EXPLORING AGENCY ENACTMENTS OF WOMEN FARMWORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA'S WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the subjective meanings inhering in individual purposeful agency among women who are, or have been, farmworkers in South Africa's Western Cape province. Existing research has highlighted gendered dimensions of farm labor on commercial farms in South(ern) Africa (Addison, 2019; Hall, 2013; Lazzarini, 2017; Rutherford, 2001; Rutherford & Addison, 2007) and the Western Cape (Eriksson, 2017; Randle, 2014; Scully, 1997; Visser, 2016; Waldman, 1996). These findings firstly reveal the gendered experiences of farmworkers. Secondly, they underscore the need to understand the processes through which women enact agency to/through work.

To gain a deeper understanding of these processes, this study pursues a conceptually-rooted examination of empirical findings from qualitative research conducted in Western Cape. It explores women's agency enactments by analyzing the motivations behind their choices and the meanings they attach to particular behaviors. It frames the research through Amartya Sen's (1999, 2009) capability approach and integrates individual interviews, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and observations in its analysis of women's individual agency. The thesis presents ground-up conceptualizations of the forms of agency women have, value, and/or pursue. Furthermore, it discusses how individual agency can also, sometimes, be 'other-related' when individuals' choices and actions can be linked to their relational considerations.

The thesis investigates the link between agency and the meaningfulness of individual women's choices and actions, grounded in understanding what women value instrumentally (as a means to an end) and/or intrinsically (as an end in itself). The project does so by examining women's control over income (chapter 5), decisions to work (chapter 6), and ideas about the 'self' (chapter 7). Thus, the main empirical contributions of this research are: analytically distinguishing control over income as *strategic* and/or *executive*; understanding how women's decisions to work (or not) helps them pursue what they value, and developing a conceptual link between those values and their identities; and examining how the 'good woman', a concept of the self that emerged from the data, is an exemplar that relates to some women's agency. This study contributes to improving our understanding of the subjective dimensions of women's individual agency.

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To all those in South Africa who have directly and indirectly helped me find my way to farmworkers and supported me in undertaking this research, I sincerely hope you continue doing the great things you are already involved in and have the kind of impact you wish for in contributing to positive change.

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“All grace is in God’s hand.”

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Glossary of Local Words Used

Amakwerekwere (a.k.a. *kwerekwere*) – derogatory term for foreigner in South Africa

Crèches – daycares, or early childhood development centers. These may be registered, and hence receive certain government subsidies, or not registered.

Dompas – identification document that non-whites needed to carry during apartheid to prove they had permission to live and/or work in certain areas.

Dop (or *tot*) – informally refers to any alcoholic drink and usually associated with the dop system, a system of payment that many farmers practiced during apartheid by using alcohol to partly remunerate their farmworkers.

Igunya – authority

Jug – a kettle

Kumbi – a minibus taxi

Kushanda – work

Kuvaka musha: building a rural homestead

Matric – final year of secondary school, or the exams that complete one's secondary education.

Oubaas – boss

Piemper – informer, someone who tells on others

Plaas – a farm

Sangoma – witch

Shebeen – informal licensed or unlicensed drinking places, or taverns

Shuwero – hope

Skollies – thieves

Spaza – a tuck shop selling basic household items

List of Abbreviations Used

AP (or APs): Adaptive Preference(s)

B-BBEE (or BEE): Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment

CA: Capability Approach

DHS: Demographic Health Survey(s)

DTIC (formerly DTI): Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition

ESTA: Extension of Security of Tenure Act

FGD: Focus Group Discussions

GAAP 2: Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project 2

GAD: Gender and Development

GBV: Gender-Based Violence

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GGI: Gender Gap Index

IPV: Intimate Partner Violence

KZN: Kwazulu-Natal

NDP: National Development Plan

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

PLAAS: Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal(s)

SDT: Self-Determination Theory

TCOE: Trust for Community Outreach and Education

UIF: Unemployment Insurance Fund

UN: United Nations

WEAI: Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index

WFP: Women on Farms Project

WID: Women in Development

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Chapter 1. Introduction

"I want my children to get educated so that they do not depend on people. I want them to live a different life [from mine]."[1]

This thesis attempts to identify and examine sites of, and processes underlying, agency in the everyday lives of women (farm)workers—those who are and/or have been wage-earning farmworkers—in South Africa's Western Cape Province. It began with a broad research question that was refined inductively and elaborated through specific goals.

Main Research Question:

- What are women's perceptions and experiences as (farm)workers, and what do they reveal about their individual agency?

Research Goals (Sub-Questions):

- Analyze women (farm)workers' descriptions of their decision-making processes regarding household finances and own labor. How do these decision-making processes (not) reflect agency?

[1] Maggie, off-site respondent from Lesotho – August 4, 2018, Nkqubela.

- How do the respondents' experiences and motivations suggest individual agency can be 'other-related'?
- Examine the meanings women associate with particular choices and/or behaviors. What do these meanings reveal about what women (seem to have reason to) value?

This question is particularly relevant when considering certain contextual specificities of South Africa, and the potential of a study in this context to contribute to global scholarly conversations about women's agency. South Africa's transition to democracy (1993-94) had initially been seen as a relative success both in terms of greater political inclusion and positive economic growth. These held positive implications for poverty reduction in one of the world's most unequal countries. However, the situation remains one of high unemployment rates, economic and financial insecurity, economic inequality, and political uncertainty (Bhorat et al., 2020). Present-day South Africa is also struggling toward achieving its goals for inclusive growth across racial lines and on gender equality (Commission for Gender Equality, 2020; Francis & Webster, 2019; Gumede, 2015; Hills, 2015; Orthofer, 2016; Patel, 2019; Stevens et al., 2006; World Bank, 2018). Existing studies show striking links between being poor, being a woman, and being non-white in South Africa (Casale & Posel, 2002; Posel & Casale, 2019; Posel & Rogan, 2012; Rogan, 2016). A Gender Gap Index (GGI) of 0.78 in 2020 positioned South Africa among the 20 most gender equal country globally,[2] but more on-the-ground research suggests progress toward

[2] Data from 2019 is used for the 2020 GGI ("South Africa: Gender Gap Index 2016-2022," 2022). The Gender Gap Index (GGI) measures national discrepancies between men and women in four areas: education attainment, health & survival, political empowerment, and economic opportunity & participation. A higher GGI (score = 1) means gender parity.

gender equality is unclear and/or inconsistent (Commission for Gender Equality, 2020; Dryding, 2019). This study on agency among a group of marginalized women informs this broader discussion by clarifying some aspects that relate to improving more gender equitable outcomes.

But what is meant by 'gender', and why does it matter here? Gender refers to the socially constructed, imagined, and enacted roles of women and men (Moser, 1989). These roles have both material aspects—such as divisions of labor between men and women—and ideological aspects—which are carried in ideas and perceptions about the abilities, qualities, and/or features of women and men (Agarwal, 1997). Gender roles can differ amongst groups and individuals as different societies and/or groups impose particular rules about what the roles of women and men entail (Agarwal, 1995; Whitehead, 2006). The feminist approach in this thesis follows from this conceptualization of gender when investigating women's experiences of agency, focused on how women's agency can be analyzed in terms of their social interactions, roles, and perceptions. As a scholar of gender issues in development who spent two years prior to doctoral research living and working in South Africa, it was never clear to me how far the country had progressed toward meeting unskilled and low-skilled Black[3] women's hopes for greater economic inclusion and empowerment. The national discourse broadly focusing on 'Black empowerment'[4] seems to lack a strategic approach based on more ground-up understanding of 'Black women's empowerment' (Commission for Gender Equality, 2020). What would

[3] Where Black is capitalized, it denotes that the term represents in the South African context multiple racial categories of blacks (those of African origin), Indians (those whose ancestors (or themselves) originated from the Indian subcontinent), and coloreds (those of mixed-race backgrounds).
[4] See the national policy strategy of Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment, or B-BBEE (The DTIC, n.d.).

'empowerment' mean from the perspectives of marginalized people like women farmworkers?

Empowerment however is distinct from agency, and my thesis is about women's agency. How then can this thesis, a ground-up examination of agency, link to, and potentially improve, our understanding of empowerment? Although distinct from each other, agency and empowerment are nonetheless interrelated processes. By presenting an overview of these two processes in the next section, I hope to: clarify the limits of my study on women's agency; and demonstrate that although distinct from each other, a study about one can have implications for the other.

1.1 The Agency-Empowerment Nexus

Agency and empowerment are two distinct and complex concepts with ample reference in international development research.[6] They are also among the most enduring buzzwords in development for the past three decades (Batliwala, 2007; Cornwall, 2018; Cornwall & Brock, 2005). Although 'agency' and 'empowerment' have often been made synonymous (Calvès, 2009), several works specify how these terms are distinguishable (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007; Samman & Santos, 2009; van Eerdewijk et al., 2017). Tracking the history of these two concepts and terms also illustrates how the international

[6] A number of studies (including some notable ones cited here) discuss, highlight, and/or exploit the agency-empowerment link (Abdelali-Martini & Dey de Pryck, 2015; Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005; Baden, 2008; Gammage et al., 2016; Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007; Jones et al., 2019; Kabeer, 1999, 2012; Malapit et al., 2015; Malapit et al., 2019; Narayan, 2005; Samman & Santos, 2009; Sen, 1985). While these authors focus on issues around agency and/or empowerment, their conclusions and/or focus need not be similar.

development agenda has shifted its approaches to issues relating to gender and women over the past few decades through different frameworks.[7]

Rather than giving an exhaustive review[8] of 'agency' and 'empowerment', this section underscores certain key differences and links between these two concepts. Specifically, I present here some of the main definitions of 'agency' and 'empowerment' commonly used in my chosen conceptual framework in the thesis—Amartya Sen's capability approach.[9] Below is a brief introduction to the approach, which I expand in chapter 2, and key conceptualizations of agency and empowerment.

1.1.1 The Capability Approach (CA)

The capability approach (CA) is a normative framework that argues for evaluations of social arrangements and wellbeing to be based on the capabilities people have to pursue and achieve valued functionings (Robeyns, 2005; Sen, 1999). A person's 'capability' is the real ability to achieve all the kinds of lives that are achievable to that person, which he/she has the freedom to pursue (Gasper, 2002; Sen, 1985b, 1999). 'Functioning' is an "action

[7] These frameworks went from a recognition of women's roles in: efficiency- and growth-focused development (the Women in Development, or WID framework) in the 1970s; challenging oppression in gender and development (GAD framework) in the 1980s; recognizing new identities and narratives through post-structuralism in the 1990s (post-structuralist framework); and the human development framework of the capability approach which has been extensively used since the 1990s and which links development to freedoms (Unterhalter, 2005). More often, a combination of approaches drawing from more than one of these frameworks are applied.

[8] A number of articles provide a more exhaustive review of the definitions of women's empowerment and agency used in the development literature (Chang et al., 2020; Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007; van Eerdewijk et al., 2017).

[9] Although I discuss some of those definitions within my chosen framework, I want to highlight that the mainstream development literature on women's empowerment and/or agency draws heavily from several disciplines, including but not limited to: economics (Donald et al., 2017; Doss, 2013; Duflo, 2003, 2012; Klugman et al., 2014; World Bank, 2008, 2012); anthropology (Cornwall, 2014, 2018; Jackson & Karp, 1990; Jacobson-Widding, 1990); sociology (Bennett & Sung, 2013), philosophy (for example, Aristotelian or Socratic; Molefe, 2020); and various fields of psychology (Bandura, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2011; Sonnenberg, 2017).

performed, or state achieved, by an individual" that allows him/her to pursue one kind of life over alternative kinds of lives (Fleurbaey, 2006, p. 300; Sen, 1985b, 1992, 1999). By positioning people's functionings and capabilities as central to assessments of their wellbeing, Sen's CA exhibits a key concern for people's agency in the processes of human development.

1.1.2 Agency

Amartya Sen argued that one must be able and entitled to make choices that matter to one (Sen, 1999), to define one's choice and self-interest (Claassen, 2017). Agency as outlined by Sen's CA is "the ability to act on behalf of what you value and have reason to value" (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007, p. 383). Sen's CA elevates choice to include people's need and ability to shape their own destiny by creating, or influencing the "selection" of, options that align with their values.[10] Agency also includes "all the goals that a person has reasons to adopt," whether those goals relate to his/her own wellbeing and/or the wellbeing of another (Sen, 2009, p. 287). Agency is often operationalized as 'decision-making' and measured using indicators that try to capture information about what, whether, and/or by whom decisions are made (Chang et al., 2020; Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007; Kabeer, 1999; Malapit et al., 2015). However, decision-making (often referred as 'choice' in this thesis), while indicative of agency, may not fully reflect agency if we do not know: what is meaningful to the individual; and whether the individual values this ability to make a choice. The idea that a choice that is meaningful to an individual is more reflective of his/her agency is inherent in how agency and wellbeing are conceptualized by Sen (see for

[10] See for example Sen (1999, p.30-31), on values and the process of valuation, discussing the importance of giving individuals the opportunity to deliberate and select which values should be highlighted in choosing priorities or options.

example, Sen, 1999, 2009), and how he relates these terms to specific notions of *freedoms* and *achievements* within the capability space.[11] For example, a woman may have the ability to choose what kinds of groceries to buy for herself and her family, but if she does not value this ability—maybe she would rather have someone else buy the groceries than be bothered herself—then simply saying she is doing/choosing the groceries offers us a limited view of her agency. It is in this pursuit of understanding the personal significance of choices to individuals—the subjective, or self-reported meaningfulness—that I explore agency enactments.

In trying to develop a ground-up understanding of women's agency, of the meaningfulness of 'choices', certain questions emerged during the fieldwork and analyses, including: how do individuals' (descriptions of their) experiences and perceptions help us conceptualize their agency; what kinds of experiences and perceptions matter to them, and why; what kinds of choices do respondents believe they have; and what motivates people to make certain choices? Understanding what meanings certain experiences and perceptions hold to individual respondents is necessary to grasp what motivates them to certain choices.

1.1.3 Empowerment

A number of studies have conceptualized empowerment as a process of change.[12] The *change* that is inherent, and assessed, in a capability view of empowerment is an

[11] See chapter 2 (section 2.1) for an elaboration of these concepts.

[12] See for example: Alkire et al., 2013; Batliwala, 1994; Eyben, 2011; Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007; Kabeer, 1999; Narayan, 2005; Oxaal & Baden, 1997; Rowlands, 1995; Samman & Santos, 2009; Sharaunga et al., 2019; Trommlerová et al., 2015; van den Bold et al., 2013; van Eerdewijk et al., 2017. While I cite these authors here (and elsewhere) together, this does not imply that these authors' works do not have divergences. In fact, many of these authors have differing ideas on a number of themes, but I do not go into the nuances of these differences in this thesis. Citing them together here aims to emphasize how they agree on viewing empowerment as (also) a process of change.

expansion in agency (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007, p. 388). By *process*, it refers to a shift in perceptions and/or actions that accompanies personal transformation (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007; Kabeer, 1999, 2003; Sen, 1999). Agency is a core element that can indicate a person is empowered in certain areas.[13] Indeed, much of empowerment can be measured in ways that are objectively verifiable by tracking progress on certain key indicators of agency (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007; Malapit et al, 2015). Although my analysis of agency takes a subjective approach to consider individuals' motivations and the meanings they attach to their choices, it also aims to better inform the objective measures that are key to advancing external actions—from governments, institutions, and others—that can increase agency and pave the way for empowerment.

While definitions of empowerment abound and often vary, "what unifies them is that they shift the analysis of power from the perspective of dominant groups ("the power over") to forms of agency exercised by the oppressed" (Kabeer, 2021, p. 100).[14] At the individual level, an empowered person is an agent able to bring about transformative change in his/her own life (Kabeer, 1999, 2021).[15] Empowerment is an expansion in agency that occurs within a context where someone (the empowered person) has "the opportunity to

[13] A number of studies examine key dimensions of agency in their analysis of women's empowerment (Gammage et al., 2016; Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007; Jones et al., 2019; Malapit et al., 2019; Sharaunga et al., 2019). Other core elements of empowerment mentioned in the literature include choice, voice, and power (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005; Narayan et al., 2000; Samman & Santos, 2009; van den Bold et al., 2013; van Eerdewijk et al., 2017). Power is also described and analyzed through four dimensions in the empowerment literature as: power over, power with, power to, and power within (Rowlands, 1997; van Eerdewijk et al., 2017).

[14] See Appendix D for a review of the different ways 'power' has been conceptualized beyond 'power over'.

[15] The ability to choose that is inherent to a CA view of agency can also be negative, in the sense of choices that have negative effects and/or adapt to deprivation (Qizilbash, 1997). For example, a woman may make a choice that can be disempowering if that choice allows her continued subordination (Kabeer, 2005), something which Sen (2009) acknowledges.

exert agency fruitfully" (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007, p. 383).[16] In this way, empowerment is a component of agency.

These statements, while seemingly straightforward, do not aim to present empowerment as a linear, simple, and/or unidirectional process. Empowerment is dynamic and hard to predict (Sharaunga et al., 2019; van Eerdewijk et al., 2017), and relies on a narrative of change (van den Bold et al., 2013), all of which complicate analyzing it. The key point is that at a fundamental level, an understanding of women's agency can be a valuable aspect in conceptualizing, enabling, and assessing women's empowerment in development settings. This is especially emphasized in the bargaining approach, which underlies the intrahousehold relations that impact women's farmworkers' experiences of agency.

1.1.3.1 Intrahousehold Relations

The questions asked in this thesis should be understood in the context of intrahousehold relations, and specifically their framing through the bargaining approach. Namely, in seeking to understand women's perceptions and experiences of agency, the analysis of individuals' decision-making processes regarding household finances and own labor reveals gendered interactions—decision-making and negotiations—within the household. While households are not the sole arenas of decision-making, they are in this thesis the main space where individual women's decisions and bargaining about labor and resource allocations are made. Analyzing these gendered dynamics, many economic approaches—from Gary Becker's unitary household model to alternatives like cooperative,

[16] There are many more methodological considerations involved in assessments of empowerment. For a review of some of these methodologies and varied approaches, please see: Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007; Malapit et al., 2015, 2019; van den Bold et al., 2013; van Eerdewijk et al., 2017.

noncooperative, collective approaches[17]—have evolved to model household interactions, making distinct assumptions about levels and types of bargaining involved and expected outcomes (Agarwal, 1997, 2015; Doss, 2013). The bargaining framework, which underlies cooperative and non-cooperative approaches to intrahousehold decision-making has elements of both conflict and cooperation. Household members will cooperate (reach an agreement) as long as "cooperative arrangements make each of them better-off than noncooperation" (Agarwal, 1997, p. 4). This does not mean that cooperation is equally favorable to each negotiating individual. An element of conflict is inherent where an outcome that is highly favorable to one individual is relatively/much less favorable to another individual in the household. Hence, the bargaining framework allows us to see how the person with relatively more bargaining power in cooperative arrangements—often the one with a stronger fall-back position[18]—will have his/her interests prevail in the final outcomes (Agarwal, 1997).

Intrahousehold dynamics are also impacted by gender roles, as the empirical chapters reveal. In low-income households (which all of the farmworker respondents fall into), Caroline Moser (1989) posits that women have a triple gender role. She argues that women have a *reproductive* role in bearing and raising children. They also have a *productive* or economic role as income-earners, which may be secondary to their husband's primary income or the main income where women are household heads. And,

[17] While describing these household decision-making models go beyond the scope of this thesis, they are well-reviewed in a number of articles (Doss, 1996, 2013; Himmelweit et al., 2013; Lundberg & Pollak, 1996; Vermeulen, 2002).

[18] A person's fall-back position, or 'threat point', are the options that are outside the current cooperative arrangements and that are available to the person. The fall-back position indicates how well-off the person will be in case cooperation fails (Agarwal, 1997: p. 4).

especially in low-income contexts, women also have *community managing* roles where they work with(in) their communities to ensure collective resources are responsibly managed.[19] From these roles emerge specific gender interests or needs. They are 'gender' interests because they "develop by virtue of [women's and men's] social positioning through gender attributes" (Molyneux, as cited in Moser, 1989, p. 1803). I refer back to gender needs in the empirical chapters.

My analyses of women's narratives provide insight into how agency is deployed by women farmworkers in Western Cape, and some of the intrahousehold, social, and relational dynamics involved. My approach is qualitative and alternates between descriptions and interpretive analyses of the agency that women (seem to) *have*, those they *value*, and those they *have reason to value*. I investigate the agency goals of my respondents, and the significance of these goals to them.

1.2 Significance and Purpose of the Thesis Research

The research question and goals set within this thesis are at the heart of two broader research debates. The first encompasses discussions on how to improve our understanding of, metrics for, and evaluations of women's empowerment and agency, particularly in rural areas of developing countries to improve development outcomes.[21]

[19] While I do not study women's community-managing roles, there is much scope for such studies in South Africa. Ethnographic work by Ida Akerstedt (2020) in Hangberg (Western Cape) describes how certain women enact agency by performing community-developing work, which she argues has broader empowerment effects.

[21] This is a broad literature on women's empowerment and agency, some particularly on agriculture, of which some notable ones are cited here (Alkire, 2005, 2007; Bernard et al., 2018; Donald et al., 2017; Doss, 2014; Doss & Quisumbing, 2020; Gammage et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2019; Lecoutere & Jassogne,

The thesis contributes to this ongoing conversation by trying to capture the motivations of individual decision-makers to understand the decisions that are important to women farmworkers, and how, why, and by whom certain decisions are made within rural/agricultural households.[22] Examining women farmworkers' individual agency also contributes to another debate focused on extending our understanding of agrarian lives, which is particularly relevant to South Africa's enduring discussions on land reform and agrarian change. These debates have focused on broadening access to agricultural lands for Blacks–within frameworks for rural and national development—as a matter of national priority by all post-apartheid governments, albeit with mixed to dismal results (S. Basu, 2016; Greenberg, 2010; Hall, 2004; Lahiff, 2008; Moseley & Mccusker, 2008; Ntsebeza, 2013). Since the 1994 democratization, land reform has had three particular dimensions: land restitution, particularly in rural areas; land redistribution programs, such as for agricultural development[23]; and land tenure for farm workers/dwellers on commercial farms and those living in communal tenure contexts (Dept. of Land Affairs, 1997; Mapadimeng, 2003). The broader debate positions land reform in South Africa as necessary redress for historical racialized injustices during and before apartheid; but it also relies on a globally-resonant underlying assumption that land—as a resource for agricultural production by smallholder farmers—can be a means for individuals to avoid and/or come out of poverty (Bernstein, 1998; Cousins, 2000; de Soto, 2003; Greenberg,

2019; Malapit et al., 2015; Malapit et al., 2019, 2020; Njuki et al., 2019; Quisumbing, 2013; Quisumbing et al., 2016; Rubin & Manfre, 2014).

[22] A number of studies highlight and/or examine the motivational aspects of decision-making in research on women's empowerment in agriculture (Bernard et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2019; Lecoutere & Jassogne, 2019; Malapit et al., 2019).

[23] For example, the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) is a sub-program of the land redistribution dimension (Dept. of Land Affairs, 1997).

2010; Hall, 2003, 2004; Hall et al., 2001; Kirsten et al., 2009; Li, 2014; Mapadimeng, 2003; Saruchera, 2004).

Discussions on land reform additionally bring to fore questions on the forms, nature, and consequences of/for agrarian change in a post-apartheid context.[24] The livelihood strategies of farmworkers in South Africa today are more varied and/or precarious, often including a combination of wage work, entrepreneurial ventures, small-scale farming, government grants, and support from their limited social networks (Addison & Schnurr, 2016; Claasen & Lemke, 2019; du Toit & Neves, 2014; Louw et al., 2021; Luig, 2021) while the labor management on large commercial farms is morphing to adapt to changing global markets and labor regulations (Addison, 2019; Bolt, 2016; Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Gibbon et al., 2014). Contemporary studies on agrarian change focus not only on analyzing the "fundamental social relation between capital and labour" (Bernstein, 2010, p. 1), but also consider dynamic processes "of social and economic change in rural areas" (Addison & Schnurr, 2016, p. 961). One such dynamic and aspect of agrarian change in South Africa is the casual(izing), wage-earning farm labor.[26] That this casual (or casualizing) farm labor is also gendered, hierarchical, migrant, and foreign add further nuance to questions about what kinds of lives are valued and/or pursued by the workers themselves. Attempting to answer such questions may help refine broader discussions on land reform and agrarian change, through a (re)focus on individuals' agency, while expanding our view of the

[24] In particular, a number of scholars have discussed the implications of the democratizing context for commercial agriculture and/or farmworkers in South Africa (Bernstein, 2003, 2013; Bolt, 2015; Bolt & Rajak, 2016; du Toit, 2005; du Toit et al., 2008; Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Levine, 2013; Mkodzongi & Brandt, 2018; Visser, 2016; Visser & Ferrer, 2015).

[26] For studies analyzing casualization, see for example: du Toit & Ally, 2003; Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Hall et al., 2017; Hall et al., 2013; Kruger et al., 2006; Ulicki & Crush, 2007; Visser, 2016.

agrarian sector as it is shaped by the lives, labor, and perceptions of those revving the engines of commercial agriculture.

My study is situated in this outpost of broader debates on agrarian change and rural development in South Africa, bringing a unique perspective on agricultural labor and lives. I examine the enactments and meanings of women agricultural workers' agency by drawing from their actions and viewpoints. I also analyze potential sources of value and meaning in farmworkers' lives, and reflect on their agency enactments in the kinds of lives lived and everyday decisions made by these women. In short, I explore women farmworkers' agency in pursuing lives they value.

This brings me to the primary objective of my thesis: my research is primarily a study on women's agency. I use Amartya Sen's capability approach to analyze and conceptualize agency, and to examine what my respondents value and have reason to value. Every other aspect—that they are farmworkers, that they live in Western Cape, that they are migrants, that they conform to certain social expectations—becomes critically relevant in not only defining the respondents but in identifying key factors that affect their agency enactments. The main task I undertake is to record and critically examine—mainly through the capability framework—women farmworker's stories in order to understand the choices, decisions, and actions that are relevant to how they experience agency. The empirical chapters present narratives and subjectivities, of (mostly) women farmworkers in Western Cape, that depict how these women view themselves and others, the meaning(s) they assign to their actions, and what seems to influence what they do and believe they can/cannot do.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis has eight chapters. Below is a summary of each chapter.

Chapter 1 introduces the thesis. It frames the study by presenting the research question and objectives, the agency-empowerment nexus underlying this piece of research, and the thesis contributions and summary. Chapter 2 presents the conceptual framework—Amartya Sen's capability approach—I use to situate my research and analyze the primary data. It discusses the advantages afforded by the capability approach for an analysis of women's agency. Here, agency is categorized as 'purposeful' and 'relational' to recognize the significance of meaningful choices, social influences, and the interdependencies of individuals in decision-making. The discussion also acknowledges that the CA cannot fully support an analysis of socio-relational influences on individual agency and therefore draws from certain literature outside of the CA—i.e. self-determination theory and moral value—to support and expand the analysis of agency with a consideration for socio-relational influences.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology, sample, and researcher positionality. It presents the techniques for collecting and analyzing the primary data, and highlights some research limitations that emerged from the way(s) data was collected and/or analyzed. In chapter 4, a broader context of the research location is presented. The discussion outlines key aspects of South Africa's, and specifically Western Cape's, histories and farmworkers'

experiences. Key shifts are brought to fore as significant to how people experience being farmworkers in contemporary Western Cape.

Chapters 5 begins the first major empirical analysis of the data. It investigates if, and how, distinguishing women's control over income—a dimension of agency—as *strategic* and/or *executive* is helpful in an analysis of agency. It suggests that while this classification is useful in helping us identify different practices involved in managing income, a deeper analysis of women's motivations for pursuing a specific way of controlling income is still necessary to provide a fuller understanding of agency. In particular, a consideration of the broader context or *situation* of the respondents is argued as necessary to understand if, and how, women's choices about the management of income do/do not indicate agency.

Chapter 6 broadens this latter argument by examining another dimension of agency, women's decisions to work. By highlighting that choice itself, without a consideration of what makes it meaningful to the individual, does not reflect agency, the chapter investigates how a consideration of people's identities—their social categories—can inform our understanding of what motivates and gives meaning to one's choice (i.e. the decision to work).

Chapter 7, the last empirical chapter, examines and develops a concept of the self—the 'good woman'—that emerged in the interviews. It considers how this concept is described by respondents and how agency mediates the pursuit and enactment of the 'good woman' by some women. I suggest that the 'good woman' is an exemplar that guides women's actions. By analyzing what meanings the 'good woman' holds to the respondents, the

chapter also highlights what motivates respondents' choices and where meanings are drawn from.

Finally, the conclusion of the thesis, chapter 8 reviews the main findings, raises some questions relevant to studies on women's agency and the literature on farmworkers in South Africa, and discusses some of the research limitations and implications.

1.4 Contribution of the Thesis

Having presented the significance and purpose of this research more broadly, and the chapter summaries, I review in this section: a) the key analytical themes and contributions of each empirical chapter; and b) the contribution of the broader thesis to scholarship.

1. **Empirical chapter contributions**

The qualitative empirical analysis in chapter 5 specifically examines the possibility of distinguishing women's control over income using a categorization that is not explicitly used (to my knowledge) in the development literature. This categorization dichotomizes control over income as *strategic* and/or *executive* (Vogler, 1998; Vogler, Lyonette, & Wiggins, 2008). By analyzing if/how my respondents have *strategic* and/or *executive* control over income, I am also able to: better define what 'having a say' in financial management means, and its significance to women in different circumstances; identify and analyze how agency occurs from women's own perspectives; and begin to examine women's choice (or decision-making) processes, specifically the motivations behind their actions. The chapter contributes to literature about women's (and intrahousehold) decision-making that is asking similar questions about how to better capture the levels of

decision-making power and dimensions of agency through analyses of various forms of control.[29]

In chapter 6, I pursue an identity-based approach to analyze women's decisions to work. The analysis adds to a growing body of regional scholarship that discuss the relevance of certain identities to farmworkers' experiences (Addison, 2013; Eriksson, 2017, 2018; Hall, 2013; Rutherford, 2011; Waldman, 1996). The chapter has two broad pursuits: analytically, it demonstrates how certain identities can be linked to individual agency using empirical data; and to theory, it draws from the CA to frame certain choice processes that arguably demonstrate how the link between identities and agency can be conceptualized. With respect to the first pursuit, the chapter contributes to an existing literature that has examined, in varying degrees, certain identities in South(ern) Africa[30] by examining more personal and gendered identities such as 'mother', 'wife', and 'woman' in the context of farmworkers in Western Cape.[31] This also expands our understanding of the choices that individuals who are/become farmworkers make and why they make these choices.[32] With respect to the second pursuit, the chapter contributes to a body of literature that demonstrates how an analysis of agency within the CA can incorporate analyses of social

[29] A number of articles, of which these are some, seek to better conceptualize and/or capture levels of agency (Bernard et al., 2018; Donald et al., 2017; Iversen et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2019; Lecoutere & Jassogne, 2019; Malapit et al., 2019).

