on the floor if I don’t have the chance to pack I just carry my bag and start running.”*

The final political barrier the women described is limited security of tenure. The women explained how not having legal rights over their trading spaces results in their limited participation in trade related decision-making. Without security of tenure, the women's experiences revealed that they have limited say over when to trade, having no rights to refuse eviction. For example, Alicia expressed how she was relocated to a new stall without being included in the decision.

*"Uh-uh they never ask us anything they dictate it to us. That's where that comes in."*

Due to lacking security of tenure, the women experienced eviction or relocation, which affected their business negatively. Kamila's experience of being displaced from her stall illustrates how limited security of tenure serves as a barrier.

*"We have stalls there [station deck]...and Intrasite took the land back and we was without work...."*

Not only did the women express having no right to choose to remain at their trade site, they also described their limited participation in choosing the stall to relocate to. Alicia's new stall is seen as a solution to being exposed to poor weather conditions however she finds it has a negative impact on her sales.

*"...I'm happy I'm in a shop I can close up and go, I can lock up and go ...but uh, it's not what I wanted"*

Furthermore, the women experience limited government communication around circumstances requiring them to close their stalls. For example, law enforcement officers threatened Susanne with a fine for trading during a city event, of which she was uninformed.

*"... we tell them 'you supposed to tell us also we need to close early because we didn't know, we used to close here in December if its 7 o'clock no one come and complain, don't just come and fine us like that', they must also know we need also the notice before we do anything."*

Therefore, the women's experiences of inaccessible permits for legal trade and the consequences associated with unpermitted trading, are perceived as political barriers to

their street trading. The women experience a lack of government support specifically through restrictive street trading policies, limited participation in decision making around street trade and lacking tenure over their trading spaces.

The women also experienced economic barriers, such as the economic climate in the informal sector, competition with larger, formal businesses and limited access to financial support systems. The economic context restricted their ability to survive and thrive. Precious substantiated that street traders are in deed negatively impacted by the poor economic climate.

*“Things are not working well than before, that’s what I’m trying to say, people are not buying as much as they used to do.”*

The women found the recessive economy to negatively impact their daily survival, their access to simple luxuries and their business operations.

*“I’m only surviving here sisi. But now its bad now, everyone they say so. ...and then those people said, ‘I have never, never saw the black South African women working hard like you Alicia’. I said, ‘I don’t have a choice, I don’t have a choice I have to work hard, very hard for me and for my son’” (Alicia)*

*“Because of the recession and these issues we [Precious and her husband] decided to cut on luxury things” (Precious)*

*“Sometimes you don’t, you make just that R35 to pay for your stall, well now you can’t pay for the boy, the boy [porter] don’t want to take away your stuff now you have to struggle all over again” (Kamila)*

The economic context was also restricting because it resulted in inconsistent income generation and the increased presence of Chinese Wholesalers near vending sites.

*“Sometimes it was-its quiet there that side, sometimes I sell R20...its only the money to go home. And then, the last time I sell there I sell R10 I pay the stand R10. I don’t have nothing” (Alicia)*

*“Retail is, retail is dropping a lot. The reason why for that is...that the government allowed the Chinese to put up their shops. We are buying from them. They charge the people that comes in less than we” (Kamila)*

The influx of wholesalers (selling similar goods at lower prices) resulted in reduced sales for street traders, perpetuating poor economic conditions. Likewise, the women experienced high levels of competition with surrounding traders as an economic barrier, restricting the success of their businesses. Precious' comment substantiated the reality of intra-personal competition traders must face.

*“Around at the taxis there are a lot of vendors, so many, almost about a thousand trying to survive so you know what you are putting yourself into you have to be prepared”*

The large scale of traders selling in a small area increased business competition, negatively and affected both the potential for the women's business and their morale. Kamila's business struggled when traders copied her stock.

*“People see you've got something that is going, now tomorrow...the day after tomorrow you see 3 or 4 people got the same thing, then they kill you again...now you have to think about something else again”*

Furthermore, economic barriers included limited access to financial support. For example Kamila had difficulty recovering from the financial shock of losing all her stock.

*“I'm blacklisted from Standard Bank because of my stuff that they stole-I couldn't pay back because I had a credit card at that time and I bought my stuff... and I couldn't repay the bank. That's how I became blacklisted”*

Similarly, Susanne struggled to open a bank account as a foreigner without a South African identity document.

*“Yes, yes its not that easy. It's very difficult to open the account...”*

*“...to open they gonna ask you you must bring the south Africa ID or this or that or...those things for me is no good”*

Hence, difficult economic conditions such as limited economic support, high levels of competition and an unpredictable market restricted the women's businesses from flourishing.

A final external barrier included physical barriers such as poor infrastructure surrounding street trading and exposure to harsh weather conditions. Each woman recounted circumstances in which she was negatively affected by exposure to harsh weather conditions.

*"So for us it's not easy to selling there in the iron because sometimes when the weather is not good the iron also used to move..." (Susanne)*

*"Sometimes it's [the weather] very bad for us but we got no choice" (Susanne)*

Kamila explained how exposure to harsh weather conditions exacerbated her arthritis, and the consequences thereof.

*"That is still...that is why my feet is still like this, it's because of the weather. So I had to stop working, stop trading here and then as I say I been trading at home, I'm selling at home... my stuff from home and..and...so.."*

Similarly, Alicia struggled to trade in rainy or windy conditions in the trading structure she was allocated.

*"Because when it was raining during December I had to close the doors, I say 'ah ah ah'. The people are just moving like so, me I'm closing my doors, so I'm gonna lose my customers"*

Thus, the women's exposure to harsh weather conditions, combined with the poor street trading infrastructure, creates barriers for them in achieving the lives they value. Alicia explained how the position and design her container limits her sales.

*"While the people they came from there [the deck entrance] they see, ' Ok, that lady's selling cap, scarf' -they see everything. But now they put eh business in the container, the people they don't have those patience"*

Additionally, the women described the poor infrastructure for street trading such as the limited availability of trading and storage space in the CBD.

*“There’s no space sisi, because you can see every day I see a new face there in the taxi rank” (Alicia)*

*“It depends on the space because people fight for space here” (Precious)*

*“Storage here in Cape Town is very, very sparse. Very difficult to get storage.” (Kamila)*

Besides serving as a barrier to business growth, poor street trading infrastructure was a barrier to personal development. Kamila provided an example of limited infrastructure as negatively impacting her religious capabilities.

*“I’m a Muslim we have to, to, to make salat 5 times a day, I can’t make salat here. We don’t have a prayer room here. You understand? And now when I go home I have to make up for...for the day.”*

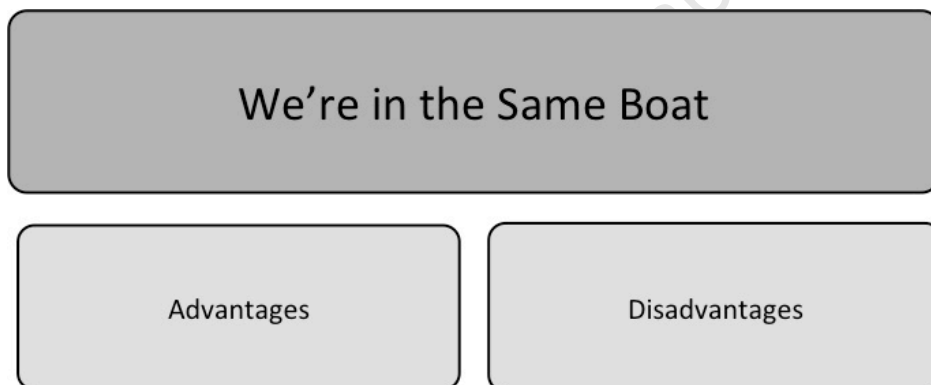
Thus, limited appropriate infrastructure around street trading and the resultant exposure to weather conditions were barriers to street trading. Analysis of the subcategory, ‘External barriers’ suggests structural environment limitations for engaging in the occupation of street trade. These limitations, namely social, political, economic and physical barriers had a negative impact on the street traders’ experiences of choice and control in their lives, and may thus negatively impact on their well-being.

