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# Transforming Narratives Through “LIVE”: A Pastoral Model of Care for Women in Sex Work

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TRANSFORMING NARRATIVES THROUGH “LIVE”:  
A PASTORAL MODEL OF CARE FOR WOMEN IN SEX WORK

by  
NKIRUKA OKAFOR IHM

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
Luther Seminary  
In Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Title of Thesis: Transforming Narratives through “LIVE”: A Pastoral Model of Care for Women in Sex Work

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## ABSTRACT

*Transforming Narratives through “LIVE”:  
A Pastoral Model of Care for Women in Sex Work*

by  
Nkiruka Okafor

This work, “Transforming Narratives Through “Live”: A Pastoral Model of Care for Women in Sex Work,” seeks to provide the Church with a pastoral response from the narratives of the women doing sex work as streetwalkers in Nigeria. The work uses the four steps of practical theological model of Rick Osmer to describe, interpret, theologize, and strategize on pastoral care of women in sex work. The literature review, both descriptive and interpretive, examines the perception of agency as exercised by the women in sex work through the work of scholars, writings by women in sex industry, the different pastoral models of care and the conceptual framework that shape this study. Research shows that different factors contribute to women being in sex work. Writings by women in sex work demonstrate that the women perceive their agency in different ways. For some, sex work is liberation, while for others it is oppression. Pastoral model of cares vary depending on how theologians and pastoral care workers judge the powers that shape the choices women make as sex workers. The most prevalent opinion is that sex workers are victims in many ways and, therefore, cannot be empowered as long as they remain sex workers.

The conceptual framework used for interpreting the data utilizes three major theories to study the narratives of women in sex work. The Karpman Triangle, also called the Drama Triangle, suggests that people normally vacillate between Victim, Perpetrator, and Rescuer roles depending on how they perceive and utilize their agency. This theory

aims to understand how those roles play out in the lives of sex workers so as to have a holistic view while proposing a pastoral model of care for them. Nonviolent communication emphasizes connection through compassion in every communication. Critical Realist Personalism, a sociological theory, affirms the dignity of every person irrespective of functioning. Both theories help to maintain that female commercial sex workers deserve to be treated with dignity and respect in spite of the way they are choosing to use their bodies. The critical praxis correlation method of theology invites theological reflection to turn to the poor or neglected members of the society.

This work collected data from female sex workers in Nigeria (n=10), using narrative inquiry as the research methodology. The data were transcribed, manually coded, and analyzed. The emerging themes were grouped under three broad categories: self-identity, relationship with God and the Church and relationship with the family and the society. The theological chapter portrays a narrative and ideological reading of the text of Jesus encounter with the women caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11) to propose “LIVE” Listening, Introspection, Validation, and Emancipation, as a pastoral model of care for the church in working with women in sex work.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A work of this magnitude is only possible with the help of many people. Jessica Duckworth, PhD, my adviser, made a commitment to stick with me when she left Luther Seminary to Lily Endowment. Her tenacity in guiding and directing me, even when I lost hope several times, made the project to pass every necessary stage. My readers, Professors Mary Hess and Theresa Latini guided and nurtured this project to a successful conclusion. Professor Carla Dahl and Elieshi Mungure PhD were consultants who provided valuable insights to me in the process of writing.

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My religious institute, Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ, Nigeria, sent me out for further studies. I thank my superiors, sisters and friends in the institute. In particular, I thank Mother Mary Dominica Odita for her trust and confidence

in me. Friends and relatives made my study period interesting. I received unprecedented support from families and friends in ways that surprised me. I am ever grateful to you all. I want to mention my mother, Mrs. Christiana Ugbala Okafor, and my siblings. I remember Sr. Mary Cyril Eukorah, the counselor who helped me overcome during my fight with breast cancer. She passed away from the same disease the very year I left Nigeria for studies. I dedicate this work to her.

I believe the Blessed Lady is ever on my side. In all, I thank God for my life.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAUW	American Association of University Women
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANE	Ancient Near East
CC	Compassionate Communication
CRP	Critical Realist Personalism
CSA	Childhood Sexual Abuse
FSCW	Female Commercial Sex Worker
GSM	General System for Mobile Communication
HIV	Human Immune Virus
IRB	Institutional Review Board
ISSA	International Student and Scholar Affair
LIVE	Listening, Introspection, Validation, and Emancipation/Empowering
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NVC	Nonviolent Communication
OFNR	Observation, Feelings, Needs, Request
PLATO	Place, Location, Action, Time, Object
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
VPR	Victim, Perpetrator, Rescuer

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Let me tell a story. It is the story of an encounter that shaped it all. I chanced upon them. They come in different looks, shapes and sizes. Women who say they are sex workers. It is 9 pm on a cold Saturday night and I am drenched by rain. I ask my rescuer, from the site of my broken down car, to pull aside for a colleague who had been waiting for me. She lives around the corner and we are to work all night to get certain documents ready before dawn. He protests, reminding me that the area is an “*ashawo joint*” meaning an area where sex workers ply their trade. I insist. He stops. Several ladies move towards the car with the hope of being favored for a night deal. Almost at once, they hiss a disappointing sigh, noticing a nun. All disperse except one. Ngozi (not real name) is resolute and starts a conversation. We exchange numbers and go our separate ways. Thus is my passion and curiosity about the world of sex workers ignited.

What was going on in her mind when she refused to leave when others did? How do these women see themselves vis-a-vis how the society sees them? Why are some women in sex work and what makes someone bold enough to stand in the street and solicit customers? Are they members of the Church? How do these women perceive their being members of the Church? I have heard that prostitutes are victims. How come these ones are bold and courageous in a country where sex work is illegal? Do they think they have any form of power in the choice they made? These and many other questions buzz in my head as I contemplate delving more into the world of the women who are bold

enough to identify as sex workers. My interest is in the women's perception of their agency, not necessarily the sex industry.

During her first visit with me, Ngozi said, "Sister, I know you will not want to talk with me because you, Church people, think we are all sinners. You think I do not go to Church? I do. Remember, you are a human being like me. We all have our stories." This is true of all persons. We have our stories. Human beings tell stories about their lives and make meanings from them. During this visit, Ngozi is looking different from the picture she presented the previous night. A skimpy skirt gives way to a longer one. A relationship is borne. Ngozi continues to visit me at the academic institute, doing some non-skilled jobs and getting paid each day she shows up and works. After three months, Ngozi reminds me that I have not asked her why she is into sex work. Working with her enables me to relate with her like every other human being, irrespective of her evening and night work. Developing trust and openness could mean a lot for women in anti-social behavior. This may encourage healthier pastoral relationships.

The Church could re-envision pastoral care for sex workers based on theological anthropology that takes the agency of every human person seriously instead of a moralistic approach that judges and condemns. Narratives of these women, the stories they tell about their lives and how they make meaning from them, would be the bedrock of such care. If the humanity of the women would be emphasized above the sexual acts, there may be greater openness to impacting their lives and for the Church to be impacted by them as well. Women enter into the sex trade for several different reasons. A stance of openness, listening, understanding, and healthy curiosity may help in the process of offering an effective pastoral presence.

In Nigeria, as in most parts of the world, the world of a prostitute is a difficult one to inhabit. Female prostitutes (henceforth female commercial sex workers, FCSWs) are despised. Because of their work, there is mostly a silence about their presence in the Church. When they are mentioned, they are looked upon as a problem to be solved. Generally, they are the bad girls of the society. Pastoral care that reflects an acknowledgement of their presence is mainly aimed at letting them realize how they are abhorred so they may be converted and leave the work. Little to no attention is paid to their stories, their own perception of their agency, or other factors that led to the work. This stance further alienates these women from the Church.

Ngozi is an active member of a Catholic Church in the heart of an oil city in Nigeria. She is a member of the choir, attends mass regularly, and participates in other activities in the church. Ngozi is a sex worker. She tried to hide her source of income from other members of the Church. However, one day, her patron, who happened to be a renowned member of the church, disclosed her work to others. Without paying any attention to Ngozi, she was asked to stop participating in the choir, and if possible, to leave the Church community entirely. No one ever cared to ask the “elder” how he came to know Ngozi’s work. Ngozi speaks with assurance of how God loves her, even though human beings refuse to hear her and understand her. On that rainy night, Ngozi challenged me (and the Church) to consider our common humanity and her agency in choosing this work as she tells me that she made the choice and was not forced into prostitution.

Sex work is studied from various perspectives. There are studies on the aspect of trafficking, that is, the system of forcing men and women to use their body, against their

will, to make money for their lords. There are ethical studies on various aspects of sex work. In this study, the stories of the women in sex work, especially how they perceive their agency as women in anti-social behavior, form the focus of interest. The theoretical and theological frameworks for the study serve to understand the themes that emanate from listening to the stories of these women. Listening to the stories of the women in sex work may influence the ecclesial practices in the Church in Nigeria by encouraging pastoral care through active listening to women in sex work.

Europeans introduced commercial sex work into Nigeria and some parts of Africa through colonization in the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Commercial sex work is considered one of the consequences of modernization of Africa.<sup>2</sup> Many Nigerian cultures do not have words for prostitutes and/or prostitution. Generally, commercial sex workers are regarded as those who have sold their cultures for the modern way of living. Sex workers are caught in a conundrum of being defined as deviants from many perspectives. They have no place in the traditional society. They are not welcomed in the Church. Yet, sex work thrives and there exist a substantial number of women who boldly say that they chose to be in sex work.<sup>3</sup> These are the women in this study. Narratives from women on the underside of culture challenge the Church to listen to “Others” who are also members of

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<sup>1</sup> Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (New York: NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Otutubikey Izugbara quotes research carried out between 1991 and 1995 to support the claim that the rise of prostitution in Nigeria could be traced to the colonial situation and sexual habits of the colonists. People in the traditional African society had polygamy and other forms of recreational sex like Levirate marriages thereby rendering prostitution unnecessary. Colonization led to commodification and monetization of sex as seen today. See Izugbara Otutubikey, “*Ashawo* Suppose Shine Her Eyes! Female Sex Workers and Sex Work Risks in Nigeria,” *Health, Risk and Society* 7, no. 2 (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Izugbara further notes that the Genderlift study of 2003 puts the estimate of prostitutes in Nigeria at 60,000. He cautions that the current statistics may be unreliable. I echo such caution, being a Nigerian and aware of the dearth of reliable statistics complicated by the fact that people in anti-social behavior hardly report what they do. See *ibid.*, 143.

the Church.

### **Research Question**

The pivotal question of this study is, *What do narratives of female commercial sex workers (FCSWs) say about women's construction and deconstruction of agency as persons in the Church and the society?* Other related pertinent questions that the research will engage include: *How do female sex workers' self-understanding from their narratives impact their sense of being in the Church? What are the implications of this for pastoral care with these women?* From researching these questions, I will construct a pastoral theology of care for FCSWs from Jesus' encounter with the woman caught in adultery (John 53:7- 8:11.)<sup>4</sup>

Pastoral model of cares constructed from the narratives of sex workers are not readily available. Models reviewed in this work are based on the understanding of sex workers as victims. An in-depth analysis of their stories, supported by theoretical and theological frameworks that take the narratives seriously, recognizing the forms of agency that the women attribute to themselves, helps to re-envision pastoral care for FCSWs. Re-imagining, re-creating, and accepting the humanity of FCSWs as agents in their choices is a revaluing of humanity.

The question of this study also emerges at the intersection of youth, culture, religion, and society and helps to deepen the understanding of narratives and Nonviolent Communication as communication pattern and way of life that nurtures the humanity of all persons. I am fascinated by stories people tell about themselves. Two persons may have had a seemingly exact experience, yet, they tell their stories differently. These

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<sup>4</sup> Bible quotes are from *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible, Catholic Edition.

stories are formative and informative of one's identity. Relationships with the world and with others are hinged on narratives. As a mode of communication, narrative is the bedrock of this research. It is the research methodology and the therapeutic approach adopted as pastoral response to women in sex work. According to Dan McAdams,

We are tellers of tales. We each seek to provide our scattered and often confusing experiences with a sense of coherence by arranging the episodes of our lives into stories. This is not the stuff of delusion or self-deception. We are not telling ourselves lies. Rather through our personal myths, each of us discovers what is true and what is meaningful in life.<sup>5</sup>

I have worked and walked closely with FCSWs since that night of meeting with Ngozi. My experience working with them affirms that FCSWs are hardly evaluated through their own narratives as women with some form of agency. Listening to their narratives may lead to transformation of attitudes and approaches to the women. Having been challenged by a female commercial sex worker on the assumptions made by the Church on who they are, I am determined to listen to the narratives of female commercial sex workers in Nigeria in order to construct a pastoral theology of care for such women.

My work contributes to my community of Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ (IHM) in discerning ways of caring for women in Nigeria and the global community. In 1937, the Religious Institute Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ was founded for the care and lifting of the status of women.<sup>6</sup> At the time, women were not gaining access to education and healthcare in Nigeria. The young Order of indigenous women started building training centers for women across the nation. At these training centers, women were taught basic education and domestic

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<sup>5</sup> Dan P. McAdams, *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of Self* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1993), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, *Our Way of Life* (Onitsha: IHM Sisters, 1993). Art. 3

science. Some of the centers were later upgraded to Teachers' Training Colleges and schools of nursing and midwifery. The institute is outstanding in contributing to the explosion in the number of educated women in the country. Today, in addition to promoting education for women generally, and care of rural women specifically, the institute is seeking to reinterpret the purpose of its foundation to include care for women at the margins of the society. In the past two decades, we have taken up the care of widows. We have also taken up apostolate with trafficked women doing sex work in Italy and other parts of Europe. This research is the first attempt to envision a different model of care for women doing sex work in Nigeria, particularly, because they remain active members of the Church through participation in the Church, a pastoral care that is theoretically and theologically grounded. My research also contributes to the Church's mission through developing a pastoral model of care that recognizes the human person as the center of Jesus' approach to care.

The study will contribute to the theological academy through its narrative and ideological reading of the passage of Jesus' encounter with the woman caught in adultery. The work pays particular attention to how persons claim agency in their lives. Using narrative theory as a research methodology, the work uses stories people tell of their lives to construct a model of pastoral care. Narrative theory is described as a postmodern worldview.<sup>7</sup> The narratives used in this research come from the underside of culture and persons described as vulnerable in the society. As a work done in a postcolonial society, this study also illumines some ways in which young women in a postcolonial society are negotiating identity formation in the wave of globalization. Their stories, coming from

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<sup>7</sup> Jill Freedman, and Gene Combs. *Narrative Therapy: The Social Construction of Preferred Realities*. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 1.

the underside of culture, will contribute to how the present postcolonial culture is making and unmaking persons in Africa. Lifting up the stories of the women as they tell them contributes to hearing the voices of women in their own words.

This work, utilizing a form of qualitative research, is more precisely a narrative inquiry. The narratives from the women are coded for themes. Listening to the stories, I listen to what matters to the person in her story how her agency as a woman is construed in self-identity, relationship with the Church and the society, and relationship with others as well as the overarching themes and myths in the stories. McAdams writes, “stories are less about facts and more about meanings,”<sup>8</sup> I listen to the meanings these stories hold for the person. The themes from the research are presented while interpretations and meanings behind the stories are used to propose a pastoral theology of care.

### **Practical Theological Task Framework**

I am entering this study from practical theological perspective. Practical theology is considered both a social science and a deeply spiritual practice. Practical theology begins its reflection on practices in faith communities. Colleen Griffith notes that the core commitment that remains constant in practical theological field across divergent methodological lines is the study and promotion of practice.<sup>9</sup> Claire Wolfeich defines the task of practical theology as entailing “the study of practices, contexts, cultures, and communities in dialogue with faith traditions and informed by best human knowledge

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<sup>8</sup> McAdams, *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of Self* 28.

<sup>9</sup> Colleen Griffith, Practice as embodied knowing: Epistemological and Theological Considerations in Claire E. Wolfeich, *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014), 52.

available.”<sup>10</sup> In the series foreword to Thomas Hasting’s *Practical Theology and the One Body of Christ: Toward a Missional-Ecumenical Model*, Don Browning, James Fowler, Friedrich Schweitzer and Johanns van der Ven note, “practical theology is a theoretical undertaking that builds on a practical basis.”<sup>11</sup> Reflecting on practices informed by theories requires methodology acceptable in academic field. Richard Osmer identifies four tasks that are discernible in practical theology as proposed by different models or methodologies. These are the descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative and pragmatic tasks.

Practical theological methodologies may emphasize one task over the other. Osmer’s model holds the importance of each task in awareness of its contribution to the theory-laden practices that practical theology stands for. Aware of other practical theological frameworks, I am choosing to follow the practical theology framework of Richard Osmer.<sup>12</sup> This choice is predicated on the simple, and yet, deeply profound way that Osmer’s model attends to the praxis of the Church and society. The model urges me to start the tasks of practical theology from pastoral practices in the faith community. Pastoral practices are expressions of the Christian presence in the world. Practices are the foundation of theological expressions. The things that matter to me as the researcher, from the social science perspective as well as theological and biblical perspectives, are attended to using this model. The lived experiences of the community or persons, the use

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<sup>10</sup> Claire Wolfreich, Introduction: An Invitation to Practical Theology in *ibid.*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Don Browning, James Fowler, Friedrich Schweitzer, and Johanns van der Ven, Series Foreword in Thomas John Hastings, *Practical Theology and the One Body of Christ: Toward a Missional-Ecumenical Model*, Studies in Practical Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2007), viii.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Robert Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008).

of social science theories for better understanding through an interpretive task, the theological discourse that occurs in the normative task and the space to propose strategic response to the church through the model contribute to my choice of the model. Osmer's model puts the tasks together in an intentional manner that offers the researcher an interdisciplinary platform that is scientific, theological, and practical.

Four tasks or moves guide the work of a practical theologian in Osmer's model. They are the descriptive-empirical, the interpretive, the normative, and the pragmatic tasks. These four tasks of practical theology guide interpretation and response to ecclesial practices. The ecclesial practice pertinent to this study is pastoral care of the human persons doing sex work in Nigeria. These four tasks guide the issue of how to adequately respond to the reality of female commercial sex workers in the Church in Nigeria. Osmer counsels that it is pertinent to approach practical interpretation as more like a *spiral* than a circle. He remarks that the interpretation constantly circles back to the tasks that have already been explored, which makes it imperative that the "tasks do not proceed in a strict, linear, or stage-like fashion."<sup>13</sup> This approach offers the flexibility to describe, interpret, theologize, and propose strategies in the different tasks in an awareness of how mutually influential each move is to the other. The spiral movement makes it possible for the practical theologian to attend to varying aspects of the task in an authentic manner.

The first task, the descriptive-empirical, asks and answers the question "What is going on?" This leads to thick description of dynamics of particular issues in contexts. A thick description of context or situation involves openness to listening. According to Theresa Latini, in this move, the researcher gains "as much data as possible about a

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

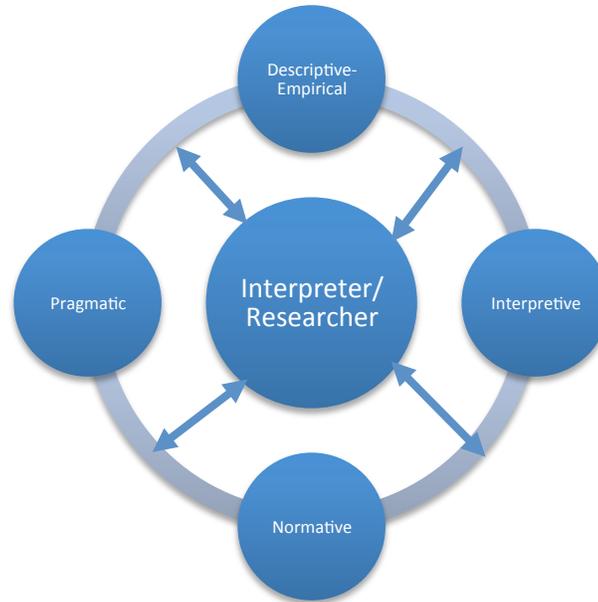
situation or context so that we can describe it from many angles or points of view.”<sup>14</sup> In this project, the descriptive-empirical task includes qualitative research using narrative inquiry. In describing the situation of women in sex work from their narratives, no angle or aspect is irrelevant or neglected. The world of the women is described in their own words using the data gathered from the field. Previous works and research carried out in the area are also used to describe what is going on with women in sex work. My interest is the human person doing sex work and how she perceives her agency in the world. The culture and society where the women are found are also described to assist in clearer understanding of the mutual exchange between the culture and an individual.

The interpretive task answers the question “Why is this going on?” Using the theories of social sciences and arts, an interpretation is made for a better understanding of the situation. According to Osmer, the theories serve as maps that interpretive guides use to “understand and explain the certain features of an episode, situation, or context but never provide a complete picture of the ‘territory.’”<sup>15</sup> The interpretive guide is the researcher who gathers the data, interprets and performs the practical other theological tasks, and presents them to the church. In this research, I will make use of the Karpman Triangle, Nonviolent Communication and critical realist personalism, and narrative theory to interpret the collected stories. These theories are reviewed in the literature review chapter.

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<sup>14</sup> Theresa Latini, *The Church and the Crisis of Community: A Practical Theology of Small-Group Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 2011), 8.

<sup>15</sup> Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 80.



**Figure 1. Osmer's Practical Theological Tasks<sup>16</sup>**

The normative task uses Biblical and theological concepts to interpret the situation, context, or practice and discern guidelines for the faithful response. This task asks the question, “What ought to be going on?” This question is relevant to bringing the theological and biblical perspectives to bear on the issues being reviewed. The theological concept of *imago Dei* is used as the guiding principle in listening to the stories of women who are using their bodies to gain access to resources. Jesus’ transformative encounter with such women in the Bible is revisited as a guiding pastoral approach.

The fourth task is the pragmatic task. This task answers the question, “How might we respond?” Osmer writes that the task sets out to help in “determining strategies of actions that will influence situations in ways that are desirable.”<sup>17</sup> The move takes

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<sup>16</sup> An adaptation of Osmer’s model of practical theology that acknowledges the role of the interpreter/researcher. See *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

cognizance of the other tasks to help articulate the way that the Church might respond to FCSWs as persons created in the image and likeness of God. This is by no means a completion of the practical theological interpretation. The task of practical theology is an ongoing process.

### **Significance of the Study**

This dissertation is significant at many levels. To the women in sex work in Nigeria, this is an attempt to include their voices in a remarkable way in proposing a pastoral model of care for the Church. The work privileges the voices of the women in meaningful ways in every step. The work helps the women to realize that they matter and that they belong in the Church and the world by reducing the stigma associated with being in sex work while treating them as a significant portion of the human society and the Church. The work is significant to the Church, as it makes more visible a part of the Body of the Church that is frequently neglected. Appraising the humanity of the sex workers, the Church is challenged to pay more attention to the human persons in sex work as persons created in the image and likeness of God and as members of the Body of Christ.