[30] Some of this literature includes: Addison, 2013; Bernstein, 2013; Bolt, 2015, 2017; du Toit, 1993; Eriksson, 2017; Hall, 2013; Hunter, 2010; Johnston, 2007; Lazzarini, 2017; Levine, 2013; Lilja, 2019; Rutherford, 2001, 2011; Salo, 2018; Strebel et al., 2006; Sylvain, 2001; Visser & Ferrer, 2015; Waldman, 1996.

[31] There are notable studies (Addison, 2013, 2019; F. Ross, 2015; Rutherford, 2001; Salo, 2004, 2018) that explore these more personal identities, including outside the agricultural sector and/or Western Cape.

[32] Some studies (Addison, 2013, 2019; Bolt, 2015; Eriksson, 2017; Hall, 2013) have critically examined certain choices that farmworkers make and why. My approach, which examines agency within an identity-based approach to choice processes, elucidates the 'why' and 'what' of some of these choices.

influences[33], which I pursue here with attention to people's identities. Specifically, by using the capability lens of agency to analyze if/how women's decision to work is an articulation of what is valuable to them as individuals, I uncover if/how this value/valuation relates to the meaning(s) they attach to specific identities.

In chapter 7, the last empirical chapter, I deconstruct and analyze a specific concept of the 'self' that emerged from the primary data—the 'good woman'. The unique proposition of this chapter is that 'the good woman' is an *exemplar* that is socially and relationally defined (and redefined), individually pursued (or not pursued), and gains personal (instrumental/intrinsic) value within each individual's situation. The idea of the 'good woman' appears key to understanding what some women want to achieve. The chapter contributes to ongoing scholarly discussions concerned with examining how individual agency can (also) be relational and socially-embedded.[34]

2. Broader Thesis Contribution to Scholarship

In pursuing a bottom-up approach to conceptualizing women's agency, I have sought to examine women farmworkers' experiences and perceptions in order to also understand their motivations, hopes, and fears. Studies in/on South Africa have focused on a number of topics relevant to the commercial agricultural sector and farmworkers.[35] My study

[33] See for example: Conradie & Robeyns, 2013; Devine et al., 2008; Ibrahim, 2006; Klein, 2013, 2016; Robeyns, 2017; Shariff, 2018.

[34] These discussions (Abebe, 2019; Alkire, 2005; Conradie & Robeyns, 2013; Devine et al., 2008; Ibrahim, 2006; Klein, 2013, 2016; Mackenzie & Stoljar, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2011; Stoljar, 2018) are part of a growing body of scholarship, more of which can be found in chapter 2.

[35] A number of studies on agriculture in South Africa focus on issues such as casualization, labor conditions and regulations (du Toit, 1993; du Toit & Ally, 2003; Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Hall, Jacobs, & Lahiff, 2003; Levine, 2013; Swanepoel, 2017), labor and land rights (Bernstein, 2003; B. Cousins, 2015; Greenberg, 2010; Gumede, 2015; Hall, 2004; Hall et al., 2013; Hendricks, 2013; Ntsebeza, 2013), Black empowerment (du

contributes to this body of research through its application of the capability approach, a conceptual framework that, although commonly used in many development contexts, is not used to frame most of the major debates in the existing literature on commercial agriculture and rural social relations in South Africa. This allows me to add at least three contributions through my thesis to the existing scholarship.

1) Practically, my thesis demonstrates how the agency lens from a capability perspective provides a useful, conceptually-rooted, and unified way to document and analyze the experiences, motivations, and perceptions of farmworkers at the intersection of other analytical dimensions, including: agricultural wage labor in South (and southern) Africa; gender and other identities of farmworkers; and the experiences of women farmworkers in and beyond their work. The work in this thesis underscores the applicability of the capability approach in multidisciplinary research across varied contexts.[36] I apply the CA to study the agency of women farmworkers specifically, and frame my research at the intersection of some key conceptual debates on agency—such as women's processes of decision-making—and broader debates—on women wage workers in South African commercial agriculture. I consider in every empirical chapter the instrumental and/or

Toit, Kruger, & Ponte, 2008; Greenberg, 2010; Hall et al., 2017; Kruger et al., 2006), migrant farmworkers (Addison, 2013; Bolt, 2015; Hall, 2013; Johnston, 2007; Rutherford, 2011), and gender (Eriksson, 2017; Hall, 2013; Hart, 2008; Herman, 2014; Kritzinger & Vorster, 1996).

[36] By applicability, I specifically mean that the CA is able to 'travel' or be used to study certain phenomena in different contexts. Giovanni Sartori (1970) was the first to note that conceptual 'traveling' is important as "the wider the world under investigation, the more we need conceptual tools that are able to travel" (p. 1034). Sen's capability approach has been mostly absent in my review of studies on farm labor in Western Cape (and South Africa) so far. The exception is James Ferguson (2013), who does not focus on the agricultural sector but whose work on personhood and social relations is relevant to my study, particularly chapter 7, and has been referred to by Bolt (2017) in framing the social/labor context for farmworkers. Ferguson briefly mentions Sen in his discussion on the pragmatism of dependence, democracy, and inequality in South Africa.

intrinsic values of my respondents, and implications of their experiences and perceptions for their (sense of) agency.

2) The empirical chapters contribute in varying degrees to a relatively small yet burgeoning field in the capability approach which concerns itself with relational and/or collective dimensions of the capability approach.[37] I suggest that Sen's approach has been wrongly criticized by some for being inattentive to social conditions—or 'structures of living together'[38]—within which individuals find themselves, interact, make choices, and act. In particular, I argue how Sen's recognition of the significance of social influences (see Sen 1999, 2009) in individuals' valuational exercises also supports the possibility and importance of conceptualizing an agency that draws value from relational (and/or social) factors.[39]

3) Efforts to better identify and conceptualize agency, and its relational elements, in the empirical chapters recognize the importance of examining individuals' self- and other-oriented 'motivations' (Alkire, 2005; Chirkov et al., 2003; Klein, 2016; Kranton, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2011, 2019). Doing so allows for the conceptualization of agency in this

[37] For works recognizing the importance of collective dimensions of/to the CA, see for example: Deneulin, 2008; Deneulin & McGregor, 2010; Ibrahim, 2006; Klein, 2013, 2016; Sen, 2009; Shariff, 2018; Stewart, 2005.

[38] This phrase is from Paul Ricoeur, quoted for instance by Stewart & Deneulin (2002). One of the key criticisms laid was that Sen viewed these structures as only 'instrumentally' valuable/valued to/for individual wellbeing (Stewart & Deneulin, 2002, p. 66). Sen himself refutes this criticism in *The Idea of Justice*, where he argues that his earlier work recognizes how individuals may value these structures also intrinsically through social influences—which one may argue are nascent of such 'structures of living together', although Sen himself does not use that concept specifically—that operate on what individuals *have reason to value* (Sen, 2009, p. 244).

[39] Iversen (2003) argued that having an (implicit) interdependent dimension makes the capability framework more suitable for analyzing intrahousehold power inequalities from a feminist perspective. This feminist perspective was evident in Klein (2013; 2016), who drew attention to relational processes and the constructive nature of agency in her analysis of psychological and collective agency among the Bambara in Mali.

thesis to be based on understanding the meaningfulness of choice(s). This is key because the act of making a choice (or decision) is *indicative,* not *reflective*, of agency unless it is possible to confirm that the choice is meaningful to (valued by) the decision-maker. Focusing on the meaningfulness of choice allows the thesis to add to a body of research in international development concerned with the subjective—here, 'self-reported'—dimensions of women's agency and empowerment (Alkire, 2005; Martínez-Restrepo & Ramos-Jaimes, 2017; Quisumbing et al., 2016). For example, chapter 5 and 6 explore common indicators of agency and proxies for empowerment, i.e. control over income and participation in the labor force, but complicate their analysis by examining how the latter two are "experienced or defined by the respondent" (Quisumbing et al., 2016, p. 4).[40] If we know what is meaningful (or valuable) to individuals and why, we are better positioned to identify which of their actions/decisions *reflect* (and not just *indicate*) agency. Therefore, understanding the meaningfulness of certain choices to the respondents adds a subjective, or self-reported, dimension that widens analytical leverage in the conceptualization of agency.

[40] Subjective measures also highlight the importance of 'emic', or respondent/insider interpretations and perspectives (Quisumbing et al., 2016).

Chapter 2. Analytical Framework: Agency Through the Lens of Sen's Capability Approach

"We have to fight to just get a piece of bread on the table while the white farmers have everything. They eat themselves to death."[41]

In this chapter, I lay down the framework I will use to analyze women's agency. I first present some key terms and concepts within Sen's capability approach which establish the appropriateness of this approach for a study on agency. In doing so, I also identify certain openings for expanding the CA view of agency through the analysis of social/relational influences. I unpack the concept of purposeful agency by first anchoring it in the CA before complementing my analysis with literatures outside the CA. I then examine how agency is viewed as relational and/or socially-situated within the capability literature and review additional literature outside the CA that allow for an examination of key 'relational' aspects of agency. I complete this chapter by outlining how the main arguments of the three empirical chapters contribute to the CA.

[41] On-site respondent, Poppy Rose Farm.

2.1 Capability Approach (CA) and Agency

Sen's capability approach has been relevant to contemporary studies in development and beyond for over four decades. First articulated by Sen in 1979, the CA is a people-centric approach to development that emphasizes people's freedoms, capabilities, and functionings. Functionings are actual 'beings' and 'doings' of an individual, such as being nourished or having a job.[42] A capability represents "the alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for [a person] to achieve," and therefore relies on the 'substantive freedom' this person has to choose and pursue the kind(s) of life she has reason to value (Sen, 1999, p. 75). If 'capabilities' suggests the potential that people have for achieving valued functionings, then capability achievement refers to people's realized functionings (Ibrahim, 2006; Kabeer, 1999).

Agency is at the core of evaluating people's capabilities and functionings because it represents "the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world" (Sen, 1999, p. 18). Sen has defined agency as "what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important" (Sen, 1985b, p. 206). The agent is thus "someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives" (Sen, 1999, p. 19). The first half of this definition of the 'agent' is central to many definitions of agency and women's empowerment.[43] The second half of this definition of the 'agent' indicates that agency is

[42] These can also be more complex, such as being able to participate in one's community life, or having "self-respect" (Sen, 1999, p. 75).
[43] The articles cited here are those I drew from (Donald et al., 2017; Duflo, 2012; Goetz & Nyamu, 2008; Kabeer, 1999, 2012; Khwaja, 2005; Malapit et al., 2019; Samman & Santos, 2009; Trommlerová et al., 2015; van den Bold et al., 2013).

value-laden, that it ought to be assessed not only for what an agent is able to do but also whether s/he values this action. This latter aspect I argue: 1) suggests an implicit recognition that individuals reason, act, define their objectives, and make choices within particular social contexts[44] that shape what they value and/or have reason to value; and therefore, 2) these values provide an entryway for studying the significance of social influences on people's agency. Defining agency as one's ability to set and act upon one's goals also involves two assumptions: that these goals are *valued*; and pursuing them contributes to someone's sense of wellbeing (Donald et al., 2017; Sen, 1985b, 1999). It is important to distinguish between wellbeing and agency, and the notions of freedom and achievements that are attached to each.

Fundamentally, wellbeing is two-fold, including: achieved wellbeing (functionings) and wellbeing freedom (one's potential opportunities or capability set) (Robeyns, 2017, p. 119). Sen (1985a, p. 3) notes that *wellbeing* tends to be more concerned with achievement, or the actualization of functionings. *Achievement* on the one hand, Sen explains, is what one manages to accomplish, while *freedom* is the real opportunity to accomplish what one values (Sen, 1992, p. 31). A person's achievement of his/her functionings "will [likely] be influenced by his or her agency role" (Sen, 1985b, p. 187). Wellbeing also ties to the value aspect of agency, representing "how well the life of a person is going *for that person*" (Robeyns 2017, p. 119). Wellbeing is therefore personal to each person, and reflects what is personally valued by each person.

[44] My view aligns with a social constructionist perspective, where meanings are created and influenced as individuals interact and coordinate with each other within their social worlds (Charmaz, 2006).

Sen here makes several distinctions worth noting: 1) *wellbeing freedom* refers to "the freedom [or ability] to advance one's own well-being" (Sen 2009, p. 288); and 2) *agency freedom* reflects "the freedom to advance whatever goals and values a person has reason to advance" (Sen 2009, p. 289). *Wellbeing achievement* and *agency achievement* reflect the acquisition or achievement of one's wellbeing and/or agency goals. *Agency achievement* is more specifically about "the realization of goals and values [one] has reasons to pursue, whether or not they are connected with [one's] own well-being" (Sen, 1992, p. 56). On the other hand, *wellbeing achievement* is concerned about how well one's own being is along with personal "advantage" (Sen, 1985a, p. 3, 1985b, 1992). Sen shows us that while agency and wellbeing can be interconnected, they do not need to have the same goals. These different understandings not only integrate 'choice' in definitions of agency and wellbeing but also suggest how these choices are value-laden.

A first point is that the agent has goals that he/she values and/or has reason to value, and these align with his/her idea of the good (Sen, 1985b). A second point is that an individual's agency influences some kind of change, in the wellbeing of the self and/or others, because it "advances any goals the person thinks important, whether for themselves, their community, or some other entity or group altogether" (Baden, 2008, p. 458). Agency thus represents "what a person can do in line with his or her conception of the good (Sen, 1985b, p. 206).

A focus on only achievements of agency can blur the importance of social processes involved. The freedom to make choices for example, as Sen (2009) notes, reflects both one's *opportunity* to choose and *responsibility* for one's choices (p. 19, 22). Agency

recognizes people as responsible agents because when people take responsibility for acting or not acting, reason is involved. This reasoning involves not only choosing action or inaction, but also an understanding of the implications of that choice. *Agency freedom* therefore can also be 'other-oriented'[46] when an individual who has responsibilities towards another (or certain others) chooses to (not) act upon (e.g., to fulfil) those responsibilities.

When the agent is 'considering' her goals, she is also involved in a decision-making process. Having established previously (see chapter 1) that 'agency' is often operationalized as 'decision-making', it is useful to briefly consider the conceptual connections of these two terms. Decision-making as a capability requires the freedom to make choices that: 1) a person wants to (and is able to) make and/or influence, and; 2) reflect or voice the person's needs and interests from an informed position (Gammage et al., 2016; Khwaja, 2005; van Eerdewijk et al., 2017). While being informed allows one to think through the options that are available to him/her with respect to some decision, it is agency that allows one to express their preferences and influence decision outcomes. Furthermore, a capability view of decision-making would need to determine how the process of decision-making allows for the exercise of effective agency. The effectiveness of agency is examined based on Alsop et al.'s (2006) categorization of the exercise of choice, which includes the *existence of choice* (that the opportunity for choice exists), the *use of choice* (one can use the opportunity of choice), and the *achievement of choice* (one

[46] Sen (see for example (Sen, 1985b, p. 203)) does recognize that an individual's 'other-orientedness' may involve pursuing goal(s) that are not his/her own. For example, Solava Ibrahim's (2006) study explores this 'other-oriented' view of agency freedom in her research on self-help groups in Egypt.

can achieve the desired result from this choice).[47] The categorization allows one to consider what one's agency goals are, and whether one is in a position to realize them.

Decision-making capability includes a set of functionings, the main ones (in theory) being a person is *able to*, and (when relevant) *does*:

- Make decisions
- Create valued options (e.g., define their goals, set the agenda)
- Express preferences
- Voice concerns
- Have certain resources (e.g., personal, material)
- Be heard, and listened to (without facing negative repercussions)
- Influence decision-making (e.g., bargain, negotiate, coerce)
- Know options that are available
- Choose between valued options

In practice, the set of functionings will vary by level of decision-making (individual, household, group, community, or other), and be specific to the particular context being considered. Furthermore, the set of functionings are truly empowering (reflective of agency) when people who possess those 'beings and doings' in fact *value* and *have reason*

[47] This categorization is also recognized by others using the CA (Alkire, 2008; Samman & Santos, 2009). A key point is that *choice* and actual 'options' (freedom) go hand-in-hand as one should have the ability to make a choice from a selection of real opportunities. For example, women's freedom to choose in any given context relies on the availability of options to choose from, and this freedom is strengthened when their options expand (Batliwala, 2013; van Eerdewijk et al., 2017).

to value them. This idea, that having more options or functionings to choose from is not necessarily empowering, also highlights two key points about 'choice' that Sen makes.

Firstly, as the earlier explanation of agency within the CA highlighted (see section 1.1), it is not merely the expansion of options that expands one's freedom; Sen duly recognizes that these additional options may not include what one values. By positing that more choice is not necessarily better, Sen (1991) challenged an argument made by Pattanaik and Xu that "judgements about the degree of freedom have to be based exclusively on the number of options available in the choice situation under consideration" (Pattanaik & Xu, 1990, p. 383). For Sen, it is not only freedom or adding more options that matters—for adding the option to be "beheaded at dawn" would certain not increase one's freedom (Sen, 1991, p. 24)—but also the opportunity to live as one would prefer, and to make choices in line with what one values (Sen, 1990b). The latter relates to a second point from Sen, that choice should include the ability for one to create valued options from which to choose from (Sen, 1999, p. 30-31). Without this ability, one is less capable of shaping one's own destiny and be relegated to choosing from a set of options that may be relatively less valued than those options one would (prefer to) create.

Lastly, having more options (even valued ones) may actually be more bothersome for a person (Sen, 1992, 1997). For instance, Sen (1992) has clarified that one may also value the option to live "a peaceful and unbothered life" (p. 63) since "more freedom of choice can [sometimes] bemuse and befuddle, and make one's life more wretched" (p. 59). As the example noted in section 1.1.2 illustrates, a woman who has the choice (or freedom) to buy the groceries may actually prefer not to execute this freedom if she considers this

act bothersome or it withholds her from doing what she actually values (more). Therefore, having more options does not necessarily expand agency; what matters more is having options that one values and/or has reason to value.

As an explanatory framework, the CA provides a systematized understanding of key factors that matter in analyzing women's agency. Crucially, the CA tells us that at an elementary level, a person's being consists of valuable states and activities. What one is capable, or able, to be or do reflects the freedom to pursue and achieve functionings that one values and has reason to value (Sen 1992; 1999).[48] If capabilities only had instrumental significance (used only as a means to an end), it would be sufficient to define a capability as an arrangement of functionings. But capability also encompasses the opportunity, or substantive freedom, to pursue valuable functionings (Alkire 2009).

2.1.1 Opportunity and Process

The freedom-oriented view of development that Sen proposed with the CA is keenly attentive to key types or aspects of freedom. If we are to analyze the extent to which the individual(s) in a particular context have/exercise agency, then examining the *opportunity* and *process* aspects of freedom forms a key part of the informational basis of such an evaluation. Each aspect has a specific role and requirements for its fulfilment (Sen, 2000). Firstly, the actual 'opportunities' or 'substantive freedoms' that an individual has impacts his/her capability to lead the kind of life he/she has reason to value. For example, "technical progress or industrialization…have contingent and conditional importance

[48] The conception of what one is capable to do and/or be also encompasses what one wants to and/or should be capable to do and be (Sen 1999).

without being the defining characteristics of development" because these components of development (are expected to) increase the opportunities available to people such as the number and types of jobs available, improved healthcare systems, better physical infrastructure, and more (Sen, 1999, p. 285). The substantive aspect is concerned with people's real "opportunities to achieve valued outcomes" (Sen, 1999, p. 291).

It cannot be assumed however that freedom ends at the availability of opportunities for that is a restrictive view of development that also neglects people's capabilities and the central role of agency, or people's ability to convert those opportunities into valued outcomes.[49] Take for instance the cases Sen (1992, 1999) presents of the fasting priest and the undernourished wife in India. While both persons lack the achieved functioning to be well-nourished, the CA shows there are different influences on their individual agency which affect their substantive freedoms. The priest can choose to not fast, and he has adequate means to do so, but the Indian wife in a poor household is adapting to limited household income and gender expectations.[50] Her gender acts as a limiting factor, influencing her within her socio-cultural context from converting inadequate household income into more equitable advantages for herself. Adapting to her situation, the wife chooses to feed her husband before herself, resulting in her being less well-nourished than him. It is also a prime example of how women within specific socio-cultural contexts can

[49] Called conversion factors within the CA, these factors determine the extent to which individuals can transform a resource into a functioning. The abilities of individuals to convert the same resource into a functioning will vary (Robeyns, 2005; Sen, 1992). For example, two people may have the same car (resource) but one has a license and can drive the car (having a high conversion factor) while the other does not have a license and cannot drive the car (having a low conversion factor). While both people have the same resource, their differing conversion factors mean that they both cannot derive the same functioning (e.g., mobility, traveling) out of the car.

[50] As Agarwal (2003) notes, "there is considerable evidence of intrahousehold gender inequalities in the sharing of benefits from household resources" (p. 32).

be “complicit in the perpetuation of their own oppression” (Agarwal, 1995, p. 423). These cases emphasize that ‘processes’ of decision-making and of actualizing one’s choices are constitutive of one’s overall freedoms and capabilities. An analysis of process freedom may in this instance illuminate the extent to which choices and actions are motivated or constrained by external influences (Baden, 2008). The process aspect of freedom broadens the basis of evaluation by being attentive to the “broader contextual features of choice [that] may have normative value beyond the specific alternative selected” (Foster, 2010, p. 2).

In this process aspect of freedom, Sen also expands the conceptualization of individual agency by arguing for distinguishing between culmination and comprehensive outcomes (Sen, 2009, pp. 22–23). A ‘culmination outcome’ only reveals an end result or realization, such as acquiring a job or securing a house, while a ‘comprehensive outcome’ is attentive to the process(es) involved in reaching an end result, such as “the *process* of choice itself” in selecting the means to acquire that job or securing that house (Sen, 1999, p. 320). A focus only on culmination outcomes denies a fuller view of human agency, its motivations, and the ways it is deployed even within circumscribed contexts. Emphasizing comprehensive outcomes on the other hand, which may not necessarily reveal individual motivations, enables a process view of agency that may highlight, *inter alia*, “the significance of social processes, including the exercise of individual duties and responsibilities” (Sen, 2009, p. 22). It is with attention to comprehensive outcomes that I study women’s agency in this thesis as purposeful—driven by one’s valued and valuable motivations—and relational—constituted of social influences and/or impacted by one’s interdependent relations. As noted in chapter 1, the distinction between agency and

empowerment demands understanding the processes underlying choice, including the possibility of agency within circumscribed contexts.

Lastly, process and opportunity freedoms relate to individual agency through how they affect, and encompass, what the individual considers valuable. More specifically, process and opportunity freedoms define people's capabilities, the repertoire of valued and valuable functionings (Alkire, 2010). Through individual agency, a person chooses and is able to pursue any number of functionings that is within her capability set. Importantly, what makes agency purposeful, and distinguishable with the CA, is its function to pursue *valued* functionings. An individual may value a functioning for diverse reasons, and the CA distinguishes value as *intrinsic* and/or *instrumental* (Ibrahim, 2006; Sen, 1999). Sen is less concerned with proving the superiority of one type of value over another, but rather in emphasizing the importance of a person's reasoning and capabilities (what he/she is actually able to pursue) in his/her calculation of each type of value (Sen, 1999). For example, a farmworker who says she works because the wages she gains from working allow her to pay for her children's higher education has expressed an instrumental value of work. That same woman however may also like to work, finding it important to keep herself busy and not let her mind wander. Work here (also) has intrinsic significance to her, and she will likely still work even if it was not instrumentally useful to her anymore.

Consider the concept of agency itself within this dualistic view of a valued functioning. Agency is a constitutive element of a person's freedom. Agency is valuable in itself—has intrinsic value—for a person's overall freedom because it represents his/her ability to pursue and achieve what he/she values and has reason to value. Agency is also

instrumentally significant; that is, it is valued and valuable for its role and function in allowing a person to pursue and achieve his/her valued capabilities (Alkire, 2010). Both the instrumental and intrinsic aspects of a choice can coexist within that single choice when defined within the CA. An individual agent therefore may pursue a specific choice because of its instrumental usefulness, its intrinsic significance, or both.

2.1.2 Purposeful Agency

In section 2.1.1, I (briefly) noted that purposeful agency is driven by one's valued and valuable motivations; this relates to the meaningfulness of choice that is inherent to the conception of subjective agency. In the CA, this value is framed as intrinsic and/or instrumental (Ibrahim, 2006).[51] Purpose also denotes intentional action (Klein, 2013). Purposeful agency therefore is the ability to intentionally pursue what is intrinsically and/or instrumentally valuable. It is this latter definition, also encompassing the subjective dimension, that I imply when I refer to purposeful agency in this thesis. While most notable works on agency, within and outside the CA, in development contexts do not specifically refer to 'purposeful' agency, various prominent conceptualizations allude to purposeful action as inherent in the term 'agency'.[52] To view agency as purposeful also draws attention to two interrelated aspects of agency that I discuss in various forms throughout my thesis: 1) agency as other-related; and 2) agency as situationally-specific.

[51] Note that Ibrahim (2006) never referred specifically to 'purposeful agency' but her work clarified the link between agency and what the individual values intrinsically and instrumentally, thus denoting the necessary part of intentional action in any act of agency.

[52] The works cited here are not exhaustive but they provide a broad overview into how intentionality is key to agency (Abebe, 2019; Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005; Baden, 2008; Donald et al., 2017; Kabeer, 1999; Khader, 2012; Kitayama & Uchida, 2005; Mahmood, 2005; Sen, 1999; Sen & Drèze, 1995).

Although I expand on these aspects in the empirical chapters, let me briefly explain how viewing agency in these ways supports a conceptualization of agency as 'purposeful'.

To view agency as also other-related is to acknowledge its value "beyond the self" (Klein, 2013, p. 59). While Klein was explicitly discussing 'collective agency' in this instance, she refers numerous times to the centrality of social relations to individuals' conception of what a 'good life' would be. In particular, the people she interviewed overwhelmingly agreed that they could not imagine having wellbeing while others around them did not. What was valued was not simply what was intrinsically and/or instrumentally important to the self's wellbeing but also to the wellbeing of others around (Klein, 2013, p. 60). The pursuit of individual wellbeing therefore was grounded in a relational understanding of the self. The relational aspect of agency has been noted by Sen (see discussion later in this chapter) and others for it cannot be denied, humans being social creatures, that some people through their actions "seek to enhance others' human development" (Alkire, 2010, p. 19). An agent therefore is not one who acts simply in the pursuit of self-interest, but can also be one who has associated intrinsic and/or instrumental significance to acting in the interest(s) of certain others.

Additionally, agency has to be viewed and understood as situationally-specific within and across individuals. This firstly allows an assessment of opportunities in a sufficiently broad way that considers a person's 'actual' ability, or capability, to act in certain ways (Sen, 2002, p. 83). For example, a woman who considers farm work in South Africa as instrumentally valuable, because her wages from this job help build her house in her home-country, may not have the capability to pursue other job options because her

husband only allowed her to do farm labor. Or, she may be doing farm labor because it is the most convenient work option for her but she does not attach intrinsic value to this work. If given the chance to a higher-paid job, she will willingly quit the farm job in favor of the more remunerative one, indicating that in this situation—while she is a migrant in South Africa with a goal of saving money toward her house—she has not attached intrinsic significance to her farmworker job. However, that same woman when she is in her home-country may attach an intrinsic value to farm labor; she may like doing farm work on her own plot of land because doing so helps her express herself creatively and satisfy her in other ways, even if her work does not bring in (much) financial gains. Attention to the instrumental and intrinsic value of people's actions is crucial to an analysis of individual agency to clarify whether and how this agency is motivated by one's self interests, others' interests, and/or situationally-specific factors. A broader consideration of what is intrinsically and/or instrumentally significant to people is part of a 'comprehensive' view that supports a conceptualization of agency as purposeful by examining the process of choice (Sen, 1997, 2002).

2.2 Meaning from the Social and Relational

In *The Idea of Justice*, Sen argues that the CA's "concern with people's ability to live the kind of lives they have reason to value brings in social influences both in terms of what they value…and what influences operate on their values" (Sen, 2009, p. 244). He posits that choice and action cannot be detached from society due to how social influences impact the valuational exercises of individuals (Sen, 2009, pp. 244–245). Sen keenly notes the influence of social environments on one's choice when stating that "individual

conceptions of justice and propriety, which influence the specific uses that individuals make of their freedoms, depend on social arrangements" (Sen, 1999, p. 31). Among capability theorists, a growing conversation about collective capabilities in particular recognize social aspects and/or relational interdependencies by considering how individuals cooperate to be/act as a collective group. These works, while varied in their methods and objectives, illustrate how groups, rather than individuals only, can acquire and/or enact agency collectively while also broadening our understanding of how individual and collective levels are linked.[53] "Collective agency and the pooling of personal responsibilities" create collective capabilities that each individual in a community can benefit from (Ibrahim, 2017, p. 202). Collective capabilities are especially relevant where poverty is a major impediment to people's freedoms to have valued lives. Since a poor person often has constraints on his/her individual agency and limited capabilities, acts of collective agency enable the creation of "new collective capabilities that each person alone would not be able to achieve" (Ibrahim, 2017, p. 198). These works argue that collective capabilities do not supersede individual capabilities, for within Sen's CA the rights of the individual are still valued, but rather that the focus of development activities can extend beyond the individual only.

While my empirical analysis draws from individual-level data, I highlight throughout this thesis the interconnections between socio-relational factors and individual agency. In particular, my work in this thesis relies on the capability language to conceptualize my respondents' agency while also drawing from components of some other theories,

[53] For a review of the collective capabilities/agency literature, see for example: Ballet et al., 2007; Evans, 2002; Fukuda-Parr, 2003; Ibrahim, 2006, 2013; Klein, 2013, 2016; Pelenc et al., 2015.

empirical studies, and approaches that allow me to identify and/or analyze the social/relational components that are reflected in/by my respondents' agency enactments. I illustrate that the CA does not have to be used exclusively in order to be considered helpful; one can complement the CA with certain other literature and/or theories (as I will refer throughout this thesis) when examining key concepts of human development like agency.