The findings in the category, ‘**Facing Tough Conditions**’ reveal that the personal and external barriers the women faced restricted them from the valued life they aspired to. The women experienced these barriers as restricting their ability to grow their businesses, support their families and exert choice and control over their lives. Overall, the chord struck by the women’s voices in this category denotes their sense of exclusion and lack of support through the mechanisms of the tough conditions they faced. The above excerpts provide a stark contrast against the backdrop of the women’s actions to steer towards the life they valued. The women described an ultimate sense of limited choice or control in fully reaching the goal of the life they valued. Like a boat traversing rough seas, the women aimed their course towards the valued livelihoods, but were often rendered with little control over the elements they faced.

## Category 3: We're in the Same Boat

The final category, '**We're in the Same Boat**' comprises data referring to the significance and meaning of interconnectedness, and the disadvantages that accompanied it. Interconnectedness refers to the social connection, belonging, solidarity and affinity that traders valued with others they encountered in their contexts. The women's stories evidenced their value for being connected to others around them, whilst indirectly describing the difficulties associated with it. Thus "We're in the Same Boat" describes the complex relationship between the meaning and cost of social connection, which the traders voiced during data collection. Figure 4 depicts the subcategories within category 3

Figure 4: We're in the Same Boat (Category 3)



### 4.4.1. Subcategories: Advantages and Disadvantages

The sub category 'Advantages' describes the meaning of interconnectedness while 'Disadvantages' presents the costs and difficulties associated with valuing interconnectedness, evidenced during data collection. Each of the five clusters of concepts informing the subcategories will be explained.

#### 4.5.1.1 Advantages

The traders described various personal and business “Advantages” they experienced through maintaining interconnectedness by learning from others, belonging, helping others and being helped.

The women felt that they belonged by being meaningfully connected to others through street trading, by knowing and being known by others and through forming collectives.

*“ Now we become friends we sell, we give each other ideas” (Precious)*

*“ We know each and every trader here” (Alicia)*

*“ We arranged to do something like stokvel so that it encourages you to think how to do business and to have better ideas to change what you are doing” (Precious)*

The women described the positive effects of belonging. Susanne experienced meaningful belonging through a family-like community with surrounding traders as well as through friendships that connected her to her home country.

*“We [neighbouring traders] sitting here like family, like friend, like brother and we like to make the jokes with each other”*

*“We come also from the same village sometime we like to speak the language and its make us laugh because its long time we didn’t hear that dialect”*

In addition, the women’s sense of belonging enabled them to view periods of poor business differently.

*“...today is not my day, is somebody’s day maybe is that guy’s day. If that guy is selling selling, selling I’m happy, its his day, tomorrow its gonna be my one!” (Alicia).*

*“No if god give me today tomorrow its gonna be yours...So don’t cry” (Susanne).*

The statements above reveal how the women were able to experience positive outcomes through belonging, whether the benefactor of those outcomes was the participant or her neighbour.

Precious described how belonging to a collective of street traders in the form of a stokvel<sup>16</sup> enables the women to help each other so that they all have a turn to benefit.

*“Right now we are doing the stokvel for cooking oil; we are 7 of us every day you have to buy 2 litres of cooking oil, we are 7 then you pick up 7 litres of 2 liters you give one person”*

The women described helping others and being helped as another advantage of interconnectedness. Their stories conveyed the natural ways in which they helped each other and those they interacted with. One of the ways the women helped one another was through learning from and teaching each other. For example, Alicia was able to learn new perspectives on life or to learn from her fellow traders on the Station Deck.

*“Its nice to heard different views ne? So that you can learn something from somebody else”*

Furthermore, she described how her connectedness to those around her enabled her to learn and to teach certain skills. For example, she explains how a neighbouring trader would teach her to knit hats. Similarly, she would teach a cleaner working nearby how to make earrings.

*‘She says ‘Alicia I don’t see you my child, come to me what are you waiting for? Let me show you another stitch!’*

*‘This one but is working here sweeping here in the taxi rank for the cleaners company. And then by that time she’s off she just come here into town she said, ‘ok maybe you can teach me how to make these earrings’*

Likewise, Beauty was able to learn about street trading strategies from surrounding traders she knew.

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<sup>16</sup> A rotating credit union.

*'I used to ask people what time they start selling and I came to know places, following people, you know just to find the information'*

The women also helped each other through considering other's needs and giving money, food or business opportunities when necessary.

*"If you don't have food at home, here in this market ne, Sharyn I will give you a money we always help each other in this market" (Alicia)*

*"Because all of us we need money, we have to understand each other. Its not- you mustn't think about yourself you have to think about the next person that is near you, that person needs to survive as well." (Susanne)*

*"The people are very important because they give me money to survive" (Alicia)*

Precious described how traders worked together to ensure that another trader would benefit from a sale when she could not.

*"You see. They know that if we have got that thing and the next person doesn't have he'll call you as well that I've got this one you get this DVD-its like you are working together as a team"*

A further way the women described helping each other was by selling their goods to one another on discount.

*"If I want shoes in that side they say ok you are a trader. Us traders they give us a discount." (Alicia)*

Kamila supported these examples of 'Helping and being helped' by describing how neighbouring traders watched each other's stalls while they were away.

*"If I have to go to the toilet which is a little far, then Loretta and the guy next to me and the other guys opposite me or next to me will all look out for my things. If there's a customer then one of them will ran to help-to serve the customer."*

While the advantages of being helped by others might be obvious, Precious revealed the potential advantages the women experienced through helping others.

*"...(we) help each other financially and become better people, all of us"*

The women described the meaningful connection of family as a motivator for helping others. In Precious' case, she experienced the positive outcome of family connectedness through helping her children.

*"We have learned that because our parents didn't have enough to give it to us so that we can have better life. But we learn it was their life so we have to change our children's so they can get a better life than ours" (Precious)*

Similarly, Kamila proudly described the meaningfulness of helping her sister attend a church mission trip.

Kamila: *She [Kamila's sister] went uh, she had a opportunity to do missionary work in Amst- in uh New Orleans somewhere.*

Sharyn: *Oh wow!...*

Kamila: *And um, then my sister-I work very hard at home -I'm selling party packets, R5 party packets also, to give money to her so that she can go, and she went. She's my sister.*

Sharyn: *Ja...*

Kamila: *I didn't say I'm lending you this money, no!...it's my sister! My mom- my late dad and my late mum would be glad to see her go...and now she's going to Amsterdam!*

Thus, the women experienced a host of advantages to their sense of interconnectedness with those around them, including financial, business and social benefits. Interestingly, it was evident from the women's voices that the value for interconnectedness could cause certain difficulties within their street trading. Data describing the other side of the coin in relation to inter-connectedness was grouped into the subcategory 'Disadvantages'.

#### 4.5.1.2 Disadvantages

Circumstances emerged in the women's stories that suggested the cost of inter-connectedness being integral to a valued life. The women spoke about business costs of connectedness, which were costs incurred to their business development in order to foster connectedness. For example, the women's values influenced the way they expended their income.

*"I don't make enough money, a lot of money hey? But she came to one time and said, 'Patricia I don't have bread at home' if I make, if I have got R20 I give to her so that she can buy a bread and a milk" (Alicia)*

Precious described how valuing connectedness, and collective benefit, could reduce her potential income earned through trading.

*"Because like now we are going into rain season, DVD people have been selling outside without the shades, when it rains they run away they want to go into the shade so they ask you can you fold your clothes so that they can sit there, because all of us we need money we have to understand each other"*

According to Precious, illegal traders would fold up part of the blanket they traded from to make space for other traders to sell next to them. However, this meant she could display less stock or sell fewer goods. Similarly, Alicia's story above about helping a colleague suggested the financial cost of her connectedness to others. Similarly, Kamila's drive to create opportunity for her sister and daughter through her street trading business had a negative impact on her business.

*"Sometimes like yesterday...I made uh...yesterday I only made a R5 for my sister...did I make money for me? (thinking)...no...I didn't. I didn't make money for me but I made a R5 for my sister- I sold a toothbrush. I sold, I made a R245 for my daughter, selling Avon"*

While Kamila happily shared her trading space with her daughter and sister to create job opportunities for them, she was aware of the restrictions it placed on her own business.

Sharyn: *"And, and who do you think has the most stuff, out of the 3 of*

*you, who's got the most stock do you think?"*

Kamila: *"(pauses) ....Um, my daughter now."*

Precious echoed the value of putting family first and hinted at the personal costs of connectedness.