The significance of the work to the academy is immense. The work uses postmodern theories in arguing for the inclusion of the voices of FCSW in research. Narrative theory posits that all of reality is socially constructed,<sup>18</sup> while critical realist personalism argues that we construct the social out of reality.<sup>19</sup> The richness of both

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<sup>18</sup> Freedman and Combs, *Narrative Therapy*. See also Michael West, *Maps of Narrative Practice*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2007)

<sup>19</sup> Christian Smith. *What Is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010)

sociological theories illumines certain aspects of the study. They are brought into interaction in important ways in the narratives of the women. The dissertation is a work in gender studies and in particular women studies. Its significance lies in studying narratives from marginal voices those of Black women in anti-social work in a postcolonial society. Narratives of female commercial sex workers in Nigeria contribute to exploration of the identity and experience of self as Black women doing sex work in a postcolonial society.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

#### **Female Commercial Sex Worker**

The term “female commercial sex worker” is used to refer to a woman who sells sex for monetary or other forms of rewards as a means of livelihood. This term is chosen above the other more popular term, “prostitute,” because of other connotations that prostitution infers especially with respect to the historical link between the word and the temple. Prostitutes and prostitution perpetuate romanticized and moralistic ideas around it.<sup>20</sup> Prostitute, in the ancient world, is closely tied to cultic practices symbolizing reenactment of sexual acts by the gods and goddesses. Carol Anderson, making the distinction between cultic and commercial prostitution, explains why the terms, prostitutes and prostitution, are easily linked with activities around the temple. She writes:

It appears that temple prostitution was located within the temple walls, in contrast to commercial prostitution, which was found outside the temple. Temple

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<sup>20</sup> Brock, Rita Nakashima, and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, *Casting Stones: Prostitution and Liberation in Asia and the United States* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 2.

prostitution was considered to be socially acceptable, whereas commercial prostitution was not. The difference between the two forms of prostitution was one of class, although both forms emerged within the temple's sphere of economic influence at different places and times throughout Near Eastern history.<sup>21</sup>

For Susan Ackerman, the word Hebrew word, לַכְתוּבָה, (*zonah*) and Greek word, πόρνη (*porne*), are the main biblical translations of prostitution. Both words generally designate “a woman’s participation in sexual intercourse outside marriage, typically in exchange for payment.”<sup>22</sup> Ackerman notes that though this practice is widely attested in the Bible and Ancient Near East (ANE) sources, there is ambivalence towards it. Social ambivalence towards prostitutes is that they are marginalized yet are praiseworthy, and that the women are liminal yet independent (cf. Lev 19: 29, 21:9, 23:27; Amos 7:17; Joshua 2:15; Gen 38:26). Prostitutes are condemned and also desired in the society. The Bible also depicts prostitution as a religious apostasy. The term is used for the Israelites who forsake Yahweh for other gods (Hosea Lev 17:7, 20:5-6). In the New Testament, the most we heard of them is that Jesus is anointed by a woman of questionable character, presumably, a prostitute (Luke 7:36-50) and that they are making their way to the kingdom (Matt. 21:31). This historical and biblical use make me opt for a more contemporary term that specifies the particular women I study in this project.

Media and cultural portrayals of female commercial sex workers include the use of such terms as *slut*, *whore*, *hooker*, *working girl*, *streetwalker*, *member of the oldest profession*, *tart*, *escort*, *hustler*, *scarlet woman*, *tramp*, *ho(e)*, *bitch*, *wench*, *rent (for)*

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<sup>21</sup> Carol Anderson. Prostitution in Serinity Young, *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion*, 2 vols. 2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1999), 809-811.

<sup>22</sup> Susan Ackerman. Prostitution in Abingdon Press., *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols. Me-R, Volume 4 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 650-652.

*boys, temptress, dirty girl, stripper, cam girl, perv, show girls*, and many others.<sup>23</sup> In Nigeria, the common terms include *Ashawo, Ash, Akwuna, midnight crew, and flower girls*.

Most of these terms elicit an attitude of judgment and condemnation. I choose to use the term “female commercial sex workers” (FCSWs) to capture the reality of those whose world I engage while remaining respectful. The use of sex work, though contestable, recognizes some agency and autonomy in the choice, since for some women sex work may be either enslavement or liberation.<sup>24</sup> Narrative encourages us to trust each person’s experience for what it is for that person. This use does not mean that “selling one’s body for sexual uses was the equivalent of typing one’s letter or serving someone food.”<sup>25</sup> It means that I wish to remain open to hearing what the women say of their lives.

### The Church

I use the term “Church” to describe, in the broadest sense, the community of believers in Christ irrespective of denominational affiliation. The Church captures the catholicity of every baptized person. Nonetheless, there may be times that I may use the term to refer to a particular ecclesial grouping. At such times, I will indicate what particular denominational group I mean. According to *Lumen Gentium* “for by communicating his Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body those brothers (and

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<sup>23</sup> Lia Claire Scholl. *I Heart Sex Workers: A Christian Response to People in the Sex Trade* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2012), 16-17.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>25</sup> Brock and Thistlethwaite, *Casting Stones: Prostitution and Liberation in Asia and the United States* 2.

sisters) of his who are called together from every nation.”<sup>26</sup> Those called into this body enter through baptism, which makes them a new creation. I consider every baptized person a member of the Church, having been grafted into the Body of Christ.

### **Ethical Concerns and Considerations**

Any research that utilizes human participants as subjects is bound to raise ethical concerns. This research is a narrative inquiry, which seeks to listen to stories of female commercial sex workers in Nigeria. Therefore, a number of ethical concerns are raised for the research. Ethical concerns focus on protection of human subjects from exploitation or exposure to unacceptable levels of risk through their participation in research.<sup>27</sup> Protection of subjects is an integral part of the process of a research. As John Creswell counsels, “do not put participants at risk, and respect vulnerable populations.”<sup>28</sup>

My research subjects are within the category of vulnerable populations. Most of their life stories revolve around so-called illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, and demeaning behaviors, and my questions during the interview are related to sexual attitudes, or practices.<sup>29</sup> Aware of these ethical concerns in this research, several measures have been taken to ensure adequate protection of the researcher and subjects. The research subjects are not just any FCSWs but those who are active members of the Church. They are those who confidently say that they chose sex work and expressed

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<sup>26</sup> *Lumen Gentium* No. 7 In Vatican Council II, *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery ed. 2 Vols. Vol. 1. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1975), 354-55.

<sup>27</sup> Kathryn Herr, and Gary L. Anderson. *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 113.

<sup>28</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 89.

<sup>29</sup> See Luther Seminary Policies on IRB concerning vulnerable populations and asking sensitive questions. <http://luthersem.edu/irb/approval.aspx?m=2413#vulnerable> (accessed 4/25/13)

willingness to participate in the research. They, therefore, claim some form of autonomy and agency, which accounts for their ability to consent to the research. I observe the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements of Luther Seminary in doing my research. Participation in the research has been entirely voluntary. The sampling technique was a snowball sampling, which is a method of a non-probability sampling. Only those who indicated interest were chosen. I made it clear to the participants that they were free to withdraw from the research at any point. The participants gave an informed consent for the research.

### **Chapter Delineation**

The dissertation is presented in six chapters. Chapter one is the introduction, which covers the statement of the problem, the research question, and the tasks of the practical theology framework utilized in answering the research question. The chapter also states the significance of the research to the women studied, the Church, and the academy. Reoccurring terms in the work are also defined.

Chapter two is the literature review. This chapter, an interpretive move of practical theology, presents the scholarly views that shape the present research. The interpretation starts with an exploration of the philosophical and sociological framework that aids the interpretive task of the research.

Carisa Showden's understanding of agency by women in sex work is used to demonstrate that negotiation of agency and autonomy by women varies significantly in context. In the work of Frederique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, which is a collection of writings by women in the sex industry, the complex world of women in sex work and what agency means for women in sex work is reviewed. Sex workers define

their work and role in the society from different perspectives and contexts. Agency is reviewed as a way of survival in power as demonstrated in the Karpman Triangle.

Theological responses and pastoral models of care for women in sex work are also reviewed. Brock and Thistlethwaite are concerned about the ethical implications of sex work for the global context. Their work, situated in Asia and the United States calls for global action against the sex industry through a review of male (power) domination in the world.<sup>30</sup> They argue that prostitution and violence are inseparable. Margaret Guider sees sex workers as victims who need liberation and challenges the Church to the action of liberation.<sup>31</sup> Lia Claire Scholl is of the opinion that all Christian ministers should be allies with sex workers, taking a cue from Jesus, who she sees as a “Harm Reductionist.”<sup>32</sup> These authors make claims about sex workers from different perspectives, though basically seeing women in sex work as victims, that is, as those without any form of agency. These perspectives must be taken seriously in thinking about sex workers. This dissertation adds to the perspectives by affirming that women in sex work can and do claim some form of agency for themselves, and it is more descriptive to speak of a continuum of agency. The continuum of agency on which women negotiate power exists in the space between total deconstruction of the self and victimhood as women are limited in the choices they can make as human persons. No single perspective can capture the reality of sex workers perception of their agency in the world.

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<sup>30</sup> Brock and Thistlethwaite, *Casting Stones: Prostitution and Liberation in Asia and the United States* 2.

<sup>31</sup> Margaret Eletta Guider, *Daughters of Rahab: Prostitution and the Church of Liberation in Brazil* Harvard Theological Studies 40. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995)

<sup>32</sup> Scholl, *I Heart Sex Workers: A Christian Response to People in the Sex Trade* 16-17.

Another theory used to focus this work is Nonviolent Communication and critical realist personalism. Nonviolent Communication fosters connection through communication that values the common humanity of every person. Critical realism personalism is a sociological theory emanating from personalism as a philosophical school of thought. Personalism and critical realist personalism look to the human person as the key to reality.<sup>33</sup> Nonviolent communication affirms that reality through communication patterns that connect through compassion. The choice of the interpretive theories is an affirmation that engaging in sex work does not reduce or remove the personhood of the women. In spite of how they are using their bodies, they remain human beings in the human society. Narrative theory presents the rationale for the use of stories people tell about themselves in helping them make sense of reality. The theory helps populations on the margins of the society to come to voice. The theory is supported scientifically, theologically, and contextually. This chapter is both interpretive and descriptive.

Chapter three lays out the research methodology and design of this project. It further discusses the process of data collection and coding. Notes from the fieldwork are used to substantiate the credibility and reliability of the research. The themes from the qualitative study are presented in chapter four. Themes emerging from data analysis show that women in sex work in Nigeria demonstrate a solid sense of self when describing their identity and choice of sex work. This is also repeated in their relationship with God. Relationship with the church and the society is described with distrust and pain. There is a dissonance between how the women see themselves and how they are treated in the

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<sup>33</sup> See James W. Walters, *What is a Person? An Ethical Exploration* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Smith, *What Is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up*.

church. This incongruence is the pain that the church may attempt to heal through a pastoral model of care that takes women's narrative into consideration. The chapter is equally descriptive and interpretive.

Chapter five is the theological segment, which fulfills the normative move of the practical theological task. The first section makes the case for making theological suppositions from the persons on the margins. The concept of *imago Dei* as a theological concept helps to foster the affirmation of the human person in sex work. Theological and biblical interpretation from women supports the narrative and ideological reading of Jesus' approach to such women as exemplified in the life of the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11). It generates four discernible movements, which I articulate as the transformative approach, which this work proposes as a pastoral approach to sex workers. The model is the "LIVE" approach.

The final chapter is the strategic proposal toward the ministry of transformation. The chapter presents the LIVE approach (from the previous chapter) in conversation with skills from Nonviolent Communication. The thesis of the work is that listening to the narratives of women engaged in sex work, to understand their construction and deconstruction of agency as women, might help Christian communities to re-envision pastoral care for such women. The shift that might begin with the transformation of attitudes and views of the women, by listening to their stories as persons created in the image and likeness of God. The women could be empowered as agents in their own lives, not positioned merely as victims.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### **Introduction**

The descriptive and interpretive moves of the practical theological method of Osmer are developed in this chapter which introduces and discusses the concepts that guide the interpretation of the data from fieldwork. The chapter also describes the previous work done in the area of pastoral care of sex workers and how the present research connects with them. The chapter answers the question, *What is going on* and *Why is this going on* from the works of researchers in the world of women in sex work. Understanding how the agency of the women in their choice of sex work is acknowledged as the big question that guides the choice of literature in this section.

Carissa Showden, a political feminist theorist, shows that agency exists on a continuum that spans the space between victimhood and heroism. Heroism is defined as total self-deconstruction of powers that hinder women in their choices. The women on that end of the spectrum claim total agency in their lives. Agency for women is mitigated by societal values and norms, and is shaped by a desire to live up to expectations. The work of Frederique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, a collection of writings by women in the sex industry, is used to present the ambiguity involved in the extensive ways that sex workers describe and ascribe agency to themselves as sex workers. Theologians and pastoral workers understand agency in sex work at different points on the continuum and make suggestions based on this. Margaret Guider offers the change that occurs in the

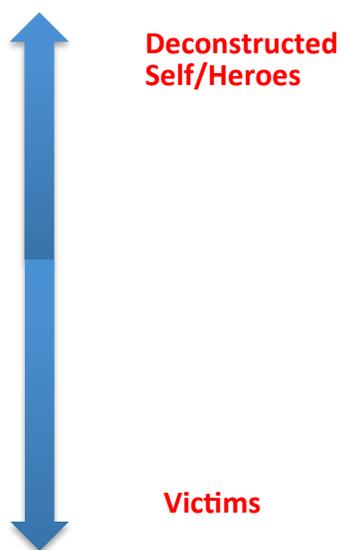
Church when women in sex work recognized as having some agency in their lives. Brock and Thistlethwaite underscore the ethical implications of dealing with women in sex work. They argue that the women are the least to blame for the booming of sex work in the world. Women are victims and have little or no agency in sex work. Scholl, paradoxically, sees the women both as agents and as victims. She labels anyone not joining in solidarity with the women as a perpetrator. Sex workers are to be supported in their choice of work.

The second section of the chapter introduces and discusses the theories that inform the study. As an interdisciplinary work, the theories guide the researcher in the collection and interpretation of data. These theories include the Karpman Triangle, critical realist personalism, and narrative theory. The Drama Triangle depicts the various roles human beings play when they question the recognition of their agency in the world. Victim, Perpetrator, and Rescuer roles make the dance in the Triangle to endure. Critical realist personalism helps to illumine the interplay between society and human bodies and points out that the personhood of every person subsists irrespective of how one's body exists in the society. In other words, sex workers remain human persons with some forms of agency in spite of how they use their bodies. Narrative theory engages the stories people tell about their lives and how they make meanings from them. These theories help the researcher to focus and understand the agency in personhood of sex workers contextually in their own narratives in a bid to answer the research question: *What do narratives of female commercial sex workers (FCSWs) say about women's construction and deconstruction of agency as persons in the Church and the society?*

## Section I: Female Sex Workers in the Society and the Church

### Women and Agency in Sex Work

Carisa R. Showden, a political feminist theorist, in her work *Choices Women Make: Agency in Domestic Violence, Assisted Reproduction, and Sex Work*, presents an understanding of agency in the lives of women that will guide the trajectory that the present study takes.<sup>34</sup> Regarding agency as a product of autonomy and freedom, there has to be deliberation on choices and having choices to deliberate on. Women are easily categorized between two impossible extremes either they are mostly described as heroes in the class of a self-determining autonomy or seen as victims in a structural determinism. Showden argues that women make choices in the continuum between these two extremes.



**Figure 2. Showden's Model of Agency**

Drawing together feminist political and legal theory, as well as phenomenological and poststructuralist theory, she argues that the responses that women make are shaped

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<sup>34</sup>Carisa Renae Showden, *Choices Women Make: Agency in Domestic Violence, Assisted Reproduction, and Sex Work* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

by norms, values, needs of others, and forms of power that shape women's self-understanding. The implication is that there should be respect for the choices that women make, even choices of subordination. Arguing that agency is both socially determined and socially enacted, she aims "to explain how women are more than simply dupes of power, though are shaped by material reality of their situations."<sup>35</sup> Sex workers are acting on the choices presented to them in the society, and yet, have some agency to claim, as the data from fieldwork shows. The task is discovering how each woman understands her own role.

With women in sex work, Showden classifies the responses to sex work into three models. Each of these positions sees women's agency in sex work differently. The first model comprises those who see sex work as violence otherwise called the abolitionists feminists. The sex-as-violence model regards sex work as violence against women and calls for stringent laws punishing anyone involved, both buyers and sellers. The model affirms communities that legislate against sex work. This makes make sex work go underground, creating a hostile environment for women in sex work. The success rate of such legislation is low because no structures are put in place to respond to various needs that sex workers fill in the society. The model seems to favor those who commit violence against women, like the pimps, those who rape sex workers, and law enforcement agents within the legal system of the state. This model has found favor among some theologians, as it helps to hold firm to the moralistic attitude towards women in sex work or take a position against one perceived cause of sex work in the world. In this model, women in sex work are regarded as victims lacking any form of agency.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 12.

The second model, sex radicalism, on the opposite end, sees sex work as unleashing female sexuality. Privileged women in sex work mostly hold this position. Showden calls them “privileged” because these women are able to choose whom to serve or not. They are mostly educated white women who tend to their customers in the comfort of their homes. This model holds that sex work has therapeutic functions in the society, liberates both men and women from sexual violence, and closes the chasm between the Madonna/Whore model of categorizing women. This model calls for decriminalization of all sex-for-reward acts by women in the belief that they are making the best use of their agency in the world. This model is not a favorite of theologians and pastoral care workers.

The third model presented by Showden is the sex-as-work model. In this perspective, she opines that what needs to be challenged are “the conditions under which sex workers labor, not the legitimacy of sex work or sex workers themselves.”<sup>36</sup> Sex workers argue that criminalizing sex work is a denial of their agency in the choice and makes them ineligible for post-sex-work life and benefits. Those who hold this position are willing to acknowledge the risks sex work poses to the society, sex workers, their families and communities and prefers to give them ability to take responsibility for their lives. Sex work is both sex and work, and yet not either. Some pastoral workers are now adopting this perspective, as we shall see in the review for models of care for sex workers.

Recent studies on women in sex work are rethinking the women’s agency. Scholars who interview women in sex work found that the top reasons women engage in

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 149.

sex work are poverty, marital abuse, sexual abuse (especially childhood sexual abuse [CSA]), and the unexpected death of a spouse or parent. Making a decision to engage in sex work in itself, except when trafficked is a form of agency. Bucardo, Semple, Fraga-Davilla, and Patterson maintain that financial need is the major factor driving women to sex trade at any age. A good number of young women in sex work are single mothers supporting their children. There are identifiable positive aspects of the job, which includes workable shifts, and good income.<sup>37</sup> In their qualitative study of 48 female prostitutes, Karandikar, Gezinski, and Jacquelyn found that family members and acquaintances sold the majority of respondents into prostitution.<sup>38</sup> These are real victims of sex work who had no say in being there.

Trafficking is found to be one of the greatest risk factors for entering into prostitution. Women trafficked as sex workers suffer untold human degradation and find it difficult to reintegrate into the society later on. In this case, the abolitionist model of sex-as-violence wins. Brunovskis and Surtees note the points of tension in reuniting trafficked women with spouses and children. Some of the women do the reintegration alone for fear of victimization, being associated with prostitution. Some of their fears include unrealized migration expectation, and stressed behaviors upon return.<sup>39</sup>

Unrealized migration expectation is the inability of the sex worker who migrated to

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<sup>37</sup> Roy F. Baumeister and Kathleen D. Vohs, "Sexual Economics: Sex as Female Resource for Social Exchange in Heterosexual Interactions," *Personality & Social Psychology Review* 8, no. 4 (2004); Jesus Bucardo et al., "A Qualitative Exploration of Female Sex Work in Tijuana, Mexico," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 33, no. 4 (2004); *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Sharvani Karandikar, Lindsay Gezinski, and Jacquelyn Meshelemiah, "A Qualitative Examination of Women Involved in Prostitution in Mumbai, India: The Role of Family and Acquaintances," *International Social Work* 56, no. 4 (2013). See also Baumeister and Vohs, "Sexual Economics."

<sup>39</sup> Anette Brunovskis and Rebecca Surteen, "Coming Home: Challenges in Family of Trafficked Women," *Qualitative Social Work* 12, no. 1 (2013).

another country or city to achieve substantial material gain. Some of the women realize that conditions of sex work are not as rosy as they painted when they were in their country of origin. Returning to their place of origin in a poorer condition, migration has failed to give them the desired societal upward mobility. Stressed behaviors arise from shame associated with failure to achieve economic gains. Fear and shame prevent the women from reintegrating back into the community they left to seek better life through sex work.

In contrast to trafficking narratives, Oso Casas finds that the majority of the women from Latin America who do sex work, particularly in Spain, are not trafficked or forced into it. They make the choice because of the love they have for their family, to keep socially mobile in the society, or because of breakdowns in relationship. Some get out of prostitution on their own if they make “enough” money. Thus, this orientation shifts the focus on the experience of the women. They claim agency in the choice.<sup>40</sup> The data collected for this project supports this claim. Research participants affirm that they made financial contributions to enable their departure from Nigeria to Spain for sex work.

Baumeister and Vohs studied sex work as a female resource in heterosexual interactions and found that sexual economics could be analyzed using sexual exchange theory, which is summarized as individual and market factors. Findings include that women may gain more with the suppression of female sexuality, because societies endow female sexuality, but not male sexuality, with value. Such values include virginity, fidelity, modesty, and chastity. This helps to increase the factors of demand for women’s sexuality using a social exchange theory. In that case, sex becomes a valued good sold

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<sup>40</sup> Laura Oso Casas, “Money, Sex, Love, and Family: Economic and Affective Strategies of Latin American Sex Workers in Spain,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 1 (2010).

and bought in a marketplace where women are mostly sellers and men buyers. They further argue that sex, as female resource, can support some testable predictions, as male sexuality has little or no exchange value. One factor that was tested and proved in the study is that suppression of female sexuality increases demand for women. Generally people refuse to acknowledge the exchange process in negotiating sexual activities.<sup>41</sup> This gives women leverage to use sex as an exchange for other values including economic gains. Thus, this model suggests that women have some agency in choosing sex work.

Claiming some form of agency in sex work enables the women to face the risks involved in it. Women in sex work are exposed to various risks, including STDs like AIDS, harassment by law enforcement agents, rape, and in some, extreme cases, brutal death. Some women have to abandon known territories for unknown ones in order to carry out their trade. Being involved in what is viewed as an anti-social work, they risk being exposed. Sex work involves shame and guilt. In most societies, including ones where sex work is legal, sex workers are viewed with skepticisms. The sense of doing something that is not acceptable makes some of the women live with sense of shame and guilt. Yet, there are always more than enough women in the trade.

Paying attention to how the women place the gains side by side with the cost makes it worth all the risk. Some women who say that they are not appreciated in the home think that sex work is doing the exact thing you do in the family and being paid for it. For a woman to remain in sex work by choice, she must have calculated the benefits and rewards against the cost. Thus, Baumeister and Vohs question the assumption of

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<sup>41</sup> Baumeister and Vohs, "Sexual Economics."

seeing women in sex work only in terms of as “sex objects” and the women themselves as victims. Izugbara studied sex work risks as expressed by the sex workers.<sup>42</sup> He contends that female commercial sex workers are aware of the many risks involved in sex work and assume many responsibilities to stem them. Of particular interest in the findings is that participation in religious activities is included as one of the ways of managing risks by sex workers in Nigeria.

### **The Women Speak**

Women in sex work have written extensively on their experiences. Women in the sex industry find the three models of agency reviewed above in the writings. The book, *Sex Work: Writings by Women in Sex Industry (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)* edited by Frederique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, presents their views by exploring the complexity of agency in sex work through contributions from women in the sex industry. In the introduction, Delacoste writes:

This book is about sex, and how shameful and perverted sex has become in our collective psyche, how we have lost respect for pleasure and disrespect for those who know about it, all in the name of “morality.” This book is also about money and worker’s rights. It’s about women. Women who have voices and a great deal to say about culture, women whose words cut through the discourse and tell the truth about their lives, and ours.<sup>43</sup>

Those whose writings are included are prostitutes, pimps, advocates, allies, and anyone interested in the subject. Delacoste notes in the introduction that the book is organized in that way for coherence. Some parts of the book features the story of street prostitutes, exotic dancers, nude models, escorts, porn actresses, and workers in massage

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<sup>42</sup> Otutubikey, “*Ashawo* Suppose Shine Her Eyes' Female Sex Workers and Sex Work Risks in Nigeria.”

<sup>43</sup> Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press, 1998), 13.

parlors speaking for themselves. The writings do not reflect one particular opinion or the other. Readers are left with the choice of forming their own opinion. There are also writings by academicians, who consider the stigma and shame around prostitution in the context of other demeaning issues in the society, especially racism, classism, and anti-semitism. The book also questions the culture of chastity (especially as it pertains to female bodies), lesbianism, other human rights advocacy, and what they term “progressive politics.” Some writers use their real names while some use pseudonyms.