Agency is key to actualizing capabilities into functionings. In trying to conceptualize women's agency from the ground up, the study analyzes the link between social influences and individual agency by identifying and examining certain elements and processes that constitute this link. Below, I discuss three main bodies of literature outside the CA that my analyses of women's agency draw from to recognize the influence of social influences in my respondents' agency enactments. They complement my analyses within the capability framework.

2.2.1 Motivations

People's goals, objectives, and aspirations motivate their agency. Motivations can consist of one's basic needs, such as the need to feed one's self, as well as one's dreams and ambitions that are beyond one's basic survival needs (Conradie, 2013; Conradie & Robeyns, 2013) and which are shaped (and driven to be desired) by values, norms, and contexts (Appadurai, 2004). In studying how agency is purposeful, attention to motivations indicate how action is inspired by intention. This 'motivation' aspect of agency

closely connects with the concept of 'autonomy' in Self Determination Theory (SDT).[54] Ryan & Deci (2000, 2011) defined autonomy in SDT as the ability to self-regulate one's actions in line with one's values. Motivation aspect can also suggest how purposeful agency can be socially-embedded. The social milieu, through the ways it influences people's 'visions of the good life', is a vital site for the cultivation of the individual's (or group's) aspirations and goals, or motivations (Ryan & Deci, 2011).

As noted by Ryan and Deci (2000), "autonomy refers not to being independent, detached, or selfish but rather to the feeling of volition that can accompany any act, whether dependent or independent, collectivist or individualist" (p. 74). When viewing agency through the lens of SDT's autonomy, it is also possible to see how agency freedom can be self- and other-oriented since one's vision of the good life would include one's own and/or others' wellbeing. Similarly, the idea of a 'dependent autonomy'—when a person is guided by another's decision or wish, "willingly relying on [another's] care, particularly if the other is perceived as supportive and responsive" (Chirkov et al., 2003, p. 98)—improves our understanding of an agency that is other-oriented.[55] This is further supported by SDT's identification of certain psychological needs—including autonomy and relatedness—as key to a person's thriving and wellbeing. Because of people's extrinsic and/or intrinsic need for relatedness, people will often act in ways that connect them "more deeply with each other" (Ryan & Deci, 2011, p. 52), including through more dependently autonomous behavior.

[54] SDT is concerned with examining the *content* of goals or objectives as well as the *processes* through which these objectives are pursued (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

[55] As noted by Ryan and Deci (2000, 2011) and Chirkov (2003), the opposite of autonomy is not individualism but rather coercion. In defining autonomy thusly, SDT importantly advances our understanding of autonomy in a way that can be studied in individualistic and collectivistic cultures.

One of the ways that relatedness and dependent autonomy—or other forms they can be seen in, such as relationality and mutuality—are examined in this thesis is how they define the actions of many of my respondents who are part of a heterosexual relationship. Some of my arguments in the empirical chapters demonstrate the other-relatedness of agency by exploring how/if a need for relatedness is embedded in the respondents' agency goals and/or enactments. In particular, the analysis of individual agency that is other-related draws from the kind of mutuality inherent in SDT's conceptualization of dependent autonomy. Dependent autonomy makes it possible to acknowledge the notion that a mature relationship does not have to be primarily individualistic—such as when each partner has their own bank accounts and makes their own financial decisions—in instances where partners not only decide to mutually agree on how to allocate income (suggesting relatedness) but also where certain respondents said they were happy or satisfied with how they and their partners made some decisions *for* each other.[56] SDT provides one way to theoretically anchor my findings that people's need for 'relatedness' (among other needs) and pursuit of intrinsic goals that tie to their idea/s of the good life will motivate them to agentic (and sometimes, more autonomous) action.

To conceptualize individual subjective agency, one needs to understand the motivations behind a person's actions as those motivations can reveal whether and why the pursued functionings are valued by the person. My approach relies on the CA's categorization of choice—specifically the instrumental and/or intrinsic motivations underlying choice—to

[56] Using SDT's framework, what would distinguish a coercive situation from an autonomous one here is if someone in the relationship disagreed with their partner's decisions but could not make a different decision for fear of punishment or negative repercussions.

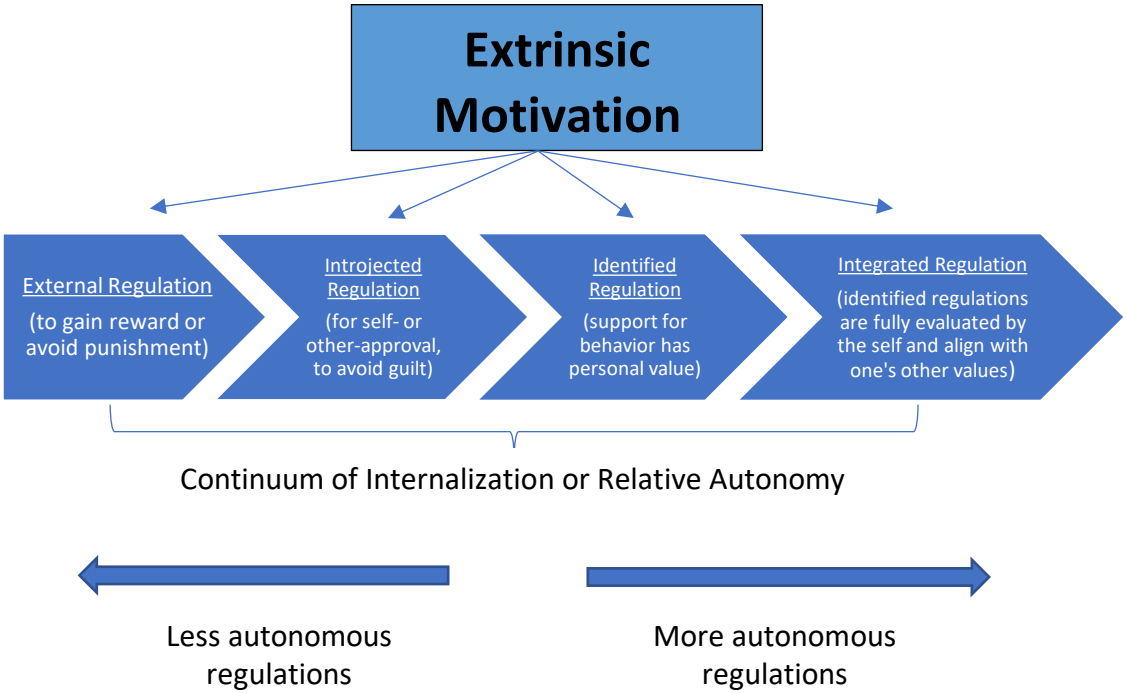
better understand what people value. While this approach allowed me to study individual agency, it can be complemented with SDT to examine how empowering certain choices made by the respondents were, including choices motivated by purposeful agency. In particular, SDT classifies people's motivations as extrinsic and intrinsic. Behavior that is intrinsically motivated is said to be done for its "inherent satisfactions", therefore being fully autonomous, while behavior that is motivated by extrinsic reasons vary in the extent to which they are autonomous (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 72). SDT makes a key contribution in conceptually and functionally disassembling people's motivations further, with four different types of motivations that fall under the extrinsic category: external, introjected, identified, and integrated. As Figure 1 (below) shows, these motivations form a continuum depending on how internalized each type of motivation is.[57] The more a person has internalized a motivation, the more aligned his/her choice is to what he/she values, and the more autonomous he/she is. Applying a capability lens suggests autonomy is very similar to empowerment (see section 1.1.3). Although I apply motivations analysis from SDT to a very small extent in my analysis, these categories of motivations allow me to sometimes highlight certain issues in later chapters where an assessment of empowerment (from SDT's autonomy perspective) complicate the analysis of agency.

Like the CA's instrumental and intrinsic reasons, SDT's motivations can overlap with each other; a person may make a certain choice for various reasons which may (or not) align with any (or each) of these different motivations. The most highly autonomous actions are linked to motivations that are *intrinsic*, "the doing of an activity for its inherent

[57] While this illustration is my rendering, it draws from the information within Ryan & Deci (2000, 2011).

satisfactions" (Ryan and Deci, 2011, p. 72) and/or *integrated*, when identified external goals "are fully assimilated to the self, which means they have been evaluated and brought into congruence with one's other values and needs" (Ryan and Deci, 2011, p. 73). An *identified* motivation is when a goal is accepted "as personally important" but it has not fully aligned with one's values, whereas behavior that has an *introjected motivation* is done "to avoid guilt or anxiety or to attain ego enhancements such as pride" (Ryan and Deci, 2011, p. 72). Lastly, behavior with an *external* motivation is done only to comply with or "satisfy an external demand or reward contingency" (Ryan and Deci, 2011, p. 72). These distinguishing factors are important because they can indicate which behaviors are more/less autonomous according to SDT, and which behaviors (such as those driven by only introjected and/or external motivations) are not empowering from a CA perspective.

Figure 1. Valuing Choice – SDT Perspective on Extrinsic Motivation



Lastly, motivation is more likely to lead to action when one believes in his/her "personal efficacy", that his/her actions can lead to the effect he/she desires, as this is key to the "incentive to act" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Bandura (1997) explains that "perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Within the capability literature, personal or self-efficacy has been found as intrinsically valuable, as a valued end itself (Klein, 2013, p. 25). Personal efficacy is also instrumentally important in helping people achieve valued functionings for as Bandura (1997) argues, "beliefs of personal efficacy" are "mechanisms of personal agency" because they expand people's psychosocial functioning (p. 2). He further contends that "perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of personal capability," one's belief in one's ability to act and in that action having the desired effect (Bandura, 1997, p. 11). But how can one's (perceived) self-efficacy be swayed by social influences? Consider this in the case of a functioning like 'being married'.[58] Social/community influences may be important to one's agency enactments as a 'married' person if the significance of that pursued functioning—e.g., what being married means to those in a particular society/community and how it is perceived and evaluated by others within that society/community—relies on "established patterns of behavior in a community" (Sen, 2009, p. 255).[59] In other words, the 'community' delineates the social

[58] The functioning 'being married' is also based on certain social dependencies which complicates its analysis. I suggest it ties to what Sen (2002) has called "socially dependent individual capabilities" (p. 85). A socially dependent capability, which "most individual capabilities are" (Sen, 2002, p. 85), is assessed at the individual level (the individual possesses this capability and attaches intrinsic/instrumental value to it) but s/he will need to rely on another (or certain others) in order to actualize this capability.

[59] Sen's focus here is on *intersocietal* variations, or differences *between* societies rather than *within* societies or other social groups and collectives (which is what I am examining). His comment is nonetheless applicable to my analysis as he notes there are differences in societies (such as the characteristics of the people, their natural and social environments) that shape an individual's ability for converting income or primary goods into basic functionings in their society (Sen, 2009, p. 254). In my analysis, rather than looking at the conversion of income into basic functionings, I consider how the meanings of the same functionings can vary even within the same community.

acceptability and worthiness of people's actions by defining what is meaningful and worth pursuing as/through certain functionings (this is reminiscent of the case of the undernourished Indian wife in section 2.1). This would also suggest that the self-efficacy component of agency is to some extent socially embedded if one's judgment of what he/she can pursue and/or achieve through a certain functioning is based on existing social arrangements that guide one's behavior with respect to that functioning.

While "agency refers to acts done intentionally," to serve some purpose or intention of the agent, the effects of agency—the consequences of one's agentic actions—do not necessarily have to serve that purpose (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). A woman from Mozambique who migrated to Western Cape in search of work on farms so that she can save money to build a house in her home country may indeed find a job as a farmworker. But if the remuneration is barely sufficient for her to meet her basic living needs like food and shelter, then she may not be able (or take much longer than she anticipated) to fulfil the reason she came to Western Cape in the first place: to save enough money so that she can build a house in Mozambique. That she is not able to fulfil this purpose, or the instrumental value of a job to her, does not mean that she is an individual without purposeful agency; intentionality is still present in her actions, despite serious constraints on her substantive freedom. The example notably shows that the actual effect/s of her actions do not fully match the effect/s she had anticipated. One may also argue however that living in one's own house (or *being* a homeowner) is an 'elementary functioning' (Sen, 2009, p. 255) in this woman's Mozambican community, that it is driven by identified and/or integrated extrinsic motivations, perhaps connecting to her need for 'relatedness' to other members of her community. Her inability then to build a house in Mozambique

may not only affect her own and/or others' perceptions of her self-efficacy but also reduce her sense of autonomy. In this way, the CA allows us to build an informational basis to identify how work has instrumental and/or intrinsic value to this woman, even underscoring her agency, but through the lens of SDT we see how her present inability to fulfill some of her intrinsic and/or extrinsic needs may lead her to be/feel less empowered.

2.2.2 Decision-Making Context: Opportunity Structure and Situation

When noting the importance of the environment(s) in which individuals live, Deneulin and Stewart (2002) called attention to the need for understanding the social context when analyzing people's capabilities and agency. Contextual information of this kind is important because it serves as a reminder that any conceptualization of individual agency bears, and is impacted by, the influence of opportunities and processes available to the individual and which are part of her environment (Klein, 2013, pp. 64–65).[60] The most prominent way that context has been theorized in the CA is through the concept of *opportunity structure*.

The opportunity structure[61] represents the "broader institutional, social, and political context of formal and informal rules and norms within which actors pursue their interests" (Samman & Santos, 2009, p. 3). As such, the opportunity structure may enable as well as prevent people from exercising effective agency (Alkire, 2007; Samman & Santos, 2009). With respect to Sen's CA, "institutional arrangements are assessed as being fundamental

[60] The need to understand social context is also necessary for a constructionist perspective, which I adopt in my analyses, as it highlights the links that connect individuals with each other through their interdependencies.
[61] The opportunity structure is also discussed elsewhere (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005; Narayan, 2005).

to the process of influencing people's ability to achieve the things they value" (Frediani, 2010, p. 185). In one sense, the opportunity structure can consider capabilities within a rights-based approach in so far as the latter "lies in the recognition of the structural causes of people's impoverishment, of the fact that their condition is the outcome of the active denial of their rights and entitlements by social, economic and political structures and processes" (Mander, 2005, p. 239). In another sense, understanding the opportunity structure angle can focus attention on the inequalities and capability deprivations (e.g., multidimensional poverty) that institutions (or lack thereof) create and/or enable (Samman & Santos, 2009). Institutions within the opportunity structure can thus enhance/restrict people's choices and freedoms, impacting people's wellbeing and agency (Sen, 1999)[62]. An individual may for instance feel she is acting by what she values but an outside observer may notice her values are less than "reasonable", having been influenced (too much) by circumstances (e.g., a restrictive social context) which prevent her from imagining a different, truly autonomous, way of being and doing (Alkire, 2007, p. 173).

Elements within the opportunity structure can also influence people's ability to define and act upon what they value. Attention to agency should therefore parallel attention to the opportunity structure, particularly those aspects of the latter which seem to influence agency's "constructive role in the creation of values and norms" (Sen 1999, 157), or what

[62] At a very basic level, a poor person experiences capability deprivation when he/she is not able to have a life that he/she has reason to value. Valued functionings such as being healthy and well-nourished can be beyond reach of the poor because the conditions of poverty—such as being unemployed, not having clean water and sanitation, having no assets, having no or low financial resources, etc.—further constrain the options that a poor person has to pursue valued functionings (Alkire & Santos, 2014; Appadurai, 2004; Unterhalter, 2005), leading many to adjust to their situation with 'compensating abilities' (Qizilbash, 1997).

individuals *have reason to value*.[63] This argument is supported by research indicating that "people's agency is deeply informed by their own knowledge and values," affected by societal norms that shape their "varied understandings of appropriate agency" (Alkire, 2008b, p. 456; Mishra & Tripathi, 2011). Social norms and cultural values influence the choices one makes.[64] The importance of values and social norms also indicates that agency is relational; it occurs in relation with/to other people with whom one interacts, and to institutions in a particular context (Narayan, 2005; Samman & Santos 2009). Having argued previously that the agent will pursue goals that he/she values and/or has reason to value, recognizing aspects of the opportunity structure allows us to consider to some extent the way these values align with a person's conception of the good in a particular context (Samman & Santos 2009). Specifically, the formal and informal institutions of the opportunity structure may not only enhance/constrain people's agency but also "condition the effectiveness of human agency" (Alsop et al., 2006; Ibrahim & Alkire 2007, p. 385).

While the opportunity structure is useful in setting the institutional context, I suggest that for the analyses I undertake in this thesis, the concept of *situation* (to use Simone de Beauvoir's term) can include the various institutional dimensions of the opportunity structure while also allowing for a relationally-embedded view of context, or one's circumstances. A woman's *situation* constitutes both 'what she is in' and 'what she is' (de

[63] Note that Sen here was referring to capabilities like democracy, not the opportunity structure per se, as having an intrinsic, instrumental, and constructive role.
[64] Choice, without considering the circumstances within which it is made, may not be automatically empowering when the process and/or outcomes of choice allow for the continued subordination of women through disempowering norms that women have internalized and therefore may not resist (Kabeer 2005).

Beauvoir, 1949a, 1949b). *Situation* on one hand is *what she is in*, such as a (her) body, a society, a physical environment that sketch her boundaries and opportunities. This is similar to how the opportunity structure includes the formal and informal institutions, and social and political contexts (Samman & Santos, 2009, p. 3). On the other hand, *who she is* also represents the ways she processes her experiences to create a unique view of herself. In this manner, one's *situation* can be both objective, when viewed through an external lens, and subjective, when considering the internal perceptions that both shape and are shaped by one's personal experience (Knowles, 2018). This internal aspect is not considered in the opportunity structure. 'Who she is' is particularly important because it includes an internal dimension, or those personal components that are important to the individual for the enactment of agency.

De Beauvoir's account considered how *situation* contributes to women's unfreedom, or their inability to be equal to men (S. James, 2003).[65] One aspect of De Beauvoir's conceptualization of women's *situation* is 'materialist' and ascribes women's unequal status to: their dependence on men and; to habit, where woman's *situation* is often simply the way things are and have been. In this way, man can dominate woman's *situation* through existing structures and institutions of domination, like patriarchy, that relegate her to a subordinate status. The materialist account is specifically financial and posits that

[65] Susan James' argument is bound to notions of neo-Roman republicanism and seventeenth-century politics, where the basis of freedom is equality. For Sen, "unfreedom can arise either through inadequate processes (such as the violation of voting privileges or other political or civil rights) or through inadequate opportunities that some people have for achieving what they minimally would like to achieve" (Sen, 1999, p. 17). For how Sen may envision the limits on the Beauvoirian freedom, see for example Sen (2009; p. 245) and Sen (1999; p. 190), where he discusses how social influences affect how people choose, think, and act, limiting their freedom to envision themselves differently than what their society prescribes. For many women in such societies, Sen notes they may come to accept that they are inferior (unequal) to men.

women throughout the world have historically had lower wages, less resources and opportunities, and held positions of less importance than men (Baxter & Kane, 1995; de Beauvoir, 1949a, 1949b). Another aspect of de Beauvoir's argument has a psychic (or psychological) basis. De Beauvoir asserts that there can be no freedom (i.e. equality) for woman if the latter sees in man traits and qualities that she values but does not, or cannot, see in or envision for herself. Through *situation*, these gendered inequalities affect the "capabilities and the opportunities that are open" to a woman, shape her character, and restrict "her possibilities and her freedom (Knowles, 2019, pp. 245; 248).

Situation as noted previously is much more than an independent context consisting of outside conditions and institutions that seem (and may be) beyond the control of individuals; it is also subjectively constructed through the relationships men and women have with each other and which influence "who we are, we were and who we can become" (Freeman 2011, p. 370, cited in Knowles 2019). Since these relationships also constitute one's *situation*, they can limit or expand what one conceives as the realm of his/her possibilities and hence what is possible for him/her to be and do, or her capabilities. One's *situation* can dampen one's determination to be truly, in an existential sense[66] and from an opportunity freedom perspective, free by limiting the possibilities that are available to one.

Situation therefore includes an expanded view of the social institutions within the opportunity structure—where norms and expectations on appropriate (gender) roles,

[66] An existentialist view of freedom conceives of human beings as "fundamentally free in the sense that we have no predetermined essence in accordance with which our life or our "character" unfolds" (Knowles 2019: 248).

behavior, and practices influence one's actions and relationships, how one first perceives others and consequently one's self (Knowles, 2019)—as well as who one is, such as the various *identities* (e.g., mother, girlfriend, farmworker) one has. Throughout my thesis, and particularly chapter 6, I either refer directly to the word 'context' itself or to *situation* (rather than opportunity structure) specifically to recognize both these external and internal aspects of an individual's circumstances.

2.2.3 Morality and Social Life

In pursuing the view that individual agency cannot be detached from the life one has of shared interactions with others,[67] an essential point regards the links, or 'glue', that facilitate (or guide) these interactions and/or influence what one has *reason to value*. During the interviews, it became clear that respondents described some choices as 'good' or 'bad', and their perceptions of this 'goodness' or 'badness' often colored what they valued or not. I realized that the notion of 'value' they were drawing from, which concerned their perceptions about what 'behaviors' were good or bad, tied to their moral values.[68] Value theory offers a lens through which to examine moral values as it asks which things/behaviors are 'good' or 'bad', what it means to be 'good' or 'bad', and the extent of the 'good' or 'bad' (Hirose & Olson, 2015). When people start speaking about the

[67] This point is made for instance by Sen in *The Idea of Justice* (2009, p. 244-245). Sen has also argued for a "moral approach" to wellbeing and agency (see his Dewey Lectures (1985b)), where he argues that agency is general (can be self-related or other-related) while wellbeing is personal (relates to one's personal state). He adds that "The importance of the agency aspect, in general, relates to the view of persons as responsible agents. Persons must enter the moral accounting by others…as people whose responsible agency must be recognized" (Sen, 1985b, p. 204).

[68] Value theory (or axiology) is a branch of philosophy that also pertains to ethics, and the latter is a defining feature of the capability approach (see for example the previous footnote, and Robeyns (2017) for a review). Rather than apply value theory, I draw instead from certain sociological literatures (see rest of section 2.2.3) that expound on certain aspects of value theory to examine my respondents' choices. Value, specifically moral value, fits into the broader conceptualization of subjective agency.

'goodness' or 'badness' of certain behaviors, which the majority of respondents did, value theory argues they are driven by certain moral compasses which they call upon, constitute, and (re)present in their interactions. Attention to moral value, or people's ideas of morality, here improves the analysis of the relational and social influences on people's agency.

Clyde Kluckhohn, often noted as the first anthropologist to attempt to create a systematic theory of value, wrote that "morals are socially-agreed upon values relating to conduct. To this degree morals—and all group values—are the products of social interaction as embodied in culture" (Kluckhohn, 1951, p. 388). Since any culture has a set of rules and norms, 'standards', that guide action, individuals can perform the tasks—through their behaviors—of organizing social life as/through their commitment and responsibility to these standards (Parsons et al., 1951, pp. 59–60). Those standards aim to uphold the morals of a culture, or group of people who agree on the same values regarding conduct through shared notions of the "desirable".

A parallel can be drawn between the terms 'desirable' and 'value', the latter being prominent in the CA. Take the concept of agency freedom within the CA is a person's ability to pursue what s/he values and has reason to value. David Graeber's dualistic meaning of the "desirable" is particularly useful: the practical meaning is that which people want (or in capability language, 'value'); and the value-laden meaning is what people "*ought* to want" (or in a capability view, 'have reason to value') (Graeber, 2001, p. 3, emphasis in original). He notes that:

> The desirable refers not simply to what people actually want—in practice, people want all sorts of things. Values are ideas about what they ought to want. They are the criteria by which people judge which desires they consider legitimate and worthwhile and which they do not. Values, then, are ideas if not necessarily about the meaning of life, then at least about what one could justifiably want from it (Graeber, 2001, p. 3).

As Joel Robbins notes, "if the good is defined as that which is "desirable" (in contrast to that which is simply desired), then it is difficult to imagine a discussion of morality that does not make some reference to values" (Robbins, 2012, p. 117). Robbins is specifically referring to cultural values as what shapes, and sometimes differentiates, social life in different social worlds (Robbins, 2012, 2015). These values order and organize social worlds as they are rooted in culture[69], or what gives individuals a sense of shared existence and purpose. Thus ordered by cultural values, social life comprises all kinds of "routine social action with moral performance" (Robbins, 2012, p. 119). Individuals construct social worlds, and social life constitutes of individuals interacting with each other within their social world/s. When we place these social actions "in relation to cultural values" (Robbins, 2012, p. 119), we can begin to analyze how the individual makes, contests, reproduces, and gives moral meaning to his/her choices.

It is not necessary to view these values only in 'cultural' terms, as Robbins and others would argue, because they are standards that individuals in any collective may follow through a shared sense of moral commitment. In an individual's calculation of value

[69] Robbin's (2012, 2015) use of the term 'culture' appeals to the notion's conceptual ability for explaining how individuals who share the same values are motivated to act in order to create and/or preserve the social world they share. His goal appears not (specifically) to point toward cultural relativism, but rather to elucidate a culture's integral role in shaping values and determining the moral pathways of social life that will align with those values.

therefore, what she values and has reason to value—what is 'good', desirable, ought to be sought after—is what gives meaning to her social life from a relational agency view.

When we shift the attention from the individual only to the individual *as part of* the collective(s) (e.g., a society, community), a relational view of agency asks that we consider the instrumental and/or intrinsic significance of the collective/s to the individual in the latter's calculation of value. Specifically, agentic action can be motivated by the instrumental and/or intrinsic value of the social structures themselves (Ibrahim, 2006) and/or the standards set by/within such structure. In my study, the church is one example of such a social structure having instrumental and intrinsic value to individuals. Furthermore, certain social structures, by shaping people's lives and organizing their expectations, may define the standards—kinds of choices and actions—that are worth valuing, thereby giving people *reason to value* certain choices and actions over others.

Attention to morality, or moral actions and choices that are 'desirable', also confirms that social influences emerge out of specific social structures created and held together by individuals who also belong to certain social categories or collectives.[70] Drawing from some basic principles of value theory allows me to highlight in the core chapters how certain social influences seem to discipline the behavior of individuals who form part of certain social categories, influencing what they have *reason to value*.

[70] A *situational* view here locates the social structures as what 'people are in' and their social categories as 'who they are'.

2.3 A Relational and Purposeful Agency

Agency (of the individual) in the CA is characterized as personal, since it considers the person's ability to choose and pursue what he/she values (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007; Sen, 1985b, p. 206, 1999, p. 19). Agency necessitates the person's personal intention/s (Klein, 2013) and judgment/s that her action/choice aligns with what she values and has reason to value (Donald et al., 2017). Despite its personal nature, it is still possible for individual agency to be relational—attentive to how the agent is connected to others (or one other). One's personal intentions, actions, and judgments are grounded in specific arrangements of meanings which may be self-oriented or other-oriented. Kitayama and Uchida (2005) elucidate that a person's agency can be independent when one's decision is guided by one's own goals and "needs of the self", and/or interdependent when one's decision is regulated by the needs and goals of significant others (p. 137).

Similarly, some have argued for considering the effect of people's particular socio-cultural environments—e.g., how individualist or collectivist the communities are—on the type of, and motivations underlying, individual agency people demonstrate (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 2005). For example, in highly individualist socio-cultural settings, a wife under-nourishing herself for her husband (see section 2.1.1.) may appear odd. However, if the socio-cultural environment promotes collectivism, or attention to one's interpersonal relations and/or obligations as is expected in collectivist cultures, then a wife adjusting her expectations/behaviors to her husband's expectations may be the standard. To (re)conceptualize agency as also relational or interpersonal does not need to delegitimize independent motivations. If taken from a CA view that a person's agency achievements

must be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, then part of respecting that judgment is to acknowledge that the agent's interpersonal concerns give meaning to her actions. These meanings, which may be grounded in one's relationships and interdependent concerns and responsibilities, are key to this person's personal agency.

Relational agency is also relevant to many African contexts where personhood has been defined in terms of one's relations to others such as one's family and/or community (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001; Ferguson, 2013). Many African traditional communities embrace the philosophy of Ubuntu, which loosely means 'I am because we are'. From this collectivist worldview, it is the community rather than the individual that is prioritized through the individual's realization that others are "the sources of his or her own humanity, and so realizes, with internal assurance, that in the absence of others, no grounds exist for a claim regarding the individual's own standing as a person" (Menkiti, 2004, p. 324). Personhood in this sense must account for the "extended self" (Menkiti, 2004, p. 324) and constitutes the interdependencies and interrelationships of the person within his/her collective, or a "sociocentric view of personhood" (Kaphagawani, 2004, p. 337). A person's agency is embedded in her social and cultural context (Devine et al., 2008; Mackenzie & Stoljar, 2000), and in an African context this often means that individuals prioritize "group solidarity and interdependent life" over one's own needs (Abebe, 2019, p. 5; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001; D. James, 2021). Personal agency is required for an individual in this, or any, context (as the studies mentioned next suggest) to maintain and/or transform practices that support the need for relatedness embedded in his/her agency (Kabeer, 1999, 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2011).

Mahmood's (2005) work on women in Egypt's piety movement illustrates that following socially-prescribed rules or models of behavior were not construed by the women of her study as limits on their individual freedom but rather as opportunities for realizing and developing the self (p. 5). Ibrahim's (2006) study, while focusing on 'collective' (rather than 'interdependent') agency, keenly examines the link between individual capabilities and social structures—the "social embeddedness of individuals"—by emphasizing the intrinsic and instrumental significance of these structures to the individual (p. 403). In her study on women's agency in an urban neighborhood in Mali, Klein (2016) found that individuals could not imagine having *hèrè*, which translates as the "good life" or "well-being", if others around them did not have it, indicating the value of what Menkiti (2004) calls the 'extended self'. As I clarify below, additional voices are using the CA to pursue a conceptualization of agency that articulates the self in relation to others. Several studies have applied and/or referred to a relational perspective when examining agency within the CA. While critical debates about the CA's focus on individual agency are well-established (Deneulin, 2008; Herdt & Deneulin, 2007; Ibrahim, 2006; Stewart & Deneulin, 2002), I have noted earlier that Sen's attention to various social influences on individual agency does not in fact suggest an individualistic worldview (although the individualistic view is how the CA has been applied largely). Sabina Alkire, a leading capability theorist, has argued that people often act to expand the capabilities of other people because "humans act not only for economic and social advancement but also, at times, to satisfy their moral sentiments" (Alkire, 2010, p. 19). Individual agency therefore may seek to further one's own interests and/or the interests of others in line with what one considers 'moral', or one's conception of what is 'good' (Graeber, 2001; Robbins, 2012).