*"I want to say oh I want to spoil myself to go on holiday, to do my hair whenever I want (laughs), to do what-to buy my own clothes... because right now I can't whenever I want to buy I just think 'oh my other daughter doesn't have this' then I don't buy I just think for my daughter then I do it for my daughter..."*

In summation, 'We're in the same boat' signifies important data about how the women viewed themselves in relation to others and the costs they incurred because of their value for being connected to those around them. This category indicates the importance of connectedness in fostering belonging, learning and assisting, which served to mutually benefit the women and surrounding others. Furthermore, the women incurred personal and business costs through favouring connectedness. These costs signify that the valued life the women were steering towards did not prioritise individual or economic prosperity over collective prosperity.

## **4.5. Conclusion**

The findings described in this chapter portrayed the women street traders journey aimed towards the life they valued. The findings revealed the women's attempt to steer towards this valued life against the various inhibiting conditions within their personal and external contexts. In addition, the findings uncovered the significance of interpersonal connectedness to the street traders and how this further impacted their journey by offering support for a valued life whilst also exacting costs on their personal and business development. How the women's experiences of street trading impacted their well-being will be expounded in the next chapter

# Chapter 5: Discussion

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## 5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides qualitative perspectives on the research question, “what are women’s experiences of street trading and how does it impact on their well-being?” These perspectives are discussed through Dewey’s lens of contextually embedded action (Cutchin et al. 2008) and its links to Bourdieu’s concepts of field and capital (Cutchin et al., 2008 and Laliberte Rudman, 2013). I begin by applying Dewey’s transactional lens to discuss how the women’s transaction with their complex realities brings about subjective and nuanced experiences of well-being. I also present the way that street trading contributed to the women’s well-being beyond the economic gains associated with street trading as a form of income generation. I then proceed by describing the contextually situated nature of the occupation and its impact on well-being (Laliberte Rudman, 2013). The description of the situated nature of street trading is twofold: Firstly by describing street trading as situated action towards well-being (as an end in view) and secondly by unpacking how context informs habits, ends in view and thus action through street trade. Finally I describe the occupational injustices the women experience and how these threaten their well-being. I end by framing how occupational therapy and occupational science, committed to health, community development, social transformation and justice through occupation (Watson, 2006), might contribute to the well-being of women street traders.

It should be indicated from the outset of the discussion that the intention is not to generalise the findings to all women survivalist street traders. Rather, by presenting the experiences of this group of women in their context at the time of the study, I provide a realistic base for occupational therapists and other interested parties to gain deeper understanding of the relationship between occupational engagement in street trading and well-being. Enlightenment about the uncertainties and complexities of women street traders’ subjective well-being experiences can provide potential markers for promoting the well-being of similar groups.

## **5.2. The complex nature of well-being for women street traders**

The dynamic and variable nature of well-being described in the women's narratives about street trading echo Sen's (1999:77) point, that we cannot reduce well-being to "one homogeneous good thing". The women's well-being existed despite difficult circumstances and as a fluid mixture of positive and negative factors located in emergent opportunity gains and costs. To maintain a sense of harmony in their lives the women traded-off one 'good thing' for another.

Doble and Santha (2008) suggest that meaning and satisfaction in one's occupational life are the essence of occupational well-being. However, meaning and satisfaction for the street traders arose from both advantageous and adverse factors in their occupational lives. If well-being is simply defined by experiences of meaning and satisfaction, we may miss out on the nuanced nature of well-being occurring within adverse situations. In chapter 3 (see Section 3.2.2), I drew from Wilcock (1999) and the Capabilities Approach (CA) (Robeyns, 2005) to define well-being as the freedom and ability to pursue, with dignity, the life one values as meaningful. Inherent in this definition is the possibility for a person to value risk-taking or destructive actions that may result in transient ill-being, despite the pursuit of overall well-being. Such alternative definitions hint at what Aldrich (2011) describes as nuances and uncertainties in concepts of well-being. Thus, Doble and Santha's (2008) definition should be held lightly to allow a conception of well-being that acknowledges the complex realities emanating from being occupied with street trade, comprising both advantageous and adverse situations. The impact of street trading on the women's well-being should therefore be understood in light of their subjective meaning making and satisfaction, including trade offs arising from 'doing' street trade and descriptions of what 'living well' entailed for them at particular points in time. (Doble and Santha, 2008). In short, well-being was hindered or enhanced as a subtext of transactions between what was subjectively meaningful and the emergent situations within context. Living well involved experiencing coherence between their values, contexts and the 'doing' of street trade. The following section describes the aspects of living well.

### **5.2.1. Surviving and thriving as well-being**

One particular way that the nuanced nature of well-being came across was its presence during times of hand-to-mouth living as well as times of thriving. Well-being

was not necessarily tied to situations of personal benefit or “plain sailing”. The women’s habits would shift towards different ends-in-view for well-being according to their situations. These ends-in-view were at times survivalist and at other times aimed at thriving. Similarly, Clark’s (2003) survey<sup>17</sup> on perceptions of well-being in South Africa highlighted the dualities of surviving and thriving. Clark (2003) found that when describing perceptions of well-being respondents would emphasise different capabilities: while they valued the finer things in life<sup>18</sup>, they also emphasised their basic needs when describing well-being. Thus, occupation can enable well-being through meeting basic survival needs as well as through fostering positive sense of self, relationships and certain more complex values. Likewise, Sen (1993) explains that the functionings germane to well-being can range from the basic (such as adequate nourishment and health) to complex (such as self-respect or community participation). In a study of the meanings of occupations Reed, Hocking and Smythe (2010) found that the meaning of an occupation is tied to that which calls one to engage in it. They noted that the meaningful call to engage in occupations could be burdensome or joyful and that occupational engagement was directed by the most significant call or care in a given moment. Similarly, the insights around surviving and thriving emphasise the value of considering the impact of contextual and temporal conditions on habits (Dewey, 1998) and how subjective experiences of occupation inform well-being (Doble and Santha, 2008).

### 5.2.2. Social connectedness

Social connectedness was also central to the nuanced variations of wellbeing realised through street trading. Thus, the value and meaning of street trade evident in the findings exists beyond economic gain. Clark’s (2003) survey identified that income generation was most valued because it enabled the support of family and friends. Similarly, Evans (2002) argued that the greatest life satisfaction is derived from social interaction that shape identities, values and goals. The advantages of connectedness described by the women reveal street trading as a means for meaningful social networks that enabled the expression of what is valued through their occupational participation. Likewise, Reed et al. (2010) found that occupations create opportunity to connect and be with others, revealing meaning that goes beyond the occupation itself. The women’s value and pursuit of collective well-being suggests significance of

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<sup>17</sup> Clark’s (2003) survey evaluated the perceptions of well-being amongst those living in rural villages and urban townships in South Africa.

<sup>18</sup> For example: good clothing, beauty and the ability to do what one pleases.

occupations that afford social connectedness. Ramugondo and Kronenberg (2013:7) suggest that occupations can be seen as "...‘carriers’ of human relations as part of experiences that matter", acknowledging the collective nature of occupations and their contribution to liberating or oppressive human relationships. They posit that investigating how human relations drive human occupations will support occupational justice approaches in occupational science and occupational therapy practice.

The women described the opportunities in street trading for reciprocal responsibility towards the transformation of others' lives and for greater communal freedom and development. Aside from the significant contribution of informal trade to the national economy (Mitullah, 2003), the women's occupational engagement was viewed as significant and meaningful through its contribution to meeting the needs of and providing a valuable service to others. The high value and meaning the women gave to social connectedness portrayed well-being experiences espoused by favoring, at times, the communal good. This value can be likened to the African philosophy of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is an interactive ethic and way of being that speaks to human interconnectedness and the reciprocal responsibility held by a deep connection to others and, through which people can come into their own (Cornell and Van Marle, 2005). Ubuntu philosophy expresses a "...freedom to be together in a way that enhances everyone's ability to transform themselves in their society" (Cornell and Van Marle, 2005:207). Ubuntu philosophy is complex and its relation to conceptualizing well-being for street traders would necessitate an entire investigation of its own. I mention it here to flag the link between social and cultural embedded habits that may inform the women's actions through street trading towards well-being.

On the other hand, social connectedness had certain adverse affects on the women's business growth and economic development, potentiating negative implications for their well-being. Von Broembsen (2010) identified the opportunity costs women informal traders face when prioritising family care and household maintenance. She identified these costs as resulting from market-based approaches<sup>19</sup> that fail to address the socio-economic context and gender roles that impact women's ability to achieve business growth and live meaningful lives (Von Broembsen, 2010).