Basically, the writings may be divided into two broad categories. There are those for whom sex work is liberation, empowerment, fulfillment, and emancipation from a life of drudgery and those for whom sex work is oppression by many people. In the category of those for whom sex work is empowerment are women who think they chose sex work or those who are grateful for being led to discover the richness therein. They are convinced that they are contributing to the wellbeing of the society through their honest living. Making money just by having sex with a consenting adult is no big deal. Phyllis Luman Metal writes, “I found it very liberating being a prostitute, and the men must have found it liberating too, for they were much better lovers than my husbands. They seem to feel free with me and I with them.”<sup>44</sup> Some of them consider sex work a great vocation. For Carol Leigh, “Sex work is nurturing, healing work. It could be considered a high calling. Prostitutes are great women, veritable priestesses. Maybe, that’s an exaggeration.”<sup>45</sup>

Among this category are women who chose sex work for different reasons. One writer describes how her son was diagnosed with a terminal disease at age 6 and she

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<sup>44</sup> Phyllis Luman Metal, “One for Ripley’s,” in *ibid.*, 119.

<sup>45</sup> Carol Leigh, “The Continuing Saga of Scarlot Harlot VII,” in *ibid.*, 123.

decided to give the best to her son until he died in 1985, at age 10. To sustain her son till that time, she needs about USD 2,000 every week. She works three jobs but cannot boast of that amount in one month. She took to sex work. Within two weeks, she had USD 4,000. She describes her choice of partners and how she refuses partners who look down on sex workers and call them names instead of appreciating the work they do. She avers that some of their clients are family men and that these are preferred. For her, instead of destroying families, sex workers are the ones who keep families intact since the men find outlet for their emotions which they may not be able to express to their wives, especially when those whose wives are a “nagging old witch.” She concludes with a declaration that prostitution is neither good nor bad. She writes, “Prostitution served me very well. It was a most a most useful tool. I have no regrets, no shame, no remorse. Indeed, I look back on my prostitution experience with a sense of pride and accomplishment. I did it, I’m glad I did it, and I applaud those who do it now.”<sup>46</sup>

Women in this category (those with a positive outlook on sex work) describe how they help young boys who are still virgins to learn the art of sexual exploration. They have cases referred to them by psychologists as part of the psychotherapy process. Their services are valuable in the treatment of sexual dysfunctions, as clients are more relaxed in their sexual explorations with prostitutes than others. They do not feel judged. Some of the women in this category also came out of abusive relationships and find in sex work an opportunity to respond to men that have abused them in life, something like, “I can now do what I want with my body.” Among these are also women who were sexually abused as children. Sex work is a way of reclaiming ownership of their bodies. Women who see

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<sup>46</sup> Sunny Carter, “A Most Useful Tool,” in *ibid.*, 165.

sex work as empowerment find it ridiculous that the government legislates against sex work. They note that politicians are among their most valued and cherished customers, since they are looking for people who would have their back. Law enforcement agents are their allies and customers as well. They wonder why the government authorities would not just let them be. Using Showden's categorization, these are the sex radicalism and sex-as-work models of agency.

On the other hand, another category of women describes sex work as oppression and slavery. The oppression is multifaceted. The oppression comes from and by the self, others (sex buyers), government agencies, pimps, the society, and the Church. As self-oppression, the women point to the risks in sex work like STDs and especially HIV/AIDS. They speak of the turmoil in their being after rounds of sex with strangers, especially the emotional turmoil of knowing the person will not be there for you tomorrow. One struggles with the sense of remaining "professional" in a work that engages one's whole being. Judy Helfand, a former exotic and erotic dancer, laments, "What I never saw was that I was basing my self-worth on men's desire. I was far from developing a true sense of worth based on self-love. I see this false sense of power as one way internalize oppression keeps us down."<sup>47</sup>

Some of the writers in this category acknowledge that the use of drugs and alcohol is to create numbness over the pain as well as the guilt and shame in sex work. Some write that their uncontrollable sexual urge comes from the sexual abuse they suffered at some points in their lives. Sex work is a continuation of unfinished business. Among these writers are people who see sex work as trafficking and exploitation of

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<sup>47</sup> Judy Helfand, "Silence Again," in *ibid.*, 101.

women. The women in sex work have no agency. They are victims. They have been lured or forced into the work and they think there is no way out. They remain in the work to please their pimps, usually the person who initiates and forces them to do the work. They describe gory experiences of beatings and being forced to have multiple sexual activities even when they are sick or hungry. Yet, somehow, they continue to stay with these people since their livelihood is tied to the person.

Women who operate in the ten counties in Las Vegas (where prostitution is legal) describe their oppression by the government. They see their bodies as what is being sacrificed. The owners of the brothels and hotels make huge profits out of them. The government collects taxes from them as well and forces them to undergo medical checks without the patrons ever being medically checked to protect them (sex workers). They suggest being paid by the government, in addition to what they receive for each sexual activity, for providing tourist attraction to people.

Advocating for these two broad categories of sex workers, some writings in the book make a case for each position as the correct and authentic interpretation of the situation of sex work and sex workers globally. There are advocates who are convinced that sex work is all about exploitation of women's bodies and form organization to stop all forms of sex work. These would correspond with the feminist abolitionists. In the Church, this corresponds to the radical evangelizers who go preaching to the women for conversion without listening to the needs of the women and why they are doing what they do. They propose more stringent laws against prostitution. Other advocates see sex work as the only industry controlled by women. They make the case for the government to let the women be. In fact, their position is to abolish all laws legalizing or restricting sex

work in any way, so that the women may take full charge of their work and bodies. What would a position that holds the ambiguity of these models of agency for women in sex work advocate?

### **Pastoral Models of Care for Sex Workers**

Theologians and pastoral care workers mostly hold one model above the rest when they make proposals about pastoral care of prostitutes. The most often held position stems from the feminist abolitionists view that sex work is violence for women. There is no recognition of agency for the women in sex work. The women are just victims, whether they recognize it or not. More recently, voices that call for solidarity with the women are growing in pastoral care. In response to the women, three pastoral perspectives are reviewed. They include the liberation perspective by Margaret E. Guider, ethical dimensions by Rita N. Brock and Susan B. Thistlethwaite, and a loving response by Lia Claire Scholl.

#### Prostitution and Liberation Theology

Margaret Guider, in her work *Daughters of Rahab: Prostitution and the Church of Liberation in Brazil* presents an example of what contextual liberation might look like for women in prostitution. Her work is situated in Brazil. She writes from her experience as a missionary in there. Prostitutes have some agency, which confounds the Church and society. The persistence of prostitution is a problem both in the Church and the society. Persons who engage in prostitution are hardly understood in their own terms. However, she notes that “despite the scrutiny and condemnation of Church authorities, the religious imagination of prostitutes, as with other women, is beyond the control of any

institution.”<sup>48</sup> There exists ambivalence between beliefs and behaviors around prostitutes and prostitutions in the history of Christianity. The ambivalence, noted above, is that prostitutes are marginalized yet praiseworthy, liminal yet independent, condemned yet desired and tolerated. Church fathers like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas called prostitution “necessary evil.”<sup>49</sup>

In what roughly corresponds with the political models for viewing prostitution and prostitutes as enunciated by Showden, Guider offers three patterns of interaction between the Church and the phenomenon of prostitution in history: toleration, prohibition, and abolition. Toleration is marked by a sense of accommodation of a phenomenon judged to be a human situation; prohibition is marked by efforts to repress prostitution which normally yields no fruit; abolition is marked by moves by both ecclesial and civil authorities to liberate prostitutes from conditions of poverty, as poverty is easily explicated as the one factor that leads to prostitution. Sometimes, these patterns exist side by side while a particular pattern may dominate at a given time. None of the patterns favored by the Church takes the agency of the women seriously. They attempt to solve prostitution problems without involving the women in sex work.

Critically reading the role of Rahab the Harlot as told in the Book of Joshua, Guider sees in the story a starting point for theological reflection on the Church of liberation and the problem of prostitution. She suggests that Rahab should be incorporated into the Christian tradition as an exemplar of faith and justice. Rahab’s

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<sup>48</sup> Guider, *Daughters of Rahab: Prostitution and the Church of Liberation in Brazil*, 12.

<sup>49</sup> Rita Nakashima Brock, “Casting Stones: The Theology of Prostitution,” in <http://www.ontheissuesmagazine.com/1997summer/su97brock.php>.

neglect as an icon of faith and justice might not be unconnected with her profession as a harlot. Yet, her harlotry does not seem to be an issue before God. In her evaluation of women in sex work in Brazil, countless daughters of Rahab are involved in issues of faith and justice but are neglected and their stories not told because of connection with prostitution.

The history of prostitution in Brazil, like every other history, defies summation. The present-day response is a specialized ministry to women who are marginalized (generally prostitutes) known as *Pastoral da Mulher Marginalizada*. Through this ministry, tremendous changes have taken place within the Church in Brazil. The process of establishing the ministry was interactive. Though a project of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Brazil, it was not instituted as a top-down model of ministry. It evolved through the actual work of human beings working with actual persons known as prostitutes. In this new attempt, the women are made to take charge as agents of their own issues. The women wrote letters to the Vatican requesting that the Catholic Church stop the marginalization of prostitutes in Brazil. The women were taking back their agency in making their voices heard.

Guider sees this as a "process of evangelization and liberation that ultimately demanded the conversion of the Church itself, or if not its conversion, at least the admission of its complicity in the marginalization and oppression of all women."<sup>50</sup> The institutional silence on the existence of prostitution in the Church is broken. Though the problem of prostitution is not completely solved, what is accomplished for the Church is a shift away from a problem-solving mode and a radical change in fundamental

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<sup>50</sup> Guider, *Daughters of Rahab: Prostitution and the Church of Liberation in Brazil*, 103-104.

theological orientation. The Church in Brazil has proved an exception through its ministry to marginalized women.

#### Sex Work and Ethics of Liberation

Rita Nakashima Brock and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite offer a different approach to liberation perspectives, with an emphasis on the culture and context that promote and sustain sex work. In their work *Casting Stones: Prostitution and Liberation in Asia and the United States* they use extensive historical data from United States of America and Asia to argue that the sex industry is a form of colonization and exploitation of the weak, in this case, women. They condemn any approach that tries to “normalize” sex work as “work” and maintain that the right word is “prostitution,” which is a loathsome thing in the right sense of the word. No form of agency could be argued for the women. They are victims and nothing but victims. This view represents the feminist abolitionists as outlined by Showden.

Articulating the complexity of the situation and where taking actions against it might begin, they write:

The realities of sex industries in Asia and the United States are hidden by the mystification of sexuality, and the romanticization of prostitutes in the Christian cultures is magnified in most Hollywood versions of prostitution. Mainstream entertainment industries tend to glamorize sexual exploitation. These distortions hide the fact that the lives of most prostitutes in Asia and elsewhere, many of whom, are children, are brutal and dehumanizing. Accuracy requires that we acknowledge the devastating realities of the sex industry at the same time we do not patronize those who work in it. The sex industry is a massive symptom of deeper societal problems, rather than the root disease.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Brock and Thistlethwaite, *Casting Stones: Prostitution and Liberation in Asia and the United States*, 9.

Subsequently, prostitution could never be by choice. Prostitution is about violence against the weak in the society, and this is where the evil lies. The blame shifts from the women in sex work to the men who buy sex and the culture that creates avenues for women to find the source of survival only on their body. Sex work is a form of male chauvinism and masochism, which is explicitly claimed as the central argument of the book, stating, “the social structure of male dominance is a necessary though not sufficient cause of sexual exploitation.”<sup>52</sup>

The book presents a systemic analysis of prostitution in Asia and the United States. It links sex work to the values placed on the female body and to the Christian culture that shaped Europe and United States. Elements of this culture include the dichotomy of human person as body and soul, blaming the victim, oppression of the poor, and the body as the bearer of human guilt for the sin of disobeying God. The Asian landscape is even more complex since the study covers a few Asian nations, which not only differ in their historical-religious outlook, but also politically. The nations in the study are Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Taiwan. Most of these nations have thriving prostitution centers around the United States tourists’ centers, naval bases, and political headquarters.

The book offers a liberation response, as the authors call it. Suggesting that prostitution is an ethical and theological issue, the authors opine, “To reconstruct, we must deconstruct the illusion of prostitution on which the industry relies for its power.”<sup>53</sup> The deconstruction method focusing on emancipation of oppressed people from feminist or liberation theology is called “ideology critique.” Feminist, womanist, and liberation

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 210.

theology have introduced contextual discourse that allows narratives of subjugated people to rise to the surface in theological circles. Therefore, “sin is not a concept adequate to explaining the condition of women and children who are exploited sexually.”<sup>54</sup> If there is any sin involved, it is in the buying of sex. Response to women in sex work comes from grace and compassion. Such response comes from both the Christian and Buddhist traditions.

Furthermore, various strategies are suggested as ways forward for liberation of prostitutes. Decriminalization, that is, no longer keeping prostitution illegal, may free those being exploited. Serious commitment by government agencies must follow such laws. Laws against pimps and johns would serve better than laws against prostitutes. Of course, there would be no industry if there were no buyers. Creating economics alternatives, police retraining, changing the focus of tourism, health care and taking care that prostitution around military bases are eliminated are all part of the strategy. Above all, solidarity with those prostituted involves listening to them, and offering help in whatever way that may help them break out of their cycle.

The book connects the dots on violence, exploitation, theology of the body that denigrated the female sexuality, politics, tourism, and other subtle ways that other religions, especially Buddhism, contribute to prostitution and children all over the world. Asia, as a region, is treated with respect and dignity. One question that remains is the denial that some women choose sex work, thereby denying them agency. Treating every woman in sex work as a victim is an ideology that denies a human being the ability to make decisions. Lumping all sex workers together as victims is an oversimplification.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 426.

Another question would be to wonder if there would be prostitutes if everyone were rich. The book seems to suggest advocacy at the corporate level for the Church and grace and compassion at the individual level in care with sex workers. Those recommendations are considered in the pastoral model of care that this study proposes.

### Loving Response

A response that takes solidarity with sex workers seriously is the work of Lia Clair Scholl. Scholl is a pastor who dedicates her work and life as a chaplain to sex workers without being called by any constituency, except her inner conviction that God is calling her to the ministry. In her work *I Heart Sex Workers: A Christian Response to People in the Sex Trade* she articulates her ideas on what may constitute a Christian's response to persons in sex work. On her motivation and experience, she writes:

Because I'm a minister—and candid about it—I've faced the stigma that comes with being an ally, especially a Christian ally, to people engaged in sex work. Sex workers often encounter do-gooders who want to rescue them from their situation. Because other Christians offer judgment, moralism, and evangelism, they expect those same attitudes from me. They expect me to be a "Captain-Save-a-Ho," a person who tries to rescue and change sex workers. When I don't try to "save" the people I meet, just be their friend, over and over, they express surprise.<sup>55</sup>

She regrets her earlier years in the work when she tried to convert sex workers. She says that perhaps Christians are the people who need conversion. She presents her theology and method of response to sex workers by using an overarching story from the Bible to retell the story of the sex workers whom she encounters.

She writes of Tamar, who played the prostitute in the Bible to get her rights. She affirms the stories of women who enter sex work for various reasons, especially to reclaim their rights. An outstanding question she raises is: *What if we begin to see the*

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<sup>55</sup> Scholl, *I Heart Sex Workers*, 3.

*people who engage in sex work as individuals who are seeking their own paths in an unjust world?* The question becomes crucial as she decries the media and cultural portrayal of women in sex work, which invites derision and discomfort around women in sex work. Using the models of agency presented by Showden, Scholl's women are in charge of their decisions and should be supported. They fit more at the deconstructed self/heroes pole. In contrast to Brock and Thistlethwaite, Scholl maintains that no singular experience captures the story of every woman in sex work. Affirming the work of Delacoste and Alexander, she notes, "sex work may be enslavement to one woman, but it may be liberation to another. The most liberating thing, for any woman, is to have her experience affirmed and believed, because women can be trusted."<sup>56</sup>

With the story of Esther, who was compelled to join the harem and later used her sexual prowess as a woman to win favor for her people, Israel, Scholl raises questions about what constitutes trafficking and choices when young women are faced with a few choices in life. Societal values and sexual preferences must have to change to accommodate ordinary expressions of self that are no sinful in themselves. Sex becomes a way women achieve power. This, inevitably, has to change if the root cause of sex work has to be addressed. Inequality is the foundation of sex work. Her three categories of entering sex work are choice, circumstances, and coercion. However, she admits that the categories become blurred, as there are many reasons one enters into sex work and because it is difficult to determine how circumstances differs from coercion and choice. In the story of Rahab, Scholl sees a lady who transitioned from a "madam" to a

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 20.

“mother.”<sup>57</sup> Frequent transitions occur for women in sex work. This is extended to those transitioning from sex work to other ways of living. Becoming an ally with sex workers helps them to participate in their own liberation.

In conclusion, Scholl uses the story of Jesus and the women at the well to demonstrate that Jesus is a harm reductionist. For her, until Christian ministers stop their judgmental attitude toward sex workers, trust will be hard to build. The first step to working with a sex worker is to earn her trust through humility and approaching sex work as one learning a new culture. The minister should be willing to listen and learn. Next is self-care that encompasses emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of the caregiver. Finally, she invites all Christians to be made in the mind of Christ.

Scholl’s approach and pastoral care method is further expanded in this dissertation through listening to the stories of women in sex work in Nigeria. Scholl does not propagate a one-size-fits-all approach. This dissertation aligns with this position that the experience of the women may be trusted. The women perceive their agency in different ways. Sources of the influence in accepting or denying agency are to be examined in proposing a pastoral model of care. The person of the minister, the sex worker, the culture that produces and sustains sex workers, and the way that Biblical stories are read are factors to consider.

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<sup>57</sup> “Madam” is a parlance used to designate older women who have worked as sex hawkers but are now mentoring other upcoming sex workers. They usually initiate men and women in the sex industry. Scholl uses the Rahab as an example of older sex workers transitioning to other roles in the society.

## Section II: Conceptual Framework

### **Introduction**

This section performs the interpretive move in the Osmer's model of practical theology. As noted above, the interpretive move uses theories and models of social science to interpret data. The theories reviewed below offer the lens that guides the interpretation of the data collected from women in sex work in Nigeria. They are the Karpman Drama Triangle, Critical Realist Personalism and narrative theory. These theories help to conceptualize agency in different ways and help to ground space where women negotiate their agency daily. They show agency may shift and may be conceived broadly.

### **The Karpman Triangle: Victim, Rescuer, and Perpetrator Cycle**

The Karpman Triangle, also called the Drama Triangle, is named after its originator, Stephen Karpman. Karpman conceived the (un)healthy roles that persons assume in relationships. In social interactions, people vacillate between playing the Victim, Rescuer and Perpetrator. This is a method of power negotiation when one is trying to claim some form of agency in one's life. A Victim is the one needing to be saved. A Rescuer saves, while the Perpetrator makes things difficult for the Victim. In an internal play and/or game, one person can assume these different roles intermittently depending on what serves her at a given situation.

The Karpman Triangle first appeared in an article titled "Fairy Tales and Script Drama Analysis", in *Transactional Analysis Bulletin*.<sup>58</sup> In the classic essay, Karpman

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<sup>58</sup> Stephen Karpman, "Fairy Tales and Script Drama Analysis," *Transactional Analysis Bulletin* 7, no. 26 (1968).

uses the characters found in fairy tales to analyze the conscious and unconscious roles individuals play to survive in the world. The Victim takes the role of “Oh, Poor me! What can I do?” The Rescuer steps in with “Oh, see, I am here to help you.” The Perpetrator is the “I have all the powers” person. The roles are graphically represented with an inverted triangle thus.



**Figure 3. The Karpman Triangle<sup>59</sup>**

The Victim keeps the drama going by calling attention to self. Weinhold and Weinhold suggest that the competition for the Victim role keeps the Triangle game going.<sup>60</sup> They identify two types of Victims, which are the Pathetic Victim, and the Angry Victim. The Pathetic Victim uses pitiful facial expression, beaten demeanor, verbal and body language that suggest helplessness to call attention to self. The Angry Victim pretends to be powerful and may look like the Perpetrator in most cases. The catch is to attract a Rescuer who will chime in with wanting to help. “Shame”, “oppression”, “helpless”, “powerless”, and such words are the portrayals both in body

<sup>59</sup> [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/1e/Karpman\\_drama\\_triangle-2.png/220px-Karpman\\_drama\\_triangle-2.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/1e/Karpman_drama_triangle-2.png/220px-Karpman_drama_triangle-2.png). (Accessed January 10, 2016, CC)

<sup>60</sup> Barry K Weinhold and Janae B Weinhold, *How to Break Free of Drama Triangle & Victim Consciousness* (Colorado Springs, CO: CICRCL, 2014), 3.

posture and verbally. Unfortunately, this is how most pastoral agents see sex workers and thereby work as Rescuers.

Claude Steiner differentiates between a “capital V” Victim and a “small V” victim.<sup>61</sup> A Victim is, in the real sense, not a victim. It is more of a role. A “capital V-Victim” assumes the role of victimhood as a way of gaining power. A victim is a proper victim who has no power whatsoever in the issues that s/he is going through. An example would be a person being robbed. In the case of female sex workers, a person sold into sex slavery is an actual victim, as she lacks power to negotiate her freedom. However, Steiner thinks that the majority of the time, persons who act victimhood in the society are “capital V” Victims. Victims collude with their oppressor to maintain the role they are playing in the Drama Triangle. Some women in sex work belong to this category. They discount their feelings, minimize the situation they are in, enable the oppression, and increase their victimization. They beckon to the Rescuer to come and help them. They easily switch roles when their expectations are not being met as Victims. The nearest role to switch to would be the Perpetrator. A Victim responds to assistance with anger or switching of role while a proper victim appreciates and thanks any Rescuer who actually helps them to come out of their situation.

The Rescuer is the good one. She notices the Victim before anyone else. The role provides opportunity for feeling good by having one’s ego needs met. Often, the Rescuer unconsciously sets the drama up for failure, thereby attracting the Victim’s anger. The Rescuer role automatically switches to the Perpetrator or the Victim. Rescuers often complain while playing the role.

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<sup>61</sup> Claude Steiner, “The Rescue Triangle,” *Issues in Radical Therapy* 1, no. 4 (1973).

The Persecutor is the bad one. Weinhold and Weinhold, working with the Triangle in their clinical practices (especially marriage and family therapy), term the cyclic effect of the switching of roles in a relationship living with “Victim Consciousness.” They note “Drama Triangle and Victim Consciousness are at the core of the social and cultural matrix that blocks both our personal growth as individuals and our collective evolution as a species.”<sup>62</sup> Victim Consciousness is letting life happen as opposed to living life. The attitude of helplessness, hopelessness, and powerlessness describe the relationships.

Reviews of the works on women in sex work show that scholars, theologians, and pastoral agents also get caught in the Drama Triangle as they choose one role over the other. The work by Thistlewaithe and Brock takes a position that all women in sex work are victims. Therefore, the society is the perpetrator and we all should be working to rescue the women. The work by Lia Claire Scholl portrays anyone who does not take up solidarity with the women as a Perpetrator. Guider presents a more balanced position maintaining that the women have some agency even while some victimhood experience exists. The data from the fieldwork show that the women depict these roles. The roles are taken up the women as they negotiate their agency in the choice of being in sex work. These roles guide the interpretation of the data as the same ideas are found in the narratives of the women.

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<sup>62</sup> Weinhold and Weinhold, *How to Break Free*, 1.

## **Nonviolent Communication and Critical Realist Personalism**

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) and critical realist personalism (CRP) are used as theories in this project to describe the shifts that occur in relationships that centers on our common humanity. Nonviolent communication promotes practices of communication that strive for connection with every human person. Critical realist personalism interprets the social principles that locate dignity in the personhood of every human being. Both theories offer the type of approach that makes pastoral relationships with women in sex work an experience grounded in a shared humanity of all persons.

Nonviolent Communication, also called compassionate communication (CC), is a way of life as well as a model of communication developed by Marshal Rosenberg, a clinical psychologist. Rosenberg came up with this mode of communication from his experience of conflict and racism in the inner city of Detroit, Michigan. In his book, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, he mentions his preoccupation with these questions: What happens to disconnect us from our compassionate nature, leading us to behave violently and exploitatively? And conversely, what allows some people to stay connected to their compassionate nature under even the most trying circumstances?<sup>63</sup> Led by the desire to find better ways for human beings to connect with one another, Rosenberg developed the theory and practice of Nonviolent Communication. It is a theory and a practical model of communication that emphasizes connection through compassion. It upholds the dignity of all people, emphasizing respect and autonomy and self-responsibility.