Recent works on the nature of agency in the CA suggest expanding the "frontiers" for capability-driven conceptualizations (Comim, Fennell, & Anand, 2018). Klein (2016) examines the instrumental and intrinsic value of psychological concepts of self-belief and internal motivation in an urban neighborhood in Mali and argues how the social and collective construction of these concepts positions women's individual agency within 'relational' processes. Warner's (2018) ruminations on the 'common good' and the 'good life' stresses that even in today's Anthropocene context, what an individual has *reason to value* cannot be detached from one's social context but rather must consider whether certain choices and behaviors will "assist or hinder the flourishing of others" (p. 78). The 'common good' from a relational perspective is shared and/or interdependent (Deneulin, 2006). It would seem therefore that this relationality also represents a responsibility one has toward others and/or the self. This point is furthered by Nebel and Nebel (2018) who argue that agency, when conceived as a capability,[72] is held when the individual recognizes and acts upon the responsibility she has to herself, her actions, and in her relationships with others. Hence, they view 'responsibility' as socially constructed within one's social relations (Nebel & Nebel, 2018, p. 83).

Robeyns (2005) has argued that this concept of responsibility is not sufficiently unpacked in the CA, and that doing so will bring clarity in distinguishing between 'rights' and 'obligations', and 'freedom' and 'duties'. Sen (1999) has discussed the notion of "individual responsibility" in the context of substantive freedoms required to exercise it,

[72] Note that Sen himself has refused to make 'agency' a 'capability'. Agency as a capability would mean the capability to choose one's own freedom (see for example Crocker (2008) on this), a tautological error in Sen's conception because it presupposes the ability to choose. See Nebel & Nebel (2018) for more about this (p. 94).

where he also acknowledges, but does not delve on, the impact of "personal, social, and environmental circumstances" (p. 284) and "the functions of other institutions and agents" (p. 285) on an individual's abilities to exercise his/her responsibilities. Attention to what one believes to be his/her duties and obligations, toward the self and others, constitutes a critical aspect of the relationality that is embedded within one's agency. Terms like 'responsibility' and 'obligations' also help us understand, for example, why an individual may value and have reason to value certain functionings. While Robeyns (2005) has noted this apparent discrepancy, she refuses to label the CA as necessarily methodologically individualist, stressing that some applications of the CA recognize that "the conversion of capabilities into functionings requires individuals' choices, which are influenced by social factors" (Robeyns, 2005, p. 108).

Debates about 'methodological individualism' within the CA have generally pointed to "the view that everything can be explained by reference to individuals and their properties only", which has sometimes been linked to 'ontological individualism', the view that "only individuals and their properties exist, and that all social entities and properties can be identified by reducing them to individuals and their properties (Robeyns, 2005, p. 108). Sen himself does not classify the CA as ontologically or methodologically individualist (see Sen (2009), p. 244), but rather his numerous references to the importance of recognizing the rights and responsibilities of individuals[73] suggest, as Robeyns (2005) points out, that the CA is ethically individualist, with the person being the ultimate unit of moral concern. By arguing that the CA is not methodologically individualist, Robeyns (2005) also

[73] See for example Sen 1985b, and 1992.

underscores its intrinsic ethical focus. She clarifies that Sen's CA is ethically individualist because it considers the individual's moral rights and inter-connections with other individuals and/or groups, and it is by considering these moral aspects that individual decisions can be assessed. This ethically individualist stance of the CA also importantly supports a relational conceptualization of agency as the latter can highlight the moral inter-connections of the individual with others.

As some of these works within the CA underscore, applying Sen's capability framework does not exclude, but rather demands, an improved awareness and analysis of context, which I analyze through people's *situations*. My data suggests that women's individual agency is motivated by and constituted of relationality, or their need for relatedness; as such, my analysis of agency considers intent (or purpose) in people's actions alongside an examination of interpersonal relations and the interdependencies of individuals. Attention to such elements of the *situation* highlights: the relevance of different relationships and identities in women's conceptions and pursuits of their goals and aspirations; and the salience of social and moral worlds in women's conceptions and constructions of the(ir) self and what they value, and which influence their agency enactments. Below, I briefly summarize how I use the framings discussed in this chapter, relating to individuals' purposeful and relational agency, in the three empirical chapters.

In chapter 5, by analyzing women's motivations for pursuing a particular type(s) of financial control, I argue that women enact purposeful agency when their actions are intentionally motivated by what they value and/or have reason to value. I suggest that where the data shows women valuing (and being motivated to certain actions by) their

interpersonal relations, there seems to be a relational basis in their rationalization of what to value. These findings suggest that the interdependencies of individuals should not be neglected in examining individual agency, not the least because these interdependencies underlie a purposeful and interdependent account of agency. In chapter 6, I suggest that a clearer picture of purposeful and relational agency emerges when women's motivations to work are considered within a broader view of their varying identities. I note how identities entail certain ideas regarding what is valuable, or what ought to be valued, and in certain social contexts individuals who share an identity may be expected to share those values. These shared, identity-specific ideas may function as social influences on individuals' agency. I also consider how some identities imply certain obligations and responsibilities the individual holder of the identity has towards others, which add a relational aspect to purposeful agency. In chapter 7, I examine how 'respect' and other functionings valued by the respondents were encased in women's individual behaviors, and how the latter often carried moral connotations. My argument is twofold: firstly, I consider how the 'good woman', as a notion that is often not fully achieved by women who aspire to it, stands as a moral example that nonetheless motivates women's purposeful agency. Secondly, as an 'exemplar' that is socially and relationally demarcated, the 'good woman' persists through the interdependencies of individuals via the intrinsic and/or instrumental significance that women individually assign to it.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the conceptual framework for analysis that I use in this thesis, namely Amartya Sen's capability approach. In the pursuit of supporting a ground-up

conceptualization of agency for the women I interviewed in Western Cape, I noted that the CA allows for a purposeful and relational—rather than (only) individualistic—conception of agency. Specifically, Sen and other capability theorists have duly noted the other-centeredness of individual agency by recognizing the significance of social influences and the interdependencies of people on individuals' actions. The conceptualization of agency as purposeful and relational is supported and developed from literature within the CA and from works outside the CA. For the latter, I use several concepts such as 'autonomy' and 'moral value' drawn from other theoretical frameworks—such SDT and theories of value, respectively—to complement my application of the CA and support analyses of purposeful and relational agency.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology, Methods, and Fieldwork Reflections

I came to South Africa for one reason. The reason was that I was in starvation, and I was walking barefoot because I did not even have shoes anymore.[74]

My thesis was designed to rely on inductive reasoning to understand what agency means to my respondents. The research goals emerged during and after fieldwork as data was collected and analyzed.

My research methodology involved field research, with two rounds of fieldwork in Western Cape province for a total of nearly four months.[75] In the first round, I conducted 6 focus group discussions and 30 individual individual interviews with farmworkers. In the second round, I conducted 40 individual interviews with farmworkers. A second round of fieldwork was necessary because of limited data from the first round. I also conducted 5

[74] Maritaba, off-site respondent from Lesotho – August 5, 2018, Nkqubela.
[75] Phase 1: July 2, 2018-September 30, 2018. Phase 2: June 5-17, 2019. Both rounds were during the winter months (June to September) as these were presumed to be less busy for farmworkers than the summer months.

key informant interviews, 4 of these with experts on Western Cape farmworkers to triangulate the responses I received from farmworkers.[76]

This chapter presents the methodology and methods of data collection. I discuss my positionality, and that of my assistants, and the process(es) for selecting the research sites and identifying respondents. I also discuss the research methods used in data collection. Lastly, I present some key statistics on the two main categories of (farm)workers I interviewed—on-farm and off-farm respondents—which will also classify those respondents in the rest of the dissertation. O*ff-farm* workers refers to those agricultural laborers who work/have worked for labor contractors (often interchanged with *contract* or *off-site* workers) while *on-farm* workers (often referred as *on-site* workers) refers to those workers who are (or have been) employed by, and reside on, large commercial farms.

3.1 Methodology

An iterative process guides the subsequent chapters in my thesis, alternating between theoretical analyses, primary data analyses, and my own observations from the field and interpretations of the findings within the theoretical discussions. My findings, arguments, and conclusions cannot be generalized to all agricultural workers in Western Cape or elsewhere, but they rather provide deep insights into some of the processes and dynamics of women's lives, labor, decision-making, and identities from my respondents' perspectives. The research question 'what are women's perceptions and experiences as

[76] See Appendix B for a list of interviewees.

(farm)workers, and what do they reveal about their individual agency' was deliberately open-ended to align with a ground-up conceptualization of women's agency. My research is inductive, using my interview data and observations in conversation with existing theories and literature, to reach understandings of and explanations for the observations and data (Goddard & Melville, 2011). I apply textual analysis—particularly content analysis of interview materials—and take an interpretivist position.

My intention was to understand certain concepts that are suggestive of women's agency. I sought to discover what 'meanings' the life stories of women (farm)workers held, and what those stories *and* their meanings revealed about their individual agency. My research design also reflects my own philosophical (i.e. constructivist) stance on research and epistemology. Being more an interpretivist than positivist, this is significant to how I first positioned my research—open-ended research question in my case—and conducted analyses. I focus on analyzing the ways that my respondents created and gave meaning to their/others' actions and decisions. At the primary analytical level, this began with qualitative content analysis of the interview transcripts to identify the "meanings, motives, and purposes" underlying specific choices (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 336), and subsequently distinguishing if certain (patterns of) categories and themes emerge in responses. Lastly, I triangulated the main findings with insights from key informant interviews.

With respect to coding (a.k.a. organizing) the qualitative data, I referred to Charmaz's (2006) guidelines on sequential coding of qualitative data in order to categorize and analyze the interview texts. In short, this involved labeling and organizing collected data

by categories both during and after fieldwork, refining the categories throughout the analytical process, and abstracting from the categories. Three levels of coding were used: open, axial, and selective. *Open coding* created summaries of the data by reading through transcripts several times and creating initial labels based on words and meanings that emerged from the actual data. *Axial coding* used the initial summaries to pry out conceptual families that linked the open codes. *Selective coding* was the final stage toward creating a formal framework by creating a variable that represents a group of conceptual families. The interview transcripts could then be re-read to code data that related the identified variable.[77] Table 7 (see Appendix C) provides an illustration for how one of the interview questions was coded qualitatively using this methodology.

The methodology was suitable for how I sought to establish my research within the CA. Qualitative content analysis helped me identify motivations and intentions in the participants' responses, setting the basis for an analysis of subjective agency. The rest of this chapter is divided into sections that explain particular aspects during my dissertation's fieldwork stage. It explains the motivations behind the steps I took, some of the processes through which I collected primary data, and key lessons from these processes.

3.2 Researcher Positionality

In order to understand what agency means from the ground up and how it occurs for women employed as (farm)workers in Western Cape, I needed to directly ask those

[77] Selective coding was not always pursued since it was not always possible or necessary to identify a variable that englobes the summaries and conceptual families identified through open and axial coding respectively.

women about their experiences and perceptions through fieldwork. When researching these women's experiences of agency during fieldwork, I cannot claim I was ever an 'insider'. Even when I was able to be part of a group of contract workers as they went about their tasks for two weeks, courtesy of the labor contractor who gave me permission to join his group for observation, even participating in pruning grape vines, I was still seen as an 'outsider'.[78] I was not (nor had ever been) an agricultural worker; and I was not a black or colored person. Did my 'outsider' status make my research seem more 'legitimate' to my participants (Kanuha, 2000), or less 'credible' to those for whom this status made me unable to fully appreciate their experiences (Corbyn Dwyer & Buckle, 2009)? There is undoubtedly a range of answers to these questions.

While I was easily identifiable as a woman, which most of my respondents were, it is questionable if many of them viewed this aspect as important enough to warrant a shared connection. I could not speak any of the respondents' languages (except English), and therefore was limited from having any kind of conversation with them unless they spoke English or my translator was present. More specifically, due to my overall appearance and color of my skin, I was first seen (mistaken) by most participants as a South African Indian. The off-site workers who worked for Johan, the labor contractor whose team of workers

[78] The way I use the terms insider-outsider here serve to situate my socio-cultural location vis-à-vis my respondents rather than the ontological positions of these terms (Holmes, 2020; Savin-Baden & Major, 2012). Ontologically, an insider perspective refers to an emic account and views "behavior and actions as being relative to the person's culture and the context in which that behavior or action is both rational and meaningful within that culture" while an outsider perspective refers to an etic view where cultural differences are judged using external standards or theories and avoid the use of local terminology (Holmes, 2020, p. 5). I do not use the insider-outsider terms to denote the way I interpreted the findings; I do not operate strictly from the ontological views of these terms. While having no experience of being a farmworker and/or sharing any of the local cultures limits my understanding of the contextual nuances of my respondents lives, I have tried where possible to take an emic position such as by incorporating the voice of the respondents (although Holmes (2020) argues it is uncertain to what extent it is really possible to take an emic approach as an outsider).

I had joined for two weeks, initially called me, as the foreman later revealed to me, as *coolie*[79] girl. But I also entered the field in various roles, some of which I made known to the people I interviewed and/or worked with. I made sure that the participants knew at the onset that I was a university student from England, and my enumerators[80] encouraged me to do so; this was often more acceptable to many on-site and off-site workers as my enumerators believed this disassociated me from some of the negative views workers may have held about South African Indians. It also meant to convey that I was not sent from the farmer/manager or contractor, or the South African government to spy on them. While some of these measures may have mitigated some potential unfriendliness and made my reception by farmworkers more welcome, there were some workers who still refused to participate in the research (such as the women from Elderberry Farm) and the reasons for their refusal may be multiple.

Furthermore, through the Muslim headscarf on my head, I wore my faith openly to people who immediately viewed me as non-Christian and most of whom, as the interviews revealed, were practicing Christians. I was also young (28 and 29 during the fieldwork phases), and I appeared younger than my age to many people I interviewed (some thought I was 18 or recently out of school). My translators often introduced my research as a "school project", even referring to me as "the girl" in some instances, to downplay any threat that some participants may have felt as an intrusion by an 'outsider' into some very personal matters of their lives. These aspects of my positionality—e.g., faith, age, skin color, etc.—matter in a multicultural and historically racialized country like South Africa,

[79] *Coolie* or *makula* is a derogatory term referring to someone of Indian descent in South Africa.
[80] I refer here specifically to two of my enumerators, Bongo and Mike, whom I describe later in this chapter.

and these likely played a role in whether some respondents chose to participate in the interviews and/or what aspects of their lives they chose to share in their interviews

Finally, being a foreigner and non-white person who openly showed interest in how farmworkers lived and worked likely influenced how some respondents perceived me and what they focused on in their conversations with me. Several respondents would discuss their living and/or working conditions at length with me, often telling me what government(s) should be doing and the kinds of help they wanted from the state and/or the farmer. It was clear to me in those situations that these respondents were placing a kind of hope in my research/presence that I could not promise to deliver on, since I did not work for anyone that could arguably be of the help they wanted from the public, private, or civic sectors. Their impression that I was in a position to influence the government to take action on their behalf, a position Asa Eriksson aptly called "mediator of grievances" (Eriksson, 2018, p. 44), became more apparent to me as I spent more time on the field. Some of the on-farm, unionized respondents had previous experiences of relating their situation to journalists and activists. Speaking to women farmworkers about their everyday experiences of work, family, community, and home has meant that this research is also situated against a backdrop of ongoing political, unionized and non-unionized activism that—even from an outsider perspective—reveals real living and labor struggles that farmworkers face.

3.2.1 Research Assistants

I hired 3 research assistants to help me conduct fieldwork. In the first round, I worked with Bongo and Mike while in the second round, I worked with Mike and David. Bongo works

for a labor union, and Mike is a foreman for a labor contractor. David is an independent consultant. Below, I briefly describe each assistant and their positionalities.

3.2.1.1 Descriptions of Assistants

Bongo (alias used)[82] was my first assistant and translator. I hired him after a professor in South Africa with whom I had discussed my research referred him. A middle-aged black man and single-father of two children, Bongo worked for one of the most prominent labor unions in South Africa. While his position at the Cape Town office was junior level, as a union fees collector and assessor of living and working conditions, he had access to many farms in the Paarl, Constantia, and Stellenbosch areas. He also spoke English, Sesotho, Xhosa, and Afrikaans, which meant that he could easily communicate with all the on-site workers (for whom Afrikaans was the main language). He was my only assistant for all focus groups and individual interviews on farms. He also assisted me with interviews in Nkqubela, an informal settlement in Robertson area that is a two-hour drive from Cape Town, because he had previously lived there as an NGO worker still had contacts there.[83]

Mike was a twenty-three-year-old Zimbabwean who an off-site worker and foreman, a position that to his boss (Johan, a labor broker) told me he earned because of his reliability. I recruited Mike after spending two weeks in Wellington, a farming area an hour's drive from Cape Town, doing participant observations with a group of off-site

[82] I used an alias for Bongo, and not the other assistants, because he explained to me that giving his real name could compromise his current position as an employee for one of the most active labor unions in South Africa.
[83] See *Site Descriptions* in Appendix D for details on each fieldwork site.

farmworkers working for a labor contractor. Mike helped me identify and recruit women all the off-site respondents I interviewed living in Mbekwini (50 women).

David is a former colleague who helped me transcribe some of my interviews in the first round of fieldwork, and who later also agreed to help me conduct some interviews with women off-site workers in the second round of fieldwork. He is also a South African white man in his mid-thirties who can speak Afrikaans and Zulu.[84]

3.2.1.2 Positionalities and Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages

In this section, I discuss some of the points relevant to how the positionalities of my assistants influenced: the way(s) that primary data was collected; the content of the data collected; and the way fieldwork was structured. While not exhaustive, I identify certain biases and how I tried to address/minimize them.[85]

Through Bongo, I gained entry into farms where he knew union members and he introduced me to farm residents/workers. As a result, all of the on-site farmworkers I interviewed were (or had been) union members. It is difficult for me to predict if responses from on-site workers who are not (have never been) union members would have been significantly different to the responses I collected. One way I believe the experiences of

[84] In terms of credentials, David holds an undergraduate degree in management, has consulted pro-bono for a number of non-profits in South Africa, and had at the time of fieldwork over five years of experience engaging in cross-cultural dialogues including with grassroots and community organizers, black union workers, and village chiefs in South Africa.

[85] Some would argue that bias minimization is not crucial to a qualitative study (Galdas, 2017; Thorne, Stephens, & Truant, 2016). I suggest that recognizing certain biases, where relevant, are important in order to better situate the researcher's positionality, and the data and analyses can be read in light of those recognized biases.

living and working on a commercial farm in Western Cape could vary for non-union members is where the latter are usually not able to formally organize themselves and collectively make certain demands to their employers for better living and working conditions (Visser & Ferrer, 2015).

This low(er) collective capability may have implications for how non-union members experience and perceive their, and others', agency. The on-farm women respondents who were employed at the time of the interviews were union members and those who were not employed on the farm and/or worked outside the farm had a partner and/or son who was a union member. However, since membership among farmworkers to formal labor unions is low in the agricultural sector, about 11 percent for permanent low-skilled workers (Visser & Ferrer, 2015, p. 30), some argue it is debatable how much influence unions have, and union members believe unions have, in negotiating improved conditions for farmworkers (Visser, 2016).[86] In my fieldwork, I noted several instances where an on-farm respondent said s/he was saved from eviction through union help and/or negotiation done on their behalf by their union.[87] Their cases demonstrate how through their collective agency (see section 2.2), these union workers have accrued certain collective capabilities that any individual union member may access and that would not have been possible without collective action. In this regard at least, union members may have a greater sense of self-efficacy and/through collective agency, but further research should probe this.

[86] This varies by farm, as some farms are heavily unionized while many are somewhat/not unionized.
[87] Antoine from Elderberry Farm and Julia from Groot Constantia are two such respondents.

Data collection with on-farm respondents was usually straightforward. On all on-farm visits, the participants did not seem to feel threatened by me and Bongo given that Bongo was a familiar face to them (through the union) and spoke to them in their preferred language (i.e. Afrikaans).[88] He always inform them prior to the visits that he and I would be conducting interviews with them to understand their work and life experiences for a university project.

In Nkqubela, our approach and reception was different. Given Bongo's native fluency in Sesotho, he relied on this functioning of his ethnic background as a means to seek (and gain) acceptance by off-site farmworkers who were Sesotho-speakers but whom he did not personally know. This meant that most of those we interviewed in Nkqubela were from Lesotho or Sesotho-speaking regions of Eastern Cape province. Given that my main concern was for us to build enough rapport with off-site workers (regardless of ethnicity) that they could be comfortable enough to allow us to interview them, it made sense to allow Bongo to use his native language as a means of building trust. Nonetheless, our positions (especially mine) as 'outsiders' however may have meant that some of the respondents did not have a strong trust base with us, which could have made their responses less forth-coming. My analysis of those interviews (all of which were conducted in Sesotho) does show that in some of the interviews from Nkqubela (3 out of a total of 5), some answers were a bit shorter and/or vague that interviews with on-farm workers as sometimes respondents did not (want to) elaborate on their answers.

[88] Even non-union members on the farms we visited knew Bongo.

With Mike, I presumed that his position as a contract worker, foreman, as well as a native Zimbabwean married[89] to a South African Xhosa woman would mean he had access to the Zimbabwean and local Xhosa communities in Mbekwini township where he lived. With his wife's help, who is also a casual laborer for different contractor, he mainly recruited women who worked for other contractors and whom he knew personally either through his work or his wife. He selectively used his positionality as an Mbekwini resident, a Zimbabwean, the 'husband' of a local Xhosa woman, a casual farmworker, and a foreman to help him identify and recruit participants. This also suggests the presence of interviewer bias (discussed more later in this section) given that some, not necessarily all, women whom Mike recruited were people whom he knew and who may, on some level, share (some of) his own views. Or, it may be possible that Mike's own opinions or expectations, which could be in how he framed/translated certain questions, interfered with how forthcoming or candid certain responses were. When conducting interviews, Mike always maintained a low profile, allowing the women who understood English to converse with me rather than trying to mediate for us all the time.

David's positionality as a South African white man made me initially skeptic about how comfortable respondents (women, black, foreigners) would be with him. Since he did not speak Shona, the local language of most the off-site workers we interviewed, he conducted interviews mainly in English with respondents who said they were comfortable speaking in English. The day before interviews, I trained him on my interview process and detailed my research design and goals to him. I found, by listening to the recordings, that

[89] Mike spoke as if he was married, always referring to his partner as "my wife". However, he was not legally married to her, and was waiting to have enough savings so that he can marry her both legally and traditionally (by offering the *lobola*, or bride price).

respondents seemed very comfortable in speaking to David, sometimes more than I found them to be with me. There were almost no long silences from respondents, and some respondents who were confused were those not understanding or able to explain themselves fully in English. To address these communication issues, David sometimes relied on a Shona translator via phone, who helped David and those respondents better communicate their views.

Since I hired local assistants, there were two immediate advantages. First, all of my assistants could (and did) speak at least one other local language aside from English, which was immensely helpful for respondents who could better express themselves in another language. Secondly, for Bongo and Mike, respondents appeared largely comfortable with my assistants, perhaps seeing them as one of them (i.e. Mike being a farmworker himself) or someone who has been (or could be) helpful to them (i.e. Bongo as a union worker). Both Bongo and Mike, in varying degrees, had local knowledge of the people's backgrounds, the labor structures, the living conditions, the work sites, and the cultural aspects that also became crucial to how I would view, understand, interpret, and analyze the field and my data.

Key drawbacks of hiring non-professional enumerators and translators also became apparent during fieldwork. The simultaneous translations were not usually precise, and it was not always clear to me if my translators were always using the right words to explain the interview questions. Undoubtedly, both Bongo and Mike, by virtue of their positions and influence among the groups of respondents also used their standing to source and convince some people to participate, and perhaps even unintentionally influencing what

some respondents actually said during the interviews. While I often encouraged my translators to try to give me close translations, without summarizing, trying to correct for these biases simply clarified to me what is natural in any research process involving human participants—that power dynamics will always be present in human interactions, and the best I could do in those instances was to recognize them, and mitigate potentially negative biases where possible. I found my assistants Bongo and Mike would still sometimes summarize a respondent's answers especially where those answers seemed to be often repeated by other respondents. Since all interviews were audio recorded, I have tried to improve the precision of the translations by having several transcribers fluent in the respondents' languages review most of the interviews I conducted, and they have retranslated the responses where necessary.

Lastly, the fact that all my assistants were male is a key point to consider, and was a disadvantage. All turned out to be qualified enough to practically assist me during fieldwork, but the gendered dynamics during the interviews are highly underestimated (Padfield & Procter, 1996). While respondents generally answered the questions we asked them, some women were less open to elaborating on their answers with details of their personal experiences. For example, Winni (who interviewed with me and Bongo) and Rachel (who interviewed with David) were the only two women who answered all questions we asked them but refused to elaborate when we tried to follow up on certain responses about their perceptions regarding family life and/or financial control with their partner. While Winni and Rachel were the most obvious examples, since they clearly said

"no" when asked to elaborate,[90] they suggest that some other respondents may have been trying to avoid giving more detailed explanations by speaking in firmer tones, affirming a certain finality to their answers so that I and/or my translator(s) would not prod them.

Additionally, the positionality of the interviewers—which included me and/or one of the three male research assistants supporting me—likely had implications for how openly women answered some questions, suggesting interviewer bias and response bias (discussed in section 3.5). Interviewer bias was likely present in many interviews, especially due to the presence of male enumerators. There were a few respondents who, I realized when transcribing the interviews in the first round, seemed to answer certain questions more quickly, with less elaboration or longer silences. For example, many women said they did not make financial decisions without consulting their husband. When the same women were further probed if they could have made certain financial decisions if they wanted to (although they chose not to for various reasons), their answers were usually a swift 'no', their tone signaling me and/or my enumerator to not broach this subject further. While it may just have been coincidences where some women were not comfortable answering those particular questions, it could also have been that these women were feeling judged by someone (a male enumerator) who knew them and who could link their opinions to particular behaviors. This type of interviewer bias can be expected in most studies where the respondents and researcher/interviewer of different genders share some commonalities that lead them to engage with each other in light of

[90] Rachel did not want to say how she and her late husband used to manage their incomes, and Winni did not want to explain about how she manages her money with her current partner.

certain shared expectations (Chenail, 2011). While it was not possible to eliminate this type of bias from the interview process, the findings from interviews conducted with Mike for instance revealed a mix of opinions that also did not always align with Mike's own worldview (which I learned about after interviewing him). However, because Mike was such an integral part of the respondent identification and interviewing processes, I could not sufficiently minimize some of the interview biases that may have been introduced through (or due to) him.

Interviewer bias likely impacted the responses I received during some interviews where it was clear women were withholding more elaborate and candid perspectives. These shorter responses suggest that in certain parts of the analysis, the real situations of women farmworkers are understated. Unable to fully remove interviewer bias, my approach has been to provide a range of contrasting views from my respondents throughout the analyses, which in several instances are triangulated with key informant views and secondary literature. This does not invalidate the responses from women farmworkers, which were also corroborated by four Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with experts working on issues pertaining to farmworkers in Western Cape. The key informants[91] do note that some women respondents would likely have been more forthcoming or given more elaborations if the interviewer had been a woman who also spoke their language(s), and/or who had built rapport and trust with them. This is not a guarantee however as recent research (Devereux, 2020) with women farmworkers found that even with only women enumerators, some respondents were still too intimidated

[91] These were: Andries du Toit, Carmen Louw, Wendy Pekeur, and Mercia Andrews.

and/or uncomfortable speaking openly about sensitive and/or household issues. More problematic still is that "the legacy of paternalism and entrenched experiences of subordination…have meant that farm workers are not accustomed to articulating their needs in a professional and sustained manner" (White, 2010, p. 677) . Nevertheless, I strongly believe that hiring qualified women assistants would have provided more detailed interviews and generated more open interactions between myself, the assistants, and the women interviewees during the fieldwork. This, however, is my retrospective observation.

3.3 Selecting the Research Sites

Focusing on Western Cape as my research site—an entire province rather than a specific town or farm—was personal and analytically intentional. After nearly fifty emails to different farms in the province where my queries to interview farmers and their farmworkers remained unanswered, I decided to focus on conducting interviews where I could gain access to rather than by trying to get a geographically representative sample of respondents all throughout the province. I conducted fieldwork at a total of 8 sites in 2018 and 2019. Of those sites, five are farms,[92] one (Nkqubela) is an informal settlement, one (Wellington) a semi-rural town, and the last is an NGO facility in a suburb (Mitchel's Plain) of Cape Town. I used aliases for all the farm names except Groot Constantia, where all the workers I interviewed gave me permission to give the real name of the farm they worked at.

[92] These were: Flora Farm, Poppy Rose Farm, Elderberry Farm, Groot Constantia, and Butterfly Farm. The descriptions of each site where I conducted interviews are in Appendix D, in the order that I visited them.

3.3.2 Identifying Respondents

Nonrandom samples were appropriate for my study as, through a qualitative research design, I sought to understand and conceptualize women (farm)workers' agency by asking them about their lives, experiences, and perceptions. My goal was not to reach some generalization about the broader (farm)worker population, where objectivity of the sampling methods would have been important, but rather to capture certain aspects of individuals' lives that would be relevant to understanding their agency. At the more practical level, given that farmworkers in Western Cape are a scattered population, some living on farms and others in settlements, there was limited accurate surveillance data that I could easily draw from to identify and contact potential interviewees. I therefore used different channels through my translators, as explained in section 3.2.1.2, to first gain access to farmworkers.

In Nkqubela, where neither I nor my translator Bongo had identified potential respondents prior to our visit, I used *time-location sampling* (a type of convenience sampling) and *snowball sampling*. These two convenience sampling methods seemed sensible because: no prior register of contract farmworkers living in Nkqubela existed; and they are preferred methods for recruiting members of 'hidden populations', like illegal migrants, "when no sampling frame exists and public acknowledgment of membership in the population is potentially threatening" (Heckathorn, 1997, p. 174). *Time-location sampling* is used when certain factors about the day, time of day, and location need to be considered prior and/or during the process of identifying respondents in hidden populations (Heckathorn, 2002; Magnani, Sabin, Saidel, & Heckathorn, 2005). Prior to my

visit, I knew from Bongo and local media that Nkqubela (in the Robertson area) was an informal settlement mainly for contract laborers who worked in the surrounding Robertson farms. This made it ideal to use *location sampling,* which "is suitable when the target population is geographically concentrated" and a hidden population (Heckathorn, 2002, p. 11). I headed there with the main aim of interviewing contract workers, legal or illegal, who resided in Nkqubela. We also knew that the weekend would be a most convenient period to reach and interview the target participants as they would not be at work on farms. Bongo, with me at his side, approached women whom he anticipated to be farmworkers[93] (those whom we found easiest to reach and speak to, thus *convenience* sample) by first telling them that we were from Cape Town, specifying he was a union employee. He explained that we were conducting research about the working and living conditions of women farmworkers. We were rejected several times initially, but eventually we obtained two interviews using this time-location convenience technique.