Having set a platform for conceptualizing well-being in light of the women street traders experiences, I will now describe how the occupation of street trading is

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<sup>19</sup> Programmes targeting economic rather than social outcomes (Von Broembsen, 2010)

unfolding action towards these fluid forms of well-being through habit and context transactions.

### **5.3. The occupation of street trading as action towards well-being**

Using theories of action, street trading is expressed as the women's action to harmonise their lives with their context, and to direct their lives towards well-being. In this section I frame the occupation of street trading through a transactional lens by describing the ends-in-view and habit formation (shaped by contextual influences) that informed the women's occupational engagement in street trading. In addition, I describe street trading as action towards well-being in the sense that it portrays the women's agency in steering towards living harmoniously within their contexts, and thus living well.

#### **5.3.1. Aspirations and vulnerability in habit formation for street trading**

Similar to Dewey's construct of 'ends-in-view' (see section 3.2), the women's aspirations (their dreams and beliefs about future possibilities through their engaging in the occupation of street trading) served as a compass guiding the use of their capabilities and actions towards the lives they value. Neves and Du Toit (2009) explain how aspirations help individuals to reposition themselves outside of marginality, through societal contributions as self-employed entrepreneurs (Neves and Du Toit, 2009). The women's shifting aspirations and their attempts to re-position themselves in society through street trading demonstrated the fluid way that street trading makes functional coordination with situations possible (Dewey, 1998). The women's aspirations shaped their actions, were contextually embedded and, were always changing ends-in-view.

Social, economic and cultural contextual factors impacted the women's aspirations and the actions they took to achieve well-being. The women's behaviors, desires, capacities, morals, and will, arose from processes where social and cultural structures were internalised in the individual, shaping aspirations and the disposition to act (Cutchin et al., 2008). This process of internalisation fits with the Deweyan perspective on motivation, which posits that one's impetus to act is an unplanned outcome of contextual conditions that influence already unfolding action (Cutchin et al., 2008).

Hence, street traders' aspirations motivate action or their disposition to act (habits) may be unplanned and resulting from the conditions of their street trading. In his discussion around the unequal distribution of the capacity to aspire, Nathan (2005) explains how contextual factors can affect one's aspirations. Aspirations are key in allowing individuals to dream about the lives they could live and to connect steps to these future goals (Nathan, 2005). Two particular socio-historical contexts were noted as key structures that shaped the women's aspirations and dispositions to act through street trading, namely family heritage and vulnerability.

The disposition to participate in street trading was shaped by the sociocultural contexts of the women's family heritage and influenced their belief that this occupation would lead them towards the lives that they valued. Similarly, Reed, Hocking and Smythe (2010:142) identified that what calls people to their occupations is linked to an individual's culture. One's culture, tradition and family upbringing helps determine what occupations should be engaged in, giving certain occupations meaning (Reed, Hocking and Smythe, 2010).

Vulnerability and deprivation also influenced the women's dispositions to participate in street trading. Intergenerational poverty and oppression in the women's social and historical contexts resulted in their limited work experience, training and education, which shaped their aspirations within and through street trading. Bourdieu (cited in Swartz, 1997) noted that habitus sets limits for action by influencing individuals of different social classes and limiting them to certain expected actions. The women's socio-historical contexts of poverty, deprivation and oppression not only shaped the impetus to engage in street trading but also restricted action to street trade through limited personal resources. Thus the women's predisposition to engage in the occupation of street trading was linked to socio-historical roots in a way that was meaningful as well as arising out of a position of vulnerability.

In summation, street traders' habits guided them towards street trading as an option for acting within their contexts. However, these habits also influenced the construction of their aspirations. The tension between habits and aspirations influencing the women's occupational engagement in street trading is evident in their nuanced experiences of well-being.

### 5.3.2. Shifting nature of action towards well-being

Dewey (1998 cited in Cutchin et al., 2008) perceived aspirations or goals as shifting ends-in-view, where actions and the resultant learning inform further action and re-shape aspirations. The women's initial aspirations for street trading, such as putting food on the table or escaping an abusive environment, did not remain the ultimate goal for them. As the women acted in their situations their aspirations were re-shaped. For some, their aspirations, or ends-in-view, became grander. The ever-changing nature of the women's ends-in-view and aspirations demonstrates how the purpose of occupational engagement can shift. Nelson (1988) acknowledged that the goal orientation for occupational engagement could indeed evolve over time, affecting what might constitute well-being. He points out that the structure of occupations (or occupational form) is dependent on sociocultural realities that determine the norms, values and guidelines for engaging in an occupation.

The women's aspirations changed as their actions unfolded in dynamic contexts toward functional coordination. For instance, their aspirations were shaped by their socio-history, but not necessarily determined by it (Nathan, 2005). Although at times driven by basic survival needs, their desired end goal was not solely and always about survival and business but to improve their opportunities and those of their families. Neves and Du Toit's (2009) respondents placed similar emphasis on the desire to improve the opportunities for their families. Action in relation to aspirations shifted between survival, personal benefit, family benefit, business growth and meaningful interaction as the women aimed to live out valued lives through unfolding situations. Street trading enabled continuing and adjusting action attuned to shifting ends-in-view, allowing the women to meet occupational needs in various contextual conditions. For example, the flexibility associated with self-employment and business ownership enabled the women to meet various needs within their productive, reproductive or community maintenance roles depending on the situation. The ability to meet these needs enhanced their experience of occupational well-being (Doble and Santha, 2008).

Dewey's transactionalism has helped to frame the women's impetus to act through street trading towards well-being by uncovering their contextually imbedded habits, aspirations and shifting ends-in-view (Cutchin et al., 2008). To shed further light on how occupational engagement in street trading can be seen as agency aimed at well-

being, I will describe the positive well-being outcomes achieved or afforded through street trading.

### **5.3.3. The valuable options and realised functionings for well-being through street trade**

Street trading was noted to afford harmonious transactions between the women and their environments where socio-culturally informed habits gave rise to meaningful action, despite difficult conditions. The opportunities and benefits the women experienced through street trading afforded their agency to act in and on their situations, to do, be and become that which they had reason to value (Wilcock, 1999). Street trading thus afforded the valuable options (opportunities) as well as realised functionings (benefits), which the CA describes as key for the freedom to live the life one values. Drawing on the CA (Robeyns, 2005) and transactionalism (Cutchin et al., 2008), I propose that the women's agency towards well-being unfolded through actively exploiting the valuable options they encountered and the doing and being they realised through street trading. In addition, I explain how the women encountered limited freedom for achieving well-being through their available options and functionings.

The opportunities for survival, economic development and betterment realised through street trading informed the women's actions and thus the way they engaged in the occupation. The opportunities the women saw and took hold of can be likened to 'situations', which are "transitions to and possibilities of later experiences" (Dewey, 1980:236). Dewey (1998) noted that contextual conditions or 'situations', including various constraints and opportunities, are fundamental to people's habits and their connectedness to context (Cutchin et al., 2008). Street trading was a response to the opportunities within the women's situations, as well as coordination with these situations. As such, it was flexible and sensitive to the influences and uncertainty that came with opportunity (Cutchin et al., 2008), serving as a means to take hold of valued possibilities for a better life.

Kuo (2011) describes occupation as a means for creative improvisation towards desirable ends. She suggests that creativity and imagination about future possibilities leads to transactions that foster meaningful experiences. Similarly, the women's ability to uncover positive opportunities amidst difficult circumstances illustrates creativity

towards meaningful, desired ends. Dewey identified that intelligence and imagination surface in action when individuals deliberate on possible courses of action (Cutchin et al., 2008). Through imagining possibilities towards the lives they value and deciding on best possible actions, the women were able to creatively steer their lives towards well-being, despite difficult situations. Thus creativity enhanced ongoing action towards well-being. Fesmire (2003:66) states that capabilities to create opportunity, such as that displayed by the street traders, are “imbued with sociocultural meanings and rooted in problematic conditions”. Despite these difficult conditions, the women presented imaginative action towards new ideals. Robeyn’s (2005) iterates that it is the valuable options (such as the positive opportunities the women perceived) that truly count in creating freedom for well-being. With these options, the women could choose what they most value and in this way access degrees of well-being or ill-being. However, these choices did not occur in a vacuum but were influenced by powerful contextual conditions and their resultant affect on the women’s well-being. Such conditions are discussed later (in section 5.3.).