Rosenberg opines that habitual patterns of thinking and speaking block compassion.

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<sup>63</sup> Marshall B. Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, 2nd ed. (Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press, 2003), 1.

These patterns include moralistic judgment, which sees things as good or bad, and black or white. With such an attitude, relationships with others are expressed as blaming, insults, put-downs, criticisms, comparisons and other forms of life-alienating communication. The response to such communication involves habitual patterns that further isolate and alienate. They include defending, withdrawing, and attacking. All these communication patterns block compassion. Pastoral caregivers who function from such communication pattern see nothing to relate with in FCSWs. They are labeled, diagnosed, blamed, judged, and reminded that it is their fault to be in sex work. NVC suggests that this kind of life-alienating communication is a tragic expression of our own needs. NVC teaches pastoral caregivers to transform their judgments of FCSWs into needs, so that they can understand, respect, and care for these women. Such transformation guides the interpretation of data collected from the women.

The skills of NVC serve as a model for being with women in sex work. Nonviolent Communication emphasizes compassion and a nonjudgmental attitude in human relationships. These are skills that strengthen our ability to be human/humane. The skills serve as a guide to reframing how we express ourselves and hear others in everyday encounters. The NVC process utilizes three skill sets and four components in ways that enable people to connect with others. The four components of NVC are OFNR, which is the acronym for Observation, Feelings, Needs and Requests.

Observation is the ability to state what is happening in a situation utilizing the five senses, what we can see, hear, taste, touch or smell. This sounds like an easy process. Rosenberg warns: “The trick is to be able to articulate this observation without introducing any judgment or evaluation—to simply say what people are doing that we

either like or don't like."<sup>64</sup> Observations express what is seen, heard, tasted, touched or smelled, not an evaluation of them. Here NVC differentiates between value judgments and moral judgments. Value judgments point to qualities we value in life, like honesty, freedom, and peace. Moralistic judgments point to how we make sense of behaviors that do not support our value judgment. Compassionate Communication does not ask us to be completely objective and never evaluate someone. Instead, it is requesting that we become more aware of our observations and distinguish them from evaluations. The role of NVC process is helping to notice the differences through observation, connecting with feelings, noticing the needs beneath those feelings and making a connecting request.

The capacity to identify feelings and experience them is the second component of NVC. Feelings point to the values or needs that are being met or not met in our observation. Feelings help us to notice what is alive in us as we confront a situation. We often mistake feelings for opinions or interpretations or evaluations. For example, feeling that sex work is wrong is not a feeling; it is an opinion. NVC asks us to connect to the depth of our actual feelings to know what triggers our reaction to a situation. Connecting to feelings leads to awareness of the needs underlying them.

Needs in NVC are values that matter to a person in life. Rosenberg defines them as qualities that contribute to the flourishing of life. Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger and Theresa Latini affirm that everything we do (or fail to do) is an attempt to meet a need.<sup>65</sup> Positive feelings arise when needs are met, while negative feelings arise when certain needs are not met. Needs are universally shared by human beings, even if they are

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 7.

expressed or experienced differently in particular social locations. Also, what might differ is the strategy to meet the needs. The fourth component of NVC is connecting to needs through making requests. A request is a strategy to meet needs. Requests are not demands, nor are they entitlements. They are simply ways of expressing our desire to have our needs met. Requests are specific to place, location, action, time, and object.<sup>66</sup>

The skill sets in NVC are known as self-empathy, empathy and honesty. Each of these skills is practiced using the four basic components of NVC. Self-empathy is the ability to use the four components to ground our sense of being. Words might not be spoken because, as Rosenberg notes, “the essence of NVC is in our consciousness of the four components not in the actual words that are exchanged.”<sup>67</sup> The inner work of NVC helps to stay connected with the self and to avoid communication patterns that alienate others. Offering empathy is the ability to connect with the other using the four components. Making observations instead of judgments helps to create trust and mutual connection. Receiving empathy is the ability to accept from others the move to remain connected. Honesty is the ability to take responsibility for our feelings and needs and connecting with them at the deepest level and in expressions. Further discussion of how the skill set could be utilized in the pastoral model of care for women in sex work is done in chapter five.

The bedrock of NVC is compassion. Though Marshall Rosenberg is a Jew, he did not practically embed NVC in any religious framework, in large part, because he

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<sup>66</sup> PLATO is the acronym for place, location, action, time and object, a unique contribution of Hunsinger and Latini to the NVC process. See Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger and Theresa F. Latini, *Transforming Church Conflict: Compassionate Leadership in Action* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 56-75.

<sup>67</sup> Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, 8.

understands religion as causing division and alienation. Even so, many NVC trainers and scholars take up compassion as the spirituality for NVC in various religious backgrounds. In their book, *Transforming Church Conflict: Compassionate Leadership in Action*, Hunsinger and Latini use compassion in the Christian tradition to develop a system for managing conflicts in Christian communities. They juxtapose each NVC component and skillset with Christian theological concepts in a way that makes NVC an ecclesial practice. A pastoral model of care for women in sex work could put their proposals to use.

According to Hunsinger and Latini:

When we put NVC into an explicitly Christian context, we understand the joyful mutual giving and receiving that Rosenberg describes as central to NVC as descriptive not only of our being created in the image of God but also of our being redeemed for life together. God created us to live in rich fellowship with each other, and the richness of harmony and love will be made manifest in the kingdom of God.<sup>68</sup>

Hunsinger and Latini relate the NVC component of human needs to being rooted and grounded in love, understood with the injunction of Christ to love our neighbor as ourselves (cf. Mark 12:31). The Christian realizes ultimate dependence on God for fulfillment of our needs, though many of these needs are met in human relationships in the here-and-now. Feelings as expressed in NVC are awareness that God searches and knows every heart. Hunsinger and Latini surmise that feelings are hardly discussed from a theological perspective. Yet, God is portrayed as one with emotions. They correlate observation with Jesus' words: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged" (Matt.

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<sup>68</sup> Hunsinger and Latini, *Transforming Church Conflicts*, 14.

7:1). Similarly, requests are interpreted in light of Christians' interdependence in the body of Christ.

Hunsinger and Latini write that compassion is first and foremost an attribute of God and that God alone is the source of compassion. Listening to women in sex work using the skills of NVC helps to reduce judgmental attitude and invites Christ's compassion and openness with them. The call, to love your neighbor as yourself, entails the ability to practice self-empathy. Kristin Neff lists three core components of self-empathy as self-kindness, recognition of our common humanity, and mindfulness.<sup>69</sup> The call to practice compassion with women in sex work is also a call to self-empathy, recognizing our own needs and showing ourselves some kindness. Stepping out of judgmental roles, the common humanity we share may become more visible. Rethinking the shared humanity of every person is igniting more enthusiastic scholarship in various disciplines especially humanities and social sciences. NVC is supported by research that demonstrate that there is essence to being human. One of the sociological theories that redefine the essence of the human person is critical realist personalism.

Critical realist personalism (henceforth CRP) is a sociological theory that attempts to reclaim the essence of human beings as persons. Articulated by Christian Smith in his work *What Is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* the theory attempts to answer the seemingly simple but complex question: What is a person? Smith notes that four related considerations motivate his work: a conviction that we, as persons, are not well represented in the theoretical discourses in the social sciences; the gap between depiction of human beings in many of our social science

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<sup>69</sup> Kristin Neff, *Self-Compassion: Stop Beating Yourself up and Leave Insecurity Behind*, 1st ed. (New York: William Morrow, 2011), 41.

theories, and the moral and political beliefs and commitments that social scientists embrace; a consideration that an inadequacy of exploration exists in sociological theory to define the human person; and a concern for our deep contemporary uncertainties about the human self and person.<sup>70</sup> Offering further clarity on the thesis of the work, he claims that “human beings have a specifiable nature, that there is a real quiddity or ‘whatness’ about personhood that can be known.”<sup>71</sup> He sets out to prove that essence and to define a human person.

The theory, as used in this study, affirms that every woman has an essence as a human being and should be supported to reclaim her sense of being and agency in the world. NVC is a great process that makes reclamation of the essence of human beings wholesome for the pastoral agent and FCSWs. According to Smith, the human person is not the rational, biological, social, psychological, or other component, but an emergent reality that is composed of these qualities and many more. A human person is a higher reality and cannot be defined solely by the components. Emergent entities exist at a new level. For Smith, the task then is to “show that a series of real, distinct, interrelated causal capacities are emergent from the human body, particularly from the human brain, as it operates in its material and social environment.”<sup>72</sup> Smith goes on to offer an analytical conception of thirty causal capacities that could be a possible conceptual ordering of the human person and concedes that they are not definitive. The components interact in a complex and central mode of expression. He defines the human person as:

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<sup>70</sup> Christian Smith, *What Is a Person?: Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 2-5.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

A conscious, reflexive, embodied, self-transcending center of subjective experience, durable identity, moral commitment, and social communication who as the efficient cause of his or her own responsible actions and interaction exercises complex capacities for agency and intersubjectivity in order to develop and sustain his or her own incommunicable self in loving relationships with other personal selves and with the nonpersonal world.<sup>73</sup>

Thus, the uniqueness, dignity and worth of human persons are emphasized.

Embodiment is the core nature of human beings. The body is the site of emergence and sustenance of personhood. Women who engage in sex work are no different from other human beings. CRP maintains that there is inherent dignity in every human being, whether the person knows it or not. This is the core idea that Smith is pushing in the entire work. His arguments sound quite theological except that the dignity is removed from persons being created in the image and likeness of God and located squarely in the personhood. It is a case of wonder and pondering that some people deny this seemingly undeniable fact and Smith thinks that “what is more mysterious is why certain people are devoted to persuading other people that human persons lack dignity and freedom.”<sup>74</sup> Sex workers have dignity and freedom and use their freedom and agency in many ways, as the data from fieldwork show. Female commercial sex workers retain their dignity as human beings, irrespective of the choices they make with their bodies.

Reminding every human being of the dignity and worth of other human beings is necessitated by the various experiences of some people treating others as less human even in the church. Scholars of African origin are using concepts found in the African traditional society to emphasize the dignity of every human person especially the

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 440.

interdependence of everyone. The concept of *Ubuntu*, *umuntu*, and *Umunthu*<sup>75</sup> capture the essence of being human in the African context. *Ubuntu* is of Zulu, South African origin. *Umunthu*, *mtu*, *mundu*, *ntu* or *muntu* are from Bantu-speaking West Africa. These concepts are used to express the core idea of interdependence and relational understanding of the human person in African philosophy as expressed by the popular dictum of John Mbiti, “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.”<sup>76</sup>

In the Igbo language (Nigeria, West Africa), the word used to denote a human being is *mmadu*, which literally means the “beauty of life or the goodness of life or the crowning point of life” according to Andrew Isiguzo, George Ukagba, and Nkeonye Otakpor.<sup>77</sup> Further in their explication of the concept of the human person, Isiguzo, Ukagba, and Otakpor reiterate the interdependence of the human person on others as emphasized in African life. They write:

*Mmadu* is conceived, born, lives, and dies with in a dialogical milieu. *Mmadu* is not just born alone into a community. This fact is no qualification as or for a human being. Physical birth is not a predicate. To be authentically human is also not a function of a nametag. Physical birth and a name are necessary but not sufficient to qualify someone as a human being. We are humans principally because of the humanity of others. As a consequence human existence is understood as a double act of independence and interdependence. *Mmadu* needs the support of others to make life worthwhile. *Mmadu* needs the confident trust

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<sup>75</sup> For further discussion of the terms, see Elieshi Ayo Mungure, *Conflict Transformation in the Family: A Quest for a Contemporary Pastoral Care and Counseling Approach in Tanzania*. (Unpublished PhD dissertation submitted to Luther Seminary, St. Paul, 2007) 51-55. Also Hilliard Dogbe, *The Living Well: An Ecclesial Response to Alcoholism in Ghana*. (Unpublished PhD dissertation submitted to Luther Seminary, St. Paul, 2012.) 153-166.

<sup>76</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1982), 108.

<sup>77</sup> Andrew Isiguzo, George Ukagba, and Nkeonye Otakpor, “The Igbo Concept of a Person,” *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell’Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente*. 59, no. 2 (2004): 231-243.

and reliance of others in order to attain that sublime state of goodness and beauty that are the essence of existence.<sup>78</sup>

My hope and desire is that women in sex work may find in the church the place to experience confidence and trust they need to flourish as humans. Women in sex work find themselves at the receiving end of being treated as less than human in the church and society, as data from fieldwork show. Affirmation of their dignity and worth could be a starting point of support using skills from Nonviolent Communication.

### **Narrative Theory**

Human beings are different from all other primates because of the ability to tell and hold stories. Narratives provide the framework through which human culture is transmitted. In oral societies, stories are a powerful means of socialization. As a means of socialization, how individuals and communities hold their agency is revealed in their narratives. The power in the use of narrative as a therapy model and sociological theory is rooted in the revival waves of postmodernity, especially in social constructionism as a philosophical theory. Broadly speaking, social constructionism posits that human beings construct reality. Bryan Turner sees it as “the philosophical idea that things are not discovered but socially produced.”<sup>79</sup> Christian Smith cautions against overly stretching the idea to include all of reality. He admits that there is a dimension of reality that is socially constructed. For him, humans, out of reality, construct the social. In effect, reality exists and human beings construct the social from it. Awareness of the arguments of social constructionism is valuable in thinking around how oppressed populations and

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 238-239.

<sup>79</sup> Bryan S. Turner, *The Body & Society: Explorations in Social Theory*, 3rd ed., Theory, Culture & Society (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2008), 11.

populations on the margins construct self-identity from what the society offers them.

Women in sex work give voice to their experience and how they conceive their agency in the work through narratives.

Constructionism is associated with the notion that social reality is a narrative or text.<sup>80</sup> Freedman and Combs write:

Using narrative metaphor leads us to think about people's lives as stories and to work with them to experience their life stories in ways that are meaningful and fulfilling. Using the metaphor of social construction leads us to consider the ways in which every person's social, interpersonal reality has been constructed through interaction with other human beings and human institutions and to focus on the influence of social realities on the meaning of people's lives.<sup>81</sup>

Perception of agency is negotiated in intrapersonal, interpersonal, and influence of social reality. Every human person is formed by social context and contributes to formation of the context as well. Female commercial sex workers have been formed by the social reality they experience. My interest is to study them from a narrative perspective, that is, how each person perceives her agency in the stories they tell of themselves in their choice of work. Studying individual narratives helps to understand their construction of agency in relation to self-identity, relationship with God and the Church, and the social reality they find themselves embedded in.

Narrative theory engages stories that people tell about themselves, from which they construct a sense of self and meaning in their lives. Michael White and David Epston developed the theory as a therapeutic model. In their book *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* they express an overall idea that hearing people tell their stories is a path towards healing. Social scientists who embrace text and narrative analogy respond to

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<sup>80</sup> Smith, *What Is a Person?*, 11.

<sup>81</sup> Freedman and Combs, *Narrative Therapy*, 1.

urgent needs in the society. They argue, “in order to make sense of our lives and to express ourselves, experience must be storied and it is this storying that determines the meaning ascribed to experience. In striving to make sense of life, persons face the task of arranging their experiences of events in sequences across time in such a way as to arrive at a coherent account of themselves and the world around them.”<sup>82</sup> Understanding the importance of narratives as text offers the social science community the space to critically evaluate the so-called objective measurable facts in the society. The social science world is coming to the realization that certain aspects of realities need not be predicted, measured and controlled to exist. Brene Brown recalls her training as “If you can’t be measured, it doesn’t exist,”<sup>83</sup> which is the description of the logico-scientific mode of research. This is not an accurate description of social world. Subjective human experiences are as varied as there are human beings. Narrative theory leads a researcher to greater appreciation of the depth of stories people tell about their lives.

Narrative theory is contextually situated. It privileges a person’s lived experience. The reality of the dynamism in the world is linked through plotting as it sees the human person as a subject with explicit and implicit meanings to life. Art forms and poetic descriptions are acceptable as methods of constructing stories. In this way, both the subject telling the story and the listener take a posture of appreciation for participating in one’s acts. Such stories could be produced and reproduced as life goes on.

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<sup>82</sup> Michael White and David Epston, *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (New York: Norton, 1990), 9-10.

<sup>83</sup> Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2012), 8.

Michael White, in *Maps of Narrative Practice*<sup>84</sup> lays out the ideas informing the theory. The six main techniques used in the therapy are externalizing the conversation, re-authoring conversations, re-remembering conversations, definitional ceremonies, unique outcome conversations, and scaffolding conversations. There is no denial that the process of carrying out the research is therapeutic. Listening and hearing stories leads to healing for both the storyteller and the listener. According to White, externalization “makes it possible for people to experience an identity that is separate from the problem.”<sup>85</sup> Generally, sex workers experience being treated as problems. Employing this narrative technique helps me to hold sex work as extraneous to the person, thereby, becoming more open to hearing the stories each person brings. There is more to each FCSW’s life than sex work. It also informs my choice of the term “commercial sex workers” over the more popular term “prostitutes.”

White sees re-authoring conversations is an invitation to people “continue to develop and tell stories about their lives, but they also help people to include some of the more neglected but potentially significant events and experiences that are ‘out of phase’ with their dominant storylines.”<sup>86</sup> In the life of women in sex work, using narrative theory helps to explore other aspects of the women’s life including strengths and resiliency. A good number of the women are not aware of their agency and strengths due to dominant negative narratives around women in sex work.

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<sup>84</sup> Michael White, *Maps of Narrative Practice*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007).

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

Engaging the model as a research technique and pastoral intervention contributes in no small measure to reclaiming the sense of self and some form of agency in the work. Listening to the stories people tell about themselves is therapeutic since narrative is central to identity. Stories hold an entire life experience in perspective. A more nuanced form of narrative theory which developed from narrative therapy and feminist studies is the work of Christie Cozad Neuger, *Counseling Women: A Narrative Pastoral Approach*.<sup>87</sup> She notes that narrative theory cares for particular stories in the midst of dominant cultural discourses.<sup>88</sup> Women and people from the underside of culture are empowered to share their stories, using awareness developed from feminist and narrative theories. They begin to develop a sense that their stories matter. Their conception of their agency is trusted. To believe that one's story matters is to begin to develop a sense an authentic self.

Neuger builds her theory in recognition of the revolution that gender studies have created pathways in our understanding and ways of being in the world today. She weaves the gifts of narrative approach, gender studies, and theology together. The aim of the approach is to help women come to voice in every context, considering the enduring legacy of patriarchy. Neuger's basic assumptions, which are even truer in the context of the study, are that "men and women still live out their lives in a world that is profoundly sexist, racist, ageist, classist, and heterosexist."<sup>89</sup> Aware of this statement of fact while conducting the research, attention is paid to the multiple factors that inform the choice of

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<sup>87</sup> Christie Cozad Neuger, *Counseling Women: A Narrative Pastoral Approach* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>89</sup> Neuger, *Counseling Women: A Narrative Pastoral Approach*, 1.

commercial sex work in Nigeria, helping the women to come to voice and gain clarity as they critically evaluate and appraise their sense of agency in what they do.

### Theological Root of Narrative Theory

Theologically, narrative theory resonates with the Christian tradition. The Bible is filled with narratives of how people see God working in their lives. God constantly requests that the Israelites do not forget the wondrous deeds performed in their lives.<sup>90</sup> Ray Anderson remarks that “Before the theologian there was the storyteller. To say ‘Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’ is not a recital of a genealogical litany but the recapitulation of a theological legacy.”<sup>91</sup> Behind every theology is a story of individuals and/or community. The gospels are narratives of the earthly life and ministry of Jesus, “written so that you may come to believe.”<sup>92</sup> During the Eucharistic celebration, the memorial of the Lord’s Supper is narrated and celebrated.<sup>93</sup> Terence Tilley notes, “Without stories of Christianity, there could be no Christianity.”<sup>94</sup> Making case for story theology, he writes:

To be a Christian is to use the Christian canonical metaphors, to adapt or adopt the stories which carry them to one’s own life, and thus provide meaning and unity for one’s life. This use of stories provides us another way to answer the question of what metaphors, concepts or doctrines mean. By telling and exploring the stories which contextualize key Christian ideas, a person can show what they mean. That process of discovering, creatively transforming and proclaiming the

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<sup>90</sup> *Shema Yisrael* (Deut. 6:4-7) is an exhortation to always narrate the deeds of God with the Israelites so that they may keep His laws. Telling and retelling of the narratives of the Israelites has a place during Passover celebrations. The summary of the narratives that constituted Israel as a people is repeated in the Assembly.

<sup>91</sup> Ray Sherman Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 11.

<sup>92</sup> John 21:12.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Luke 22:19.

<sup>94</sup> Terrence W. Tilley, *Story Theology*, Theology and Life Series; 12 (Wilmington, NC: Michael Glazier, 1985), xvii.

stories which carry the key ideas of Christianity is the distinctive work of a Christian narrative theology.<sup>95</sup>

In doing theology, attention is paid not just to the stories of the Christian tradition, but also to individual and communal stories of the Christian community. This takes the context where the story arose seriously. In order to understand a person, a movement, a symbolic action, or a provocative metaphor, one needs to pay attention to the context in which each arose.<sup>96</sup> Narratives allow for attempts at inclusion of voices that are traditionally excluded in theological discourse, while paying close attention to the context of the story. Hearing the voices of the poor, women, Black, Hispanic, and Asian peoples calls theology to promote inclusion of all peoples in the promise of the reign of God, in both thought and practice.<sup>97</sup>

In Africa and among African theologians, narrative methodology is used in many ways, for instance, in communal rites and as means of socialization. Sitting around a fire, a tree, a well, an elder, or in a village square to tell stories is an undying part of African culture. African theology comes embedded in stories embedded in liturgical expressions. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator uses this method in his appropriating Christian theological concepts in African ways. Justifying his method, he has this story to tell.

Doing theology is not an isolated enterprise, particularly in Africa where doing theology is a community event. At Hekima College where I teach, one of my favorite classes is called simply "Palaver Session." This is a time when students sit in a round hut and talk about God, faith, and their religious experience in a

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>97</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, "Horizons of Theology: New Voices in a Living Tradition" in *New Horizons in Theology*, vol. 50, The Annual Publication of the College of Theology Society (New York: Orbis, 2005), 3-15.

African context. Sometimes we have something to drink and munch on as we dialogue, debate and converse.<sup>98</sup>

I do not know if there was literally a “round hut” at Hekima College in Nairobi Kenya. The picture painted by Orobator is typical of how Africans do serious talks. The scenario also depicts relaxation, equality, trust and communion. Every participant knows that his/her story matters. Orobator goes ahead to use stories from African tradition to study theological concepts in the book. Using narratives as the research method, the thrust of this work is inclusion of the voices of women in sex work as they negotiate their agency in theological reflection. The research metaphorically creates a “round hut” where the stories of the women matter in theology.

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<sup>98</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe. E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine from an African Perspective* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2008), xi.

CHAPTER THREE  
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

**Narrative Inquiry as a Qualitative Research Methodology**

The research methodology that this study uses is narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology. According to Hesse-Biber,

Qualitative methodological approaches stress the importance of multiple subjective realities as an important source of knowledge building. Epistemology in this paradigm holds that knowledge gathering and truth are always partial; that researcher values, feelings, and attitudes cannot be removed from the research relationship but instead should be taken into consideration when interpreting the data as part of the knowledge construction process; and some of these approaches argue that the researcher should establish a reciprocal relationship with research participants to promote an interactional, cooperative construction of meaning.<sup>99</sup>

“Subjective realities,” as the central focus of qualitative research project, are ways of working against so-called “objective realities.” Creswell defines qualitative research as “a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.”<sup>100</sup> Qualitative research is identified within the social constructivist and interpretative worldviews. The philosophical tradition assumes that human beings develop subjective meanings from their experiences of the world. The meanings are vast. The researcher is open to multiple meanings and themes emerging from her research.