From those initial two interviews which were successful, we asked those two respondents to refer us to other women who were also farmworkers and whom we could interview. This way of identifying respondents is called *snowball* sampling, a type of chain-referral or respondent-driven method where initial participants serve as "seeds for an expanding chain of referrals" (Heckathorn, 2002, p. 12). Using *snowball* sampling was ideal as it helped us reach a group of people who were difficult for us to identify as outsiders in Nkqubela. Another two participants were identified through snowball sampling who were

[93] How he correctly identified those who were farmworkers is not clear to me, but most of those he approached were in fact agricultural laborers.

either friends or neighbors of the previous interviewees.[94] Interviews were conducted outside or inside (only when invited to) the participants' houses.

3.3.2.1 Compensating Respondents

All the respondents in the research had participated willingly and not been coerced by myself and my enumerators to participate.[95] Most on-farm respondents (and those in Nkqubela) were interviewed outside their home, for a maximum of one hour that they had previously agreed would be a convenient time for them. These participants had expressed their willingness to share their experiences as farmworkers and/or farm dwellers and did not ask to be compensated for their interviews. All off-farm respondents who were interviewed in Wellington and Mitchel's Plain, residents of Mbekwini, were financially compensated as they did not otherwise demonstrate a willingness to participate in the research.[96] After an initial scoping in the first phase of fieldwork, Mike found that the women farmworkers he approached did not want to be interviewed mainly because the interviews would be conducted outside Mbekwini. They saw an interview away from their homes as personally inconvenient, requiring travel and significant loss of their personal time (a whole day) on a weekend. Some of these women however were

[94] The fifth and final person we interviewed in Nkqubela was Winni, who was Bongo's former neighbor when he lived in Nkqubela.

[95] Coercion is viewed as forced compliance, where a participant is threatened with harm if s/he does not participate (Wertheimer & Miller, 2008). There was no threat of harm made to participants as a result for non-participation. On the other hand, where compensation had been agreed as necessary prior to an interview, this was verified at the beginning of each interview when permission was sought from the interviewee to ask him/her questions about her life and experiences and that he/she was willingly participating. The presentation of certain benefits (e.g., compensation) to the participant for participating is not considered as coercive (benefits are offers, not threats (Wertheimer & Miller, 2008)); instead, coercive processes are those that would induce respondents to take risks that they otherwise would not be willing to take without the compensation (Singer, 2003).

[96] I also had no physical access to Mbekwini directly as I was advised it would be too risky to visit this settlement.

willing to participate if transportation to/from Mbekwini and the interview site was facilitated and if they were given a remuneration close to the daily minimum wage (120 rands).[97] Mike, my assistant and recruiter for off-farm participants, encouraged me to compensate the respondents for their time given that we would be interviewing them on their days off, which they usually spent doing household chores and grocery shopping. A similar compensation approach, by providing lunch food instead of cash, was used to interview the two women from Poppy Rose Farm who had to be transported away from the farm to a neutral space, as the interview process took half of their day. While these two women demonstrated a keen interest in the research topic, the interview took the time they would have spent preparing food for their families and they suggested that they be compensated with a meal which they could share with their families.

3.3.3 Safety Risks and Measures Taken

It is impossible for me to detail every risk I anticipated, faced, and dealt with, but I have tried in this section to speak about some key logistical and practical issues and how I handled them.[98] My main challenge turned out to be conducting interviews on farms (with on-farm participants) as potential retaliation by farm owners and managers became very real, and risky, not only for the participants but also for Bongo and me.

[97] There is some evidence from survey research that monetary and non-monetary incentives can induce research participation and compensate for other factors that would normally encourage cooperation willingly, such as interest and/or personal attachment to the research topic or sense of civic duty (Singer, 2003; Singer & Couper, 2008).

[98] I speak about issues relating to particular methods of conducting field research when I discuss the research instruments (see section 3.4).

Union employees like Bongo were not always welcome on every farm by the management and/or owner. When we visited Flora Farm, the participants had prepared a plan if accosted by the farmer to say that I was a nurse who was called upon to check on a newborn in the community. My visit to Poppy Rose Farm made it even clearer to me why some farmworkers had to create innovative stories to camouflage visits by outsiders, especially a union employee like Bongo. There, the farmer was openly hostile to Bongo.

Although interviews with on-farm participants provided key details about their lives, livelihoods, values, and norms in their communities—all of which informed their perceptions and experiences as women and individual agents—I deemed the safety risks to myself, Bongo, and the farm dwellers too high to pursue this route for additional interviews. Choosing to not interview on-site women for these safety concerns affected my research in two main ways. Firstly, this choice meant that my thesis would not include the perspectives of more on-site farmworkers, a key group in my study. Secondly, it meant that I now had to interview many more off-site women in order to build an evidence base from which I could analyze agency for women (farm)workers.

There is also a strategic consideration that convinced me that focusing on off-site farmworkers in the second round of fieldwork would not jeopardize my ability to pursue my research question and goals. As chapter 4 raises, agricultural labor in Western Cape is increasingly heading toward contract labor—or casualization—while farm owners decrease their reliance on on-farm labor through retrenchments and by limiting new hires of permanent workers to fill existing vacancies. While the reasons for this trend are numerous and outlined in the literature (du Toit & Ally, 2003; Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Hall, Scoones, & Tsikata, 2017; Ulicki & Crush, 2007; Visser, 2016), the evidence is compelling

enough to warrant a greater representation of contract farmworkers among my participants. Given that my access to off-site respondents from Mbekwini was mediated through a compensation process, the financial limitations I faced which meant that I could not interview as many women as I had planned prior to fieldwork. The final sample (103 participants, see Table 5) was a third of my planned sample (of 300 participants).

3.4 Research Methods

I used several research methods common in qualitative studies to gather data during fieldwork and these were: focus group discussions (FGDs); individual in-depth interviews; and participant observations. In a more limited capacity, I also conducted key informant interviews (interviewing only 5 key informants), in order to verify my findings and/or better understand the agricultural context. Table 1 (below) presents the main research instruments used to interview farmworkers. All interviews and FGDs were recorded on a voice recorder after requesting permission (orally) to do so from all participants, which made it possible to quote respondents in my thesis and sometimes analyze some respondents' choice of using certain words (over other words). Below I discuss the methodology and motivation for using each of the data-collection methods.

Table 1 – Stakeholder Groups and Research Instruments

Stakeholder groups	Methods
Low-skilled agricultural laborers (female)	- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) (3) - Individual in-depth interviews (Phase 1: 26; Phase 2: 40)
Low-skilled agricultural laborers (male)	- FGDs (3) - Individual in-depth interviews (Phase 1: 4)

3.4.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

In planning my fieldwork for Phase 1, I chose to use FGDs because their efficiency, time-wise and cost-wise, would allow me to gather the thoughts and experiences of a sizeable number of agricultural laborers on my key topics, including women's labor and agency. All FGDs occurred during Phase 1 with Bongo as my assistant. Bongo acted as a facilitator by introducing the general focus of the discussions to the participants before beginning an FGD. Each FGD—some as small as 5 individuals to as many as 10 individuals—was semi-structured and lasted about an hour and a half. Each discussion started with some broad questions, and then I would follow-up on specific concepts and terms that the participants raised.

My aim for conducting FGDs was to gather agricultural workers of the same residential communities together and to engage them in a discussion around their living situation, livelihoods, and beliefs about women's and men's various roles. My intention was also to identify, from those discussions, ideas that may relate to women's agency (initially also on

empowerment) and which I could later probe in individual interviews. For instance, I noted from the first two FGDs (with women) that women consulted with their husbands about household expenses; subsequently, in individual interviews, I probed women respondents about the mechanics of financial discussions with their husbands. I also expected that FGDs would allow me to observe dynamics between participants in the group when particular topics or concepts are raised, and if there were potential unwritten rules about who should/could speak. In that regard, I found that older women generally spoke first, and then women from younger age groups would speak. Those older women also spoke authoritatively, so if they said something was not right, other women in the group would not give a different opinion. This dynamic was confirmed as a general practice among on-farm women by two key informants, Carmen Louw and Wendy Pekeur. Lastly, while I made sure to ask certain questions about women's roles and activities in their communities and households, the discussions flowed freely in the directions that participants chose and ultimately focused on issues that they wanted to tell us.

I also purposely sought to explore certain aspects of agency around decision-making by asking participants if they felt that women in this community were able to make important decisions in their lives. As respondents would answer by focusing on different points and/or factors within and/or related to the question, I would follow-up on their answers and probe for them to define what they meant. For example, I asked what kinds of decisions they considered 'important', and *who* (or what kind of woman) was able to make important decisions. Seeking some of these definitions and explanations from participants themselves allowed me to also base my examination and analyses of women's agency on locally-derived conceptualizations and refine individual-interview questions.

The primary issue with using this method was that gathering even small groups (of 4 to 6 people) for FGDs became a dangerous affair for both on-farm and off-farm workers. Due to the risks noted in section 3.3.3, I chose to reduce the number of FGDs to only those sites where (and times when) participants did not feel the need to hide (or create excuses for) our presence from the farm owner. For off-farm participants, Mike refused to set up an FGD with workers because he believed that participants would view a group discussion that gathered contract workers, many of whom were foreign and/or illegal migrants, a high risk for being targeted by the authorities and/or certain locals.

The only FGD of contract workers was conducted in Nkqubela and, due to similar risk factors that Mike had anticipated with Mbekwini participants, Bongo suggested we approach it differently. Bongo had walked through the township with a loudhailer the morning we planned for the FGD, calling for a meeting of contract workers at the local union office in Nkqubela where he, as a union worker, would discuss the recent changes in labor laws that affected contract workers. This approach managed to gain the attention of several casual workers who wanted to learn about how the new laws impacted them. Many of those participants then stayed on to participate in the FGD after Bongo explained, at the end of his discussion on the labor laws, that I was a researcher trying to understand the issues that agricultural workers face. This tactic to approach interview participants however also had several unintended effects. Firstly, Bongo forgot to specify that both women and men should attend this meeting, which resulted in about twenty men and only two women showing up. Both women came late during the FGD and therefore did

not participate in the FGD. Secondly, since Bongo was speaking in Sesotho on the loudhailer, the people who showed-up for the meeting were only Sesotho speakers.

Abandoning more FGDs did not negatively impact my research as detailed information about workers' perspectives and attitudes was better gathered through individual interviews. That is also why I focused on collecting more data through individual interviews after my first few days in the field.

3.4.2 Individual Interviews

A total of 70 in-depth interviews were conducted, lasting between fifty minutes to an hour and fifteen minutes, with individuals from the main stakeholder group: (farm)workers. The main analyses of my research are based on primary data collected in these interviews, which I draw from to document respondents' personal life experiences. In some instances, I also contextually situate these individual interviews where possible in relation to the socio-cultural context and/or with reference to secondary literatures and KIIs. Individual interviews allowed me to probe how particular experiences influence/d certain attitudes—such as, about gender and labor—and what those attitudes are, including specific factors that seemed to influence people's feelings of agency (i.e. being able or not able to do and/or be what/who they want to). While analyzing the primary data from the FGDs revealed some broad themes of interest to the participants (e.g., labor conditions, wages), I delved into these themes more deeply in the in-depth interviews, and probed individual perspectives on instances that displayed agency (or lack of it) in decision-making.

3.4.3 Participant Observation

A research method most common to ethnographic studies, participant observation refers to the researcher's involvement over a period of time in some activities with and within the group of interest in order to gain understanding of the group members' behaviors (Kawulich, 2005). While not the mainstay of my fieldwork, I consciously pursued short periods of participant observations in Phase 1 in two instances: 1) during my three-day stay in Robertson when I interviewed Nkqubela residents in the informal settlement, and 2) during a two-week stay in Wellington when I accompanied labor contractor Johan and his workers during the days while they were at work on farms. Through participant observation, I built a deeper understanding of the situations within which my respondents and/or farmworkers lived and/or worked that interview data did not fully provide.

In the first instance (i.e. Nkqubela), participant observation provided me with first-hand knowledge, through observations, of the living conditions and social interactions of the participants with (as well as) their communities. In the second instance, accompanying contract workers allowed me to see and gain a deeper understanding of the daily 'work' lives and routines, working conditions, and activities of some off-farm workers as they worked on different farms. Using this method also forced me to step out of the comfort I had found in my questionnaires and purposely seek to situate what I had learned in interviews so far with what I could learn by being open to the realities around me. I believe that the usefulness of participant observations in connecting me with and within the communities I interviewed, even if briefly, also enriched my interpretations of interview materials, particularly by helping me better visualize, in a very small way admittedly, what it is like to be in some of these women's shoes.

My participant observations, where consciously pursued, were not long. Given my resource constraints, previous inexperience in ethnographic research, and disciplinary background in more structured methodologies, my transfer assessors (both of whom are anthropologists) advised me to pursue a particular type of ethnographic method called 'deep hanging out',[99] where I had to be in my respondent(s)' work or living environment for a period of time longer than a few interviews in order to get a better sense of their lives and surroundings. This method was suitable because it was a shorter period than traditional ethnographic fieldwork and therefore more manageable for me. Where and when possible, I approached 'deep hanging out' by engaging with the communities of interest in their own settings without conducting any interviews or writing notes immediately. Using this method was meant to enable me to gain more localized understanding of the communities and their activities, as well as build my repertoire of insights to supplement findings from interviews and FGDs. For example, when I first entered Nkqubela with Bongo, we spent about three hours walking around to get a sense of the different activities that people there were engaging in, which also allowed me to take in the sights, smells, and sounds of the community. Through this exposure, I also kept notes during the weekend, at the end of each day, about my observations.

The second opportunity I got for 'deep hanging out' was after a meeting with Johan, the labor contractor in Wellington. He allowed me to accompany him and his workers during

[99] The first use of the term 'deep hanging out' was by anthropologist Renato Rosaldo in describing ethnographic methodologies, and which James Clifford subsequently used to critique methodologically less rigorous methods of ethnography (Clifford 1996). The term was popularized by Geertz in his famous essay on 'deep hanging out' (1998).

the day for two weeks on various farm sites. This short two-week immersion, or *deep hanging out*, broadened my analyses by diversifying the data collected, allowing me to be part of, albeit more as an observer, a group of contract farmworkers during their work hours on multiple farms. During my two weeks of participant observation in and around Wellington, I stayed at a guesthouse from where Johan picked me up every morning at 6.50am and we headed to pick up a group of about fifteen workers from a designated spot at 7am on the road outside Mbekwini. When I accompanied the contract workers during those days at their work sites, I spent my time shadowing them as they did various tasks. Since it was winter and they worked on vineyards during those two weeks, the farmworkers were mostly doing cutting and pruning, preparing vines to bloom appropriately in the summer months. Their tasks were repetitive, and they mostly went about their work without much fanfare or talking among each other. The two foremen also actively monitored this, sometimes reprimanding those who were engaging in extended personal conversations, as Johan believed chit-chatting among workers affected their performance and would delay the completion of the tasks.

Since it was my first time being on farms for an extended period, the lack of constant chatter and urban noise made me realize how quiet, monotonous, and solitary these jobs could be. I also tried to perform some of the pruning but could barely prune a few meters of vines without having to stop due to my hands bruising. I found that workers' lunch time, which consists of only one hour, is spent eating and drinking items they carried from home as well as taking small naps. I did however interview the two foremen during those two weeks as Johan gave me specific permission to shadow them and interview them when

they were not too busy.[100] This meant that those interviews were much less structured and longer, often not voice recorded but rather written down in a diary or typed on my smartphone, spanning different times and days in order to allow the foremen to stop when they needed to focus on certain tasks and pick-up again when they could speak to me freely.

3.5 Interview Questionnaires

The particular questionnaires I used for the FGDs and individual interviews (referenced in Appendix A) were sourced from the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) and were designed to capture qualitative information relevant to certain indicators of women's empowerment and agency at the individual level.[101] In this section, I explain why I used an existing questionnaire from which I chose (and adapted) certain questions.

For Phase 1, I had a questionnaire each for the FGDs and interviews with agricultural workers based on the qualitative WEAI questionnaires of the Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project 2 (GAAP2).[102] I chose to use the GAAP2 qualitative questionnaires as

[100] I did not have Johan's permission to interview the other workers.
[101] The WEAI was launched in 2012 as a tool used to measure women's empowerment in the agricultural sector. It is a household survey instrument that scores women's decision-making and control across five domains: production, income, resources, leadership, and time (Alkire et al., 2013). It is also used to gage women's empowerment relative to men within their agricultural households. There are multiple versions of the WEAI used for different purposes, with questionnaires collecting quantitative and/or qualitative data: the Abbreviated WEAI (A-WEAI) is a shorter version used in population-based surveys; the project-level WEAI (Pro-WEAI) allows different modules to be tailored in project-specific contexts; and the latest WEAI for value chains (WEAI4VC) seeks to measure empowerment across value chains.
[102] The GAAP2 Qualitative Research Protocol is a 58-page document (available upon request) detailing different research instruments and accompanying questionnaires. The GAAP2 questions were oriented to qualitatively validate the domains and indicators of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), especially at the project level (or pro-WEAI). The questionnaires were accessed through my supervisor Dr. Cheryl Doss, who is a lead researcher on the GAAP2 research team.

guidelines to help me ask/develop my own questions around areas of agency because these questions had been constructed by experts and were being tested in the field for several projects—I felt I could not go wrong with using these questionnaires as a basis for my own. I further deemed the focus areas of these questionnaires pertinent to my own study in areas that coincided with examining agency. A particular feature of the GAAP2 studies is that they target smallholder farmers whereas my target respondents are agricultural wage workers. Use of the WEAI in my study was treated cautiously as my research design did not simply apply the WEAI directly; rather, I adapted several of the interview questions on agency, life stages, and intra-household dynamics to better relate to wage-earning farmworkers. For example, I modified questions related to the WEAI indicator *autonomy in production* to ask questions about 'autonomy over supply of own labor' to better capture what would be relevant to my respondents.

Furthermore, I asked some additional questions surrounding the WEAI indicator *control over income use* (used in GAAP2), an indicator that correlates with increased agency (Alkire et al., 2013). For example, while the questionnaire asked, "who else has control over how income is used? Would you prefer it to be different?", many women in couple households initially interviewed appeared uncomfortable when asked the latter question. Many answered 'no', saying that the way income in their household was managed was fine and that they did not prefer it to be different. To further probe this question, I would sometimes ask those women the hypothetical question "what would you do if you won the lottery of 'x' amount", and present them with vignettes of different possible scenarios relating to this question. Their answers would be the same in one key aspect: the dynamics of household decision-making they described, where they

would consult with their husband and make joint decisions, would not change. Even though these respondents said they did not prefer it to be different (e.g., wanting more control or say in how income gets spent), some distinguishing of responses by respondent category is warranted. Louw (2022) agrees this situation is close to what she has observed among migrant couples, where women tend to defer more to their partners. It is unclear whether the status quo would really be the preferred choice for on-farm workers though, particularly since research by WFP (2020) found many on-farm women wanted to earn an independent income precisely to gain more influence in intrahousehold decision-making. This likelihood of response bias limits how I am able to distinguish *strategic* control over income in chapter 5 with respect to answers for this question.

A key limitation of this research therefore is response bias, where some women responded in ways they believed they should, whether this was to paint a positive image of themselves and/or because they believed they should only answer in certain ways. To avoid social stigmatization, some women farmworkers profess opinions that align with social expectations but privately act differently (Amanuel et al., 2018). While response bias may display some women as adhering to certain values and beliefs, the direct implication of these guarded responses is that in reality those women act differently—against social expectations—than what they asserted in the interviews. Thus, women farmworkers may have more or less agency freedom than is proclaimed in this thesis.

3.5.1 Phase 2 Version

For Phase 2, I modified my questionnaire for life histories further to include areas I found relevant to the direction that Phase 1 data was leading to in conceptualizing agency. This meant asking respondents specifically about their beliefs and values to gain an understanding of underlying motivations.[103] What I wanted to understand from these modified and additional questions was the extent to which women's decisions and actions, such as those related to income-use and own-labor supply, reflected relational interdependencies and moral values. Specifically, how much were their actions based on perceived approval/disapproval of others in their community? I presumed these actions and choices would have implications for how individual agency could be conceptualized, how women viewed and perceived their actions and roles, and what they pursued and refrained from. In assuming the influence of normative factors on women's decision-making, as well as their functionings, I sought to analyze the extent of and limits on women's agency.

Asking such questions also had implications for using Sen's CA, particularly regarding the social contexts or "structures of living together" that shape people's capabilities.[104] Given that normative factors such as social norms and cultural practices are features of "structures of living together", I sought to understand to some extent their relevance to women's individual agency and capabilities, through questions about women's own

[103] I based these motivation-related questions on Mackie et al's (2015) typology and methods for studying social norms.

[104] Deneulin (2008) describes 'structures of living together' as "structures which belong to a particular historical community, which provide the conditions for individual lives to flourish, and which are irreducible to interpersonal relations yet bound up with these" (p. 110).

beliefs and perceptions of others, and the significance of such features to women's agency.

3.6 Respondents

The participants in my study are the central contributors to this research, the sources from whom I have sought to develop a ground-up conceptualization of women's agency. The approach essentializes participatory research by aiming to bring as much of the participants' own "voices" to the forefront (Klugman et al., 2014). The main source of "voice" are low-skill women farmworkers; it is through their confided experiences and perceptions that I build my analyses of agency. The processes and concepts through which agency gets to be explained and understood follows an inductive reasoning approach that, as explained in section 3.1, draws from the primary data to identify and develop the ways that may explain how women farmworkers experience and perceive agency.

This section broadly demarcates the main categories of respondents, and provides some descriptive statistics on their composition. The first way I distinguish participants is as *on-farm* and *off-farm*.[106] I use this way of categorizing the respondents—using the classifiers on-farm and off-farm—often in addition to more commonly used categorizations (e.g., permanent, temporary, contract).

[106] I defined these terms in the introduction to this chapter.

3.6.1 On-Farm and Off-Farm Workers

My targeted respondents were women farmworkers. Gender identity (i.e. woman) is a key category given the focus of my study on women's agency, which allows me to analyze from these women's perceptions the gendered choices and dynamics of decision-making. The categorizations of on-farm and off-farm also serve a key methodological purpose by allowing me to more systematically highlight and analyze the varied experiences and perceptions of respondents in these categories.[107] While there are other categories and identities that I use additionally to further describe the respondents, some of which I discuss in chapter 6, I always introduce respondents by specifying their gender and farmworker category throughout the thesis. Table 2 (below) depicts the number of on-farm and off-farm respondents I interviewed by these two classifying categories: gender and site of residence.

Categorizing workers as temporary, casual, seasonal, migrant, and permanent was important but when used alone less effectively conveyed how these categories often intersect with each other and missed a key (and often historically-situated) dimension of their lives as farmworkers: as people who lived, or did not live, on the farms where they worked. I therefore chose to classify participants firstly by their site of residence as it was a more concise way to differentiate between the two broad groups of (farm)workers I interviewed. Following this, I then categorized respondents according to their labor category (e.g., permanent, contract).

[107] There was at least one outlier to this categorization. An interview with a male respondent who lived on Elderberry Farm pointed out that he often took a *temporary* job with a labor contractor to earn additional income when there was little work for him to do at Elderberry Farm. While he was an on-farm respondent, he was also a contract worker at a farm where he did not live.

Table 2 – Number of Respondents by Research Instrument and Site Categories

	On-farm	Off-farm	Total
FGDs (total women)	20	0	20
FGDs (total men)	10	10	20
Individual interviews (low-skilled women farmworkers)	10	56[108]	66
Individual interviews (low-skilled men farmworkers)	2	2	4
Total	42	68	110

The three tables below depict the distribution of respondents according to various categories. Note that, to avoid double counting, the total number of respondents for Tables 3, 4, and 5 each amount to 103 as they do not count 2 on-farm men and 5 on-farm women who participated in both an FGD and individual interviews. Table 3 shows that the majority of respondents (78) were between the ages of 18 and 40. Without double-counting, the total number of men participants were 22, and there were a total of 81 women.

[108] 10 from Mbekwini in Phase 1; 6 from Nkqubela; 40 from Mbekwini in Phase 2.

There was an equal number of South African and Zimbabwean participants (41 each) as shown in Table 4 below, followed by a smaller number of respondents from Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho, and Mozambique.

A key feature of the sample that Table 5 shows is that all on-farm participants were colored while all the off-farm participants were black. That the on-farm respondents are all colored and contract workers are black are key features of the agricultural labor forces in Western Cape (du Toit & Ally, 2003; Ewert & du Toit, 2005).[109] Additionally, if compared against 2018 population statistics provided by Statistics South Africa and Western Cape Government, this pattern is not surprising as it reflects patterns that government statistics and the existing literature show, whereby most on-farm labor is colored and most non-permanent (classed here as off-farm) labor is black (Community Survey 2016, 2018). However, this feature of my sample leads to some questions regarding my analyses and which I recognize below.

[109] As Ewert & du Toit (2005) note, "most permanent (on-site) workers have either grown up on the farm where they are employed or originate from the immediate vicinity…This 'internal labour market' is one reason, along with cultural and political factors, for the low presence of African permanent workers" (p. 328).

Table 3 – Number of Female and Male Respondents by Age Group

Age Group (years)	Female	Male
Age1 (18-30)	41	10
Age2 (31-40)	23	4
Age3 (41-50)	12	3
Age4 (51-60)	5	4
Age5 (61-70)	0	1

Table 4 – Number of Female and Male Respondents by Country of Birth

	South Africa	Zimbabwe	Malawi	Zambia	Mozambique	Lesotho
Female	31	39	3	1	3	4
Male	10	2	0	0	0	10

Table 5 – Number of On-Farm and Off-Farm Respondents by Race

	Black	Colored
On-farm	0	35
Off-farm	68	0

In South Africa, blacks and coloreds are two groups with specific, racialized socio-historical experiences (Plaut & Du Plessis, 2019). Where comparative analyses are made between the two main categories of farmworkers—on-site and off-site workers—one consideration

is that variations in the respondents' experiences may be attributable to their racial category in ways that I cannot (clearly) detangle. This implication raises a number of questions. For example, are all of the off-site respondents black because I, through the ways used for recruiting, did not find any colored off-site workers? Or, are the off-site respondents all black because this type of job—contract labor—is not preferred by workers who are colored (e.g., for reasons that may be geographical, social, historical, political, personal, cultural, etc.)? Are there racial preferences implicit in the hiring dynamics? These are considerations relevant to any study in/on South Africa, such as the kind undertaken for my thesis, as a country that is home to a wide and complex array of racial groups with often conflict-ridden histories with each other (Stevens et al., 2006). Examining how my respondents' experiences directly related to their racial categories is complicated by an array of other categories that intersect with race. In South Africa, Elirea Bornman notes that "societal structures are furthermore complicated by the fact that many social divides overlap and converge so that factors such as race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion and/or class have become interdependent and closely interwoven" (Bornman, 2011, pp. 729–730). One of the ways my thesis attempts to unpick some of these factors is in chapter 6's analysis of identities. 'Race' was not raised as a significant factor by any respondent in their interviews; it was only mentioned at the beginnings of interviews when every respondent was asked if they could identify their race. I do however make some comments on race in chapters 4 and 6, relying on secondary literature and KIIs to better situate the milieu and interrogate some responses. Another key limitation of my study therefore is that while I conducted research in one of the most racialized countries in the world, I make limited analyses that enriches our understanding

of race in the context of the farmworkers I interviewed since my data lacks more significant evidence to do so.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained the data collection and analysis methods used in my research. By discussing the various positionalities—of myself and that of my assistants—as well as the data collection methods and respondent identification methods, I tried to underscore certain factors that impacted what type, and quantity, of data could be collected as well as some of the main implications I could identify for my analyses. I presented brief overviews and statistics on my respondents, and reflected on key limitations around response bias and race.

The next chapter presents the broader research site: Western Cape. By discussing several contextual considerations that, it seeks to better situate the experiences and perceptions of the respondents.

Chapter 4. Western Cape: Key Contextual Considerations

Wanneer 'n mens op die plaas bly, is alles ver van 'n mens – "When you are staying on the farm, everything is far away from you".[110]

"At home, you feel it is different. Here, you are a *kwerekwere* [foreigner]".[111]

This chapter introduces some of the contexts within which my study and fieldwork occurred to foreground the broader setting within which farmworkers live, work, and experience various forms of agency. I begin with a historical overview of colonial agriculture in South Africa, illustrating certain aspects of the lives and experiences of farmworkers before, during, and after apartheid. I then highlight how certain structural issues—poverty and inequality, violence and insecurity, and migration and xenophobia—shape people's everyday experiences and perceptions. While also impacting the broader population, these issues and their interrelations show not only the precarious nature of people's lives in South(ern) Africa but importantly emphasize the multidimensional nature of the precarities that farmworkers experience. Recognizing these structural precarities are important to a socially-situated understanding of people's agency freedom because

[110] Sandy, on-site respondent – Poppy Rose Farm.
[111] Perpetual, off-site Zimbabwean respondent – Mbekwini.

they urge us to acknowledge factors that condition agency. I then discuss Western Cape's agricultural sector and some key dynamics about farmworkers' labor and lives in this province.[112] I end with a review of some key terms that I use throughout the thesis and how they are defined in the context of my study.

4.1 The South African State

The historical accounts in this chapter—of South Africa, Western Cape, the agricultural sector and labor, for example—are contextually important for understanding farm labor and (farm)workers' lives in the province today. If socio-relational elements of agency are to be noted and examined, as I argued in chapter 2, then enactments of agency cannot be detached from contextual factors in the analytical process. In this regard, my approach in this chapter is not to have a comprehensive summary of South African history, but rather to provide overviews—mainly from existing studies and some firsthand accounts from my respondents—of key socio-historical and empirical aspects that are relevant to a satisfactory understanding of various context(s) of my study. I start with the beginnings of an agricultural society and economy in the Cape, a region that includes Western Cape and historically encompassed parts of present-day southern and western South Africa.