The women developed various skills as well as a positive self-identity through street trading. In addition, they described the positive experience of exercising their capabilities and the decision-making freedom and flexibility they experienced through street trading. The skills developed and capabilities realised through street trading enabled harmonious coordination within difficult conditions through occupational engagement. The occupation of street trade was thus a means for creating “experiences that truly matter” (Kuo, 2011: 137). Street trading afforded the women a positive self-identity that was attributed to the purposefulness, affirmed by others and personally experienced within street trading (see section 5.2. above). Furthermore, street trading created a space to develop and exercise unique and creative capabilities. The women were able to develop and exercise skillful and creative ways of acting in and on their environments through the occupation of street trade, towards functional coordination and well-being. Dewey held that imaginative experience was to endeavor beyond the conventional in order to creatively tap into new possibilities (Fesmire, 2003). Similarly, Reed, Hocking and Smythe (2010) found that occupations allow individuals to present themselves as capable, having stamina and pushing boundaries as they journey towards who they are becoming. Through imaginative use of the resources available to them, such as public space, media and relationships, the women were able to accrue skills and to learn and practice business capabilities.

Finally, the women experienced certain freedoms through street trading (such as decision-making freedom and flexibility), which enhanced their well-being. As self-employed business owners the women were able to enjoy the flexibility of street trading, enhancing their sense of choice and control in their occupational engagement and their lives. Choice and control are significant experiences contributing to well-being within occupation. Christiansen (1999) stated that exercising choice and having a sense of control allows the expression of selfhood and identity. Occupational choice and control are also important contributors to personal and social transformation through occupational engagement. People's exertion of choice and control create everyday experiences of power in various contexts (Townsend, 1997). When opportunities to make choices are enhanced, individuals feel more control (Pierce, 2003), while a lack of control within occupations is found to have negative effects on health (Kirsh, 2007).

While street trading afforded the development and expression of capabilities towards well-being, the benefits and opportunities presented in the findings reflect a limited range of valued possibilities towards well-being. The opportunities afforded the women did not necessarily result in the effective ability to consistently live valued lives. Galvaan (2012) suggests the existence of opportunity to participate in occupations may not translate to actual occupational performance. She argues that instead of focusing on the current occupational performance of vulnerable groups, one should look at potential occupational participation and the choices involved in realizing those occupations (Galvaan, 2012). Similarly, taking hold of opportunities and developing capabilities towards meaningful participation in street trading may not translate to well-being enhancing occupational performance and engagement, as these are influenced by underlying occupational determinants such as political and economic systems (Wilcock, 1999). Additionally, discourse around capabilities translating to well-being has critiqued the application of Sen's CA, in that moving from functioning to capability is complicated by elements of choice (Robeyns, 2005). It has also been argued that certain capabilities should be foregrounded as central for achieving human well-being (Nussbaum, 2003). Drawing on the above insights, and in light of the findings, I posit that the development of capabilities through opportunity and improved functioning may result in limited experiences of well-being due to contextual determinants and aspects of choice affecting the occupational performance of street trading. The following section further illustrates how context (such as institutional, political and economic systems) impacted the women's capabilities, or freedom to live the lives they valued.

## 5.4. Occupational injustices threatening well-being

The restrictive contextual situations described provide insight into the women's ability and freedom to achieve harmonious transactions and enhance their well-being through street trading. The women's agency towards and experiences of well-being through engaging in street trade is hung against the backdrop of the difficult conditions in spite of- and through which- they navigated. According to Whiteford et al. (2005:10), "No human action is independent of the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in which it occurs. The women's capabilities to lead the lives they value, and to achieve well-being, can thus be situated as issues of occupational justice. Therefore, the conception of the environment is key for a more complete knowledge about the occupation of street trade.

Context is now considered regarding its influence on the scope of the women's freedom and ability to be well through street trading, highlighting how institutional barriers result in occupational injustices that reproduce the women's position of limited power in the field of street trading. Bourdieu's concepts of position, field and capital are applied to formulate how the occupation of street trade is situated within the political, economic and social contexts and how these factors influence the occupational injustices that contribute to ill-being experiences. While occupational therapists acknowledge the value of all occupations it is equally recognised that occupations are un/undervalued occupational injustices ensue (Townsend and Wilcock, 2004). Thus, by highlighting contextually embedded occupational injustices I provide information on the landscape in which occupational therapists should work to enhance women street traders' well-being.

### 5.4.1. Political barriers and restricted trade

The legislative issues and bureaucracy associated with street trading contributed to conditions for occupational injustice. The City of Cape Town's policy on street trade states that traders must hold permits to trade legally in the city (City of Cape Town, 2004), yet the limited accessibility and flexibility of trade permits restricted the traders' choice and control within their occupational engagement. On the other hand, trading without a permit resulted in experiences of restricted choice and control over when and how to trade as the women avoided expensive fines and the confiscation of their goods by the police. The strong legislative barriers around street trading -an

occupation valued for its flexibility (Bromley, 2000)- resulted in the women's limited freedom for choice and control over aspects of their street trading. Restricted choice and control, compounded by limited resources, caused trade offs and costs as the women sought ways to functionally coordinate their actions within limiting political conditions. Actions shaped by socio-culturally informed dispositions were deemed illegal and marginal in Cape Town where by-laws have naturalised certain norms for street trading. Thus, a disjuncture between habitus and field (Laliberte Rudman and Huot, 2013) created uncertainty around how and when the women would engage in street trading and their sense of belonging.

Mitullah (2003) echoes how restrictive by-laws and regulations have made street trading essentially illegal, contributing to societal perceptions of the occupation as a nuisance. In this way, the women traded a legal status for the possibility of survival and well-being through their work, perpetuating difficult situations of stigma, social marginalisation and mistreatment. Furthermore, placing law enforcement as the primary mechanisms for managing street traders in the CBD underwrites perceptions of traders as criminal and problematic (Mitullah, 2003). Using Bourdieu's position on the state's role in limiting action (Cutchin et al., 2008), it is argued that the women's occupational engagement in street trading is restricted to socially marginalizing, and at times survivalist, action. For example, to adhere to the by-laws around street trading the women adapted their dispositions to act within the norms of their field to functionally coordinate with their environments, resulting in actions that promoted hand-to-mouth, survivalist living. Alternatively if they continued to engage in street trading through means outside of the political norms of street trade in Cape Town, they perpetuated their marginality and illegal status which were further inculcated by the role of police in ensuring that their actions align with bylaws (Cutchin et al., 2008). The criminalization and marginalization associated with street trading reveals the low value assigned to street trading as an income generating occupation.

The women's limited participation in decision making around policy, legislation and planning pertaining to street trade further impinged on their choice and control for actions towards well-being. For example the location, position and design of their stalls and poor infrastructure of the markets restricted the women's freedom for experiencing the full benefits and opportunities of this occupation. While the women's exposure to extreme weather conditions and crime had obvious negative affects on their well-being, infrastructural barriers contributed to further economic implications.

The obvious consequences of poor infrastructure involved the women's susceptibility to ill-health and economic disadvantage.

Furthermore, limited involvement in decision-making around street trading infrastructure and bylaws restricted the women's freedom to engage meaningfully in this occupation. Limited participation in these processes restricted their abilities to experience harmonious transactions with their environments. Mitullah (2003) and Brown, Lyons and Dankoco's (2010) descriptions of poor communication and association between the authorities regulating street trade and the traders themselves, resound through the women's experiences. The women had little ability to lobby for service provision or infrastructure and had no influence on the policies developed to manage their operations (Mitullah, 2003). Apart from the aforementioned contributions to ill-health, the absence of the women's voice in urban management can be seen as a statement about their marginal citizenship in the urban spaces where they work (Brown, Lyons and Dankoco, 2010), contributing to experiences of disenfranchisement and occupational marginalisation.

#### **5.4.2. Economic barriers and limited capabilities**

The women experienced the brunt of difficult economic conditions influenced by global and local economic contexts. Increased competition within the growing informal economy -partly due to trade liberalisation -and, a recessive economic climate have impacted the women's freedom and ability to enhance their well-being through street trading. Economic barriers contributed to the women's intermittent struggle for survival and their access to certain comforts in street trading. These difficult economic conditions were worsened by the women's lack of financial and material resources to serve as buffers in times of need, resulting in limited choice and flexibility around street trade activities when survival necessitated longer working hours, less time for family and risking ill-health. Economic conditions limited access to financial services while the few micro-finance institutions serving informal traders have high interest rates, offering limited support (Mitullah, 2003). In light of limited economic support for street trade, the women relied on ROSCAs<sup>20</sup>. Although Mitullah (2003) argues that ROSCAs themselves offer low levels of financial support that are inadequate for business growth. The findings showed that this important form of social and economic capital enabled the street traders to access smaller commodities and materials.