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<sup>99</sup> Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, *Mixed Methods Research: Merging Theory with Practice* (New York: Guilford, 2010), 17.

<sup>100</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 4.

Narrative inquiry, as a research approach for this project, is grounded scientifically, contextually, and theologically. Narrative inquiry is a type of qualitative research that makes use of stories that research participants tell to describe, interpret, and construct meanings. D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly make a case for this method of research in their remark, “if we understand the world narratively, then it makes sense to study the world narratively.”<sup>101</sup> Studying the world narratively means studying the world as a text and as a narrative. The focus is the human person who tells the story, and their implicit understanding of their agency in the world. Turner states that underlying a narrative research is “a desire to understand how the social world looks from the perspective of the person being studied.”<sup>102</sup> This study is about understanding the individual agency of women in the world from the perspective of the female commercial sex workers in Nigeria in order to construct a pastoral model of care from them.

Using narrative inquiry as a research approach involves several features. They include collecting stories from people, stories that tell of individual experiences, and how they shed light on the identities of individuals, collection of stories as data using different forms such as interviews, observations, and other sources, and analyzing and retelling the story by the researcher.<sup>103</sup> These are tasks that this study engages. Therefore, narrative inquiry is particularly suited as the research methodology to making this possible.

Listening to narratives entails openness and curiosity. I listened to the narratives aware of several factors. Chief among these was the person of the researcher. Compared

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<sup>101</sup> D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), 17.

<sup>102</sup> Turner, *The Body & Society: Explorations in Social Theory*, 11.

<sup>103</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 71-72.

with the persons I interviewed for the research, I have privileges within the Church and the society. As an educated woman, I am more respected than those uneducated. As a vowed nun, my research subjects and I seem to be at two opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of how society and the Church perceive our use of our bodies. I receive accolades and praises for standing against what “those women” do with their bodies. On the Madonna/Whore spectrum of grading women,<sup>104</sup> I am perceived as belonging to the Madonna end, while the participants belong to the Whore end. Therefore, I must remain aware of these privileges as I carry out the research. I do the study seeking to be aware of the power differential between my research subjects and me though we belong to the same race and ethnic group.

Growing up in Nigeria, my hometown was considered a metropolitan city and became a state capital in 1991. I was able to see how women in sex work are treated poorly. One of the worst insults to give a woman is to call her an “*ashawo*,” literally translated a “prostitute.” My mother’s eateries are located close to a guesthouse with a brothel. We were always warned never to look inside that place because it was inhabited by devils. I used to peep in in order to catch a glimpse of a devil and only ever saw human beings. In spite of the bad names and insults given to the women, sex work thrives.

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<sup>104</sup> Showden, *Choices Women Make: Agency in Domestic Violence, Assisted Reproduction, and Sex Work*.

## Research Design

According to Shalene Hesse-Biber, research methodology and design are “tools and techniques researchers employ in order to answer specific research questions.”<sup>105</sup>

This social science method contributes to the descriptive-empirical and interpretive task of practical theology. In answering the research question, *What do narratives of female commercial sex workers (FCSWs) say about women’s construction and deconstruction of agency as persons in the Church and the society?* narrative inquiry is the approach that will lead to a plausible attempt at deciphering women and agency in sex work. Agency will be sought in their self-identity and relationships. Self-identity may not be taken in isolation in an African society. As narrative theory has demonstrated, behind every narrative is a social construction. I, therefore, listen to political, socioeconomic, and religious factors that shape the construction of agency. I listen to issues of power, and how the women are deconstructing agency as they negotiate their limited power.

In the sphere of culture, multiple factors are involved. The slave trade, colonization, and Christianity are cultures that have deeply interrupted the traditional culture of Africans in the past two centuries. These have permanently and progressively introduced massive changes in the society. The system of governance is changed, Black bodies are despised as they are sold and bought in the slave trade, and African Religion no longer holds its place as the organizational life of the people. These dynamics introduces a wave of globalization that Africans are still negotiating. With the global digital culture, exchange of information is even more instantaneous. The way that these factors interact in the making of the self that chooses to engage in sex work is important. Attention is paid to such issues, like level of education, access to quality education,

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<sup>105</sup> Hesse-Biber, *Mixed Methods Research*, 129.

economic background, ethnicity, religious affiliation, time of exposure and involvement in sexual activities, family support, involvement in religious communities, length of time in the work, and the role of digital media.

The research population is women in sex work in Nigeria. They are members of a Christian community, particularly those who are able to describe their agency in sex work. This description rules out those who are trafficked or forced by someone else to sell and/or buy sex. Those interviewed must have been in sex work for at least three years. This parameter helps to control for those in sex work for a short period of time for one reason or the other. The sampling method used in choosing participants is snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique.<sup>106</sup> The researcher does not know in advance who may be chosen. The first person, Ngozi, who sparked the interest in the research, introduced some friends to me. Each of her five friends who were interviewed indicated interest to lead the researcher to other women interested in the research. The first ones introduced were interviewed.

A total of 10 FCSWs were interviewed between June and July 2014 in Nigeria. The women were interviewed in a location in an oil-rich city in Nigeria. Some of the women live in brothels while some live in rented apartments. They are mostly streetwalkers. They come out in the evening at certain known road junctions and clubs soliciting patronage. I carried out the interviews. The women invited me to one of their evening outings at a popular location for sex work. With assurances of my safety and theirs, I visited the place. Their hospitality and comradeship among themselves was amazing. They told me that it is the one of the ways to survive the work.

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<sup>106</sup> Peter M. Nardi, *Doing Survey Research: A Guide to Quantitative Methods*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon, 2006), 118.

The basic design used for carrying out the interview is what Rubin and Rubin call in-depth qualitative interviewing. This means carrying out an interview in a semi-structured manner in which the researcher has a general topic to learn about, prepares a limited number of questions in advance, and plans to ask follow-up questions.<sup>107</sup> Clandinin and Connelly call this a responsive interview.<sup>108</sup> An interview protocol (see Appendix A) is used. Luther Seminary IRB approved the protocol. It was field-tested with three FCSWs. Further review of the protocol was carried out after the first two participants were interviewed.

Collection of data for the research was through interviews. Each interview lasted for about one hour and thirty minutes. One of the interviews lasted two hours and fifteen minutes because the participant indicated that she wished to tell the story of her entire life, in her way. It was like replaying a 30-year life in that time frame. With the consent of the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded. Informed consent was obtained before the start of the interviews (see Appendix B).

The process of the interview was carefully designed so as not to expose the researcher and participants to any form of danger. Safety was a great concern. Interviews were carried out during the day at a safe location. Identity and what the women do were hidden from staff of the location where the interviews were carried out. I checked in with each person severally to determine her level of comfort on continuing with the interview. All the persons interviewed carried out their work as independent workers at the time of the interview. Therefore, the fear of being trailed by pimps did not arise.

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<sup>107</sup> Herbert J. Rubin and Irene Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 31.

<sup>108</sup> Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, 110.

Field notes were taken. The verbal and nonverbal communications in the process of telling the stories were rich sources of data for the research. Some of the interviewees speak English and told their stories in English. Some speak other Nigerian languages and had their interviews in two other languages that the researcher understands, speaks, and writes. Out of the 10 interviews, five were in English, three were Pidgin English and two were in Igbo. I translated and transcribed the ones in other languages to English. The idiosyncrasies of the English used by those who spoke English were retained in the data presentation.

The interviews were manually coded to identify the emerging themes.<sup>109</sup> No software was used for coding. I started with line-by-line coding followed by axial coding. I noted the different and similar theoretical themes that were emerging, how they relate to each other, and the implications for my general research question, which is their construction and deconstruction of agency in their self-identity and in their relationship with the society and God/the Church. I collected the themes from the different individual interviews together. The coded interviews present the shared stories of these women, paying particular attention to the meaning behind the stories. The themes are presented in the next chapter while theoretical frameworks discussed above are used to interpret those themes.

### **Limitation of the Study**

Prostitution is a sensitive topic and the world of sex workers is shrouded in mystery. This world is vast and seems intertwined in every fabric of the society. Sex

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<sup>109</sup> Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), 50.

work could be studied from various perspectives. This study, focusing primarily on the agency of the women selling sex, is limited in many ways. They include sampling technique, number of participants and number of cities used in the research, historicity, and focus of the theology in the work.

As enunciated above, the sampling technique used in the selection of the participants in the research is snowball sampling. This technique limits the expansiveness of the research. A friend introduced by a friend would resemble the friend in some ways. As a result, my research subjects seem to fall within the same age range. Therefore, generalization of the data is limited. Only 10 participants were interviewed. Though a limitation, awareness that commercial sex workers are itinerant workers helps to mitigate the limitations. Sex workers change location often. Efforts were made to include participants from other tribes other than one major tribe among the participants. Religion is also a limitation of the study with regard to choice of participants. Only Christians (judged by being baptized) and those who were members of a Christian community at the time of doing sex work were selected.

This method and choice of participants excludes women trafficked for sex slavery, a practice regarded as the foremost method of entry into prostitution.<sup>110</sup> Except when they came up as part of the stories of the women, international sex trade was not part of the study. Pornography, organized form of selling and buying sex using the digital media, was not discussed.

The study does not research historical data on sex work in Nigeria, but rather uses aspects to highlight how the participants view themselves with respect to the Nigerian

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<sup>110</sup> Showden, *Choices Women Make: Agency in Domestic Violence, Assisted Reproduction, and Sex Work*. See also <http://www.equalitynow.org> (accessed February 7, 2016.)

society today. Such historical studies may be taken up in future research. The next chapter presents the themes from the research.

CHAPTER FOUR  
HISTORY AND CONTEXT: ANALYSIS OF DATA

**Introduction**

This chapter presents analyzed data from the fieldwork. It describes and interprets the data from narratives of women in sex work in Nigeria. Both the descriptive-empirical and interpretive tasks of the practical theology are done in this chapter. Interpretation is done in light of the scholarly work and the conceptual frameworks reviewed in chapter two. The first section is the demographics, which covers the age (at the time of the interview), education level, economic background, history of childhood sexual abuse, and age at start of sex work. The second section presents the emerging themes from the analysis of the narratives of the women in sex work in Nigeria from three perspectives, focusing on issues embedded in the research question: *What do narratives of female commercial sex workers (FCSWs) say about women's construction and deconstruction of agency as persons in the Church and the society?* Three themes on which the analysis of data is presented in this chapter are construction and deconstruction of agency in one's identity or self-understanding, in their understanding of their relationship with God and the Church (their Christian community), and in the society. The sub-questions that will be answered in this chapter are the following: How do the women see themselves as persons with or without power? How do the women perceive their agency in relationship with God and the Church? How do they perceive their agency in the family, community, and the entire human society?

### **Demography**

Ten women were interviewed for the study (n=10). Five are aged between 30 and 35, one is 16, and four are between 20 and 30. Therefore, the mean age for the participants is 29. Regarding their history of childhood sexual abuse (henceforth CSA), defined as any sexual contact with a minor, 7 participants recalled specific details of molestation and at what age it happened; two said they had forgotten their age, though they were aware that their first sexual act was by force or coercion; one person said she had her first sexual contact by choice at age 19. The age range of when the abuse occurred for those who recalled their abuse was from 7 to 13 with the mean being 10.6. The mean age for starting of sex work is 18.5. One started seeing patrons at age 12.

Their levels of education vary considerably. Two of the participants have college degrees from Federal Universities, 5 finished high school (secondary school) and obtained their diploma (Senior Secondary School Certificate in Education), one dropped out of high school, and one finished primary school while one dropped out of primary school. Reasons for dropping out of school range from economic reasons to wanting to start life early. One linked her dropping out with her sexual abuse and running away from the household of the abuser.

Measuring the economic condition of families in Nigeria is not easy. This is because family wealth and income are rarely discussed. Many families live on informal economy. Informal economy is defined as “activities and income that are partially or fully outside government regulation, taxation, and observation.”<sup>111</sup> The usual descriptions are rich and poor. In the words of the women, two describe themselves as coming from

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<sup>111</sup> Workers in Informal Economy on <http://web.worldbank.org>. (Accessed March 20, 2016.)

wealthy families (equivalent to being middle class), and three say that they are an average family while five say they are from “very poor” families.

The frequency of the responses is graphically represented below.

**Table 1. Demography of Respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Mean
Childhood Sexual Abuse	7	
Age at First Sexual Contact		10.6
Age at Starting Prostitution		18.5
Present Age		29.1
Level of Education	Primary 2 Secondary/High 6 College 2	
Religion: Christianity	10	

From the demography presented, women who claim some form of agency in their lives as workers are mostly with a history of childhood sexual abuse. The data presented here seem to agree with the writings of the women in sex industry (refer to Chapter 2 above), who see sex work as a way of reclaiming their bodies. Seventy percent of participants of this study recall details of their sexual molestation as minors.

The mean age at the start of prostitution is 18.5. This does not mean that a majority of the participants started sex work as adults. Rather, the ages of those who started very late contributed to equalizing the mean age. One of the participants started taking in patrons at age 12. She reported that her mom was a sex worker who tried to shield her from the work. And seeing how “lucrative” it is, she left home and rented her own apartment (a shanty in a ghetto) in another town and started seeing men. Those with CSA started prostitution earlier than those three who reported having a choice in their first sexual encounter.

The various levels of education indicate that women in sex work do not have lower levels of education. Though women with low levels of education outnumber others, it is not always the case. The two persons with college degrees mentioned hoping to pursue Masters degrees when they get the opportunity.

In terms of religiosity, each of the participants described herself as “very religious” Christian. They all report attending weekly service at a Church, praying almost everyday, and paying tithes from the money realized from sex work. Three said that they are members of the choir while the rest play some active role as ushers in their Christian communities. In presenting the data from the interviews, I deliberately retained some of the expressions as they were used. “Runs” is euphemism for sex work. Some words whose meaning could be lost in translation are also retained with an explanation in brackets when they appear first.

## **Themes from the interviews**

### **Agency in Self-Identity: Self-understanding and Experience of Sex Work**

I sought to discern each person's understanding of agency in sex work from their description of self-identity as a woman and their reason for entering sex work. These are explicit in the questions: How do you see yourself as a woman and how did you start sex work?

### **Victims, Agents, Saviors?**

Responses are varied and complex. Some of the participants see themselves as beautiful women who are only using what they have to get what they do not have, while others see themselves as disdainful persons who have no other choices than sex work. It is difficult to say whether sex workers are victims or agents. Participants in this study describe their agency differently and state how this connects with being in sex work. All names used in the narrative are not real names.

A participant (Favor) narrates: "I was like a mad person. What else do you want me to do?" Continuing, she said, "I am endowed woman. I became pregnant at 19 at my first experiment with sex with my then-boyfriend. With annoyance, my father asked me to leave his house and meet whoever that is responsible for it. Putting on shorts, that was how I left the house and find my way to Port Harcourt. The girl that issues ticket was like feeling reluctant to give me ticket because I was looking tattered so she whispered to her colleague to look at this girl, is like she is mad. So I told them I was not mad, so she called me and asked me what the problem was. I told her that I was stranded that I want to go to Port Harcourt. So she gave me the shirt she wore to work because in their office they put on uniform. She said I should wear the shirt that she can wear her uniform to the

house. So I thanked her and left to Port Harcourt. When I got to Port Harcourt, it was a hell because I have no relation in Port Harcourt. I came to Port Harcourt when they were working the oil mill flyover. I slept in the oil mill market for one week because that was the nearest place to the bus park where I stopped. In the night, I will buy pure water and wash my body because I don't have a place to stay. During the day, I will use the money I got to buy things I will eat or clothes. One day a boy that sells garri came and asked that he will sleep with me. I told him that he will give me money because it is what I need so he promised and gave me N2,000. Any time I'm walking on the road I will be looking for a man that will ask me hello so that I will follow the person to his house and lay my head. This was how I was living till I got to know the Eleme junction through artillery, where I saw many young girls who engaged themselves into prostitution. So I called on one girl, who in reply asked me if I'm stupid that they are into prostitution? I said I know but I want to know how."

Favor is thrown into a situation in which she had to choose sex work to survive. She started sex work before actually learning the trade. She said that women have only one power in this world, their bodies. Using it to survive is her conception of agency.

Mezu has a narrative of "what do you want me to do." "I am a Ghetto girl, born in ghetto at Enugu. My mama is into runs. I do not know what a father is because my mama does not know how she even became pregnant or by who. Me, I started runs at 12. This is the only world I know. What else am I expected to do? I simply taking my own customers and left my mama's area and came to Awka ghetto." Here is a young girl who continues the cycle of sex work in the family. She reports that sex work is the only world

she knows. In such cases, it is difficult to assess her understanding of her agency. She is simply living the world she knows.

For Caro, it is a story of saving others in the family. She says: “I am a nice Girl. I come from a large family. We are nine kids. Sometimes, no food, nothing. I volunteered myself to start this work because I know I am beautiful and men will carry me. We now have a house.” It is clear that Caro thinks of herself as a sort of “savior,” a messianic figure for the family when they had nothing. She is somehow proud that she has accomplished something for the family. So for her, it is her “niceness” and ability to “volunteer” for the salvific mission that matters. Therefore, she sees herself as one with agency. She is using her giftedness to save her family members.

Rose says that her being good and nice brought her to the work. “Actually, at a time things became too difficult for me that I can’t even eat, rub cream or wear clothes. Then I was into one club (i.e. association) and we pay N5,000 per month. Because of the difficulties in life, I was not able to pay the money again. So I know of a girl called Nadis, she took me to artillery. That was my first time of getting to artillery. So I started going there and one day a man carried me and after staying with him he paid me N7,000. So I went to the market with the money and bought clothes, cream, etc., then I had only two trousers. I have to survive.” Rose’s identity is tied to being able to survive in hard situations. Hence, her choice of sex work.

On the other hand, Adanna continues to mourn her being in sex work and why she is not able to make good money in it. She says she is dirty. “I’m an orphan and came from a poor family and I came to notice that this run favors some people and doesn’t favor some, and conditions of life at times lure someone into what he/she doesn’t desire. I

didn't go to school because I came from a poor family. It is in this Port Harcourt that I enrolled in Adult Education class. It does not favor me." This contrast with Ifeoma's narrative: "I am beautiful. From a well-to-do family. My first sex is by choice. Men use and dump me anyhow. Instead of having sex for free, they can as well pay for it. I got into it [prostitution] out of anger, to use the men and their money also." Ifeoma sees sex work as a sure route to demonstrating that she has power over her body not men. She further says, "Imagine, if all the men I have sex with in this world paid for it, I would have been richer by now." Well, we will continue with the mathematics another day. For this research, agency and autonomy for Ifeoma is a given because she collects money from those who use her body for their pleasure.

Ezinne's story is tied to childhood sexual abuse and loss of trust in people. "I used to trust people before. I was 419ned [conned] of all my money for business, owing many people. I fled to the city. Begged a friend to teach me the ashawo [prostitution] business. I started real runs at Abuja, met one Alhaji [normally, a wealthy Muslim] who furnished my house. Men are so stupid. In short, very very stupid. They build house for *ashawo* and live in nothing but huts. I came back and continued in this city. Remember, I was raped when I was small. They are paying me for it." Of note is that some sex workers understand themselves as the ones with power while their patrons are the ones without power. This has reflected in the literature reviewed above on the writings from women in sex work. This is continued in Ada's narrative. "I am *Ezenwanyi* [loosely translated "queen" though with deeper meanings of having esoteric powers.] The world obeys me. See, you may not believe me. I tell people what to do and they do it. I rob, and I share the money. I have powers. I can do anything including *Ashawo* work and command men to

pay me any amount and they do.” In this case, this participant believes she has extraordinary powers to direct her world.

The stories presented show that no single concept may capture the way sex workers describe the way women perceive their agency in sex work. Some sex workers see themselves as powerful, while some see themselves as victims of the society. Yet others see themselves as saviors. They appreciate their being in sex work as rewarding while some see it as killing. The outstanding metaphors from the identity descriptions are agent, dirty, savior, queen, and victim. In relation to the victim, perpetrator, and rescuer (VPR) Triangle presented above, the roles correspond well. Victims are represented in the narratives of the participants and in the concept. In the narratives presented here, there are real victims and those playing victimhood to gain power.

Those who experienced childhood sexual abuse (CSA) strongly use the Victim metaphor. “I was disvirgined [deflowered] by a guy at Lagos, at primary 4. Because I was still very young, they were suspecting me and brought me back to A. I was desperate to go back because I wanted to see the boy. One day, while my father went out to work as security man, I ran away to the boy. I was disvirgined before I even saw my first menstruation.”

Those who see themselves as “saviors” correspond with Rescuers in the VPR triangle. They have a sense of fulfilling a mission as prostitutes. What they are asking is how the Church might help them do this better. The perpetrators include those who believe they are using their power as women to get what they want and deserve from men. As noted above, the roles fluctuate in the life of participants as they share their narratives.

Nevertheless, in spite of which metaphor a sex worker in my research group uses to describe herself, there is an expression of fatigue of one kind or another, especially as one ages. In her narrative, one says, “I don’t derive pleasure sleeping with men because my intention is not really that I’m sleeping with my lover because there is a difference sleeping with your lover and sleeping with any man. Rather I just see it as my business and a means of getting money to help myself. Sometimes when you meet some men whom you feel that are not vibrant or agile, you can just collect your money and go. I want to get married and enjoy sex again.” There is a perpetrator role locked in the narrative when the sex worker collects money from a prospective client and leave without providing the services. Another corroborates the view on fatigue in sex work: “I don’t derive any pleasure from it, I’m only doing it because of money.” Another recounts, “I’ve decided that after this year, I will not continue with this work. I’ll have to relocate to where nobody knows me and settle down to see if any man will come into my life for marriage.”

The teenager among them is also contemplating quitting. “I want to be a star, a Christian musician, to open my shop in a big way. In fact I want to create a history and let the whole world know me and I want to open a ministry which I will name “Singing Ministry” because in my dreams I always see myself singing very well, the lame walk, the barren conceive and even the dead rose. So I want to work for God so that what he planted in me will be manifested.”

Fatigue among the participants is expressed as a desire to get married. Marriage is regarded as a means of social mobility and sign of settling down as an adult. One participant narrates: “I am 36. Marriage is what I am begging God seriously to do for me,

to be honest, this work is not a good work because God made night for us to sleep and have rest, is just that if you don't go out for search of money, you will not survive." Some of the participants believe that women in sex work make good wives. They attribute this to their ability to endure many risks. One said, "*Ashawo don see ikenga finish. Wetin I go go find for another man wey no be im husband if im padi sabi play*" meaning that a sex worker must have seen all sizes of penis and would be faithful to her husband if the man knows how to satisfy a woman sexually. Another says, "That is my prayer now. If I can get anybody who will marry me, I will be happy to get married because I'm tired of this business." The desires are also expressed as wanting some self-reliance. "My plan is that I will get someone who will help me to establish my own business since I've some equipment/instruments for catering and even a digital camera to cover some events/occasions. Though I do tell my neighbors that am a photographer in case of anybody having any occasion and would want me to cover his/her occasion that I'm available." Some devise means to make their desires happen. One of the ways described is dressing "decently" and appearing responsible so that more serious men may be attracted. "If you dress well, they will be proud to go with you, they will even tell people that you are their girlfriend and may even allow you to stay or sleep with them till 7am or 8am. So because of this, most girls dress well while going to club nowadays."

The women in the study express and negotiate their agency in many ways that could not fit one concept. Their stories are different from each other and they understand their roles in different ways too.