4.1.1 Early European Settlers to Apartheid

South(ern) Africa has been inhabited for millennia by aboriginal *Khoisan* peoples (Kim et al., 2014). In the mid-seventeenth century, the first European settlers in the Cape arrived

[112] Western Cape, along with Kwazulu-Natal, lead in national agricultural production (Statistics South Africa, 2020).

through the Dutch East India Company to set up a restoration post for the company's ships. Gradually, a permanent settlement grew and, by the early 1700s, more colonial settlers ventured deeper into the land for exploration (De Wet, 1987), to trade with the indigenous nomadic Khoikhoi (Boonzaier, Malherbe, Berens, & Smith, 1996), and eventually established permanent farm settlements (Boonzaier et al., 1996; Clift, 1995; Randle, 2014). Clift (1995) notes that with loss of access to pastures and water, many Khoikhoi men could not maintain their herder lifestyles and took up seasonal work for settler farmers. Soon, the advent of new diseases, natural disasters, and violent conflicts between the colonial and indigenous populations led to the suppression of the latter and tied the Khoikhoi to farmers who could now exploit them as farm labor (Randle, 2014).

The European population of the Cape grew with Dutch, German, and French (i.e. Huguenots) settlers, the majority keen to build their wealth through ownership of property, specifically farm lands, and indigenous seasonal labor became insufficient for this burgeoning settler society (Randle, 2014). By 1700, every farmer household had acquired slaves—imported from other parts of Africa, India, and Indonesia—to form or supplement their farm labor force (Lucas, 2004; Shell, 1994). This labor force of varied geographic origins however was largely male, a sought-after feature as the intensive labor required for commercial agriculture in the Cape, with mainly wine farms at the time, was deemed most appropriate for male workers (Lucas, 2004; Shell, 1994). Still, the shortage of labor was serious enough that an indentureship system was developed and gave farmers the right to indenture the children that their male slaves had with indigenous women (Clift, 1995; Worden, 1985). When the Slave Abolition Act of 1833 made slavery illegal in the now British-ruled Cape colony, farmers were obligated to remunerate their

workers (Randle, 2014). The option that freed slaves had, after a four-year mandatory period of apprenticeship, to leave the farm and start a new life elsewhere was severely constrained by a lack of decent work alternatives and access to land (R. Ross, 1986; Scully, 1997). Consequently, the majority of the twenty-five thousand freed slaves remained in service and residence on the white-owned farms (Randle, 2014).

From 1861, capitalistic interests grew and agricultural production diversified within and beyond the Cape throughout the rest of what would be modern-day South Africa (R. Ross, 1986).[113] Afrikaner nationalism also intensified, building on notions of unity seeking to differentiate and elevate the white, Afrikaans-speaking community and justify the preferential treatment of whites to maintain their economic and ethnic superiority (Giliomee, 2003). Between 1948 and 1993, the ideology of 'apartheid'[114] held political and legal preeminence in white-ruled South Africa (Dubow, 2014).[115] Apartheid policies took many forms and covered various aspects of everyday life for non-whites, focusing mainly on the physical and institutionalized separation of races (Eigelaar-Meets, 2018). Segregation of the races was legally formalized in three main areas: education, labor, and

[113] Robert Ross (1986) specifies that this capitalist agriculture was based on the gradual accumulation of capital, power, and resources in the countryside by white commercial farmers, before diamonds and gold would create new capitalistic interests, whose success depended on a commercialization of labor that maintained a landless labor class who depended on "employment for food and on character for employment" (Worden, cited in R. Ross (1986), p. 85).

[114] 'Apartheid' translates as 'separateness' and 'apartness', and was nascent of Afrikaner nationalist views.

[115] While racial segregation had already been institutionalized since 1910, faults in this system meant that a new way of control was deemed necessary to maintain white-minority rule. Apartheid, therefore, "was not so much a departure as the entrenchment of an existing racial order" to ensure the physical and moral security of whites, to differentiate white-Christian civilization, and to better control the African labor upon which white capitalists depended (Dubow, 2014, pp. 12–13).

housing (Randle, 2014).[116] Segregation was reinforced, among other ways, through strict controls on the movements of non-whites.[117]

Apartheid formally ended with democratic elections in 1994.[119] White commercial agriculture, which had been built through significant state support in the form of credit, land, price-fixing, and subsidies, became subject to massive state de-investment and re-regulation along neoliberal lines (Greenberg, 2010; Marcus, 1989; Mather & Greenberg, 2003; Vink, 2004). The end of formal apartheid also had direct consequences on sociality and relationality for many non-whites, especially blacks and coloreds, by reshaping, commodifying, and enfeebling certain established ways that people interacted with, and depended on, each other (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001; Ferguson, 2013). Before I begin discussing the post-apartheid context though, I want to briefly highlight certain aspects of gendered relations on farms that occurred during the apartheid and pre-apartheid periods

[116] A number of laws were passed by parliament during apartheid which gave rise to, and were managed by, an expanding government bureaucracy (Dubow, 2014). Reiterating all these laws here is beyond the scope of this thesis, but a few notable ones are worth mentioning, for these cemented and facilitated a white supremacist rule: the Immorality Act (1950) made it illegal for individuals of different races to engage in sexual activity with each other, and law-breakers were severely punished; the Population Registration Act (1950) mandated every child be assigned a race category at birth; the Group Areas Act (1950) gave the government the right to designate residential and business sections of town to particular groups according to race, such as blacks, coloreds, and Indians; the Natives Act (1952) required all Africans to carry their *dompas*, identification document which they were required to present when asked by authorities.

[117] In particular, the movement of blacks to urban areas of the Cape was regulated through rigorous migration controls and often accompanied the resettlement, often under legal pressure, of urban blacks into Bantustans, or black homelands (Eigelaar-Meets, 2018). Such regulatory measures in turn influenced several interrelated aspects in the everyday lives of non-whites, including residential and migration patterns, labor practices, and social identities and relations. I consider these aspects in the context of farmworkers and my respondents later in this chapter.

[119] After decades of activism, economic pressures from the global community, and several years of negotiations between the white government (last under F.W. de Klerk) and the African National Congress (ANC), the main group to represent and fight for an equal and democratic South Africa, the institutionalized racial ideology of apartheid was brought to an end.

that nonetheless remain key to understanding many of the gendered dynamics that emerged from the interviews with farmwomen.

4.1.1.2 The Historical Context of Gendered Relations in Western Cape's Agrarian Labor

Notions about the agricultural laborer family had implications for gender relations both during and after the 1830s emancipation, apartheid, and post-apartheid periods. The abuse faced by women living and working on farms especially reflect the socially-defined roles they occupied during various periods. Pamela Scully (1997) notes that during slavery, enslaved women faced flogging and many were systematically raped by their owners as a means of increasing the farm workforce. The racial dynamic of white supremacy meant that those children born of rape inherited the status of the slave mother rather than the white father. After emancipation, male slaves who had previously been denied the right to a married family life were now given sole power over their wives or partners and their shared children (Scully, 1997). While the white farmer maintained control over the women farm dwellers' labor, their legal status as minors under the control of their husbands, partners, or fathers further "positioned [these] women as vulnerable to sexual violence both within the family and from white former slave-holders" (Eriksson, 2018, p. 8).

Meanwhile, farmers intensified the organization of their labor force around the notion of the 'farm as family', with the farmer held as the father figure who determined how his workers could live and work (du Toit, 1993; Waldman, 1996). This extended the farmers' claims over their male workers' labor as well as the labor of these workers' partners and children (Scully, 1997). Such social relations and mechanisms of control that the farmer (i.e. white man) has historically had over the labor and lives of his 'farm family'—the men,

women, and children who worked and/or lived on the farm—has come to be known as paternalism (du Toit, 1993; Van Onselen, 1992). This discourse of control meant that while the 'farm family' structure was mired in deeply unequal racialized and gendered relations of power between the farmer and his workers, it was also bound together by a sense of shared, albeit highly unequal, prosperity (du Toit, 1993).

Commercial farms existed as sites of both economic production and social reproduction (Kheswa, 2015), a 'domestic government' of sorts (Rutherford, 2001) where workers 'belonged' to their farm families and over whom the farm owner maintained discipline like a father over his children (Kritzinger & Vorster, 1996).[120] The paternalistic and gendered labor dynamics, many of which have persisted in the post-apartheid years, also intersected with the racial order institutionalized by apartheid. Colored men were given preference for permanent roles and were usually sourced from an "internal labour market" comprising of networks of families, friends, and neighbors (Ewert and du Toit, 2005, p. 328). These farms were a source of both employment and housing, with the latter being granted to permanent male workers only. This practice of 'tied housing', as accommodation on a farm was tied to one being a permanent worker and male, presupposed that only a man could be the household head. It relegated women as secondary people "dependent on men for access to both an income and a place to live" (Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Hall et al., 2001, p. 5). The 'farm as family' notion not only influenced labor relations between white farmers and their workers but it also shaped gender relations directly. It established that only women who were married or partnered

[120] The practices described in this paragraph are reminiscent of not only the apartheid era but have remained persisting legacies on many farms in the years after democratization (Bernstein, 1998; Eriksson, 2018; Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Hall, Kleinbooi, & Mvambo, 2001; Kritzinger & Vorster, 1996).

with a male permanent worker could stay on farms, since women received neither permanent roles nor housing contracts. Less directly but no less forcefully, this practice ensured women's constant subservience to the men farmworkers in return for their housing security, access to work on farms, and their children's upkeep. Many of these practices—such as tied housing, permanent roles given to men only (or mostly), women being financially dependent on their male partners—and the accompanying socially constructed roles that women living on farms came to occupy endure till this day in numerous ways, as numerous anecdotes in the thesis will confirm.

In the next section, I begin to discuss the post-apartheid era to set the current context of my study.

4.1.2 Post-Apartheid

Post-apartheid South Africa has brought democratic rights and astonishing political progress but mixed—or to some, disappointing—results in the economy (Bhorat et al., 2020; Rodrik, 2008). Historical legacies of the apartheid regime, including high unemployment, massive inequality, and multidimensional poverty, remain chronic (World Bank, 2018). The social and economic capabilities of the masses, which include farmworkers, remain limited. The right to vote[122] and mingle among different races has not accompanied, or led to, more and better economic opportunities, decent living options, better health and access to services, and improved standards of living for the

[122] I should note that the right to vote does not equate to the ability to vote. In South Africa (as in most other countries), the ability to vote is contingent upon individuals being registered in a home ward. This can problematic for those who do not have secure forms of tenure, living on communal land, or who have been evicted (Ballard, 2005).

millions who were poor and remain poor across generations. For Western Cape in particular, Fiona Ross (2015) aptly points out one of the key problems with defining a 'post-apartheid' era: one of the legacies of the Group Areas Act of 1950 is that Cape Town, the provincial capital, remains one of South Africa's most racially segregated cities. For many therefore, some experiences of apartheid or 'separateness' undeniably remain in their very physical surroundings. For others like Lisbet, a fifty-four-year-old on-site respondent from Poppy Rose Farm, some things became worse after apartheid. As she told me:

> The years of apartheid seem better than now because the *oubaas* [boss] used to understand us and help us. Let me make example, we wanted a loan to buy a car, and the [former] farmer took out a loan and used the name of the farm to pay for the car and gave us a facility to pay him. He deducted a certain amount from our salary. That used to happen in apartheid. Now those things have fallen away.

Lisbet's account seems to carry a nostalgy for the 'farm family' paradigm, where in a society divided by race, paternalistic practices that not only served to justify and mediate inequality and violence also bore kindly acts of the farmer (read, father) to his workers (read, children) (Bradford, 1987; du Toit, 1993; Van Onselen, 1992). It also highlights skepticism about new modes of relationality that diverge from known and accepted 'relations of dependence' (Ferguson, 2013). Others like Sandy, a fifty-nine-year-old former farmworker from Flora Farm, have conflicting emotions about the past and present:

> We come from the apartheid era when we had to fight for things. In those days, the white farmer used to have power over workers. For example, the police used to come out and assault people and not be asked about it. But now these don't happen anymore. But even now the fight continues. What is happening is there's a lot of inequality. We have to fight to just get a piece of bread on the table while the white farmers have everything. They eat themselves to death.

Sandy highlights several issues. She remembers the inequality of the past which was enforced and maintained through white violence and unaccountability. While she acknowledges that this aspect of the past is gone, she underscores new issues which still require her to fight for survival, notably the wide inequalities in certain basic needs like food that remain between the farmers and farmworkers. As the accounts of other respondents in this thesis will show, individuals act within structures of constraint that first limit their agency freedom—the ability to pursue valued functionings—and consequently their agency achievement. But limits to agency freedom do not have to signify an absence of agency, for the empirical chapters demonstrate how individuals enact purposeful agency by pursuing what is meaningful to them, even within certain structures of constraint.

The end of apartheid was supposed to bring social, economic, and political transformation for non-whites in South Africa. For some like Lisbet however, it also brought an end to known, and sometimes accepted, modes of relationality. The democratic transition did not support the kind of social and economic transformations many had hoped for themselves and their offspring, as Sandy tells us. This, accompanied by massive structural inequalities and low job opportunities, has magnified what Ferguson (2013) called a state of “in-dependence” on the state and anyone with the ability to provide another with a social link (p. 230).

4.2 Structural Considerations

Recall that *opportunity structure* in chapter 2 included the formal and informal institutions and contexts—political, social, economic—within which people pursue their choices. The factors discussed in this section are classed as structural because of how they are shaped by, and/or consist of, certain aspects of the opportunity structure. Consider poverty: it represents, among other factors, a major aspect of the economic situation of people who are poor. In addition, poverty can be created and/or exacerbated by certain (other) aspects of the opportunity structure. For example, there may be social norms that prevent women from pursuing certain jobs, thereby constricting the opportunities that poor women have and need to attenuate their poverty. Some institutional arrangements prevent these women from seeking such work in the first place. Certain structural factors influence people's capabilities and agency because of how they diminish people's freedoms (Alkire, 2007; Frediani, 2010; Sen & Drèze, 1995). My discussion in this section of certain structural factors presents them as constitutive of and/or influenced by this opportunity structure, with my main aim here being to highlight, rather than analyze, those factors in the respondents' contextual backgrounds that influence their agency freedom and achievements.

4.2.1 Poverty

About 18.9 percent of the population of nearly 60 million people in South Africa live below the poverty line, on less than $2 a day (World Bank, 2020). When using the upper-bound poverty line, 40 percent of the national population, and 25 percent of those in Western

Cape province, are poor.[123] The country's performance across socioeconomic indicators is also dismal, with low life expectancy, low educational completion, and high income inequality. Multidimensional poverty is further compounded by the large gap between the country's poorest and richest. With the national Gini coefficient hovering around 63, South Africa remains one of the most unequal countries in the world (World Population Review, 2021). Especially for black South Africans, inequality accompanies chronic poverty in addition to low intergenerational mobility, a small middle-class, high unemployment, high HIV-infection rates, and limited skills development (World Bank, 2018). Inequality between and within racial groups shows that race also intersects with other identities, including class and gender (Francis & Webster, 2019b). There were more female-headed households that were poor than male-headed households (51 percent to 31 percent, respectively), while the racial category with the most poor households were headed by blacks (47 percent) (World Bank, 2018, p. 13).[124]

Farmworkers have long been among the poorest members of society in South Africa (Andrews, 2014; Claasen & Lemke, 2019; Hall et al., 2013). Not only do farmworkers earn among the lowest wages, most also live in poverty and regularly experience hunger seasons, periods during which low (or lack of) employment increases food insecurity (Devereux & Tavener-Smith, 2019). While Western Cape boasts the second-lowest poverty rate in the country after Gauteng (World Bank, 2018, p. 16), farmworkers in the province remain marginalized, often living in hard-to-reach areas and lack convenient

[123] In 2018, the upper bound poverty line in rand values was 1183 per person per month (Western Cape Government Provincial Treasury, 2018, p. 111).
[124] Significant wealth disparities in South Africa do not show progress either. Anna Orthofer used novel data to find strong evidence showing 90 percent of wealth is owned by 10 percent of the population, while 50 percent of the population control none of the wealth (Orthofer, 2016).

access to critical basic services (Claasen & Lemke, 2019; WFP, 2020). This marginality, added to centuries of abuse on commercial farms, has exposed farmworkers to dire living and working conditions and regular labor rights violations (Devereux, 2020). Several of these conditions are mentioned in the responses presented in this thesis and serve to highlight that the analysis of subjective agency, the focus of this project, precedes from an acknowledgment that this agency is conditioned by structures of constraint within farmworkers' communities where poverty and its accompanying symptoms are the norm.

4.2.2 Violence and Insecurity

There are different types of violence, and here the focus is on violent crime and structural violence, both of which color the living experiences of people in South Africa. With respect to violent crime, South Africa is one of the most violent countries in the world. Between 2018-2019, over 53, 000 murders were recorded while there were nearly 2.2 million housebreakings, nearly 600, 000 reports of assault on individuals, and 98, 000 cases of sexual assault including rape (Statistics South Africa, 2019a, pp. 12, 16). South Africa's long histories of subjugation and land dispossession also birthed forms of insecurity that often matured rather invisibly, unseen until they became too big to ignore. These forms of insecurity filter through what Rob Nixon called processes of 'slow violence'.[127]

[127] Nixon describes slow violence as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all…that is neither spectacular or instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales" (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). Randle (2014) posits that one of the consequences of 'slow violence' is that on white commercial farms in Dwars River Valley, a commercial farming area of Western Cape, there were no groups who assumed an indigenous identity. However, as my fieldwork with on-farm workers showed, the respondents from three (out of five) farms identified as 'Khoisan', an indigenous category.

One form of 'slow violence' that permeates and continues to shape (and be shaped by) exploitative labor relations is insecurity, or the many ways that people feel uncertain about their lives and actions. As Randle (2014) explains, "the space, bodies, labour and resources of the indigenous inhabitants, slaves and farm workers of this valley, were violently dispossessed over a period of 350 years" (p. 30). An understanding of social, labor, and economic relations in South Africa therefore cannot ignore violence and forms of insecurity it breeds and/or emerges from. While historical perspectives such as those relaying the paternalistic practices on commercial farms during colonial, apartheid, and post-apartheid years openly present the brutalities that farmworkers experienced at the hands of white patriarchs and the police, the slow violence that started long ago persists today in insecure livelihoods, precarious lives, and the dearth of dependable social relations.[128]

Since it is beyond the scope of this chapter and thesis to discuss violence in more extensive ways, I suggest here only some of the facets of violence to facilitate a more situationally-grounded understanding of the respondents' experiences and perceptions. Commercial farms, as workplaces, maintain old and new forms of racialized hierarchies while the deteriorating 'farm family' structure, casualization of labor, low educational achievement, limited access to basic services, and increased corporatization of farms reveal new and

[128] Van Onselen (1992) suggests, it is "when paternalistic relationships are being rapidly eroded or restructured, that the potential for individual or collective violence is at its most pronounced" (p. 155). At no time was the likelihood of collective violence more evident in the post-liberation era than during the Marikana crisis in 2012. The Marikana crisis (or massacre, as it is often described) occurred in 2012 when mineworkers at Marikana (in North West province) staged a strike demanding a wage increase, and they were subsequently assaulted with open fire by the South African Police Services. It was accompanied by a number of strikes by farmworkers across Western Cape districts who also demanded wage increases (Webb, 2017).While Marikana was an overt display of violence, it also underscored the insecurities that continue to define labor regimes and relations for the low-skilled or unskilled across South Africa (Bolt & Rajak, 2016).

enduring vulnerabilities for farmworkers.[130] These vulnerabilities lay bare myriad forms of structural violence[131] that today's un(der)employed and disenfranchised workers (continue to) experience. Structural, or indirect, violence limits a person's (or group's) *agency freedom* by restricting one's ability to pursue what one values and/or has reason to value because one is unable or constrained in some significant way/s from imagining and/or pursuing some valued alternative/s. Several forms of structural violence—such as poverty, rising debt, dependence on alcohol, local and domestic violence—are mentioned by the respondents in the thesis and are key facets of farmworkers' lives. These structures of violence limit people's capabilities and agency, the set of valued functionings they can realistically claim and act upon, precisely through the ways that they marginalize and discriminate against certain individuals and groups like farmworkers.

Recognizing the embeddedness and impact of structural violence in people's lives is also at the heart of the ethically individualist approach of Sen's CA (see section 2.3). It means that the CA, by recognizing the moral rights of individuals, is not blind to the institutions, social arrangements, and relations that are unjust and themselves lead to further injustices and inequalities, but it rather openly acknowledges these are factors and processes that can limit individuals' agency and capabilities. For instance, food insecurity

[130] These trends have been noted in a number of studies (Bolt & Rajak, 2016; Claasen & Lemke, 2019; du Toit & Ally, 2003; Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Hall et al., 2013; Herman, 2014; Kritzinger, Barrientos, & Rossouw, 2004; Visser, 2016; WFP, 2020).

[131] *Structural violence*, a term coined by Johan Galtung, refers to structures and institutions—economic, political, social, etc.—which prevent individuals and/or collectives from achieving their full potential (Galtung, 1969). Specifically, it "refers to preventable harm or damage to persons (and by extension to things) where there is no actor committing the violence or where it is not practical to search for the actor(s); such violence emerges from the unequal distribution of power and resources or, in other words, is said to be built into the structure(s)" (Weigert, 2008, p. 2004). These structures, which can range from patriarchy, apartheid, and class to poverty and identify-based discrimination "shape how individuals and groups interact within a social system" (Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2016, p. 47).

because of poverty is commonly experienced by farmworkers, but within farmworker communities the experiences of individuals vary with some persons being more/less food insecure than others (Devereux & Tavener-Smith, 2019). From an ethically individualist stance, one contends that "the poor do not have to get actually poorer for the distribution system to be thoroughly unjust" (Sen et al., 2003, p. 327). The ethical "issue" here, as Sen notes, "is the relative sharing of gains [or losses]" that is unequal, even if there is a claim of some collective gain or loss (Sen et al., 2003, p. 327). Structural violence refers to "these common forms of lived oppression" that target and affect specific "classes of people" for whom their experiences of "social suffering" is nonetheless also personal (Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2016, p. 47). A recognition of structural violence is compatible with the ethically individualist approach of the CA, where the moral unit of concern is ultimately the individual. My analysis of individual agency does not seek to rebuff these structural limits on farmworkers but rather investigates, within an ethically individualist stance, what the perceptions and experiences of the individuals interviewed can reveal about their individual agency and intentionality even within such structures of constraint.

Another structural aspect I want to highlight here (and which will also become clearer in several vignettes elsewhere in the thesis) is that women farmworkers are especially susceptible to gender-based violence (GBV), which in their case also intersects with other forms of structural violence such as poverty, housing and labor insecurity, alcohol misuse and dependence, and limited knowledge and/or access to support and services outside one's immediate communities (Louw, 2022; Pekeur, 2022; WFP, 2020). In particular, South Africa has a high rate of intimate partner violence (IPV), a type of GBV where violence is perpetrated by one partner over another (usually a man over a woman). Studies indicate

that 20 to 50 percent of South African women report experiencing IPV at some point in their lives (Abrahams et al., 2009; Mpondo, Ruiter, van den Borne, & Reddy, 2019; Sere, Roman, & Ruiter, 2021). Localized research conducted by Women on Farms Project (WFP), an NGO seeking to address the special needs of women living and working on commercial farms in Western Cape, suggests that GBV is rampant among farmworkers (WFP, 2020) and between 50 – 70 percent of farmwomen (have) experience(d) some form of GBV (Louw, 2022).[132] In particular, women farmworkers experience GBV both at home and at their workplaces. For on-farm women, whose homes and workplaces are synonymous, violence from the farm management, such as intimidation and abusive language, is often replicated by these women's male partners unto them in their homes (WFP, 2020).

Domestic and sexual violence within farmworker communities are often also symptomatic of alcohol misuse (London, 1999). Rural Western Cape has high levels of alcohol use and dependence by both men and women, a situation deeply rooted in its racialized history (Amanuel, Morojele, & London, 2018). Alcohol historically played a crucial role in shaping complex and rooted labor and social relations on farms. Commercial farms in Western Cape became infamous for using alcohol to pay workers in an arrangement known at the *dop* system.[135] Farmers first used alcohol to attract indigenous people, and coloreds, to

[132] The report by WFP identified that GBV on farms is driven by five key factors: 1) the gendered division of labor, with women typically holding seasonal rather than permanent employment while bearing the responsibility for their children; 2) control over household income and spending; 3) tenure rights, with women usually depending on male partners for housing as on-farm housing remains exclusive to male permanent workers on most farms; 4) alcohol and drugs, specially due to alcohol dependency that has been historically linked to the *dop* system; and farmworkers' perceived or experienced unresponsiveness of the justice system (WFP, 2020).

[135] The *dop* systems refers to payment in *tots*—measures of wine—that many farmers before and during the apartheid years used to give their male laborers. *Tots* were usually spaced throughout the working day, as part of workers' compensation. In South Africa, the *dop* system was most common from 1658-1894, although it continued well into the 1900s (Williams, 2016).

work on farms and subsequently used alcohol—and workers' addiction to it—to control their laborers and keep them in a "dazed state" (Lilja, 2019, p. 42; Randle, 2014). Despite negative implications for alcohol abuse—from direct effects on the health of its abusers and their families[136] to its role leading to cognitive difficulties, long-term learning impairments, and susceptibility to violent behaviors—alcohol use also became a key cultural element of the social fabric of farm life for workers (London, 1999). Alcohol dependence has been inextricably enmeshed with the deep poverty and insecurity that continues to characterize farm dwellers' lives, in addition to the range of physical and social consequences it has had on farm dwellers (Amanuel et al., 2018; London, 1999; Walls et al., 2020).

4.2.3 Migration and Xenophobia

Instances of violence are also telling of a wider malaise between two groups that constitute farmworkers: South Africans (mostly on-farm workers) and foreign migrants (mostly off-farm workers). Migration[137] to South Africa is not a new phenomenon; the demand for labor on South African mines and farms since apartheid—coupled with political instability, structural issues, and conflicts in neighboring countries—have long led to the inflow of black Africans seeking refuge and opportunity in South Africa (HRW, 2020; Landau & Segatti, 2009; Ulicki & Crush, 2007; Visser & Ferrer, 2015). However, economic woes, government failures, and poor living conditions and opportunities for South

[136] South Africa has one of the highest rates of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, a condition with mental and/or physical impairments which occurs to the children of women who consume large amounts of alcohol during pregnancy (Walls et al., 2020).

[137] Migration, in the context of this thesis, refers to migration of unskilled and low-skilled people largely from other neighboring African countries crossing via land borders to South Africa. It does not refer to migration primarily for business, education (i.e. university), and high-skilled professions.

Africans have led many, including the government, to scapegoat migrants for these dire circumstances which have also become key ingredients to xenophobia against migrants (Hiropoulos, 2020). Consequently, foreigners (especially black and Asian migrants) have been blamed, attacked, and demonized for South African blacks' continued material deprivations and joblessness (HRW, 2020; Landau, 2011). In the wider historical-political consciousness of some South African blacks, Landau (2011) points out that foreigners or 'outsiders' have also be construed as threats standing in the way of post-apartheid justice, dignity, and retribution for 'insiders' or local blacks. The context is one of frustrated expectations on all sides. Most of the migrants who come to South Africa with the expectation of working and meeting their survival needs unintentionally agitate the anger and retribution of locals who blame foreigners for their own deprivations.

Stories about migrant farmworkers being targets of xenophobic attacks abound (Hagensen & Jager, 2016; HRW, 2020; Ngcamu & Mantzaris, 2021; Visser & Ferrer, 2015). Feelings of being unwanted and insecure was prevalent among the off-site respondents who were migrants.[138] Pretty, an off-site respondent and legal migrant from Zimbabwe, recounts she does not feel like she is treated well in Mbekwini, saying "they treat us not right. They call us the names. Only they [South Africans] call us *amakwerekwere* [foreigner]." Another off-site respondent, who is illegal in South Africa, adds that she does not feel she belongs here because "people just talk, 'these are foreigners'. So it's different, we all know that, we all Zimbabweans know that."[139]

[138] Feelings of insecurity were common among migrants in my sample regardless of their legal status (e.g. legal or illegal foreign migrants) and/or their nationality (foreign or South African). This does not imply that the levels of insecurity experienced by individuals were the same; these levels likely vary.
[139] Off-site respondent – June 8, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.

For one Zimbabwean off-farm worker living in Mbekwini, her recent move to a different section of the settlement changed her opinion of the locality. While she previously lived in a section of Silvertown, which she described as "dangerous", she now lives in Rooimadalies. Here, she says, "no one shout at you. My community is less robberies. Less of *skollies* [thieves]. They love foreigners." Her experience tells us that some sections of the informal settlements where off-site respondents lived seemed to be more welcoming and safe than others. Nonetheless, feelings of insecurity abound, even among South African migrants. Nyembesi is thirty-seven and a contract worker living in Mbekwini. She is originally from the location of Thulamahashe in Mpumalanga and moved to Mbekwini in 2015 with her husband in search of work. "We are scared everywhere here," she says, "we don't walk freely because *skollies* or someone can attack at any time." While Nyembesi and her husband consider themselves temporary migrants, she also reminds us that migration is motivated by different needs. "I work [to buy] material, then I can build my house next to my grandmother's house," she says, determined to accomplish what she moved for, "then I will go back." She is not the only one who wants to go back; most of the off-site respondents I interviewed expressed the desire to return to their 'home(country)' as that was where they felt they belonged.

4.3 Western Cape Agricultural Sector

Western Cape is among the top three (of nine) provinces in South Africa by population size (about 6.2 million) and provincial GDP (over 400 billion Rands).[140] Most of its

[140] Data approximates from Community Survey (2016, 2018) and Statistics South Africa (2019b)

population define themselves as colored (47.5 percent), followed by 35.7 percent black/African, and 16 percent white (Community Survey 2016, 2018). The commercial agricultural industry[141] in Western Cape boasted 64.4 billion Rands in total income in 2017[142], substantially higher than the 18.6 billion Rands earned by the industry in 2007 (Statistics South Africa 2020, p. 3). The province has most of South Africa's large deciduous fruit farms such as apples, pears, and peaches while grapes are the most planted crops.[143] Over 70 percent of the grapes used in winemaking, largely for export, are grown in the lush valleys of the Cape Winelands district alone (Statistics South Africa, 2020, p. 12).[144] Agriculture however is no longer a major contributor to South Africa's national economy, now propelled by the financial, manufacturing, and services sectors. And while agriculture's nominal share of the national GDP is only about 1.1 percent, the industry accounts for 5.1 percent of the national employment.[145] In a country where unemployment hovers between 20 to 30 percent, the agricultural sector is still a main source of income and employment for many people.