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<sup>20</sup> Rotating Savings Credit Associations (Also known as "stokvels")

The difficult contextual conditions discussed, impinged the women's occupational rights and translated to occupational injustice. The field of their action is stabilised by dominant political and economic structures and street traders' limited power for naturalizing social norms persists. Within these fields the women are criminal, disenfranchised and left with limited choice and control to improvise their dispositions (based on important social values like family legacy) for well-being enhancing occupational engagement in street trading. Restricted choice and control diminished the women's decision-making power over everyday aspects of their street trading, translating to occupational marginalization. Infrastructure and legislation around street trade in the CBD contributed to unsatisfactory work conditions, social exclusion and ill-health, limiting their development through participation in street trade, causing occupational deprivation.

From the CA (Robeyns, 2005) and occupational science (Doble and Santha, 2008; Whalley Hammell, 2009) perspectives, the occupational injustices the women experienced demonstrate the impingement of the opportunities and functionings for meeting their needs and functional coordination with their environments towards valued livelihoods. Thus, the women do indeed experience compromised well-being and ill-being in their participation in the occupation of street trade. One argument around the presence of this dialectic in the quality and achievement of well-being within street trading is around the area of capital and position as presented by Bourdieu.

#### **5.4.3. Capital and field disjuncture reproduces occupational injustices**

From the discussion around togetherness, aspirations and values it is noted that social capital is an objectively valued resource contributing to the women's aspirations and the formation of habitus associated with street trading (Swartz, 1997). However, this valued social capital is not necessarily the explicit end of street trade, rather the process of acting through street trade is rooted in it, making social capital more of an end-in-view (Cutchin et al., 2008:162). Similarly for the women street traders, enhancing a sense of togetherness was not necessarily the final goal of their street trading, yet it influenced their action towards the ultimate end of living the lives they value, in functional coordination with their environment.

Bourdieu described fields as spaces structured by various forms of capital that become the sites of actions that either reproduce or challenge capital and power (Swartz, 1997). The women's ability to legitimise valued forms of social capital in the field where street trading practices unfold is related to power and their position in that field. There is a discrepancy in the form of capital valued by and most accessible to the women (social capital), and the capital reproduced by those in positions of power (economic and political capital). Therefore, while the women experience well-being through street trading, their position in the social space of street trading remains marginal in relation to societal norms. Occupational injustice is experienced through systems that reinforce forms of capital outside of the social connectedness that informs their actions. This creates conditions in which the women experience limited choice and control within their occupational participation in street trading. Limited choice and control restricts the women's freedom to live (with dignity) the lives they value and, to functionally coordinate in their social, economic and political environments for well-being. Sen conceives such freedom as development (Von Broembsen, 2010). Thus, the occupational injustices the women street traders face affects their ability to engage in street trading in way that fosters well-being and development beyond vulnerability.

## **5.5. Implications for occupational therapy**

Von Broembsen (2010) suggests that the income generating strategies of street trade be viewed as a critical component of well-being, rather than as a business issue. Such an approach calls for the consideration of social, economic and political structures as well as the physical environment and how these impact well-being (Von Broembsen, 2010). The discussion of the findings of this ethnography has probed at some of these factors pertaining to the experiences of survivalist women street traders in central Cape Town. Contextual considerations around this occupation and the habits and ends-in-view shaping street traders' transactions with these contexts, is a step towards the call to situate approaches to informal trade beyond the scope of business and econometric measures of poverty (Von Broembsen, 2010).

The study brings to light that street trading is more than an economic opportunity for the women's development and well-being. Occupational engagement in street trading stretches beyond income generating activity for barely meeting basic needs. While

street trading does indeed provide an opportunity to survive at times when survival is tenuous, the women experienced glimpses of the lives they value through participating in this occupation. It is thus evident that merely improving the women's economic development or facilitating graduation to the formal economy will not necessarily ensure well-being. While a genuine concern remains for achieving the economic development of those at the bottom of the income chain in order to expand their capabilities, economic growth "cannot be considered, in itself, the ultimate yardstick of development or well-being" (Evans, 2002:55). Indeed, occupational therapy must acknowledge that survivalist street traders' well-being is not solely achieved through enhancing their abilities but through endeavours that address the conditions of their lives (Whalley Hammell and Iwama, 2012). The nuanced way that the occupation of street trade contributes to human development and well-being suggests the important role that occupational therapy could play when positioned alongside the structures traditionally dealing with street trade in central Cape Town.

The structural barriers the women street traders faced and the limited freedom to fully and holistically realise the lives they value through street trading, restricted their ability to develop beyond vulnerability and to experience well-being. Development and well-being for the women street traders, according to the definition of well-being informed by Sen and Wilcock, thus requires the elimination of un-freedoms of poverty and social deprivation (Sengupta, 2004) that constrain equal participation (Von Broembsen, 2010). The elimination of the women's un-freedoms towards equal participation in the occupation of street trading is an issue of human and occupational rights (Whalley Hammell and Iwama, 2012) and should not be ignored by the structures traditionally dealing with street trade in central Cape Town. Whalley Hammell and Iwama (2012) propose a critical practice of occupational therapy that considers the inseparability of person and context (as I have indicated through transactionalism) in addressing both individuals' abilities and contextual conditions. Armed with knowledge around this contextually embedded occupation and the transactional process of the women's participation in street trading towards well-being (as defined by the women street traders), occupational therapists may be equipped for enhancing the well-being and development of women street traders.

### 5.5.1. A contextually situated occupational therapy approach to enhancing well-being

The implications for occupational therapy practice will be discussed in light of the key findings around street traders' subjective descriptions of well-being, their action towards well-being through street trade and, the contexts in which these actions unfold. The inseparability of the women and their contexts in producing their occupational engagement casts light on the kind of approach and impact occupational therapists might have to affect change for well-being in the lives of this vulnerable group.

The role of connectedness in the women's experiences of well-being through street trading retells how occupation "rarely, if ever is individual in nature" (Dickie, Cutchin and Humphry, 2006: 83). Occupational therapy needs to cultivate an understanding of the impact of social and cultural factors on occupational participation in street trading. In addition, a critical occupational therapy approach will require an understanding of how collectives influence occupational engagement in street trading. Despite the evidence suggesting the significance of engaging in occupations with and for others, occupational therapy understanding of the collective nature of occupation remains underdeveloped (Whalley Hammell and Iwama, 2012). Recent occupational science literature has begun excavating the concept of 'collective occupation' and how it may inform our understanding of occupation, focusing predominantly on how individuals, groups and populations engage in occupations at these levels (Fogelberg and Frauwirth, 2010; Ramugondo and Kronenberg, 2013). The significance of social connectedness in shaping action and ends-in-view within street trading suggests room for developing knowledge around the meaning and influence of collectives on this occupation and the women's intentions for occupational participation towards collective well-being.

There is a call within occupational science for practice that understands and can respond to transactions between social contexts and human occupation (Pollard, Kronenberg and Sakellariou, 2009; Fogelberg and Frauwirth, 2010; Galheigo, 2011a; Whalley Hammell and Iwama, 2012). The indivisibility of social and cultural contexts and women street traders' disposition to act towards collective well-being provides crucial information about the occupation of street trade. This information begins to set the platform for occupational therapy interventions with street traders where individual occupational well-being is intricately linked to collective well-being.

In addition, occupational therapy intervention with street traders will require a nuanced understanding of well-being that accounts for the women's reality of limited choice, control and the opportunity to affect change over their lives (Whalley Hammell and Iwama, 2012). While participating in street trade revealed the women's agency towards realising the valued livelihoods, their realities reflected persistent poverty, vulnerability and marginalisation. Indeed, varied levels of well-being can be experienced within conditions of occupational injustice, such as the women's agency to realise certain opportunities and benefits through street trading. However, thinking that the agency afforded through street trading will translate to the women's ability to shape their own destinies is flawed (Von Broembsen, 2010) and interventions that focus simply on improving the women's capabilities and enhancing their agency will have limited affect (Whalley Hammell and Iwama, 2012). I propose that occupational therapy approaches should work towards occupational justice, social development and holistic well-being while acknowledging and enhancing the person/context transactions already contributing to degrees of well-being.