## Agency in Relationship with God and the Church

The second theme in the narratives is how the women describe their understanding of their agency in relationship with God and the Church. Generally speaking, the women exhibit some level of trust in God and a level of distrust in organized religion. All the women interviewed say that they are Christians and involved in a church. Most of them believe that they have a lot of connection with God, which gives them a sense of having some agency in their relationship with God. “So each time I prepared and come out for the runs, I always pray to God to help and protect me from being hurt by the bad ones.” Another puts it this way: “I prayed God to forgive me since is not going to be permanent because I know it is a sin before the sight of God. I know is that my spirit is not always at rest each time I’m going out for this work and for that, I always pray to God to guide and protect me from the hands of ritualists or those that can harm me, that it will be better for me to remain without getting work than to go and fall into the hands of evils ones because I know I’ve a call or purpose of which God brought me into this world which I have not fulfilled.” Another added a dimension of asking grace while not keeping God’s word, which she quotes. She says, “Well, God said that ‘our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit,’ but things of this world has really deceive us. So we keep on asking for God’s abundant grace in all that we do so that we will be safe from every trials and temptations of this life. I do go to Church every Sunday.” There seems to be this constant negotiation with God on how to act. From another, “I always pray to God to guide and protect me because I know God has a purpose for me on earth.”

Those who do not attend Church services regularly express the same trust in God. “I don’t go to Church often, but I always pray before going out. I always ask God to

guide and protect me as I go to that work because I did not intentionally engaged myself into the work. It is as a result of bad condition and not having a helper that led me into the work.” A participant narrates: “Like in my case, I have once jammed the spirit who came and carried me from the club and paid me N3, 000. I went with him and made love with him without knowing that he was a spirit, after which we both slept and after a while just like a dream there was a mighty breeze. Immediately I felt suppressed and I started running and was praying God to deliver me because I was already half-dead, that it wasn’t really my intention to go into this business.”

One of the participants who said that she is both a traditionalist and a Christian tells of how she performs a bath ritual at the river to invoke the spirits to assist her. Generally, water spirits are female in Africa and very benevolent to women. “I go to Idemili – I bath and make promises to the river. I call the *Ezenwanyi Mmili* (River Goddess) and ask her to assist me. If you give me money I give you something. I bath and put sweet (candies) into the river. I will not speak to anyone and after I will fulfill the promise and throw the chicken to the river. No one told me what to do. I make up my rituals and perform them.”

The participants in this study are confident of their unmediated access to divine protection and love. Their sense of agency in relationship with God is strong. This contrasts with their narrative about the various churches they attend. Relationship with the Church is described with disappointment, where human beings purporting to be acting in the name of God usurp their agency. Some of the women claim that they make a lot of contributions to the Church without being acknowledged or recognized. “The Church is a place where people run into for help but because of what is happening these

days it is no longer like that.” Another recounts: “Before I got pregnant, I was a chorister in my Church. I was expelled from being a chorister because of the pregnancy. I went back to my pastor to beg him not to come back to the choir but to help me beg my father for forgiveness.” As usual, the man who impregnated her was also a member of the choir and no one expelled him. He denied knowing the source of her pregnancy and he was believed. She ran away from the community because of the experience and started sex work. Experiences like this erode the sense of being a member of the community.

Aside from outright expulsion, some Churches go a further length of exposing and shaming the girls publicly. One of the girls has this to say: “I refuse to let him [my pastor] know my work because he is totally against any woman who live with a man without her bride price being paid [traditional marriage] not to talk of someone who is into prostitution.” It gets more complicated. “I attend XYZ International Church. The pastor has television at the corners of the church, so I can say is an exposing church. If you are found as one who live a bad life you will be called out before the congregation and warn you or even carry out deliverance on you if it requires that.” And the definition of “bad lives” is women who are prostitutes or who have extra-marital affairs. Consequently, “we who are into runs at times we meet in the church and pretend as if there is nothing going on.”

Other forms of punishment take place in the Church as well. “It is not easy when they find out because they will bring you out and place you at the back sit.” Yet, Church workers patronize them. One asks: “Do you know how many pastors we service each night at artillery Junction? Without us, they cannot do their work well. We even go their crusades to boost the numbers. See, me I even do testimony time.”

Participants' descriptions of the role of the Church in the life of women in sex work are anything but pastoral. In most of the descriptions, the women are treated as non-existent. They are invisible and are encouraged to remain so. Shaming and maltreatment of women in sex work is reported more than care. The women are not confident being themselves in the Church because of the stigma and, sometimes, outright expulsion for issues like teenage pregnancy. As a good number pointed out, no one ever asks about the men who make the women pregnant, making it easy for them to deny the responsibility.

The devil receives some blame too. It is not unusual to blame the devil for ill fortunes in Africa. "I became promiscuous as if devil planted the act in me. Sometimes, I will come back to my senses, meditate over the life that I have indulged into, cautioned myself because I wasn't gaining anything. Rather I was losing and even vowed not to go back to it again. But it seems as if devil is always by my side hearing and will always push me back to it and before you know it I'll see myself into that sexual act again. So I continued and at a stage I got angry with myself and wondered what was happening to me because I knew I was very intelligent when I was in school. After meditation, I will get repented and within a short time I will still go back to my sexual life. So with all these things happening in my life, I decided to go into club, though not fully participating. Hence, I will use what I have to get what I want and will not be falling victim of infatuation. So I was worried and was asking myself whether this is a curse or what." Without doubt, the devil is the one with powers here. The experience narrated shows some sense of helplessness. It is like a vicious cycle that keeps repeating.

### Agency in Relationship with the Other/Society

The themes included in this category are descriptions given by participants on every other manner of negotiating agency and/or points of claiming agency in other relationships in life. Included here are immediate and extended families, communities, the cities they ply their trade in, pimps (if there are any), and the larger society encompassing, perhaps, the global community. The presentation and analysis of data in this section follows the themes as used by the women.

### **Family Complicity/Neglect**

Families of women in sex work share in the complicity in many ways. It is difficult to neatly differentiate between societal and family on issues that shape women's choices. The family is nested in a society. Some of the idea discussed as family issues overlap in some ways with the societal norms in Nigeria. As pointed out by Showden in Chapter two, women negotiate agency in a continuum shaped by norms, values, needs of others, and forms of power that shape women's self-understanding. Family needs, expectations and neglect contribute in how women in sex work describe themselves as agents, victims, perpetrators and saviors in the family.

One says: "My family knows (that I am a sex worker), and I'm not the only one. Three of my half sisters are also involved into runs. My mother and her husband know about it. Her husband is no longer working, but all he wants is just to get money from his (step)children and doesn't care to know how they are getting the money. My own father does not know that I am into runs and he does not bother his own children for anything. I have a baby boy who is up to six years. He is here with me, he goes to school and I always leave him in the house while going to runs. He comfortably sleeps alone and

always asked me to come back on time, which I also maintained to prepare him for school.” Some of the girls reported too that they chose sex work for the sake of the family as contained in the section on agency and self-identity. Women see it as a sacrifice to use their bodies to save their families from economic doom. In this case, their negotiation of agency is closer to the hero pole, though may it fluctuate to the victim pole when they sense their efforts not acknowledged and/or rewarded by the family.

Poor treatment of teenage pregnancy, poor sex education, unsafe and forced abortions, and strict and stringent societal and family laws against women’s sexuality contribute to young girls taking the leap between the two poles of agency negotiation in matters of sex work as a choice. In the narratives shared by participants, young girls who became pregnant are treated like outcasts, while the partner or whoever owns the pregnancy easily denies it and is believed by the families. This easily leads to the girls looking for alternative lives from the family by launching out earlier than planned. Without doubt, sex work is the nearest and easiest trade to start. After all, what is needed is the body and the person already possesses it. The body becomes the site for expression of agency as women.

Favor’s narrative, in part reported above, continues: “She told my father about my condition and on that note my father asked me to leave his house and meet whoever that is responsible for the pregnancy. With annoyance, my father asked me to leave his house and meet whoever that is responsible for it. After giving birth to the child, my father took me to his house and after some weeks, no, about two months, my father asked me to leave his house and go to my husband’s [the one who impregnated her] house that he has tried for me. I thanked him and carried my baby to the house I was staying in. My mother

started crying and asked my father to allow me to stay in the house. He refused and said that since the boy has denied and he [my father] will not want to bring shame to the family. I carried my baby to him and asked him to hold Ezinne for me. My father asked me where I was going. I told him I wanted to go and buy something. Putting on shorts, that was how I left the house and to go and find my way. My father trained every person in my house as a graduate except me because of the incidence in my life.” Some parents still see teenage pregnancy as “bringing shame to the family.”

Another participant who left house because of teenage pregnancy narrates: “I went back to my [boy]friend to tell him about my situation, which he denied he is not responsible, otherwise I suppose to have told him since four months I have been coming to visit him, which is truth because I did not know I was pregnant. I know I never slept with another person except him. He was called to come with his people, which he did. When they came, my father asked him if he was responsible for the pregnancy. He said no.” Somehow, the boy is normally believed against the girl. In a position of “no-power” even in their own families, girls are taking back power in a way that seems possible and plausible whether it is legal or not.

Nigeria is a nation where reproductive rights are discussed mostly in moral terms. Many clinics that provide contraceptives and abortion for people do so illegally. Therefore, safety is compromised. Fear of deaths from abortions contribute to how sex workers make decisions as agents of their body when in need: “I aborted the first pregnancy, removed the second one as well. Third one I decided to keep it because my friend nearly died doing abortion.” Ending their academic career earlier is a consequence: “I got pregnant while in school, after my final year exam, I went on holiday and it was

then I put to bed in 2007. So facing the difficulties in child bearing all alone I couldn't continue.”

Sometimes, the person responsible for the pregnancy might try to induce an abortion without the consent of the girl. Coupled with outstanding poor sex education, the women are easily victimized. “I was seeing my period not knowing that I was pregnant. I fell sick after four months and was taken to school hospital, so they called my parents and told them that I was four months and one week pregnant. I doubted it because even that day I was confirmed pregnant I was menstruating because that was the only man that I have ever known in my life. Throughout my pregnancy period, I didn't go for ante-natal for once nor take any drug even paracetamol. I just decided to stay in that house till I give birth to my baby. A day after that he [the boyfriend] bought apple fruit and gave me not knowing that he injected sleeping drug inside it, I ate the apple and fell asleep, his intention for injecting the apple was to take me to the place where he will abort the baby, the baby that has already formed, six months and two weeks. He did. And that was the place I got a mark on my body. The man that carried out the abortion charged him N6, 000 they started the abortion and I was unconscious of what was going on. On the process of the abortion, I started bleeding and because of the fear that I may die, they planned and took me to a farm where one woman was working. The woman squatted and allowed them to go out of the farm. When they left, she came closer to me and saw the way I was bleeding and took me to the hospital, on reaching to the hospital they confirmed that I was short of blood though the baby was not affected. The woman looked for a way to get blood and my blood group is O positive but the woman's husband is O positive also. The woman's husband donated the blood to me. On the process of putting

the blood the needle broke and I was operated. Thank God I survived the operation. I was discharged and taken back to the woman's house. When I became fully ok from the operation, I asked the woman what I was doing in her house, which she told me nothing, that I was only brought to her house to stay. For her she doesn't want to tell me anything until I give birth to the baby so that I will not start thinking. I stayed in her house up till two months before I went back. So I asked my mother what I will do when it is time for deliver. She told me that there will be signs that I'll get then I will know it is time. All my mother told me happened the way she told me. I gave birth to my babies. The girl came out first and it took time for the boy to come out. When he finally came out he cried out once and did not cry again. Though I lost the baby boy at last but the baby girl is still alive and seven year old now." Unsafe abortions, carrying pregnancy to term without any form of medical assistance, forced abortions, lack of access to birth control are results of discussing women's health only in moral terms. The women are the victims of lack of honest engagement with reproductive rights in the society.

Almost all the participants have a story of pregnancy. Poor sex education and unavailability of choices around female reproductive issues make illegal abortion and dropping out of school the closest option the women have. When they end up as sex workers, are they victims or heroes? Other narratives include: "I fell into his hand and lost my virginity and immediately I got pregnant. When I discovered that I was pregnant I aborted the baby." Another said: "Still in close relationship, I became pregnant and told him and he told me to stop calling his phone. He said he has no money to marry me now. I brought drugs and took it and the baby aborted." Another participants shared: "When I come back, I fell sick. The guy took me to his hometown. I did not even know I was

pregnant. And the guy already had a girl arranged for marriage. When we arrived at their hometown, he abandoned me and the baby boy. I took all the money and including the money his sisters gave me to go home to my family. I was being scolded by my family for having a baby.” Really? Incidentally, the Church is participating in the blame through expulsion and shaming.

Even in the midst of being sexually molested by older males, families still find a way to blame the girl. “I was disvirgined by a guy at Lagos, at primary 4. Because I was still very young, they were suspecting me and brought me back to village. I was desperate to go back because I wanted to see the boy. One day, while my father went out to work as security man, I ran away to the boy. I was disvirgined before I even saw my first menstruation. It was then that I realized that the boys sell hard drugs and was into robbery. Even before the landlord sent me home, I had been locked at police station because of the boy.” This is the evil that the Church should be dealing with by providing wholesome pastoral care for the girls.

### **Savior: Making Contribution to the Family and Society**

The theme of the savior resounds in the stories of the women. Those with this narrative believe they are agents in their decisions. Some of the women see themselves as playing vital and crucial roles in the society and their families. As noted above, those who volunteered to go into prostitution in order to help their families see themselves as playing a salvific role. For the Church, the savior metaphor stands out among those who think the pastors need them to do their work well. In relationship to the general society, it is outstanding in many ways. Some of the ways are discernible in the narratives.

Societal expectations shape choices that families make with regards to having babies. In Nigeria, it is a clear expectation that every couple must have children, the greater in number, the better. This places pressure on families to meet up with expectation. People openly talk about lack of kids in family and ask the couples what they are waiting for. Adoption, though, growing popular is not yet valued as a couple producing own babies in any way possible. Perhaps, polygamy used to solve this problem in the traditional Nigerian society. Desire to have kids leads couples to make other formal arrangements like adoption, and informal arrangements like surrogacy for babies. None of the literature reviewed from other contexts showed sex workers serving as surrogate mothers.

Surrogate motherhood is a role that sex workers play according to the participants in this study. They describe themselves as helping in sustaining marriages through surrogate motherhood. Women in sex are not the only ones who serve as surrogate mothers; some of the narratives claim that it is easier for them to do because they are already used to using their bodies to make money. “You will also see so many married men who are childless that will come at joint, agree, and mobilize a prostitute to carry baby for him on contract basis after which he will come and pay off the prostitute, carry his baby and the prostitute will go her way.”

During my visit to one of the homes, a rented two-bedroom apartment that housed about 8 girls, I noticed that one of them was pregnant and did not go out with others for “runs.” The other girls said of her, “she is carrying baby for one big man. So, she is resting and eating well.” They speak highly of the role. In this case, the wife of the man was part of the arrangement and visited the girl often. She disguises as a pregnant

woman. Normally, when the girl goes into labor, the woman would be admitted to the same hospital. After birth, the couple takes the child.

Another way that the women think they contribute to the society is growth of the economy. Some of the women are confident that they keep money flowing in the society by getting it them out from the hands of politicians and rich people and redistributing it to the poor through making purchases. Women in sex who operate in oil-rich cities say that this is their way of sharing in the oil windfall, which the government is not letting the poor to gain access to. Concerning the oil workers who work on rigs offshore, one recounts, “if you happen to get any of them, especially when they are back from offshore, you are lucky. For instance, there was a day I met one man who just came back from. He called me and I asked him how much he will pay me. He said that money will not be the problem. I insisted that we discuss business well because I call it business. Those offshore guys are loaded.”

Every person who lives in any of the numerous oil-rich-cities in Nigeria know that “offshore guys are loaded,” a term meaning, that they are well paid. Big oil corporations like Shell, Chevron, Agip, and others who drill oil in Nigeria pay their workers in US dollars. With the increasing devaluations of the Nigerian Naira, offshore workers, both expatriate and local, pass off as “loaded.” Some ladies prefer to wait at their drop-off points when they return from rigs in order to solicit patrons.

### **Law Enforcement Agents**

The relationship between sex workers and law enforcements agents are paradoxical in epic ways. Law enforcement agents are supposed to enforce the illegality of sex work. The narratives from sex workers present relationships with law enforcement

agents as another layer of negotiation of agency as women. Sometimes, they end up taking care of the men with their bodies. Some of the women claim they are the ones with power not the law enforcement agents. Contained in the narratives are explicit and implicit beliefs that sex workers contribute to the welfare of the society through the law enforcement agents. Agency in this relationship comes at different points on hero and victim continuum with differing levels of negotiations.

The narratives point out the poor remuneration of the Nigerian Police Force and how the raids at the clubs yield funds for the maintenance of the law enforcement agents. One participant recounts, “The police people do come when they like, especially when they are in need of money and women.” Another elaborates, “Mostly, they come in between last and first week of the months for them to be sure that civil servants, who are not being paid by last week, must surely be paid by first week. They catch both men and women, that is men, who come to carry the young girls [johns] and if they find out that you are a married man, who come to the prostitute’s joint, they will make sure they sap all the money in your pocket without mercy. But on the side of women they will carry them to their office and if they caught up to 10 girls, and it happen that they are up to ten on duty, they will share the girls among themselves and some of them will refuse to use condom so that’s why as a girl who is into this business, you make sure you have condom in your bag always in case of anything.” Another source says, “some of those policemen will request to sleep with us or if you have like N1, 000 or N500. If you drag [negotiate] so much with them because they so much like money they will release us.” Another recounts: “we do encounter police embarrassments [harassments]. I have a wound on my leg which I sustained while running away from police. At times, when we don’t go out

till 1 or 2am. Police will come, chase and catch some of us. They will take us to police station.” And: “Police do harass us. At times they will select the ones they like and use, at times, they will threaten some that they will take them to court because of fear some girls once you bring court issue they will be afraid and ashamed of coming out before court and claim that you are a prostitute while some will stand their ground that they will appear before the court because they cannot come and beg you food, and even if they beg you cannot give them.” Some of the girls believe the law enforcement agents are carriers of venereal diseases because of indiscriminate sexual activities.

### **Circularity of Evil**

In the quest to negotiate agency in a world that denies power to one gender, some women are caught in a web of evil. The women interviewed in this study provide the surreal link to how women get entangled in an intertwined array of anti-social behaviors. The neglect of women by the Church and society is what I am naming as evil. Some of the narratives highlight being lured into criminal activities, becoming armed robbers, international sex trade rings, and incarcerations. It repeats like a vicious cycle. Some of the narratives present lives that move from prostitution to drugs, drugs to armed robbery, to prison, more drugs, more criminal activities, more prostitution, incarceration, release from prison, and the cycle continues. The aim of effective pastoral care would be to break the cycle at some point.

One participant narrates: “One day a guy by name Eta came and carry me to his house. Reaching there, I saw guns, cocaine, and some other things like that. I wanted to shout. He stopped me and said that he will kill me if I shout, that they were looking for a girl that will join them in their work. Then I saw life as nothing. I believe that one day I

will die. I said ok that I will join. There is a mark on my chest, an initiation mark. So they took me to [a place] where I took an oath that I will not reveal their secret because he did not believe that I will not disclose that. So I told him that before I take the oath he has to tell me what I'll be working for them. He said is to take the guns to the area where they are going for operation so that on their way going they will carry it. I don't go to operation with them. I said ok and join them in their work. After their work, when they come back they will give me some money, sometimes handset, necklace, wristwatch. I continued going to the club as am living with them. Sometimes when I go out with a big man, if he has money I will give them text message, the address of the place. They will come to the place, collect the money from the man, beat both of us, so that there will not be any suspicion. After the operation, we will all see in the morning, they will give me my own share. So we were doing this like four months. I woke up one morning and said God, I don't want to join these people again. So I walked up to Eta who is the head of the team and who introduced me to the team. I told him I don't want to join them again, that this was not what I bargained for. I prefer prostitution to this." The outcome was that she was threatened with death and given three days to think again and choose between working with the gang or death. On the second day, four members of the gang were gunned down during a shootout with the police.

One of those interviewed has this to offer: "I have been to prison 5 times. There is no police station that does not know me and continued robbery. I can break any shop and take money and share to police and others. I have to pay for my cocaine. I am an alcoholic. I use weed and cocaine." It is clear that some of them do not know how to break out of the cycle. The youngest participant, age 17, gave an insight in her effort to

stop sex work and do something else: “I wanted to stop prostitution. I broke a shop and took many things. I stole all those things to use and open my own shop.” This is where a pastoral model of care that listens to the women, as they are, would be helpful.

Two of the participants described how they were recruited to join in the international sex trade. Surprisingly, both of them maintained that they were not trafficked, as is the dominant narrative. Both said that they even paid the recruiters to be recruited. They maintain they are not victims, but agents of the choice. They told the gory story of how they were moved from city to city until they arrived in Libya on foot. One said that out of the 267 girls who left Nigeria, only two made it alive to Spain from Libya. Many died en route to Libya and their boat capsized while travelling from Libya to Spain. The other said that her cohort of 258 young girls left Benin (Edo State) while 28 made it to Libya. She later made it to Italy before she decided to come back to Nigeria.

### **Changing Location and Exchange with Neighboring Countries**

Women in sex work change location often, by choice and by force. There is a saying in my Igbo language: “*Akwuna gbagharai, ogholu nke ofuu*,” which literally translates, “when a prostitute changes location, she becomes a new one.” This dilemma is reflected in the narratives shared by participants. Changing location often is part of the deal. “There are regular customers, those ones that you must have gone out with like 5 to 6 times but some of these men after going out with you for several times will change to another woman.” Therefore, one has to change location to look new to customers.

Some of them said that this gives them some sense of agency in choosing where to go while others see it as eroding their agency since they hardly settle at a place. The movement includes other West African countries and the girls come into Nigeria as well.

The countries that were mentioned severally include Ghana, Cameroun, Garbon, Benin Republic, and Togo. One participant reports, “The way I got to Port Harcourt was the same way I got to Bayelsa State but Bayelsa life was good because then I was seeing money. So I moved down to Port Harcourt again.”

### **Risks**

Sex workers are well aware of the risks involved. They take steps to mitigate them. The risks involve deaths by murder, rape (sometimes, by multiple persons), and diseases in addition to law enforcement agents’ brutality, and rejection by the Church and families. How do you navigate all these? One participant responded, “Well, one need to be very careful in this work because the kind of condoms that are being produced nowadays is not trustworthy and some men can be cunning and wicked. Like in my experience with one man who carried me one day. Getting to the place, he asked me to pull my inner wear and wore the condom so as I bend to pull my inner wear he has already pitched out the head of that condom. As I put on the light, I discovered that and asked him why he did that. May be he has sickness in him that he want to transfer to me. Again, I do go to hospital for medical check-up at least in six months interval. So one needs to be very careful because the work is also very risk. One can easily contract disease of any kind. Sometimes one can jam bad boys who are into cult or rapists. I had experience of rapists, though they will pay you a reasonable amount which you will pay back by sleeping with a good number of them.”

Another corroborates her story: “There are many risks that are associated with this work, for instance, contamination of diseases like HIV, Syphilis, Staphylococcus, Gonorrhoea, and those ones you do not know the names. Also those who are having sex

through the anus, at a stage in their life they may develop sickness because of the abnormal way of having sex. Again when the person comes of age like 45yrs, the person will not be able to walk or stand normal because there are some sickness that may go into the body and hide when they are young and as their age is coming up those sickness will starting appearing. Another risk, the person may run into the occult men<sup>112</sup> and lose her life.”

Rape is a real threat. The problem with rape in sex work is that the raped would not be able to press charges as a sex worker. “A man may come to the club and carry you to his place and when you get there you’ll find out that they are up four to six men. They will all sleep with you [i.e. rape], collect your phones and still push you out. So there are lots of risks in the work.” The story continues: “There are rapists too who are wicked and heartless, especially the young ones who will come and carry you from the club. After sleeping with you, they will beat you up, snatch your bag, wrist watch, handsets. Or those who will come and carry you alone and on getting to his destination you will find out he is not the only one to sleep with you. Though when you get into his house he is the only one in the house with you but around 1am or 2am, he will tell you that one of his friend call him that he is stranded that he is coming to sleep with him in the house but you wouldn’t know that these was their arrangements and that is how they will be coming one after the other. When they come, they will pretend to give you advice to adapt to any situation you find yourself that they are also human beings you should not be angry. So in

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<sup>112</sup> “Occult men” is a used in describing people who are involved in dangerous cults that require human blood for rituals. It is a societal belief that such people hunt for human beings at night. Part of the description is contained in the narrative for politicians whom they say are involved in ritual killings too.

this situation you will always beg them to use condom and not to argue with them, otherwise they will injure you.”