4.3.1 Key Labor Statistics

Census data on agriculture in Western Cape shows that 186,998 individuals were employed in commercial agriculture in June 2018.[146] This number has been steadily

[141] It includes horticulture, animal husbandry, and mixed farming.
[142] This number includes gross agriculture, agricultural manufacturing, and wholesale.
[143] There was however a fall in production between 2007 and 2017 of table grapes (16.7 percent decrease) and wine grapes (31.5 percent decrease) (Statistics South Africa, 2020, p. 12).
[144] Wine was South Africa's third-largest export commodity, preceded only by minerals and cars. In 2016, South Africa ranked 8th globally in global wine production by volume (Italian Wine Central 2017; Karlsson 2016).
[145] Statistics South Africa (2019). The Transport sector for example contributes to about 10 percent of the nominal share of the national GDP, and accounts for about 10 percent of total employment; employment here is commensurate with the sector's share of national GDP.
[146] Statistics South Africa (2020, p. 3)

decreasing.[147] Most of these workers, about 145,991, were employed in horticulture, which includes the farming of fruits and wine grapes, and mixed farming, including plants and animal husbandry (Statistics South Africa, 2020).[148] Large commercial farms, with annual incomes above 22.5 million Rands, represented only 8 percent of all farms in the province yet employed 53 percent of all workers in agriculture while accounting for 65 percent of total income (Statistics South Africa, 2020, p. 4).[149] There were about 110,159 full-time employees (96,158 are ordinary farmworkers; 6,013 are foremen/supervisors; 3,881 are farm managers) and 76,838 part-time and seasonal employees.[150] Of the full-time employees who were ordinary farmworkers, only 31,512 were women.[151] Of the part-time and seasonal employees, 38,638 were women, nearly equal to the 38,199 men.[152]

4.3.2 Post-Apartheid Changes or Continuities?

The stories frequently written about agricultural laborers on large white-owned commercial farms in Western Cape often highlight low wages, poor working conditions, and sometimes abuse (Bek & McEwan, 2007; Eriksson, 2017, 2018; HRW, 2011). On-farm farmworkers have historically been categorized as *permanent* or *seasonal*. Permanent workers work year round and have historically been given permission to live with their families on the farms, while seasonal workers only work during certain periods when

[147] It decreased by 8.6 percent from the previous census. In February 2007, the number of people employed in commercial agriculture in Western Cape was 204,513 (Statistics South Africa, 2020).
[148] 20,470 people worked in the sole farming of animals (Statistics South Africa, 2020, p. 3).
[149] The other 47 percent of employees were split between 2,542 large- and medium-sized farms, which accounted for about 31 percent of total income, and 2,895 micro farms, accounting for 3.8 percent of total income (Statistics South Africa, 2020, p. 4).
[150] Statistics South Africa (2020, pp. 28–29)
[151] Statistics South Africa (2020, p. 31)
[152] Statistics South Africa (2020, p. 33)

required (Andrew, 2014; du Toit, 1993; Ewert & du Toit, 2005). As the previous section showed, the majority of permanent workers are (still) men while women (still) tend to dominate the seasonal workforce where job security and labor rights are even more deplorable (Andrews, 2014; Hall et al., 2013). There is a gendered view of the labor categories on farms, consistent with historical evidence. Women's non-permanent wage labor roles on farms were socially preferred and reserved by most farmers who wanted a pool of workers to readily source from as and when needed, simultaneously prioritizing women's domesticated roles in their own homes (Randle, 2014; Scully, 1997). Women workers were viewed as a cheap and flexible workforce (Visser, 2016). Rutherford's (2011) analysis of the situation of farm laborers in Limpopo province's fruit farms indicates this continued gendered conceptualization of the 'farmworker', whereby farmers still viewed "men as the main farm workers" (216).

On-farm women generally still earn less than men, face sexual exploitation, and often live in abusive relationships so that they can have some housing security as housing contracts are made in men's names (Addison, 2013; Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Hall, 2003; Hall et al., 2001, 2013; Visser, 2016). On large farms in Western Cape with significant on-farm labor, most of the permanent workers and their immediate families are provided with housing on the farms while most contract workers—often migrants from other provinces or neighboring countries—are residents of nearby settlements, transported by labor brokers to the farm(s) when there is work (du Toit & Ally, 2003; Hall et al., 2013; Visser, 2016).

Many features of the Western Cape's agricultural labor force are similar to agricultural wage labor practices in other parts of the world, where the seasonality of agricultural

cultivation also intersects with issues such as race, nationality, and gender (Barrientos, Gereffi, & Rossi, 2011; Kritzinger, Barrientos, & Rossouw, 2004). A distinguishing point is that many agricultural laborers on Western Cape farms have worked there for generations under the apartheid regime, some being descendants of those who worked on farms since colonial times, having been brought up to normalize the farmer's authority over who works and lives on the farms (Ewert & du Toit, 2005). Regionally, Zimbabwe and Namibia resemble South Africa through a shared settler-colonial history that led to similar state approaches to rural farm labor on large plantations in both the pre-independence and post-independence eras (Werner et al 2001; Alexander 2006).[153] While South Africa enacted tenure-protection laws for agricultural laborers relatively sooner after democratization than neighboring Zimbabwe and Namibia, these policies and other agricultural sector reforms[154] have had varied effects, from increased integration with global markets to deepening inequalities within local value chains (Bernstein, 2013). Consequently, there has been increasingly reduced reliance on permanent on-farm labor and increased labor externalization, or the use of contract workers (Hall et al 2013; Rutherford and Addison 2007).

[153] For instance, labor conditions on large white-owned commercial farms in South Africa were structurally similar to those in Zimbabwe and Namibia, and these similarities persisted even after apartheid (Bernstein, 1998). Zimbabwe and Namibia have been plagued by inefficient land-reform programs where farmworkers have remained marginalized with limited possibility of claiming redistributed land (Hall et al., 2013; Rutherford, 2001).

[154] Some of these include: trade liberalization, agricultural sector deregulation such as the discontinuation of price-fixing and farmer subsidies, and labor laws increasing wages (Greenberg, 2010; Le Roux, 2002; Marcus, 1989).

4.3.2.2 Collective Organizing

The subject of collective organization—such as through unions, collective action movements, and civil society organizations—requires some acknowledgement, although it is not examined within the scope of this research. Collective organizing has grown to be one of the essential democratic dynamics affecting labor and life for farmworkers in Western Cape (du Toit, 1993; White, 2010). Unions and civil society organization play a significant role in organizing people and narratives in the agricultural sector. While participation in a labor union usually requires one to pay membership dues, the significance of being/becoming a union member should not be underestimated or overlooked (Bramble & Barchiesi, 2018). Accounts from some respondents describe how it was the union that was guiding them on matters of eviction or compensation, including through the provision of legal representation. Groups like WFP, Sikhula Sonke (now defunct), and TCOE have done major grassroots organizing work, documenting, training, advising, and supporting women farmworkers. More broadly, collective action movements have been playing a crucial role in organizing workers' resistance such as through protests and strikes (Addison, 2019; Orleck, 2018; Pekeur, 2022). Collective organizing also performs another service: to construct and/or build upon narratives of respect, dignity, decent living and labor conditions, and recognition for farmworkers, key to a burgeoning democracy like South Africa (Addison, 2019; Eriksson, 2017; Louw et al., 2021; White, 2010).

4.4 Farm Labor and Life in Western Cape: Some Key Dynamics

Apartheid-era restrictions influenced the nature and direction of various shifts within the country. For example, the demographic composition of the Western Cape since the apartheid years maintained more coloreds than blacks within the population; this was a politically-engineered result, and persisting legacy, of different forms of institutionalized control and laws restricting people's rights and movements, such as the Pass Laws and the Colored Labor Preference policy (Goldin, 1984). Founded upon racial hierarchy, the apartheid system was maintained through discriminations in areas—such as residential rights, freedom of movement, and employment—that impacted the everyday lives of people (Dubow, 2014). Below, I discuss some of the experiences of farmworkers in Western Cape today, drawing on the existing literature and my own fieldwork, with respect to three key dynamics. While not exhaustive, they pertain to farmworkers': labor relations, mobility and residential patterns, and social relations. I do not aim to be comprehensive in my descriptions but rather to provide a view of key shifts that these dynamics suggest in the sector and various circumstances within/through which farmworkers operate.

4.4.1 Labor Dynamics

Labor relations and dynamics on most large commercial farms today still bear relics of apartheid and colonial-era practices, particularly in its paternalistic tendencies. In addition to the sets of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that came to represent the unequal relations of power defined through paternalism (du Toit, 1993), Van Onselen (1992) adds that paternalism was also an ideology "to create, interpret, legitimize, and maintain order"

by establishing the rightful strength of the white minority and bending their workers into dutiful obedience (p. 128). Contemporary researchers have identified new dynamics of paternalistic behaviors, or "neo-paternalism", on farms in the post-apartheid era, disguised as "upliftment" (Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Herman, 2014). These are "neo-liberal" styles of management on farms that maintain authoritarian and racially hierarchical practices (Ewert & du Toit, 2005, p. 318), and a "mediated paternalism" that creates vertical hierarchies of power within workforces—within and between racial groups—on the farm (Bolt, 2015, p. 160). Paternalism has proven highly malleable as a discourse of control based on hierarchies of power within labor relations on South African commercial farms. I present my respondents' labor context within this labor-organizing discourse which encompasses a medley of dynamic practices managing labor and labor relations. Below, I describe two aspects of this systematization. First, I briefly highlight three employment distinctions that came to classify my respondents' wage work: permanent, temporary, and contract labor (I elaborate on these categories of labor through the narratives in section 6.2.1). Second, I present the options that farmworkers have for receiving their wages.

Farmworkers can be broadly sorted under three main labor categories. Permanent farmworkers are those who work full-time throughout the year, usually with a work contract, and generally live on the farm where they are employed. Among my respondents, the majority of those with permanent status fit this description while a few

workers[156] described slightly altered versions. Temporary workers are those who do not work full-time all year round but are rather hired as and when needed by the farms. Often, this category of workers are called 'seasonal workers' because of the higher demands for farmworkers during particular agricultural seasons. Temporary workers therefore may work in full-time capacity during periods of high labor demand (see chapter 6 for examples of this).[157]

Contract workers have generally been described as those who work for labor contractors or brokers (du Toit & Ally, 2003; Hall et al., 2017; Visser, 2016). The permanency status of these workers varies. Among my respondents who worked for contractors, there were different groups: some only worked during periods of high labor demand; some worked for specific objectives, such as those who needed to supplement their household income at the end of the year only; and some worked (or sought to work) in a full-time capacity year-round. 'Casual workers' is the term often used to define the first two groups of contract workers, those who work for contractors on an ad-hoc or seasonal basis. For the contract workers who worked throughout the year, my interviews with workers and the labor contract reveal that it was not always possible for one contractor to provide full-

[156] Antoine, who lives at Elderberry Farm where he has worked as a farmworker since he was seventeen, had been retrenched a few years before our interview and had since taken a position as a permanent worker on another farm. He says it was possible for him to take this permanent position because the farm where he works is not far from where he lives. More importantly though, Antoine indicates that ESTA—and the union's involvement in helping him—protected his right to reside at Elderberry Farm, where he used to be a permanent worker for over a decade, even though he no longer works there.

[157] The women I interviewed on Flora Farm for example were temporary farmworkers who worked full-time during the harvest seasons for peaches and grapes. There were also some women respondents who worked in packhouses situated on farms. These women lived in the informal settlement of Nkqubela and for about six months during the year worked full-time in a packhouse. Their experience of being hired directly corroborate an existing literature on how certain farms and/or industries (e.g. packing) in Western Cape are directly hiring workers, rather than using labor brokers, and these workers generally are classed as temporary workers (Visser, 2016; Visser & Ferrer, 2015).

time work for those workers all year round. Those workers therefore would find work with other brokers when their primary broker did not have work for them. As Johan, a labor broker, explained to me, he would himself sometimes make arrangements for his key workers, a core group that he relies on, to find work with other brokers when he did not have any jobs.[158] With so many variations in types of jobs that a 'farmworker' could do/be, the way I have distinguished my respondents—as on-farm and off-farm—tries to mitigate some initial confusion that may arise when describing farmworkers. These job variations, when examined with regards to how they may shape women's agency, add nuance to the analyses.

Another aspect of the labor dynamics are the payment of wages. Wage payments for all the categories of workers mentioned are made in varied ways. Most of the permanent and temporary workers I interviewed and who are hired directly by a farm were paid on a fortnightly or monthly basis. They were either given paychecks in paper form or paid via direct deposit into their bank accounts. For contract workers, most were paid in cash on a weekly basis, usually on Fridays. These mechanisms of payment, and the subsequent forms—virtual or physical—in which money changes hands, has two direct implications for my respondents. Firstly, payment form dictates 'who' can be hired in particular positions. It immediately sets to distinguish those with and without (access to) legal status in South Africa. Those paid through paychecks or bank transfers would need a bank

[158] Johan's motivations for helping his workers find work with other contractors may seem odd, with the potential to undermine the stability of his own labor force, but he explains to me that these actions are based on reciprocal expectations. Ensuring that those workers have jobs, and are able to pay their bills, increases their trust in him as a reliable *boss*, someone who is looking out for them. This act of seeming benevolence also helps him keep his core group of workers satisfied so that when he does require them, he has a reliable core crew who trust him.

account to receive/deposit their salaries. The majority of permanent and temporary workers who received their wages this way were South African or migrants with legal status which allowed them to open formal bank accounts. Some of the migrant workers I interviewed whose legal status had expired or did not have the right to work in South Africa had found a way around the system; they received their wages in the bank account of someone they knew and trusted. While none of those I interviewed told me they had been robbed of their earnings by the account-holder, using someone else's bank account to receive one's wages is a highly insecure way of safeguarding one's earnings and is depictive of the precarity that permeates these workers' lives and labor. Perhaps though, even more unsafe than getting paid in someone else's bank account was to be paid in cash. All of the contract workers I interviewed received their wages in cash, which brings me to the second implication regarding the mode of payment—safety.

The safety—of body and possessions—of those carrying and/or holding physical cash emerged as important during the interviews, adding to their insecurity. When I met Johan the first time, he told me that he had been hijacked multiple times in his twenty-five-year career, twice at gunpoint. Several of the contract workers I interviewed described being attacked and robbed of their earnings while walking to their houses on payday. Since most of the contract workers I interviewed did not have the legal documents required to open bank accounts in South Africa, they stored their earnings inside their homes. Some of these workers recounted being robbed both inside and outside their homes. Sibo and her husband both get paid in cash. Like so many other migrant respondents, Sibo says "we keep the money in the house. We have a small cashbox, so we keep it in there." While she acknowledges it is dangerous to have cash stored in the house, she tells me that neither

she nor her husband have the required documents to open bank accounts. Ruro, a widow and off-site worker from Mozambique, was attacked twice and robbed once of her entire wage. “They took my money when I was on my way home,” she reveals. This incident prompted her to ask her Zimbabwean friend, who has legal documentation, for permission to use the latter’s bank account from then on to receive her wages. While undocumented migrants face institutional barriers from opening bank accounts in South Africa, some respondents who could open a bank account in South Africa still chose to not open bank accounts due to high bank transaction fees.

These employment distinctions and payment forms firstly reveal certain hierarchies that organize labor dynamics for my respondents. They also reveal constraints and differential access to certain options among the respondents that limit opportunity freedom by undermining individual choices. A foreign migrant without legal paperwork cannot open a formal bank account, the safest way to store her earnings, limiting her option of getting paid her wages either in cash or in someone else’s bank account. An on-farm temporary worker may not have the option of having a full-time year-round job on the farm, even if that is the option that she would prefer, because women on that farm do not get a permanent contract and the cost of transportation to a permanent job outside of the farm is too high for her to pursue this option. Both of the aspects I discussed, employment distinctions and payment methods, order labor relations and dynamics in ways that, as noted by a number of studies (Addison, 2019; Bolt, 2014, 2015; Eriksson, 2017), maintain or create certain hierarchies in contexts marred by different levels of precarity.

4.4.2 Mobility

Mobility, or the ability to move freely to where one needs/wants to, for both on-farm and off-farm workers varied. Most of the on-farm respondents I interviewed had never lived anywhere other than a farm. Of the five farms I visited, four were situated at least a twenty-minute drive from the nearest town and had limited to no access to convenient public transport. With this type of geographic isolation, due to a lack of reliable and/or affordable transport, came limited mobility which, as I discuss later, influenced people's perceptions about what they could pursue and achieve. Conversely, all the off-farm farmworkers lived in informal settlements or townships which had local shops and certain services like schools and hospitals. Off-farm respondents therefore did not usually have to pay for transportation to access certain basic services and shops. The close accessibility of these services however, while indicative of perhaps a greater availability of mobility freedom, was tainted by the relatively higher degree of insecurity and violence that respondents said occurred in their localities, severely constraining their sense of security and ability to move freely. Since some of the mobility experiences of off-farm respondents are discussed in the section on migration and xenophobia (and in some parts of chapter 6), the rest of this section highlights the experiences of on-farm workers.

The residential pattern of on-farm workers, those living on farms, impacted how freely respondents felt able to move. Some respondents at Elderberry Farm who had worked during apartheid said that their situation was better now than in the apartheid days. "Our houses are in good condition now," explained fifty-four-year-old Albert as his wife stood behind him, "our children have access to education and we have free transport from the farm to the supermarket". To the women of Butterfly Farm though, while the end of

apartheid has brought with it democracy and equal rights, those rights and opportunities seem far-fetched. Their houses are in dire states, with outdoor shared toilets. The residents still cannot leave the farm premises unless they pay for their own transport, something they avoid due to their meager salaries. The only places the women regularly travel to are the supermarket, jobs on other farms (for those who are employed), and the church. They receive free transport from the church and the employers from other farms, but on Saturdays they each pay *kumbi* fares to go grocery shopping. The nearest town with shopping facilities is about a twenty-minute taxi ride from their homes. Living in such geographic isolation, they cannot easily travel anywhere they want to.[159]

Farmworkers' experiences and perceptions of their mobility also impacted their aspirations and views of life on the farm, sometimes in seemingly paradoxical ways. The men and women farmworkers who spoke to me at Elderberry Farm, where living conditions were much better than on most other farms I visited,[160] argued that they preferred to live on the farm than elsewhere:

> We feel safe to stay with this farm, our children are also safe. It's better here for the children as it's very violent in other communities. It is safer for them to grow on the farm. This life here to see my children on a daily basis makes me feel happy and good.[161]

[159] Out of the five women I interviewed on this farm, none have ever left the Western Cape; only one has been to the city of Cape Town and only once. Cape Town is about 50 kilometers from the Paarl region, where Butterfly Farm is situated.

[160] Residents at Elderberry Farm said they did not pay for rent or electricity. Their houses were well-maintained by the farm management. They received free transport from the farm on Fridays to go to the supermarket in town. If anyone needed to see a doctor, they could request help from the Farmer and receive free transport to the hospital.

[161] On-farm man respondent, Focus Group Discussion – Elderberry Farm, July 15, 2018.

Residents at Elderberry Farm enjoy the protection that on-farm housing has given them from violence that they think is common in other communities. Some also recognize that living on this farm protects their children from this violence and enhances their bonds with their children. And yet, they do not want the farm in their children's futures. All of the respondents wanted their children to go to university, "to have a better life, do something different from this".[162] If remaining an on-farm resident is a choice that farmworkers make, I should point out some aspects of the residential context under which that choice is made. Mobility and residential context are distinct dynamics that nonetheless intertwine for farmworkers in Western Cape.

4.4.2.1 Residential Context

The long colonial and apartheid histories of land dispossession, labor migration, and repressed agricultural labor continue to taint the struggle for secure residence among farmworkers. While constraints on personal mobility are an unmistakable aspect of on-site respondents' lives, the choice for most on-site farmworkers to remain a resident on a commercial farm is also based on tenuous forms of residential rights and circumstances. Despite existing formal protections given to on-farm residents by the Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA),[163] the fear of eviction is very palpable for some of the on-site women respondents. Emma and Lisbet at Poppy Rose Farm had both been given eviction notices before I interviewed them in 2018. And yet, both remained in their current houses on the

[162] On-farm respondent, Focus Group Discussion – Elderberry Farm, July 15, 2018.
[163] The Extension of Security of Tenure Act 62 (ESTA) of 1997 made allocations of grants for (re)settlement and land acquisition. It also made it state business to regulate living conditions, eviction conditions and procedures, as well as residential claims and rights on land classified as commercial farms. For farmworkers, it protects their tenure rights and safeguards their labor rights, even if they do not work on the farm they live on (Hall, Kleinbooi, & Mvambo, 2001).

farm as both were union members and have been advised by their union not to leave their homes until the matter is settled in the courts. At forty-three, Emma is a single mother working as a domestic. She left farm work in 2006, after having worked for over ten years in the vineyards, when new management at Poppy Rose Farm changed the payment structure. The new director of the farm intimidates them, and both women seem to think he is especially rude to them because their husbands no longer worked on this farm. Emma's husband deserted her to live with another woman outside the farm, while Lisbet's husband died a few years back. Both women are still living on the farm with their respective sons who are working as permanent workers there.

It seems however that the new director and the farmer's wife are not keen to allow the mothers of permanent workers to live in farm-allocated houses, even though these women worked almost their entire lives on this farm alongside their husbands. "My biggest stress everyday is the director of the farm when he comes to my house one day and tells me to vacate," said Emma from Poppy Rose Farm, whose house had been signed on her husband's name. Having to rely on one's husband or boyfriend for housing security was common among the on-site women I interviewed. This factor is tied to one of the key practices during the apartheid era, where a housing contract was usually only given to a man who also was a permanent worker on the farm (Scully, 1997). My interviews revealed however that some on-site women did have a permanent contract, which could entitle them to on-farm housing. Lisbet from Poppy Rose Farm says the house contract where she lives had been transferred to her name five years ago when her husband died as she had still been a permanent worker on the farm. Most of the on-site women I interviewed did not have (or ever had) a permanent work contract, and some thought it incredulous

that I would ask if any woman had a house contract on her name. Lisbet was one of the few on-site women respondents who told me they were (or had been) permanent workers and had a house contract.[164] Her eviction notice came when she resigned from her job on the farm, but she refuses to leave her house. As Lisbet, now fifty-four explains:

> The director he's very rude and doesn't have a way to speak with anybody. When he saw me standing there at the gate waiting for you, he said 'you can look at me but you can't do anything'. He intimidates me all the time. He makes sure we are feeling as suppressed as ever. He speaks such that you cannot take it anymore. He wants to take us off the farm. He gossips about us to the farm owner to get rid of us.[165] He has so much hate. One day he came with a breathalyzer, and asked us to breathe. We said: we belong to the union, have you asked our union about this? But he said he doesn't care. I used to be the shop-steward, the one elected by workers to represent them with the union. This was last year, I was still working till December. I phoned the union organizer and he said we didn't have to blow because there was no prior agreement. So the director said 'F*ck you Lisbet, f*ck the union'. We normally stop working on 8 December and start on 8 January. But that day I decided I'm not coming back to work.

Lisbet is not the only on-farm respondent I spoke to who felt compelled to stop working on the farms. Despite the hostile environment on the farm between the manager, farmer's wife, and women like her, this farm is the only home Lisbet knows and claims as her own. She tells me she has no other option currently, unless she receives government-subsidized housing, but that option has been taking years to materialize.

Precarity around housing and one's living situation was also evident in my interviews with off-site respondents, who lived in varying types of houses which they did not own in

[164] See chapter 6 for more details on women respondents who were permanent workers and had a house contract on their names.

[165] Gossip here is reminiscent of the "culture of back-biting and jealousy" of paternalism (du Toit, 1993, p. 324). The director embodies the morally-condemned role of the *piemper* or 'informer', someone who tells tales about one to the former in order to soil one's reputation (du Toit, 1993).

informal settlements. Foreigners especially described being treated with cynicism and disrespect by South Africans in the communities where they lived. Maggie, a migrant contract farmworker from Lesotho, lives in Nkqubela with her husband. Her house, a self-made structure (shack), is in an area where the majority of residents are also migrants from Lesotho. “Sometimes you are treated good,” she says, “and sometimes bad.” Her main complaint is against the local government which she blames for the lack of access to some basic services. As she explains:

> Some of the things is difficult for us, the people from Lesotho. See, let me make example of electricity. Electricity, the South Africans they have electricity, but is difficult to get that box for electricity here. Because you are not a South African. Not in here in the informal settlement. It’s only at those houses [she points to what looks like concrete houses in the settlement]. I went and negotiated with somebody who has access to electricity and we just basically buy electricity on monthly basis. 150 [Rands] every month.

The difficulties that Maggie describes facing are exactly what on-farm respondents are trying to avoid and that off-site respondents are navigating as vagaries of their daily lives. Seeing that the circumstances surrounding one’s residence as an on-farm and off-farm worker can be so fractious, the choice of where to stay—on a farm or in a settlement—is often a limited choice if those residents cannot envision a life outside of those spaces.

Dynamics in labor relations, mobility, and residential context also impacted people’s social identities and relations. Below, I discuss how different notions of ‘respect’ in particular were employed to ‘mark out’ one’s social identity, and how interpersonal relations were mediated within social worlds constructed around perceptions of ‘respectability’.

4.4.3 Social Relations and Respectability

Colonialism and apartheid allowed much state control over the domestic sphere, influencing social relations within and outside households. The paternalistic owner-laborer relations on commercial farms not only reflected the regime's political ideology of racial dominance (Beinart 1988) but also positioned the farm as "a dual site of economic production [work] and social reproduction [living]" (Kheswa 2015: 38). Legal restrictions and physical demarcations curtailed opportunities for a varied and unrestricted social life. Through various legal processes and enforcement mechanisms that affected mobility, residential rights, and employment relations, apartheid also impacted the social meanings that people gave to, and drew from, their lived experiences. Among those meanings is 'respectability', a notion that emerged in the interviews as a crucial component to my respondents' sense of self. The idea of 'respectability' has been an important organizing feature in the unequal social relations that characterized African colonies (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991), and in South Africa was established on class (socio-economic), racial, and religious (i.e. Christian) underpinnings (R. Ross, 1999; Jensen 2008). While what constituted respectability would evolve with time and vary across physical-social spaces (R. Ross, 1999), the continued use of the term 'respect' and what it represents through individual behavior and perceptions (as the fieldwork identified) continues to shape social relations.[166]

As one of my respondents declared, to have respect means to "do what is better, do what is good."[167] One's respectability relies on behaving according to certain accepted norms

[166] 'Respect' is examined in greater detail in a chapter 7.
[167] Respondent #3, Focus Group Discussion – Poppy Rose Farm.

of one's community. Marriage for example was the way for a man and woman living together to mark their relationship as respectable. As one of the women respondents from Elderberry Farm exclaimed, "it is better to be married with your children inside your house because we are Christians". Echoing most of the other on-farm respondents I interviewed, she inclines to the moral (here, Christian) imperative that underlies this act. One's respectability also depends on being 'perceived' by others as acting in accordance with established norms of respectability. While I discuss 'respect' and 'respectability' from my respondents' perspectives in chapter 7, I would like to point out here that much of what the respondents associated with respectability is summarized in the previous quote. Three key aspects—being married, having a house[168], and being and behaving as a Christian—were repeatedly raised by both on-farm and off-farm respondents when describing the 'good woman', the latter being indicative of one's respectability as a social person (i.e. woman).[169] In this case, 'respectability' skirts the boundaries of morality (see chapter 2) as it defines decency through housing, responsibility and meaningful interdependence through marriage, and propriety through proper conduct. Let me consider 'housing' in particular since I previously discussed workers' residential context.

Fiona Ross (2015) argues that housing came to represent the dignity of individuals in South African democratic society because it is viewed as an enabler of social acceptability.

[168] In their studies in the Western Cape, both F. Ross (2015) and Salo et al. (2010) identified the centrality of having a house to people's claims as respectable persons. Being married and Christian would seem to represent the social practices that Fiona Ross (2015) identified as necessary for *ordentlikheid*, a 'respectable' life.

[169] Andries du Toit made a similar observation, drawing from his nearly two decades of research in this field (du Toit, 2022).

Having a house today, for many, represents a break from a racialized and unfree past.[170] It is easier to understand how the house itself may link to one's respectability when it is perceived as a physical representation of a person's dignity, reconstructed from the ashes of the past.[171] It was clear during my fieldwork that on-site women maintain a doubly tenuous hold on their houses, which formally belong to the farm owner/s and to which they do not have legal entitlement through a contract. Furthermore, on-farm workers lived in compounds, often in poorly-maintained houses, separate from the farmer's house or the quarters for upper management staff. This separation maintains infrastructural distinctions that also create, or reinforce, psychological distinctions. These are similar to findings by Bolt (2015) who notes that dwellers on farms have their own sense of propriety and notions of class superiority which can be preserved by different living quarters, labor assignments, and responsibilities. Despite such distinctions among farm residents, none of the on-farm respondents said they would want to become a contract worker or worse, be forced off the farm. Their reasoning is understandable when considering the class dimensions implied with off-farm housing,[172] and that off-site respondents, both foreigners and South Africans, overwhelmingly described their localities as typically unsafe. The uncertainties and precarity that farmworkers experience around their living circumstances, as described in the previous section, and lack of home ownership likely

[170] The long colonial and apartheid histories in South (and southern) Africa had ensured, through forceful and subsequently legal processes, that blacks and coloreds had not only differential residential rights but minimal entitlements where those rights existed (for example, the Group Areas Act of 1950 restricted where one could live and/or own property). Many in the past were thus homeless as they straddled social and economic lives across and within different communities.

[171] Most respondents explained that they wanted to have a house that belonged to them. I discuss more about aspirations for a house in chapter 6.

[172] Du Toit (2022) argues that on-farm labor historically has been able to gain some advantages that off-site workers did not. "Living in informal settlements is not wanted [by on-farm workers], it carries ideas of social status differences," he notes, adding that on-farm residents, "view town[ship] life with some suspicion, fearful of losing their support network of farm life."

contribute to a particular sense of togetherness as well as aloofness among residents within each community, limiting as well as shaping the kinds of social lives that are possible and sought after.

4.5 Key Definitions

There are several terms that I and/or my respondents use throughout this thesis that need to be situationally-defined. While each term's definition draws from recognized descriptions, I provide some additional context-specific characteristics that offer a clearer picture of my respondents' situations. Their definitions therefore have implications for the analyses and interpretations of the data in this thesis. These terms are: household; couple; and income.