Finally, in addressing the inseparability of the women and their context, occupational therapy approaches must also be directed to the contextual conditions of their occupation and lives (Whalley Hammell and Iwama, 2012). Occupational therapy would need to respond to the "pervasive, unrelenting disempowerment and socio-economic vulnerability and marginality" associated with persistent poverty (Von Broembsen, 2010: 2). Occupational therapy practice that addresses issues of human (and occupational) rights is politically positioned (Galheigo, 2011b; Whalley Hammell and Iwama, 2012). A critical practice of occupational therapy that addresses human rights issues requires the development of political competencies and strategies in the profession in order to affect social change (Galheigo, 2011a). For example, addressing the occupational injustices that street traders experience will require challenging hegemonic structures that reproduce the limited choice, control and marginalisation associated with street trade. This may involve contributing to policy formation around street trading in Cape Town, lobbying for the participation of street traders themselves in policy formation and planning of trade locations and infrastructure. Occupational therapy contribution could occur at a macro and meso level, consulting on structuring the physical environment for street trade and raising social awareness towards the full inclusion of street traders as citizens in Cape Town. Contextual level interventions could occur simultaneously with individual level

interventions to raise traders' occupational consciousness<sup>21</sup> and foster transactions with context that promote functional co-ordination with their environment and contribute to well-being and development.

## 5.6. Summary

The discussion has evidenced street trading as an important and meaningful opportunity for the women's agency towards well-being. A variety of personal and contextual factors drive women to street trade and add meaning to their engagement in this occupation. This disconfirmed my assumption that women engaged in street trading primarily out of desperation and limited choice. Well-being has been described as emerging from a variety of social, economic and political circumstances that shape action and ends-in-view, and frame functional coordination for women street traders within their contexts. The quality of the women's well-being experiences varied according to the trade-offs made and the opportunity costs of aiming towards living the life they value. This confirmed my assumptions that street trading has the potential to impact well-being both positively and negatively. The mixture of components involved in the women's experiences of well-being highlights the need to consider the complex realities comprising the livelihoods of the chronically poor and the significance of understand the contextually situated nature of human occupation. There are implications for occupational therapy practice at macro- and meso-contextual levels, to consult on structuring the physical environment for street trade and raise social awareness for the full inclusion of street traders as citizens. Contextual level interventions could occur alongside individual level interventions to raise traders' occupational consciousness, fostering transactions with context that promote harmony with their environment and contributing to well-being and development.

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<sup>21</sup> Ongoing awareness of hegemony and how it is perpetuated by occupations, as well as the ability to appraise resulting consequences of this process for well-being (Kronenberg, Pollard and Ramugondo, 2011:2)

# Chapter 6: Recommendations, limitations and conclusion

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## 6.1. Recommendations for future research

### 6.1.1. Research on the diversity of well-being associated with occupations

Further inquiry into women street traders' definition of well-being could clarify the relationship between the occupation of street trading and well-being, responding to the increasing need for occupational therapists to understand and define well-being for various client groups (Aldrich, 2011; Whalley Hammell and Iwama, 2013). Furthermore, research to investigate what well-being means for this group may inform broader occupational therapy and occupational science conceptions of well-being that consider the uncertainties and nuances of well-being (Aldrich, 2011), particularly within the complex realities of those living in poverty and engaging in other survivalist productive occupations like street trading. Such research may open the field of occupational therapy practice with the vast numbers of individuals engaging in survivalist informal economic activity in South Africa.

### 6.1.2. Investigating the role of collective well-being towards social change

Deeper investigation into the social, economic and political components of the occupation of street trading would be crucial in formulating strategies for critical and political practices of occupational therapy, as proposed by Whalley Hammell and Iwama (2013) and Pollard, Sakellariou and Kronenberg (2008). The social connectedness element of street trading could add to occupational science research around the collective nature of occupations. In particular, the ethnographic study revealed the profound influence of collectives on how and why people engage in certain occupations, as well as in defining well-being.

Further investigation into what collective well-being entails could inform occupational therapy practice with individuals who ascribe to such philosophies. I propose that the concept of collective well-being could have promising implications for occupational therapy practice that works towards social change. Street trading is a significant occupation in the urban informal sector where the marginalised and poor sustain livelihoods whilst contributing to city life. Research addressing alternative forms of informal economic activity in the City of Cape Town, from the perspective of collective well-being, could be crucial towards developing public spaces and cities that promote the well-being of all who exist within them. With a growing understanding about the role and contributions of street trading, occupational therapists could work to promote health in the lives of street traders, as well as in the cities and spaces where this occupation unfolds.

### **6.1.3. Generating knowledge about informal and survivalist occupations**

Further research on informal and survivalist productive occupations could be key in opening doors for a social practice of occupational therapy in South African. Research for knowledge generation around such occupations, like street trading, could contribute to effective occupational therapy practice with those seeking to escape chronic poverty. The social practice of occupational therapy in South Africa would benefit from understanding the potential for informal or survivalist occupations to enhance well-being and bring about social development and justice for vulnerable people.

## **6.2. Limitations**

Three main limitations were noted in the ethnographic study.

- ❖ Due to time and resource restrictions, participants were only selected if they could converse in English. It is likely that the depth and richness of information obtained through interviews would have been enhanced if participants were able to respond in their first languages, allowing for fuller expression of their experiences.
- ❖ I was only able to conduct 3 interviews with Precious and was unable to make contact with her thereafter. This resulted in reduced information for corroborating findings as well as a limited ability to convey Precious' experiences of street trading through the study.

### 6.3. Conclusion

This thesis set out to investigate women's experiences of street trading in Cape Town and how they perceive street trading impacts their well-being. The women experienced street trading as a valuable opportunity for agency towards the lives they value. The data revealed that the women valued lives in which they could meet basic daily needs, transcend survivalist living, express their faith and experience social connectedness. Interestingly, the findings revealed the complex reality of the women's experiences of well-being through street trading. Well-being was experienced in seasons of merely surviving and in seasons of thriving, revealing nuanced and uncertain subjective experiences of well-being through street trading. The women's experiences of well-being were deeply tied to valued social connectedness and a sense of reciprocal responsibility for collective well-being.

The women's experiences of street trading revealed the occupation to be a valued means for taking hold of the lives they valued. The street traders' action towards well-being arose from transactions between their aspirations, goals and agency, and constraining contexts and conditions. The action towards the lives they valued unfolded as the women pursued harmonious transactions within their occupational environments. Due to the nuanced and uncertain nature of well-being for the women, action to achieve well-being shifted as they adapted to various conditions and situations. The women did indeed experience valuable options for well-being and were able to realise capabilities for well-being through street trading. However, these women's ability to achieve the lives they valued through street trading, and thus to achieve ultimate harmony with their environments, was inseparable from context.

Contextual constraints limited the women's choice and control within their action towards well-being (according to the lives they valued). Political and economic conditions contributed to restricting the women's freedom to live the lives they valued through street trading. As a result, while the women achieved various degrees and quality of well-being, they experienced occupational injustice and reduced capabilities for well-being through street trading. In conclusion, well-being for street traders presented as a fluid state of existence that was constantly influenced by participating in the occupation of street trading.

# Appendices

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## Appendix 1: Information sheet for informed consent

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Sharyn. I am studying a Masters degree in occupational therapy (OT) at the University of Cape Town and therefore need to do research.

The research I am doing is to learn about how street trading affects well-being for self employed, women selling goods in the city. OTs are interested in how the things people do impact on their well-being. Part of our work is to understand how people's "doing" is affected by their context and how this impacts their well-being. I am doing this research so that I can help OTs to learn about how supportive environments can be created for street traders to achieve well-being through their trading. This may help OTs to work with street traders and enable participation that leads to street trader well-being.

I have identified you as someone who could be involved in this project because:

- 1) You match the criteria of my project because you are a female that speaks English and runs her own small businesses selling goods in the city
- 2) The organizations helping me (Department of Economic and Human Development in Cape Town and StreetNet) identified you as an important person to include.

Participating in the study will involve the following things:

- 1) Being interviewed no more than 3 times over a 4 week period, each interview will be an hour or less
- 2) Being observed doing some daily activities around trading (e.g.: Setting up, selling, interacting with customers).
- 3) Being given a disposable camera to take photos of your activities and experiences during a normal week of trading.