Sex workers think they are easy targets for ritual killers. “Just like we all know that next year is for election, there are so many ritualists. You see all these politicians who will send their boys to go and get some human parts for them and if you are not lucky enough, you may be involved and die away. But some girls, if they jam [meet] such a thing and God save them to escape from it, they will repent and give their lives to Christ. Another one is all these venereal diseases. I think that is the essence of producing condom because there is a saying that ‘prevention is better than cure.’” Some do not trust the efficacy of condom anymore: “Again condom is not even reliable. It can only prevent you from getting pregnant, but cannot prevent infections/diseases like HIV. I also believe that even if you have direct sex, so far the woman is not enjoying the sex, she did not release or don’t have cut in her, she cannot contact any infection. Some men do insist to have the sex without condom, promising you that they will not release inside you, but as we know, is not all men that can control themselves during sex. Therefore you have to be conscious of when he is about to release so as to avoid him releasing in you. I do go to pharmacy and buy some preventive drugs and also go for check-up after two weeks.”

### **Digital Media**

In 2012, the first licenses for General System for Mobile Communication (GSM) were sold in Nigeria. This brought unprecedented access to Nigerians in every walk of life. As of December 2015, Nigeria reports a teledensity of 107.87,<sup>113</sup> the highest in

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<sup>113</sup> [http://ncc.gov.ng/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=125&Itemid=73](http://ncc.gov.ng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=125&Itemid=73) (Accessed February 10, 2016).

Africa. Most the women interviewed for this study passed through both phases of having no means of connection to availability of mobile connections through GSM technology and being connected to the world through the same technology. They reflected on the impact of the explosion of GSM on their work and life. There are both negative and positive evaluations. “Cell phone is of two purposes: good and bad purposes. It depends on the one you choose. Like I said earlier, some people died through this phone while some have gained favors through it. There is one lady who died through this cell phone, she got a friend through Facebook and from there they exchange numbers and he invited her to Lagos. The lady went to see him and that was how she lost her life. One can get some vital information and can easily travel safely to an unknown destination.”

Further on the negative impact, one participant says: “Phone contributed to the slowdown of the business because almost everybody now has phone. Some big men instead of coming to that our joint to pick any of us will now call whoever they want on phone. So that has really contributed much on the slowdown of the business.” Some see it as helping to reduce risk of having strangers as customers. “Your friends may call you and tell that there is somebody who want you or at times it might be the person you’ve been in contact with.” Further research is needed in area of women agency and explosion of the digital media in Nigeria. The cultural shift that the implosion of access to the internet is mediating might be taken up in a subsequent research.

### **Summary**

Analysis and interpretation of the data presented in this chapter shows that women in sex work in Nigeria construct and deconstruct their agency as women at different points on the continuum, describing women as victims and heroes or deconstructed selves

as conceptualized by Showden. The sociocultural, economic, religious, political, and individual family context of the society the women find themselves in contributes in rendering agency more complex. The data analyzed show that the women see themselves as victims, agents, saviors, and perpetrators in some ways. An underlying expression of varying levels of tiredness bedecks each narrative.

Relationship with God is described in glowing terms. In the narratives, the women's sense of agency in their relationship with God is solid. Some of them believe that even if human beings are judging them because of what they are in, God loves them unconditionally. Prayer for safety before going out each night is a common theme resounding in the narratives. This trust stands in opposite contrast with the women's experience in the Church. Most of the narratives have elements of victimization and scapegoating.

The site where women's agency has, historically, been tested in history is the family, the society, and the Church. The narratives describe the appalling ways families disempower females, mostly, trusting and believing the male folk in the event of adversity. Girls could be sacrificed on the altar of the so-called family name. With the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society, the women find it hard to achieve anything with little or no education. In spite of the difficult terrain, the narratives contain aspects of making contributions to the families and the society through sex work. Some of the women own volunteering into sex work to save their families. The risks involved do not deter them, as some believe they are the ones with power in the society. In an uncanny manner, the narratives seem to indict every member of the society as being implicitly or explicitly implicated in the boom and sustenance of sex work.

The women believe that they make great contributions to the society through redistribution of wealth especially from politicians and oil tycoons in the Nigeria. Some of them are proud of contributing to the upward mobility of their families through the work. They narrate their sense of empowering families through surrogacy. The law enforcement agents benefit from their services as well. Sex work as an international trade enables exchange of services between countries especially with neighboring countries. The challenge that this analysis raises for the Church is to suggest a pastoral model of care that takes victimhood and claim of agency into consideration. The aim of such approach is to transform each narrative from any point the woman describes.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *IKPORO* THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

#### **Introduction**

This study follows the practical theology framework of Richard Osmer. The four tasks of practical theology guide interpretation and response, leading to ecclesial practices. Having completed the descriptive-empirical and the interpretive tasks, this chapter turns to the normative task. The question that the normative task of the work undertakes is as follows: How would the church in Nigeria engage a pastoral model of care for women in sex work through the affirmation of their dignity and informed sense of the women's agency from their narratives and from theological and biblical perspective? The normative task uses theological and biblical concepts to interpret an issue in context and discern what ought to be going on. The normative task could be a reflection on best practices in a context. This theological and biblical chapter anchors this task of practical theology. Osmer describes this move as an art of prophetic discernment, which involves the interplay of divine disclosure and human shaping. Thus, practical theologian fulfills a prophetic office. Osmer writes, "the prophetic office is the discernment of God's word to the covenant people in a particular time and place."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 133.

The story of what I considered the call to ministry with women on the margins of the society is told in the introduction of this work. The present chapter connects the theological and biblical perspectives informing the pastoral actions that the practical theologian undertakes in the lives of the women in the study. As I begin to look at the theological and biblical lenses, carrying out the normative task, I consider it pertinent to reiterate that this work is not a moralistic study. What ought to be going on? The attempt to answer this practical theological question is *Ikporo* theological and biblical reflection. *Ikporo* is an old Igbo word (one of the three main languages spoken in Nigeria, which is my tribe and language), which literally means “women.” I made the choice to name my engagement with theology, biblical interpretation, and ecclesiastical practices *Ikporo Theology* because African women in theology have not yet adopted a specific term for the rich theology emanating from engaging gender issues theologically, especially women and culture, in Africa. In different writings, it is called African Feminist theology, African Women Doing theology, African Women in theology, Third World Women Doing Theology and other descriptive terms, as each writer prefers.<sup>115</sup>

The points of convergence in African women theologies include that the women seek to give weight to the experiences of women and the injustices they suffer in their various contexts, contending with patriarchy and a patriarchal model of doing theology that rationalizes the exclusion and dominance of women by men. They concur that

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<sup>115</sup> See Virginia and Mercy Amba Oduyoye Fabella, ed. *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology*, Reflections from Women's Commission of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999); Mpyana Fulgence Nyengele, *African Women's Theology, Gender Relations, and Family Systems Theory: Pastoral Theological Considerations and Guidelines for Care and Counseling*, American University Studies Series, Theology and Religion, 229 (New York: Peter Lang, 2004). For me, it is *Ikporo* theology or theology *Umunwanyi*.

African women experience culture as a tool for domination.<sup>116</sup> Nyengele agrees that the starting point of African women's theology is women's lived experience, "which centers on listening to and giving voice to the specificity of women's concrete, lived experiences in light of central affirmations of the Christian faith."<sup>117</sup> Until a particular term is adopted, doing theology while engaging women's experiences in the church is, for me, *Ikporo theology*.

Calling this chapter an *Ikporo* reading and interpretation of theological and biblical passages anchors the biased hermeneutics of the chapter on the shoulders of women all over the world, in and out of academic circles, who are contributing to making the voices of women heard in theological and academic circles. In other words, I make claims to being influenced by feminist, womanist, *Mujerista* theologies and writings by men and women who are displaying some sense of honesty in recognizing the manner that women are disenfranchised in our world. I add this work to the space being created by African Women Doing Theology. Within that broad circle, I am claiming space for the voices of bodies of women from West Africa, specifically, women in Nigeria in contributing to theological and biblical interpretations. This method of doing theology resonates with "what is referred to in Roman Catholic tradition as the *sensus fidelium* that is, the ongoing revelation of God in the community of faith."<sup>118</sup> Every person has potential to speak the truth of God.

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<sup>116</sup> Maaraidzo Mutambra, African Women Theologies Critique Inculturation, in Edward P. Antonio, *Inculturation and Postcolonial Discourse in African Theology*, Society and Politics in Africa 14 (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 174-186.

<sup>117</sup> Nyengele, *African Women's Theology, Gender Relations, and Family Systems Theory: Pastoral Theological Considerations and Guidelines for Care and Counseling*, 9.

<sup>118</sup> Ada Isasi-Díaz used this theological lens in listening to what she calls "subversive narratives" of Latinas in North America. For her, it has liberation value. See her essay "Creating a Liberating Culture:

Women doing theology, irrespective of their geographical location, challenges the way Christian theologies have neglected gender in theological discourse. Feminism contributes in no small measure to the reawakening of the efforts of women forebears to its urgency. Serene Jones admits that the history of feminism, like theology, is quite long. I am writing with the work from feminist theologians of a later generations, which for Jones, “articulate the Christian message in language and actions that seek to liberate women and all persons, a goal that Christian feminists believe cannot be disentangle from the central truth of the Christian faith as a whole.”<sup>119</sup> In the words of Sarah Coakley, “Feminist theology of an earlier generation, however, labored with a certain notable restriction on its spiritual and theological efficacy, a certain stuckness in anger, hostility, and victimology.”<sup>120</sup> As the data from the field shows, the women who participated in the research are not describing themselves simply as victims. They describe themselves as Perpetrators and Rescuers as well in terms of roles from Karpman Triangle reviewed in Chapter two. Recognition of women’s own understanding of agency invites some openness in theological discourse and pastoral model of care that speak to the particular issues facing women in sex work today.

Bringing the experiences of women into mainstream theological reflection, resulting in reshaping of ecclesiastical practices in forms of pastoral model of care, means

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Latina's Subversive Narratives," in Delwin Brown, Sheila Greeve Davaney, and Kathryn Tanner, *Converging on Culture: Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism*, The American Academy of Religion Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 122-39.

<sup>119</sup> Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace*, Guides to Theological Inquiry (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 14.

<sup>120</sup> Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay "on the Trinity"* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 68.

living out the vocation and mission of Church. Coakley notes: “a proper concern for women’s rights is equally a concern for human rights and for the dignity of human life before God.”<sup>121</sup> The voices and bodies of FCSWs speak the word of God as members of the Body of Christ.

### **Praxis of Suffering as a Site for Theological Reflection**

Context is central to theology.<sup>122</sup> Man, more specifically, the white male of western society,<sup>123</sup> and his context are no longer the sole subject of theology. This gives rise to the so-called theology on the margins. Even the designation “theology on the margins” portrays the subject (the white male of western society) as the center, while others are at the margins. Theology cannot pretend to be standing firmly when the ground is already shifting. Some of the modern ways of “doing theology” include the various methods that struggle to include voices that were ordinarily excluded in theology. These are the voices of women, and third-world societies, among others. This dissertation is a work on the voices from the margins. Black women doing sex work in Nigeria are at the margins of the Church and society, as research and data from the field indicate.

Rebecca Chopp, in her work *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies*, gives an overview of theologies arising from reflection on praxis of the victims of suffering, a method described as critical praxis correlation method of theology. Liberation and political theologies create a rupture in the

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>122</sup> This statement, though always true, has gained traction in theological studies in recent times. See Victor I. Ezigbo, *Introducing Christian Theologies: Voices from Global Christian Communities* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013).

<sup>123</sup> Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 120.

theological methods and this is a new paradigm shift. Chopp builds up her theses through critical examination of the content, method, and subject of liberation and political theologies. The task of theologies, for Chopp, is to interpret the logos of the “Theos, that is, speech and knowledge of God, within the interruption of those who suffer,”<sup>124</sup> making it imperative that Christian praxis is the site of reflection for theology. Chopp’s call is to listen to the voices on the margins and what they contribute to theology. The aim of this chapter is to allow context and subject (sex work and sex workers) to shape the practice of pastoral care in the Church in Nigeria by claiming some forms of agency in the life of the women as narrated. The subjects, method, object and nature of theology could be reformulated, as has been done in liberation theologies. In fact, experience is the starting point of theological reflection.

Experiential theology that arises out of a context is authentic in its own right. For Matthew Lamb, the “self-referent of theologian is their awareness that only authentic religious, moral, intellectual, psychic, and social forms of praxis, can ground an authentic doing of theology.”<sup>125</sup> The cries of those suffering through history can no longer be neglected. Theological reflections on praxis come from listening to the stories that the persons tell of themselves which constitute their basis of being in the world.

### ***Imago Dei* and Gender Relations in Theology**

*Imago Dei* is a theological concept that has largely affected the conceptualization of agency for women in Christian theology. The work of Michelle Gonzalez, *Created In God’s Image: An Introduction to Feminist Anthropology*, is used to frame gender

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>125</sup> Matthew L. Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims: Toward a Theology of Social Transformation* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 84.

interpretation of *imago Dei* that guides Ikporo reflection of the woman caught in adultery (John 7:52-8:11).

*Imago Dei* has its foundation in the biblical account of creation. According to the book of Genesis, “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image; according to our likeness.’”<sup>126</sup> The complexity added by the subsequent verse makes a gendered reading of *imago Dei* pertinent for this study. Genesis 1:27 reads, “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

Gonzalez starts reconstruction of *imago Dei* as the basis of feminist theological anthropology from this Genesis account, clarifying that her focus is on the interpretation of the passage in the history of Christian theology. Feminist theologians interpret the passage as an egalitarian text in which male and female are created to reflect the image of God equally. This has not been true of Christian theology. Influenced by Plato and Aristotle, Fathers of the Church, mediaeval theologians, Reformers, and modern theologians work with models of theological anthropology that debate validity of women being made fully in the image and likeness of God. Gonzalez is clear that she is choosing theologians to engage based on the influence they have on their era.

For Church fathers, she engages the works of Irenaeus of Lyons, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine of Hippo. Irenaeus maintained some form of egalitarian view of male and female being made in the image and likeness of God. With Gregory, some distinction between image and likeness started taking form. Yet, Gonzalez affirms that for Gregory, “the whole of humanity resembles God’s image and bears the image

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<sup>126</sup> Genesis 1:26.

equally.”<sup>127</sup> Subtle changes begin to occur from the writings of Augustine, who distinguishes the functions of biological sex with women symbolizing the lower orientations of the mind. Women’s minds have a weakened rationality and women have to overcome their minds to become like men.

Thomas Aquinas finishes up the complex and ambiguous definitions of *imago Dei* by crowning Aristotle’s degradation of women with theological assumptions. Gonzalez notes that: “Aquinas multi-tiered understanding of the image allows him to articulate an ambiguous theology in which women reflect the image of God on some levels but not on others.”<sup>128</sup> Unfortunately, Aquinas theology is what guides the Catholic Church in its understanding and roles of women in the Church till date.<sup>129</sup> For Aquinas, women’s bodies reveal their inferiority to males, and he describes women as “misbegotten males.” Gonzalez sums up Aquinas theology image and likeness of God thus: “Ultimately, for Aquinas, woman always reflects the image of God, yet she always reflects it in a manner that is ‘less perfect’ than man. Within this theology, she remains a passive defect of nature, one that only came into existence in order to generate the species, a submissive receptacle to the male seed.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image: An Introduction to Feminist Theological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 32.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>129</sup> Gonzalez makes this assertion and I concur fully. I am a Catholic and I have heard many Catholic priests quote Aquinas verbatim on the altar to justify certain views on women. Discussions on roles of women hold on Aquinas theological anthropology as the norm. John Paul II *Mulieris Dignitatem* (On the Dignity of Women) though celebrated by many, as great document that dignifies women, is a subtle canonization of Aquinas ideas concerning women especially on complementarity of the sexes.

<sup>130</sup> Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, 47.

In between introduction of philosophers and historical events shaping each theologian, Gonzalez further examines the works of other medieval and contemporary theologians before turning to feminist theologians for a reconstruction of *imago Dei*. The reconstruction counters many years of misreading the Christian tradition for men by men. Gonzalez holds that “Both men and women reflect the divine image fully. This theological anthropology presents an egalitarian vision of humanity that reflects the relational, Trinitarian God in whose image we are created.”<sup>131</sup> Claiming this egalitarian vision of humanity, pastoral agents may relate to women in sex work as *imago Dei*. Instead of scaffolding humanity into fractions of who shares the image and likeness of God, a wholistic vision of every humanity as made in the image and likeness of God helps to relate with others as one with whom we share a divine attribute.

Nonna Verna Harrison major claim in her work, *God’s Many-Splendored Image: Theological Anthropology for Christian Formation* is that “the divine image is present not simply in one or two of these aspects of human identity but in all of them. They are many faces of the splendid jewel that each human person can become. God invites us to remove the dirt hiding these faces and polish them until they shine with the beauty God bestows on each of us.”<sup>132</sup> The faces of FCSWs in Nigeria and everywhere need polishing in ways that affirm their humanity. Indeed, they are “splendid jewels” just like every other human being is. Elizabeth A. Johnson affirms that every woman manifests the presence of God: “Her face reveals God. Her voice bespeaks the word of God. Her embodied witness precisely as female attracts and encourages others toward the reign of

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>132</sup> Nonna Verna E. F. Harrison, *God’s Many-Splendored Image: Theological Anthropology for Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 5.

justice and peace.”<sup>133</sup> Harrison offers further: “If we are to love our neighbors, we have to recognize in the first place all of them are human beings just as we are. So we do have things to share with them, just as they can share with us.”<sup>134</sup> Our shared humanity is the basis for envisioning a pastoral model of care for women in sex work. The model of *imago Dei* that this project favors is humanity imaging God as storied self. *imago Dei* as a storied self is all encompassing. This forecloses the study of human beings as related to God only in rationality, functionality, or even relationality. Just as God is revealed in the stories of human beings perceiving God as active in their lives, so could female commercial sex workers of today have the ability to story their lives in God. A rereading of the story of the women caught in adultery in the next section offers a pastoral care model that arises when the choice is to focus on the *imago Dei* as the storied self of the women in sex work.

### **The Woman Caught in Adultery (John 7:53-8:11): *Ikporo* Reading**

The story of the woman caught in adultery,<sup>135</sup> found in John 7:53-8:11, is unique to the Fourth Gospel. No other parallel is found in any of the synoptic gospels. Gary

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<sup>133</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints*. (New York: Continuum, 1998), 224.

<sup>134</sup> Harrison, *God's Many-Splendored Image*, 134.

<sup>135</sup> Historically, following suggestions by Pope Gregory the Great, this woman has been called “Mary Magdalene.” Feminist criticism has refuted notion. The woman was not named. For further discussions on this, see Brittany E. Wilson, Mary Magdalene and Her Interpreters, in Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Women's Bible Commentary*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 531-535. I struggled with how to name the woman presented in this gospel pericope. Traditionally, she has been called the “adulterous woman.” Keeping up with the externalization technique of narrative therapy, I settled with the lesser convention that names her as “the woman caught in adultery.” My dilemma is that this woman never told her own side of the story. Was she really caught in adultery? According to Deuteronomy, admission of evidence from one witness is not acceptable. There must be two or three witnesses for a charge to stand (Cf. Deutr. 19:15). Among those calling for her to be stoned, were there two to three witnesses to the act? What were they doing there (where the act was taking place) that made them witnesses? At some point, I decided to call her “the

Burge gives three reasons why the text remains problematic to New Testament scholars. He cites external evidence, internal evidence, and the text's place in antiquity and authenticity to demonstrate that the text has serious reasons to be doubted. The passage is not found in ancient texts in the East, including the Syriac and other versions. It is, however, found in the West from the fourth century AD. Internal evidence points to the lack of congruence between the passage and preceding and succeeding texts. Removed from its location in John's gospel, the gospel still flows. Some authors suggest the text could have been part of Luke. The language does not correspond with the rest of John. However, Burge conclusively notes, "It is most likely that the text is authentic in the sense that it originated from the oral tradition that supplied our gospels with their raw materials."<sup>136</sup> The question remains: What passage in the gospel did not originate from an oral tradition? As long as the text is in the Bible, I am choosing to use it as a passage that helps to propose a pastoral theology of care for women in sex work.

The story stands out as an encounter that points out Jesus' approach to judgmental perception of others while remaining oblivious of one's own sins. "Casting stones," as a metaphor, is used in calling attention to how society is willing and ready to stone those (mostly women) who are seen as using their bodies in ways that challenge societal norms.<sup>137</sup> From the narratives of the women in this study, the call to "cast stones" seems more apparent in the Church than any other approach. Attitudes of rejection and shaming

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woman they said they caught in adultery." I am going ahead with the simplest form for now, "the woman caught in adultery."

<sup>136</sup> Gary M Burge, "A Specific Problem in the New Testament Text and the Canon: The Woman Caught in Adultery (John 7: 53-8:11)," *JETS* 27, no. 2 (1984).

<sup>137</sup> See *ibid.*, 145.

emanating from the Church and families deny sex workers the sense of agency in the Church and the world.

#### John 7:53-8:11 and Method of Interpretation

Biblical scholars use many methods to study texts. Notable methods are text criticism, archaeology, sociological criticism, cultural anthropology, historical, source, redaction and form criticisms, among others. For the passage under consideration, narrative and ideological criticisms are employed. Narrative criticism analyzes a Gospel the way literary critics interpret a short story paying attention to “how the plot is advanced, how characters are developed, how conflict is introduced or resolved, and how rhetorical features such as symbolism and irony affect the reader’s perception of what is happening.”<sup>138</sup> The narrative reading of the passage will also be supported and supplemented with ideological criticism. Ideological criticisms “seek to explore how these writings might be interpreted when they are read from particular ideological perspectives.”<sup>139</sup> Ideological criticism acknowledges that people read texts from their own ideological points of view, whether they recognize it or not, and notices aspects of interpretation that might have been missed in “mainstream” readings. As a Roman Catholic woman of African descent, studying in a Protestant school, I recognize that my readings are loaded with my own experiences of life. I bring such self-reflexivity to my reading. My interest is in the theology, content, and pastoral implications of the passage for a particular population of women. According to Carol Newson, women have not

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<sup>138</sup> Brock and Thistlethwaite, *Casting Stones: Prostitution and Liberation in Asia and the United States*.

<sup>139</sup> Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 57-59.

always been self-conscious about reading the bible as women. Several reasons point to its importance. She notes:

Women have distinctive questions to raise about the Bible and distinctive insights into its texts: our experience of self and family, our relationship to institutions, the nature of our work and daily lives, and our spirituality have been and continue to be different in important respects from those of men. But there is another reason, too. Because of its religious and cultural authority, the Bible has been one of the important means by which woman's place in the society have been defined.<sup>140</sup>

The text of John 7:53-8:11 opens with an “early in the morning setting.” Jesus comes to the Temple to teach and, lo and behold, Scribes and Pharisees bring along a woman caught in adultery, fully armed and asking for the full measure of the law to be meted out on her. Jesus does nothing. He bends down and writes on the floor. What he wrote remains a mystery and subject of speculation to date. Speaking to the crowd, Jesus makes a simple request that the one without sin cast the first stone. The woman must have been waiting for the stones to start landing on her head, but receives none. Eventually, Jesus speaks to her. The action of Jesus and his spoken words in the scene are teased out here as a pastoral model of care.