It may also be important for you to know that all original photos you take will be given to you at the end of the research project. If I add any copies of your photos to the printed final draft of the research project I will ask your permission first. I will keep your personal details (name, location and contact details) confidential.

Being involved in the research should not come at any cost to you, however it may require some time out of your day. If you agree to talk to me, you will do so at a time that is most convenient for you. You will not be taken away from your work to be involved or to answer questions unless you agree to do so. Refreshments will be provided during the interview.

You are free to choose whether or not you would like to be involved and if you choose to participate you can decide to withdraw at any time. You have the right to know what is happening at any time in the research so please feel free to ask questions at any stage. I do not believe that participating in this study will put you at risk in any way. However, if you experience significant problems or difficulties I may refer you to local support organizations, where applicable. The main benefit of being involved is raising awareness of the problems you encounter in your work and learning where to go for support in street trading. Another potential benefit may be that this research will contribute to future support in your work through occupational therapy interventions, to enhance the wellbeing you experience through working.

If you have further questions please contact me on 071 889 2588

Thank you,  
Sharyn Sassen.

HSREC Reference number: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor contact details (School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, UCT) :

Madeleine Duncan & Roshan Galvaan (Supervisors)-	[021] 406 6401
Health Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee-	[021] 406 6751
Prof. Blockman-	[021] 4066496
Sharyn Sassen (Researcher)-	[+27] 718892588

## Appendix 2: Informed consent form

MSc Occupational Therapy Minor Dissertation, University of Cape Town.

The occupation of street trading: Women's experiences and the impact on well-being

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read (or had read to me by \_\_\_\_\_) the Information Sheet. I understand what is required of me and I have had all my questions answered. I do not feel that I am forced to take part in this study and I am doing so of my own free will. I know that I can withdraw at any time if I so wish and that it will have no bad consequences for me. I understand that the research project may not have direct benefits for me other than contributing to growing awareness about what I do and how it affects me. I understand that the research will have no bad consequences for me, but that it may require time out of my day. I know that my personal details (name, location & contact information) will remain confidential and that the information gathered in this study will be compiled into a document that others may read.

Please tick the relevant box:

Yes, I am willing to participate  No, I would not like to participate

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Participant) Date and place: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (Researcher) Date and place: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (Witness if necessary) Date and place: \_\_\_\_\_

HSREC Reference number: 451/2011

For concerns related to participants' rights and welfare contact Professor Blockman

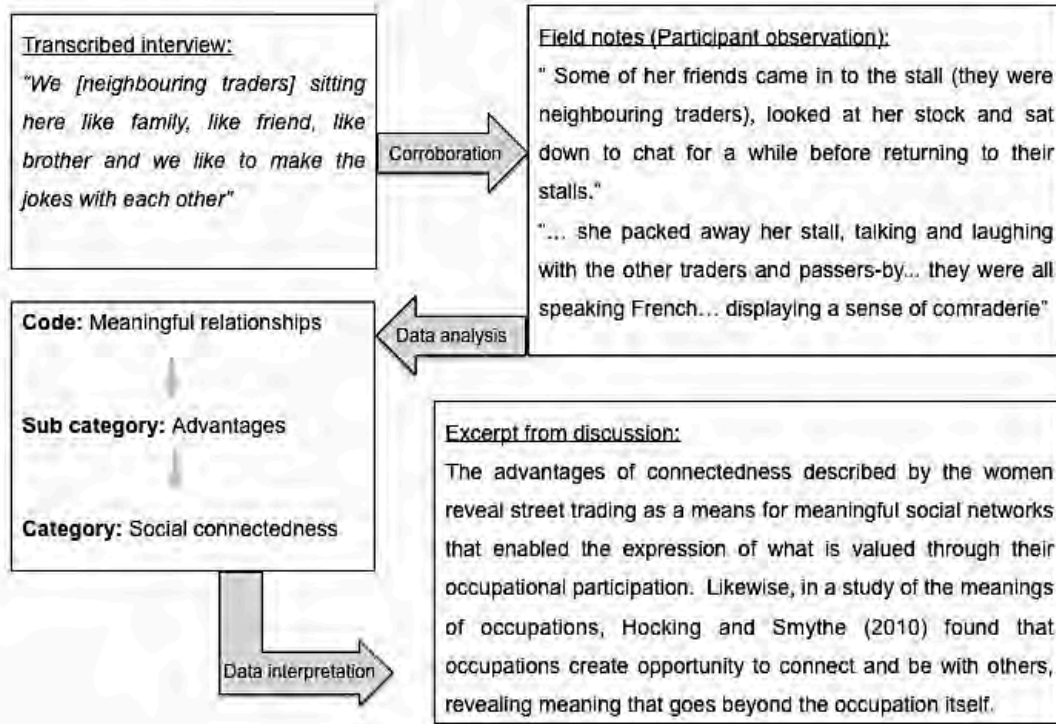
Contact details (School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, UCT):	
Madeleine Duncan & Roshan Galvaan (Supervisors)-	[021] 406 6401
Health Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee -	[021] 406 6751
Prof. Blockman-	[021] 4066496
Sharyn Sassen (Researcher)-	[+27] 718892588

### Appendix 3: Semi-structured and photo-elicitation interview questions

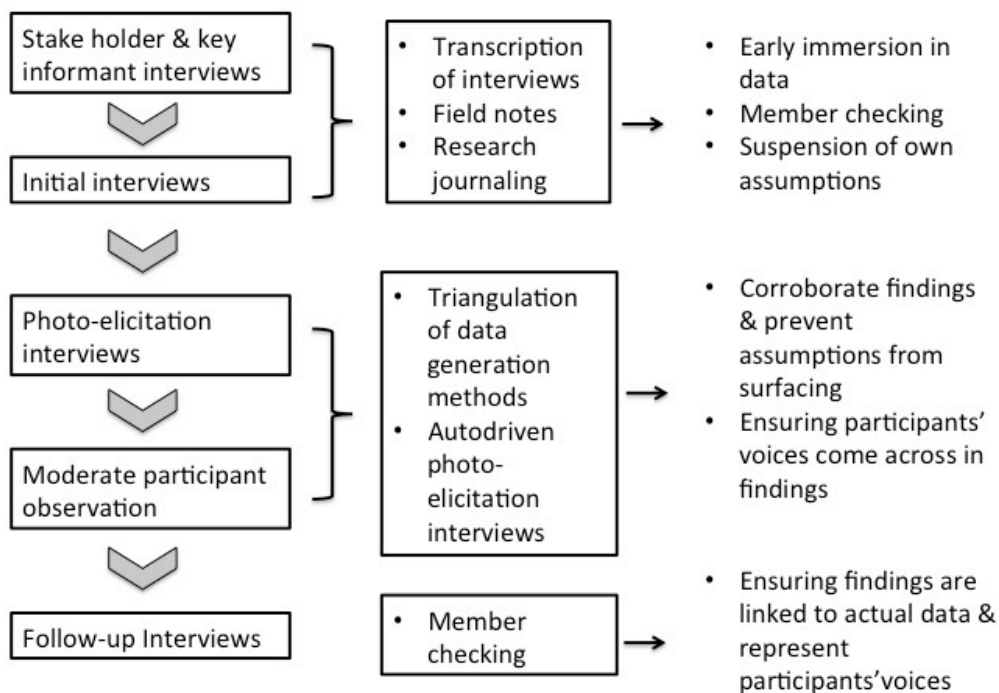
Types of questions	Example from semi-structured interviews
Descriptive question	<i>"...maybe we can start with you telling me the story of how you became a street trader, how you got involved?"</i>
Follow Up question	<i>" So tell me more about that...you said its your passion. So what are the other reasons why its your passion?"</i>
Probing question	<i>"For how long [Alicia] did you have to stay at home?"</i>
Specifying	<i>"And um, can you tell me a bit more about the storage?...about the costs or the difficulties around that?"</i>
Direct	<i>"Can you tell me some of the disadvantages... of being a street trader...for you?"</i>
Indirect	<i>"...and why do you think they do that?"</i>
Structuring	<i>" You were telling me about how you, you know, every morning you pray and say 'ok today I'm gonna make a sale'. Could you tell me a little bit more about the things that motivate you to trade everyday?"</i>
Interpreting	<i>"Sorry to interrupt you, so you saying on the taxi or the transport, you have to pay extra because you've got your bags?"</i>

## Appendix 4: Audit trail

### I. Interpretation from raw data



### II. Process notes



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