According to *Women's Bible Commentary* this passage has been read as a judgment against the woman, whereby the woman embodies sin while Jesus embodies grace. However, a closer reading of the story reveals biases in such an interpretation. The authors plot the story in three scenes: the bringing of the woman, Jesus bending down and writing, with its subsequent scenario of addressing the crowd, and standing before the woman to address her twice. Gail O'Day notes that the Scribes and Pharisees focus more

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<sup>140</sup> Carol A. Newsom, “Women as Biblical Interpreters Before the Twentieth Century” in Newsom, Ringe, and Lapsley, *Women's Bible Commentary*, 11-23.

on the woman's sin, to the detriment of being aware of their own sins.<sup>141</sup> Jesus speaks to the Scribes and Pharisees about sin ("Let anyone among you who is without sin."(v7)), and the woman too ("Go your way, and from now on do not sin again" (v11)). Jesus calls all to new life by asking that the Scribes and Pharisees not focus exclusively on lives of others, but on theirs as well. O'Day remarks: "What is striking about this story is that Jesus treats the woman as the social and human equal of the scribes and Pharisees."<sup>142</sup> He seems to shift attention from himself and the woman to the accusers.<sup>143</sup> Thus, Jesus reverses the method of assessing a situation by paying attention to the needs of the human person standing before him rather than rules, norms, and culture. Jesus' actions and words translate to the "LIVE" approach I propose as a pastoral model of care for women in sex work.

#### A "LIVE" Pastoral Model of Care from John 7:53-8:11

The acronym, "LIVE," stands for Listening, Introspection, Validation and Emancipation, and is deduced from the actions and spoken words of Jesus in the passage. "LIVE" is further explicated below.

**L-Listening:** The Scribes and Pharisees bring forth a woman they say they caught in the very act of committing adultery. Jesus does not immediately act or react. He listens. He listens to their complaints against the victim. He hears them as they take up various roles. They are the ones who caught the woman, they are the complainants, they are the prosecutors, they are the judges, and the executors of the judgments already

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<sup>141</sup> Gail R. O'Day, "Gospel of John" in *ibid.*, 517-530.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 523.

<sup>143</sup> Samuel Ngewa, "John," in Tokunboh Adeyemo, ed. *Africa Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids/Nairobi: Zondervan/WordAlive, 2006).

passed. All they need is a *fiat* from Jesus. This is meant to trap him as well. Jesus not only listens to their spoken words and actions, but also listens to their hearts. He listens to their fears. He looks at the woman and, without her saying a word, listens to her heart. He hears beyond the demands of the Law. He listens to the culture that overlooks the transgressions of men and takes it out on women. No one has accounted for the person caught with her. He listens to the deeper yearning of the woman for salvation. What else is he in the world for? He bends down to write on the ground, the only time this happened. No record exists in the scripture of what was written.

**I-Introspection:** The crowd insists on Jesus responding to the situation. Jesus does not say or do any of the things they might have been expecting, which could be joining in the condemnation of the woman or minimizing the issue and asking them to release her. Instead, he invites all to introspection with “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (v7). He follows up by bending down again to his task of writing on the floor. One could sense the disappointment among the people. Yet, they are sincere in carrying out the directive of Jesus. They look and see that they are no better. Who is without sin? Respectfully, they drop their stones one by one and leave until Jesus is left alone with the woman.

**V-Validation:** Jesus asks the woman if no one has condemned her. She answers affirmatively and Jesus says “Neither do I condemn you” (v11). Reading this as a validation does not mean a validation of her sins. It is a validation of the human person, a validation of the presence of grace, a validation of the love of God, a validation of the fullness of salvation, and a validation of a relationship whereby the woman “feels felt” in the process. The woman could be breathing deeply from relief. Her sense of autonomy

and agency as a human being is affirmed. Jesus, then, issues the call that places some responsibility on her too.

**E-Emancipation:** Jesus' encounter with the woman does not end with validation. He invites the woman to a life of freedom from sin with the words, "Go your way, and from now on do not sin again" (v11). "Go your way" evokes a sense of being set free and, in this case, being set free from condemnation and death at the hands of those who are no better. The charge to "not sin again" is an invitation to the woman to assume responsibility for her own behavior. She is a human being with some agency in her life and not an object to be acted upon, as the initial scene suggested. Pastoral agents are called upon to take on the example of Christ in ministry with women whose agency are obscured and lost daily. This "LIVE" pastoral model is further discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX  
TRANSFORMING NARRATIVES THROUGH “LIVE”:  
A SUMMATIVE CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSAL

**Summary**

The completion of Osmer’s model of practical theology is the pragmatic task, which sets out strategies on how the Church might respond. In answering the question, “How might we respond?” this task builds ecclesial strategies responding to women in sex work based on Jesus’ approach to the woman caught in adultery as described in the normative move. Previous chapters have undertaken the other three tasks of practical theology in Osmer’s model.

Chapter one, the introduction of the work, told the story of the discernment of the call to ministry with women in sex work by the researcher. The chapter presents the research question: *What do narratives of female commercial sex workers (FCSWs) say about women’s construction and deconstruction of agency as persons in the Church and the society?* The chapter then outlined trajectory of the work as suggesting a pastoral model of care for women in sex work through listening to the stories of the women. The chapter was descriptive.

Chapter two, which carried out the descriptive-empirical and interpretive tasks of practical theology, is the literature review and the theoretical framework that guided the research. Carissa Showden’s model of agency for women is upheld as the feasible understanding of how women negotiate agency in the world. Her work is done in the field

of political theory. In the pastoral and theological field, the literature review appraised the works that have been done in proposing how the Church might respond to women in sex work. These were the ethical and solidarity responses. The gap noted in the literature is that when women in sex work are regarded solely as victims, their agency reduced to non-existent. In addition, the Karpman triangle, Nonviolent Communication and critical realist personalism, and narrative theory are presented as frameworks that guided the interpretation of the stories that the women share.

Chapter three presented the empirical research methodology. Narrative inquiry is the qualitative method of choice for the research. Narrative helps to give voice to people on the underside of culture. The chapter demonstrated how the data was collected.

Chapter four was the presentation of data. Three broad themes of understanding agency in self-identity, agency with God and the Church, and agency with the family and society were used to retell and interpret the stories of the women. Both chapters continued the descriptive-empirical and interpretive tasks of the practical theology model guiding the work.

Chapter five, the theological and biblical chapter, carried out the normative task through *Ikpoko* theological and biblical interpretation. Feminist anthropology through the concept of *Imago Dei* and the importance of the voices of persons on the margin opens in theological discourse in a way that shared humanity of all persons in God may be emphasized in pastoral model of care for women in sex work. Furthermore, using ideological and narrative criticism to read the text of John 7:53-8:11 leads to formulation of “LIVE” pastoral model of care. This model is further clarified in this chapter with

skills from Nonviolent Communication and narrative therapy, the strategic level, fulfilling the pragmatic task of practical theology.

Natalie Watson opines, “The Church has, as well as being a space of oppression, been a space which has in the past-and continues in the present-to create meaning for women.”<sup>144</sup> The aim of the model is for the Church to remain a space for meaning for all women including those in sex work.

### **“LIVE” Pastoral Model Using Nonviolent Communication**

#### Listening

The first call is to listen. Listening connects. Listening deeply to others, the sex workers themselves, the context and culture, theology, and above all, listening to God, grounds the pastoral care worker while providing competent care for women in sex work. In listening, the message conveyed is “I hear you,” “I see you,” and “You matter.” The story of every woman in sex work is different and each person is on a different spot on the continuum on negotiation of agency. Listening entails openness and desire to be taught.

Nonviolent communication provides the skills to deep listening devoid of judgmental attitudes. Rosenberg writes: “Through its emphasis on deep listening - to ourselves and other - NVC fosters respect, attentiveness, and empathy and engenders a mutual desire to give from the heart.”<sup>145</sup> The four components of NVC, observation, feelings, needs, and requests (OFNR), discussed in chapter two make this type of

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 1268.

<sup>145</sup> Natalie K. Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008 ed), 3.

listening possible. Listening to others with openness entails empathy. As Hunsinger and Latini aver, “Empathy is a disciplined undertaking in which one momentarily sets aside one’s own unique feelings and needs to connect with the other’s unique feelings and needs.”<sup>146</sup> The connection is striving after the compassionate attribute of God. They further contend, “Listening to our brothers and sisters in Christ is one way that we are invited to participate in Christ’s work. Learning to hear the cry of another’s heart is not only a gift to be cherished, it is also a skill to be honed.”<sup>147</sup>

Cultivating the skill of listening is one of the major techniques needed to make connection to FCSWs. Pastoral agents can utilize the skills of OFNR to connect with a woman in sex work by sticking to observations instead of evaluations. For example, instead of saying, “You are a prostitute,” one may state an observation thus, “I heard you say that for the past two years you have sold sex.” In narrative therapy, this statement is already an externalization. The act becomes the issue inviting a state of openness to possibilities. Paying attention to feelings that the person expresses leads to discovery of the need that the feelings points to. Pastoral agents easily take the position of rescuers. Once a woman in sex work approaches us as pastoral agents, we easily assume that we are to help her stop sex work through provision of financial resources or radical evangelization to repentance. It is no wonder we see them back in the street sooner or later. Through NVC, we connect with the feelings that are alive for the person at the moment. More so, we are not to assume that we can fathom the actual feelings and needs of the other. Connecting to feelings and needs leads to a moment of discernment, known

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<sup>146</sup> Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, 4.

<sup>147</sup> Hunsinger and Latini, *Transforming Church Conflicts*, 83.

in NVC as request. Making request is connecting with the needs that are most alive and attainable.

Deep listening is a skill practiced in humility. Empathic Connection to feelings and needs of the person makes the humanity of the person come alive. Choosing what needs to meet at the time makes us realize our limitations as humans. This is where humility and discernment are indispensable in the art of practicing the compassionate love of God with others. Listening to FCSWs necessitates listening to other factors surrounding the choice of sex work, as the narratives described in this work indicate. NVC skills support this type of listening.

### Introspection

The call to introspection helps the care provider to not take a one-up or better-than-thou attitude towards the women. It also challenges others who come into relationship with sex workers to look inwards rather than condemnation stemming from pre-conceived notions of who the women are. It is easier to condemn others than to see where we all participate or are implicated in the structure that keeps some persons, especially women, in perpetually subservient position. The same people who patronize sex workers at night wake up in the morning to demand their condemnation. We are invited to reflect on how we participate in evil structures that perpetually keep some persons subjugated. We all need repentance.

Introspection squares well with the inner dance of self-empathy in NVC. With the focus being on the pastoral agent, it is possible for the pastoral agent to slide into self-pity and shame. Robert Karen describes this as, “A state of guilt or a state of shame in which

the whole self is blackened or drenched in remorse.”<sup>148</sup> Self-empathy is a particular kind of introspection aimed at humanizing the pastoral agent’s assessment of self, others and the world. The four components of NVC, observation, feelings, needs and requests, are used to connect with self. Practicing them, the pastoral agent differentiates her stuff from the stuff of others.

Observation helps us to state what is going on, what we are seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching. Connecting to our feelings and needs, we are able to notice our pre-conceived notions that might be preventing us from listening to the other. It also affirms the need for connection shared by all human beings. Hunsinger and Latini see in self-empathy a sense of healthy self-love tied to the biblical injunction to love your neighbor as yourself. They write:

It is paradoxically the case that we cannot love either God or others if we do not love ourselves. Love of self is intrinsically tied to love of neighbor. Even the golden rule makes no sense without a proper regard for the self. We must respect ourselves and cherish our own lives if we are to respect and cherish.<sup>149</sup>

### Validation

Validating the personhood of the women in sex work may go a long way in proving to them that they are still human. Some of the women believe they are nobodies. Raising a sense of hope in their being may help the women to breathe deeply and realize they are understood. This may also help them in their sense of trust and honesty instead of manipulative attitude.

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>149</sup> Robert Karen, *The Forgiving Self: The Road from Resentment to Connection* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 63.

The practice of NVC honesty could be of great value in validating FCSWs. Validation does not mean a total agreement with whatever every FCSW says. It means setting aside judgments to honor the human person. NVC honesty means acting with authenticity, helping us to translate messages from empathy for the other and self-empathy into outcomes that affirm the dignity and worth of the women. Rosenberg clarifies: “Notice this doesn’t require that we agree with the other person. It doesn’t mean we have to like what they’re saying. It means that we give them this precious gift of our presence, to be present to at this moment to what’s alive in them, that we are interested, sincerely interested in that.”<sup>150</sup> We can disagree with how FCSWs are using their bodies yet remain connected with them.

Validation through empathic connection provides the route to step out of the Drama Triangle discussed in chapter two. Instead of rescuing and risking becoming perpetrators or victims, a pastoral agent provides a FCSW the clarity and support to step out too. The data from fieldwork show that a good number of FCSWs are deeply entrenched in the victim, perpetrator, and rescuer cycle. In narrative theory, externalization, re-authoring conversations, re-membering conversations, definitional ceremonies, unique outcome conversations, and scaffolding conversations are ways of validating the human person.<sup>151</sup>

From gender perspectives, validation in the LIVE model assists pastoral agents to admit the painful situation of women in different cultures. Women have limited choices to make as human beings in the world. Agency and autonomy for women are stifled in

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<sup>150</sup> Hunsinger and Latini, *Transforming Church Conflicts*, 98.

<sup>151</sup> Marshall B. Rosenberg, *Speak Peace: What You Say Next Will Change Your World*, 1st ed. (Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press, 2005), 91.

many ways. Women are held in higher standards than men when it comes to matters of sexuality. As in the days of old, men who buy sex are overlooked or even encouraged as being “manly” while the women who sell sex are oppressed. In the LIVE model, FCSWs are validated as human persons struggling to live meaningfully in the world.

### Emancipation

Emancipation occurs through empowerment. Empowerment is a buzzword in working with people on the margins. Beyond cosmetic and surface gestures of buying sewing machines for young women in the name of empowerment, this study calls on the Church to break the cycles of evil that the women live. The process will definitely be different for different women in different regions. Through listening, the point where the person needs empowerment would be discerned. Empowerment could mean pointing people to resources they may not be aware exist. It could mean opening up the power within for the potentials to burst forth. Empowerment means validation of one’s sense of agency and autonomy in the world while taking responsibility for one’s share in the interconnectedness of humanity.

Nonviolent Communication supports joining forces to create social change. The social structures that nurture sex trade could be challenged in meaningful ways. Steps to social action use the components and skills of NVC. The starting point is connecting with people who share a similar vision on the issue at stake. Working as team is of utmost importance. Next is to identify the structures that you want to produce change. In identifying structures, it is pertinent to continue to connect to the needs of the human person behind the structure using NVC. Rosenberg writes: Nonviolent communication shows us a way, no matter what the structure, to cut through it and see the human being

within it.”<sup>152</sup> Even if the person is operating a structure that seems oppressive, there is always room to connect with actual human beings. Identifying the structure and connecting with the human person within it is followed by clarity in defining the change one wants to see. This brings up the question of knowing how and where to get the resources needed. NVC skills keep each member of the team focused on the goal. Social change constantly deals with conflict and confrontation. The LIVE model practiced with NVC skills offers the tool needed to persevere in offering FCSWs a chance in the society.

The Church in Nigeria could be at the forefront of the fight against childhood sexual abuse. This is a thorny invitation, given the complicity of some Church pastoral care workers in such issues. Childhood sexual abuse is hardly discussed in Nigeria. Narratives from the women show the pervasiveness of the issue. Arbitrary dismissal of women who become pregnant out of wedlock is hardly an effective pastoral approach in the life of women. Their pain and shame is often compounded by the fact that the person who impregnated them could be sitting somewhere close to the altar while they are judged as sinful. Instead of expulsion of women, they should be cared for in ways that empower them. Churches that call out names of such girls as punishment should desist from such. Jesus did not join the crowd in stoning the woman caught in adultery.

The issue of poor sex education could be a site for a pastoral plan by the Church. Young people are informed about sex and less about sexuality. Given the religiosity of the youth in the Nigeria, pastoral care plans incorporating sex education at all levels will go a long way in empowering the youth. Emancipation and empowerment create social

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 139.

change. Rosenberg offers, “Effective social change requires connections with others in which we avoid seeing the people within these structures as enemies—and we try to hear the human beings within. Then we keep the flow of communications going so that everybody’s needs get met.”<sup>153</sup> I suppose this is the meaning of the Kingdom of God on earth.

### **Conclusion**

The call to listen to narratives of women in sex work is to open our eyes to the conditions the people on whom the call to “cast the stone” is a daily experience. Their lives and that of the Church can be transformed through mutual encounter modeled on the one Jesus had with the woman caught in adultery. The cry for justice could be undertaken at every level in the Church. As individuals, pastoral agents should be willing to listen to women and men of every race and creed, bringing the compassionate and non-judgmental attitude like Jesus did. While listening, individual pastoral agents could perform the task of introspection to remain differentiated in the face of anxiety that listening to voices different from ours evoke. As we sense a nudge to overlook the pains, because the person might be responsible for his/her choice arises, we remember the words of Jesus, “if you are without sin, be the first to cast a stone.” Introspection reminds us that we are all with sins. The narratives of the women shared above indict every human being as being implicated in the evil structures that disregard the humanity of others. Validation and Emancipation at this level could come in form of deliberate actions against social injustices. It is transformative in nature.

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 133.

At the parish (congregational), diocesan (synod), and any other level of Church organization, a pastoral plan could be developed using the “LIVE” approach. The heart of such plan would be listening, introspection, validating, and empowering the women to live the life they called to in the Church. The Church needs introspection at all levels. Pope Francis, following up on the example started by Pope John Paul II, sets the example by apologizing for the sins of the Church. As a corporate entity, though a Divine reality, the Church is sinful too. As the narratives indicate, some of the women simply need a listening Church to validate their experiences as agents in the world. The women in sex work should be part of the formation and implementation of such plans. It is time to let the voices of the women into the mainstream of the life of the Church. Pretending that voices on the margins do not exist is not helpful in any way. It is a denial of a part of the body of Christ.

The “LIVE” approach to pastoral care is simple and does not need elaborate training for implementation. Every human being is endowed with capacity to listen to one another, while holding one’s own judgments in check. Non-judgmental attitude helps to build rapport, trust, and confidence. Each sex worker’s story differs from the other. Validating others comes from shared knowledge that every human person is made in the image and likeness of God. Empowerment and emancipation comes from the desire to play a role in bringing justice on earth. Listening to people’s narratives transforms lives. It transforms the lives of the listener and the person telling the narratives. It transforms the lives of the members of the Church when the depth of human sufferings is shared. It helps to point to resources and strengths that are found in the narratives. It helps the Church to live its mission as the Body of Christ.

I witnessed this transformation in the process of doing this project. I realized how poor my knowledge of certain human conditions is. I realized that this paucity in knowledge is a shared prejudice that keeps women, especially FCSWs, in the dark in the Church. I realized the loftiness of the privileges I hold as a nun. I realized how insulated we are from some of real issues of power that women suffer in the world. Several times during the phase of the data collection, analysis, and writing, I had meltdowns. I wanted to abandon the project and do something else that is “easier.” The conviction that this is a call sustained me. I started this project with a story. Let me end with a story. This is a story of the process of data collection from one of the participants, whom I will call Ada.

Ada came into the interview room looking determined. After the preliminaries, including obtaining the informed consent and introductions, Ada sat up with both hands on her chin. I proceeded as the “expert interviewer researcher” to start with the questions from my protocol. Ada said, “You sent me this paper before now. I have seen the questions. I told you I am a graduate. All I need you to do now is to sit back and listen to me. By the time I finish, I would have covered every question you have there. If not, tell me.”

I sat back and listened. Ada’s interview is the one that lasted for two hours and fifteen minutes, with only a fifteen minutes break I requested in the process - to go and tend to myself in another room, by calling a friend for support. The process, as I have described before, is like replaying one’s entire life story on a screen. Ada’s story is already analyzed and incorporated in the data analysis section. I am using her story to close because of her statement when she finished her story. She said: “Hey, sister, I know you are thinking if this is real. Yes, it is. What I have told is what I have experienced.”

She showed me some of the scars she received from police brutality, armed robbers she worked with, oath-taking marks when attempting to cross over to Libya, and other scary details. Then she concluded: “You said that this is for your research. Go and tell the world my story. Tell them my name, give them my number, and let them come and ask me. I will tell it again. But above all, tell your Church workers to stop despising us, especially you sisters. Tell them to stop judging us. Tell them that we are just human beings like them, hustling to survive. Tell them. Tell them.” I hope I was able to achieve this in these pages of my project.

## APPENDIX A

### Interview Protocol

Preamble: Re-introducing of myself, pointing out that I am a PhD student intending to use the interview for dissertation, researching this question, “What do narratives of female commercial sex workers tell us about being persons, in the society and in the Church?”

Obtaining consent to use the audio-recorder or not, to take notes or not.

Reminding her that she could opt out of the interview at any point.

Signing the consent form.

Question: Is there anything you might want to ask me to clarify concerning the interview?

Do you have any concerns, anxiety, excitement?

Anything you may wish to tell me?

Questions: 1. Please tell me how you came to do this work?

- Significant moment when the decision was taken?
- How did you start?
- Of all the contributing factors, which one do you consider the greatest motivation?
- Is there any way (ritual) for induction of new members?

2. Does your family (mum, dad, siblings, other extended relations) know that you are in this trade?

- What was/is their reaction to you when you started the trade?
- Any specific example?

3. Please tell me how you see yourself as a woman?

- What informed that view?
- What can you say about how the media- TV, Ads, Radio, internet, billboards- represent the female body?
- Do you use any digital media for your work? Which ones? Are they helpful or do they hinder your work?
- Does it contribute to how you view your body?

4. Do you belong to any Christian Community?

- In the family? Now?
- Can you describe yourself as active in the Church? How?
- What can you say about how the Church relates to women doing this work?
- How is the Church helpful or not?

5. What do you like most or least about the trade?

6. Demographic question: (If they have not been covered by the interview)

- When did you start the work?
- What type of customers do you serve? Male? Female? Both? Strip dancing?  
Others?
- Will you be comfortable to tell me your age?
- What of your level of education?

Conclusion: Thanks for the time and granting me this interview. Is there anything you might wish me to know that we have not talked about?

## APPENDIX B

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to be in a research study of how women in sex work in Nigeria experience self as a person, in the society and in the Church, which is shared through their narratives. You were selected as a possible participant because you do sex work. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by me (Sr. Maria Nkiruka Okafor IHM), as a part of my doctoral dissertation in Pastoral Care and Counseling at Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA.

My advisor is Jessicah Duckworth, Program Director, Religion Division, Lilly Endowment.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to construct a pastoral theology for care of sex workers as persons as created in image of God. I intend to do this from the stories sex workers tell about their lives, their experience of being members of the society and the Church in Nigeria

## Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things. I will interview you for a length of time lasting for about two to three hours. I will transcribe your interview and read it back to you to confirm that what I recorded is what you said. We will stay at a place that is convenient to both you and me. You may speak in any of these languages during the interview: Igbo, Pidgin (Broken, Wafi, and/ or Wazobia) and English.

## Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

The study has several risks: First, since you are telling your life story, it is likely to arouse periods of intense anxiety and nervousness. Please, feel free to stop the interview any moment you no longer feel safe and comfortable. We can reschedule or you may decide to quit entirely. Second, I am aware that feelings of guilt or shame might arise as we share our stories. I wish to reiterate that my purpose of study is not morality or ethics. I am willing to discuss any of such issues if suspicion arises for you.

I will reimburse you for any amount spent on transportation to our venue of meeting. In keeping with our African tradition, I will provide you with a meal and soft drinks for the period of the interview.

Indirect benefits to your/or the general public of participation are that you will get to tell your story by yourself even though I will be the one writing it up. This may affect the manner that the society and the church regard people who do this type of work. It will contribute to your own deeper reflection and awareness of how you see your body as a woman and how those views are formed.

### Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept confidential. If I publish any type of report, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file at Luther Seminary; only my advisor, Jessicah Duckworth, and I will have access to the data and, if applicable, any tape or video recording. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed. While I will make every effort to ensure confidentiality, anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the small number to be studied.

Raw data will be destroyed by June 30, 2016.

### Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Luther Seminary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. If you withdraw at the moment of the interview, your transportation fare to the venue will still be reimbursed.

### Contacts and Questions

The researcher conducting this study is Maria Nkiruka Catherine Okafor IHM. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at the address below:

1559 Fulham Street, Apt. 4, Saint Paul, MN 55108.

Phone: +1 763 587 8052

Adviser: Jessicah Duckworth, + 1 651-641-3495

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I consent to be audiotaped :

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published thesis document.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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