In this thesis, a household represents the social unit in which people live (Randle, 2014), share financial commitments, and/or social obligations. Some have critiqued the use of the term 'household' for research in South Africa as the social realities of people's actual living arrangements—including membership in multiple households (Hosegood & Timaeus, 2006)—are often too 'messy' to fit into neat categorizations (Budlender, 2003). The Western nuclear family system or standard patterns of co-residence, resource pooling, or "shared meals" may not hold true, especially for black households (Russell, 2003, p. 5). The context in which I (loosely) use the term household is for analyses that focus on how individuals sometimes act and make decisions *for/on behalf of* their

household(s), which may be one or multiple social units, and spatially extended.[173] The arguments in my thesis (especially in chapter 5) center around certain types of households, notably: couple and non-couple. The physical enclosure that defines the material boundary of the household however is not restricted to hosting only one couple. In fact, several couple households may exist within a delimited physical space. Where necessary, I describe the specifics of the households I mention in the thesis.

The term 'couple', where used in my thesis, refers to a man and woman in a heterosexual relationship living together, with or without shared children, and having a common household. Their relationship was either as 'boyfriend/girlfriend' or 'husband/wife'.[174] A number of respondents described their partner, to whom they were not formally married to, as their husband/wife.[175] I make no distinction in my analyses between the those who were formally married and those who perceived themselves as married (without having completed the formality). On the other hand, those who specifically described themselves

[173] The term household also commonly establishes another level, in addition to the individual level, upon which a person's decisions and actions can have an impact. A number of studies include the household level in their analyses (Ambler, 2016; Antonides, 2011; Bennett & Sung, 2013; Mabsout & van Staveren, 2010).

[174] I make no claim that couple households in South Africa are necessarily heterosexual (although none of my respondents admitted to being lesbian or gay). Salo et al., 2010 illustrate in their study about sexual orientation in Cape Town's townships that gendered personhood is constructed on a reproductive heterosexuality that also defines the moral economy of these settings. Black and colored residents of these townships see the claim for rights by lesbians and gays as threats to their own claims for redress from historical, racial, socio-economic injustices and hence an impediment to the socio-economic empowerment of blacks and coloreds. The authors also show that the appearance of heterosexuality serves to protect one from potential negative backlash from those in one's surroundings. Even if one is lesbian or gay, Salo et al. (2010) note that to openly deviate from the heterosexual norm is to court a risk whose consequences may be devastating.

[175] Mike, one of my respondents and later my assistant, had been with his partner, a Xhosa woman, for nearly five years and both had a child together. But Mike referred to her as his 'wife', even though they had not been legally married. He explained to me that because his intention was to eventually marry her when he had saved enough to provide for her *lobola*, he treated her as if she was already his wife. A number of women whom I interviewed were in similarly defined relationships where a formality of marriage had not (yet) been completed but described their perceptions and experiences of their relationships as if they were married.

as 'girlfriend' explained particular motivations and/or experiences that showed how they understood 'marriage' as different than the relationships they currently had. Their perceptions of their relationships also had different spatial, temporal, and aspirational dimensions. A 'non-couple' household could describe several scenarios, but essentially means that the respondent was not in an intimate relationship with someone within the same household. When using the term 'non-couple' in the empirical chapters, I also describe the situation of the respondent to specify how she is in a non-couple household.[176]

'Income' in this thesis specifically refers to one's wages from employment, returns to one's investments (e.g., savings), as well as social grant monies and remittances. I do not differentiate between different sources of income, beyond one's wages, that are nonetheless relevant to women's income in South Africa, such as social grants and remittances (e.g., I do not differentiate between women or households who collect social grants and those who do not). I often alternate between one's own income, assumed to be individually-earned (or received), and household income, assumed to be the joint or pooled contributions from earned/received incomes of household members who share expenses. I make no claim that my definition represents what income is and/or represents to the majority of South Africans, be they farmworkers or not.[177] By defining 'income' this

[176] In their analysis of the KwaZulu-Natal Demographic Surveillance System (DSS), Hosegood & Timaeus (2006) illustrate the peculiarities of defining the contours of the household in a South African context. The DSS recognizes the need to account for distinctive definitions of the household in KZN province and has collected data that considers these distinctions by allowing participants to define, for example, their type(s) of household membership.

[177] I discuss for example some of the social meanings attached to money and/through its different sources in chapter 5.

way, I create parameters that facilitate my examination of women's agency and clarify the limits of my analyses.

4.6 Conclusion

The different aspects discussed in this chapter are important to set the context of my study. Specifically, three sets of structural considerations—poverty and inequality, violence and insecurity, migration and xenophobia—form crucial parts of the contextual backgrounds of the respondents and likely shape their agency freedom. There are also distinct, yet interrelated, factors—labor dynamics, mobility, social relations and respectability—that shape one's life and labor as a farmworker in Western Cape.

The discussions in this chapter also note several instances that hint at people's interdependencies through their relationships with others. My analyses of women's agency seeks to elucidate such interdependencies of individuals. These interdependencies are demonstrated through accounts and histories that show the pertinence of agency as purposeful and relationally situated. In the next chapter, I analyze how that agency is motivated by and constituted of relationality in my examination of women's control over income.

CHAPTER 5. Distinguishing between *Executive* and *Strategic* Financial Control: Relational Elements in Women Agency Enactments

Igunya lomfazi kukuphulaphula indoda yakhe – "The wife's authority is to listen to her husband" [178]

In chapter 1, I indicated that the mainstream development approach to women's empowerment has generally been fixated on women's 'choice' and 'decision-making' ability as either direct indicators of, or proxies for, women's agency. My focus in this chapter on one dimension of agency—control over income[179]—shows that I partly do not detract from this fixation, but neither do I leave it unchanged. My empirical contribution complicates a simplistic view of control over income.[180] I examine whether it is possible,

[178] Xhosa-speaking woman interviewee, Mbekwini resident – Mitchell's Plain, June 2019.
[179] A key concern in studies of women's empowerment and agency in development has been the assessment and measurement of women's control over income (Alkire et al., 2013; Sharaunga et al., 2019). Generally, women's control over income has been associated with their agency, positive outcomes for their families, and greater bargaining power (Donald et al., 2017; Njuki et al., 2019).
[180] It goes toward understanding why people behave the way they do to gain a better sense of how decision-making can reflect agency, and in this regard a number of studies stand out with similar pursuits, even though some of their conclusions may differ (Bernard et al., 2018; Iversen et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2019; Lecoutere & Jassogne, 2019; Malapit et al., 2019, 2020).

using my interview data, to use an existing typology of money management[181] that distinguishes women's control over income in the household as *strategic* and/or *executive* in order to identify and analyze their agency.

My data provides empirical evidence for women farmworkers' ways of managing income, and helps us understand whether, how, and why they pursue *strategic* and/or *executive* control over income. *Executive* control is akin to having *managerial* power. It is a person's (here woman's) ability for making certain regular decisions about income, and the responsibility "for *managing* money on a day to day basis" (Vogler, 1998, p. 691). For example, grocery shopping often falls in the category of routine consumption decisions in married households (Vogler et al., 2008) and the person who is responsible for this category of spending displays *executive* control. However, the person who manages the money may have little to no influence over important financial decisions. *Strategic* control on the other hand is twofold: it reflects one's influence in financial decisions that are important and less routine, such as whether to buy a large household item (Vogler et al., 2008); and the ability to allocate finances to purposes that are potentially different than originally intended. *Strategic* control opens the possibility for one to change the normal course of action, such as the content and amounts of expenditures, and underlines the agent's ability to independently decide or jointly negotiate where and how much to allocate all or part of her income.

[181] The typology draws from: Vogler, 1998; Vogler et al., 2008.

Applying this categorization facilitated a deeper understanding of the nature of income management and gender relations among farmworkers. Women farmworkers' experiences of control over income are intricately linked to their labor and tenure security, financial standing, as well as their gender roles and beliefs about social expectations. Most on-farm women still rely on their male partners for housing security and most of those women who have access to work on the farm are working on a seasonal rather than permanent basis (Devereux & Tavener-Smith, 2019; WFP, 2020). For off-farm women, their vulnerability as casual workers (many of whom are also illegally in South Africa) is compounded by the irregularity and precarity of contract labor (Devereux & Tavener-Smith, 2019; Bolt, 2015), while single women are especially prone to transactional sex for food, shelter, money, and jobs (Addison, 2013, 2019; Hall, 2013). Women (farm)workers' financial dependence on men—driven in part by women's lack of an independent income, limited contribution to the household income pool, the financial support needed for their children—deeply influences how they experience financial control in their households (WFP, 2020; Pekeur, 2022). Without strong financial standing through a stable job and adequate income, many women farmworkers' fall-back positions are severely, albeit unsurprisingly, dampened, impinging on their intrahousehold bargaining power in income decisions. What this chapter also reveals is that women are similarly making certain decisions based on their socially-influenced perceptions about gendered behavior, creating what Agarwal (1997) called "implicit differences in bargaining power" between household members that bypass explicit negotiations and may not necessarily be impacted by stronger fall-back positions for women (p. 7). By examining how intrahousehold income allocation occurs and whether/how this reveals instances of agency, the case studies importantly demonstrate that women's control over income is

embedded within wider patterns of social relations and perceptions. And while economic and social factors impose limits on women's control over income, this chapter is mainly concerned with understanding the ways that women deliberately and strategically deal with such limitations. In this context, mired by uncertainty and various forms of structural violence, the ways that women experience and perceive control over income emerge as important terrains of gendered contestation where women navigate unequal gender relations.

As I show throughout this chapter, the distinction between *strategic* and *executive* control is not always clear-cut; women respondents often described instances where the line between *strategic* and *executive* control can get blurred. Rather than distorting the analysis, this blurring enriches it by improving our understanding of women's agency when it comes to control over income. Specifically, I sought a ground-up understanding of women's agency by probing my respondents' motivations for pursuing specific ways of controlling income, and their perceptions about their (and others') actions. Noting from my interviews and observations that people valued their relationships with certain others, I position my respondents' experiences and perceptions within their interpersonal context; this supports an understanding of agency that aligns with women's valuational considerations. I then present certain aspects of their choice processes that influence and give meaning to their agency. For now though, I will try to provide more of my respondents' perspectives and draw from my observations to present a more detailed way of examining control over income and conceptualizing this dimension-specific aspect of agency.

5.1 Strategic and Executive Control in the Narratives: The Stories of Tabetha and Polite

I begin with the stories of Tabetha and Polite, both of whom are contract laborers and live in the township of Mbekwini. Their stories illustrate some of the ways they think about, and undertake, the management of their incomes. In so doing, their stories further demonstrate how they control their incomes, and the reasons they do so in their particular ways.

Tabetha is a twenty-nine-year-old Mozambican. As she looks at me behind blue-rimmed glasses, her short hair pulled back in a tight ponytail, I realize she is the first (and only) respondent I interviewed who wore glasses. She seemed to radiate a confidence I rarely noticed among the respondents. She proudly calls herself Mozambican, despite having migrated three times in her lifetime to three different countries—Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. Born in Zimbabwe, where she spent the first half of her life, she moved to Mozambique with her parents—Mozambicans of Shona ethnicity—and sister when she was nine. She moved back to Zimbabwe at around sixteen, which is also the time she left school when things got financially difficult for her and her family in Mozambique. When she came to South Africa, specifically Western Cape, in 2018, she left behind a five-year-old child who still lived with her mother in Zimbabwe. In Mbekwini, Tabetha lives with her stepsister with whom she says she shares household expenses equally. She is paid every fortnight—a typical arrangement for contract farmworkers—and her wage ranges from 800 Rands to 1000 Rands, based on the amount of work the contractor is hired for and the season. Every month, their rent amounts to 700 Rands and

includes the cost of electricity, while their grocery expenses are about 400-800 Rands. These shared expenses cost Tabetha, individually, between 550 Rands to 750 Rands every month.

Tabetha also has a boyfriend who lives in Mbekwini while he has two children living in Port Elizabeth[182] (Eastern Cape province). He is from Zimbabwe and works as a builder in Western Cape. She says she intends to marry him someday, if *he* asks her. When I ask her if she thinks things will change when they get married, like how the bills are paid half and half, she says she does not think it will be different. When I ask why, she says "because I am working. I am taking care of myself. I can pay my share of the bills". So I strike further, asking her, "say tomorrow you want to go buy a jacket or shoes, you don't have to ask your stepsister, right? But now if you're married, do you think you will have to ask your husband?" Tabetha pauses to think, then replies, "yeah, sometimes." When I ask her what she thinks of women who have to ask their husband or boyfriend for permission before buying anything, she says "it's not a good thing. Because it's my money. I worked for it." Seeing that she answered a hypothetical question about 'other' women with a personal answer, noting it is "my money", I take the cue to follow up with questions directed to her own experience. When I ask how she expects the financial situation to be when she gets married, she assumes it will be the same as now, where common expenses are equally shared and jointly managed while the leftover income can be used for each one's personal needs. She concedes that most wives she knows in Mbekwini ask their husbands for

[182] Port Elizabeth has been newly renamed in 2021 to the Xhosa name *Gqeberha*.

permission before buying anything for themselves, but she refuses to do the same when she gets married. She admits that she is not like most other women, explaining:

> Maybe it's how I was raised, what I saw from my parents growing up. My mother had to beg my father for money to buy food to feed us. It was bad, I didn't like that. She [the mother] told me and my sister that she's doing this for us because she's not working, so we can have food and go to school. I learned to be this way from those situations my mother was facing. That's why I want to work and have my own plans about my own money. I want to make money so I can build a house for my mother and start my own business in Zimbabwe. Because I am working, I am taking care of myself.

Tabetha's mother encouraged her to work for herself and not have to beg anyone for money. It is the reason why Tabetha wants what seems to be *strategic* control over the income she earns, in order to fulfil her plans. That is also why Tabetha endeavors to save some of her earnings and build her mother a house in Zimbabwe. Her desire to use her earnings on what matters to her, her personal goals, indicates she wants to be able to decide how to allocate her income. Her current experience living with her stepsister and sharing the household expenditures equally with the latter has allowed Tabetha the opportunity to manage her income and to allocate it to various shared and personal expenses. Perhaps as important to Tabetha, her current situation has given her a taste of what it means to earn an income and be able to decide how to spend and save towards her own goals, and she seeks to maintain this type of direct influence over her income in the future.

In contrast, when telling her story, Polite shows that managing one's income can be done differently, especially when one is married. A Zimbabwean, Polite was nineteen when she got married, but she tells me she did not want to get married at the time. Due to her

parents being in a difficult financial situation, she thought that getting married would lessen the burden on them while also allowing her the opportunity to help them. At the time, she aimed to someday become a dressmaker. Now twenty-three years old, Polite came to South Africa two years ago (in 2017) with her husband in search of work. They first went to Zeerust, a town near Botswana, where she worked as a maid before moving to Mbekwini a year ago. Both are now contract farmworkers working for different contractors. She earns about 700 Rands per week while he earns between 800-900 Rands per week. Their monthly household expenses are 750 Rands for rent, 300 Rands for electricity, and between 1000-1200 Rands for food. Neither of them has a bank account, something which seemed quite normal among foreign contract farmworkers. Therefore, on payday—usually Friday—they pool together their physical cash, taking out what they need to pay for weekly necessities while stashing the rest in their home. Polite takes responsibility for managing the money that is taken out for weekly grocery expenses while they each take 100 Rands per week from the pooled income for their personal pocket money.

Sometimes however, her husband takes out money from his weekly wages before he comes home on payday and sends it to his parents in Zimbabwe. This act upsets Polite because her husband gets very unhappy if she sends money to her parents without asking him. In order to reduce confrontation with her husband, her strategy has been to send a mutually-agreed-upon amount of money or food to both her parents and his parents. She prefers to send their parents long-life food items however, which she does every three months, saying it is safer than sending cash. Since she manages the grocery expenses, she is able to also manage the process of buying and sending their parents' food remittances.

Furthermore, she says she readily assumes the responsibility for sending food to her husband's parents so that he does not see the in-kind remittances she sends to her parents as unfair to him.

Polite's approach of sending in-kind assistance to both her and her husband's parents is the best way she has found to maintain some sense of control over the management of their pooled income, specifically regarding remittances to their parents. This type of control is more *executive* in that it allows her to manage the allocation process. However, she cannot make more '*strategic*' decisions here, such as deciding how much to send or differentiating in the items she sends to each set of parents—those decisions have to be jointly agreed with her husband, mostly with him having the final say. She also feels restrained from making independent decisions about how to allocate her own personal income, which she must pool with her husband at the end of each payday, in order to pay for their common bills. Even after the shared expenditures have been paid, she feels unable to spend any part of the pooled income, which is stashed in their home, toward her personal objectives—like sending extra food or money to her parents—or dreams—like planning to take a course to become a dressmaker.

As she explains to me, after remembering how she thought being married would allow her to help herself and her parents, "the situation is not better, it's the same. But maybe it's better because I am here in South Africa, and when I get money I go to buy food and send for my parents". To Polite, the situation is not as she expected prior to getting married; but being able to help her parents in this way is better than not being able to help at all.

Tabetha's and Polite's stories importantly demonstrate instances where women wield some forms of financial control over income. They also illustrate the possibility of distinguishing between two *types* of control, *strategic* and *executive*.

The distinction between *strategic* and *executive* control over income emerges as significant for a multitude of reasons. As most women I interviewed revealed time and again, much like Tabetha and Polite, the ability to participate in how income was spent was important to how they viewed themselves as individuals but also as relational persons such as 'daughter' or 'wife'. While this participation to some women, like Tabetha, meant exercising *complete* control over their own income and being able to plan its use, to others, like Polite, it seemed to mean being able to have *some* sense of control over its management and allocation.

The terms *strategic control* and *executive control*[183] that I use in my research to examine one dimension of agency, control over income, is not to my knowledge commonly used in studies on women's empowerment and agency. However, the concept of *strategic* control seems already embedded in national Demographic Health Survey (DHS) questionnaires.[184] In particular, the DHS have household-level questions about who makes decisions on different types of spending. Their specification about major (e.g., fridge) and minor (e.g., daily food items) household purchases can relate, in an indirect way, to *strategic* control. This suggests that DHS data is conducive to some analysis of *strategic* control over

[183] These terms are more commonly used in industrial sociology and firm theory, and I drew them from sociology literature that focused on gender analyses of intrahousehold allocation of money in Western developed countries (see for example: Vogler 1998; Kamleitner, Marckgott, & Kirchler, 2018).
[184] The DHS aim to provide comparable, nationally-representative, household-level data in over 80 countries (Corsi et al., 2012).

finances. Through empirical case studies, my analysis in this chapter is examining household-level decision-making over finances while also grounding it conceptually.

There is much in the literature examining women's control over income[185] as an aspect of decision-making ability and indicator of access to resources, which are often also proxies for measuring other factors like intrahousehold gendered distribution of resources and power. Data in such research is usually collected at the individual and/or household level and often used to examine, from measurements such as educational achievement and age at marriage, agency and empowerment at the individual level.[186] Such data on its own however does not necessarily impart the context-specific, relational aspects of an agency dimension like 'financial control'.

My examination of *strategic* and *executive* control over income explores whether this categorization of control is relevant to women in a developing-country context, and if so, how is it useful? I analyze the usefulness of this categorization by considering how it helps us to understand the process(es) underlying how, and why, the way(s) a person perceives control over income matters to her. This 'how' and 'why' are underlined by motivations beyond the individual, which I expound on in the following sections of this chapter. As I make the case throughout my thesis, women's experiences and perceptions of themselves

[185]*Control over income* is often distinguished by sub-categorizing what the income is used for or toward, and by whom. Numerous studies examine the use of income, and amounts allocated, in particular categories—such as toward agricultural input, children's education, and food expenses—and who makes (and claims to make) those decisions—the woman, man, or both (Alkire et al., 2013; Bernard et al., 2018; Doss, 2013; Heath & Jayachandran, 2016; Malapit et al., 2015; Njuki et al., 2019; Quisumbing, 2013).
[186] For example, Heath & Jayachandran (2016) find that more years in schooling for women has been associated with delayed marriage and higher participation in the workforce by those women in developing countries (with workforce participation being touted often as 'economic empowerment' of women).

and others occur within their social milieus; it is therefore crucial to understand their individual agency and its associated values in the context of their relationships with others. The next section begins this undertaking by discussing the terms *strategic* and *executive* financial control.

5.2 Defining Strategic and Executive Financial Control

Strategic control and *executive* control are firstly descriptive analytical terms. They act as analytical shortcuts to give the reader an initial impression of an individual's control over finances. In this study, one's finances is income; this income can be individual, such as what one earns in own wages and/or grants, and it can be the pooled income of two individuals in a heterosexual couple.[187] In my fieldwork, I asked interviewees questions about the sources and uses of their incomes. I did not ask respondents whether they thought they had *strategic* or *executive* control over income; rather, these are terms I considered while analyzing the interview data. *Strategic* and *executive* control explain a particular way that someone exercises control over finances, and in so doing allow for a dichotomous view of financial control. The terms *strategic* and *executive* on their own do not provide a complete picture of financial control, nor are they intended to. Rather, they are conceptually distinct terms that indicate to the reader what the analysis on women's financial control suggests. These terms give us a sense of how control occurs, not why. In practice, as this chapter shows, the conceptual distinctions between these terms may blur. A deeper assessment of the *strategic* and *executive* character of financial control will be

[187] The respondents in my sample who said they pooled their income described doing so with a partner within a heterosexual relationship. While my data does not support this, income pooling may also occur between siblings, or parents and children, and/or may be earned jointly such as on a smallholder farm.

attentive to details such as which finances are being managed by women respondents (eg. income, own and/or pooled), how it is managed, and why the respondents say it is managed in particular ways. Answers to the 'why' questions will point to reasons and explanations that emerged as having *intrinsic* and/or *instrumental* value to the interviewees.

I will first try to describe *strategic* and *executive* financial control in practice by pulling from the individual interviews and focus group discussions. Then I will illustrate how the distinction between *strategic* and *executive* control can sometimes be blurry, and consider whether/how this blurriness is also a space where women enact agency.

5.2.1 Strategic Control

Strategic control to the respondents reflected the ability to independently decide on spending some amount of income on a good or service, not including one's financial obligations like rent, that one values or has reason to value. Among the respondents who shared no income-pooling commitments, I found *strategic* control meant the ability to do, or *plan* to do, whatever they desired with their income. Hailey, an on-site farmworker who lives with her parents and brothers on Butterfly Farm, gives part of her income to her parents to "help them out" and uses the rest on herself and her baby. She says, "if I want something for me or my baby, like clothes, I can just buy it if I have money left, I don't have to ask anyone". *Strategic* control here reflects not having to ask for *permission* from anyone before spending on something or someone. To Zelda, a divorced on-site farmworker at Groot Constantia Farm, it is about being able to *save* money toward a goal she values. She has four children, with two having completed secondary school thanks to

her planning and saving, and two still in school. "I want my children to have the best, so I want them to finish *matric*", she says, referring to the final year of secondary school. Her plan is to continue saving part of her income to have all her children complete their secondary schooling.

For women who do not pool their incomes with someone else but live in a household where some expenses are shared, such as with roommates, *strategic* control also involves *complete* control over how to allocate and manage one's income.[188] For example, to Tabetha, it is being able to physically manage her entire income and decide what to allocate that income towards. Control over income to these women refer to allocations decisions involving expenses that are jointly paid for, like rent and electricity, but also include individual needs and wants, such as buying a pair of shoes that one likes.

For women who pooled their income with that of their husband or boyfriend[189], *strategic* control assumed slightly different forms, such as being able to *influence* how income is expended through the decision-making process about the allocation of this pooled income. As the interviews showed, this influence involved some kind of negotiation. One

[188] Where decisions were made by more than one person in a multi-person household, I refer specifically to decisions within couples. Where such decision-making processes did not involve couples (such as the mother-daughter household I discuss in Chapter 7), I elaborate on the composition of the household.
[189] *Husband* or *boyfriend* usually do not mean the same thing mainly by virtue of the responsibilities and duties that are assigned to each and that can be claimed by each from the relevant 'other', such as *wife* or *girlfriend*. To the women respondents who were living with a boyfriend, rather than a husband whom they were legally or customarily married to, the distinction seemed to blur when they had shared children. As Deborah James argues, considering that marriage in South (and southern) Africa, especially in black communities, usually requires an exchange of *lobola* (the bride price, in the form of cattle, and sometimes money and other goods), such 'proper' marriage is often unaffordable for men of limited means (D. James, 2017). Therefore, I do not distinguish between husband and boyfriend when the couple have shared children, and categorize the household as either *non-couple* (such as those who are living alone or with roommates) and *couple* (those who are a heterosexual couple, formally married or not married, with or without shared children).

woman respondent described having to ask and convincing her husband that they should spend a little more on a particular week on groceries because it was one of the children's birthday.[190] Some women said they often argued, and successfully so, with their husbands about not sending remittances to his family during financially dry months. Another woman said she was planning to discuss with her husband about them saving money to buy a washing machine for Christmas.[191] For women in these couple households, *strategic* control meant being able successfully convince their husband to allocate different amounts to a routine expenditure, or to allocate an amount of income toward an alternative, non-routine, use.[192]

The interviews showed that *strategic* control could be multifaceted. To some women, especially those in non-couple households, *strategic* control meant being able to spend, save, or plan about one's income independently, toward something one valued, without having to ask for permission from or negotiate with anyone. To others, especially women in couple households, *strategic* control meant being able to influence the income allocation process and amounts spent, often involving negotiations between the wife and husband or girlfriend and boyfriend.

[190] Off-farm woman respondent from Mbekwini – Mitchel's Plain, June 9, 2019.
[191] Respondent #2, women's focus group discussion – Flora Farm, July 11th 2018.
[192] What constituted 'routine' or regular expenses? Beyond the rent and electricity, which were usually fixed amounts, the biggest regular expenditure was groceries. The amounts to be spent on these routine expenses were usually already agreed upon between husband and wife or boyfriend and girlfriend. Most respondents bought groceries every week or fortnight. Women in couple households regularly said they were in charge of buying household foods and cleaning items by physically going to the supermarkets alone, with other women friends, or with their husband or boyfriend.

5.2.2 *Executive* Control

Drawing from the interviews, a woman's *executive* control over income could be traced as her ability to manage some amount of household income and be responsible for some, but not necessarily all, of the household's routine expenses. To the respondents, *executive* control exudes a sense of *responsibility* on the woman to manage how much and when income is spent on those categories of spending that she is in charge of.

To identify this type of control over income and set it apart from *strategic* control, I drew especially from interviews of respondents in couple households, such as women living with their husband or boyfriend. This is not to say that *executive* control is not present among women who are single or living on their own. In fact, it is more straightforward to identify in interviews with respondents who are single and/or in a non-couple households; whoever earns the income also (usually) manages that income fully, relegating both *strategic* and *executive* control to the earner. As the interviews suggest, some of which I present in the chapter, *executive* control is more distinguishable in couple households because the women described their management of income differently if they lived with their husband or boyfriend as opposed to living alone, with other relatives, or roommates.

This makes the meaning attached to *executive* control over income in a couple household different than it is in a non-couple household. For instance, most women who did not live with a husband or boyfriend did not describe their income as part of a joint or household pot; they viewed it as their own income, fully managed by them as individuals. Even when such women lived with others, they describe having full control over part of their income that was not contributed toward shared expenses. Lydia, an on-site respondent from

Groot Constantia, says she gives her mother a certain portion of her earnings, a contribution which she says is "used for the house" and the management of which she does not "interfere with", while she decides how to spend the remainder of her earnings. On the other hand, women who lived with a husband or boyfriend almost always spoke of making decisions and managing the household finances together. As one woman described, echoing many other interviewees, "we put our wages together and then discuss together what we need to buy".[193] In such households, that pooled income or part of it was usually (though not always) then managed, fully or partly, by the wife or girlfriend. However, women in couple households did not view any part of the household finances as something to use as they please (the exception may be 'pocket money', which I discuss in section 5.4.2).

Among the respondents who were temporary or seasonal workers—who would be out of work, and sometimes without a contributing wage, for some periods of time during the year[194]—women usually continued to describe managing some or all of the household finances and making financial decisions together with their husband or boyfriend. This suggests that a woman's *executive* control over household income did not necessarily

[193] Respondent #4, women's focus group discussion – Poppy Rose Farm, July 11, 2018.

[194] For South African women respondents, the receipt of child-support grants of about 400 Rands per child each month (at time of research) would usually mean that they were still contributing to the household income even when they were not working. My respondents did not describe child-support grants as their own money, saying instead it was part of the money they put together with their husband/boyfriend. Child-support grants were not relevant to the majority of my respondents who were not South African and did not benefit from this government support. The exception was one of the men (Mike) I interviewed who was a Zimbabwean but whose wife (whom I did not interview) was South African, and she received child-support grants for their two children. An interesting line of study, which I do not pursue in this chapter, would consider women's perceptions specifically about income from child-support grants, which are usually (though not always, as my one male translator told me) transferred to the mother of the child in South Africa, and analyze whether these women displayed more/less *strategic* and/or *executive* control over this income.

relate to her continuous financial contribution to the household pot.[195] In *executive* control however, women respondents described being unable or not wanting to make a decision about spending part of income toward a non-routine use without first *consulting* their husband or boyfriend.

In summary, *executive* control is concerned with how income is managed. It revolves around the running of the day-to-day expenses, the responsibility for which is usually relegated to women in couple households. It also requires a woman to consult with her partner before she makes an expenditure that has not already been mutually agreed upon.

5.3 Identifying *Executive* and *Strategic* Control Over Income

I now turn to briefly show how some women respondents understand their expending of income in light of *executive* and *strategic* control. Control refers to the management of and/or influence over income and expenditure categories. This understanding will be important and acts as a primer for the next section where I discuss three specific aspects of women's daily lives that influence and/or showcase how they manage their finances. I include responses from my fieldwork interviews which asked women how much they earned in wages, how did they go about spending that income, and their perceptions about how income was managed in their household.[196] As such, my respondents often

[195] It is also likely (though my interviews did not probe this) that women who were South African and able to claim public monies, which migrant workers could not, were using part of their social grants toward the household's expenses. This is examined in studies such as Duflo (2003), Ambler (2016), and WFP (2020).
[196] I note here that I did not introduce the terms *strategic* or *executive* control over income at any point to my respondents during fieldwork; these terms are part of my post-fieldwork analysis of the primary data.

discussed the 'representation' of *strategic* and *executive* control in ways that would suggest that these terms were not mutually exclusive. The two points I make in this section are: 1) women who displayed clear *strategic* control were usually not in a couple household and also maintained *executive* control over some, if not all, parts of income, and; 2) women who displayed clear *executive* control did not necessarily display *strategic* control, but women's interviewees' perceptions suggest that their *executive* control could sometimes carry *strategic* meanings. I elaborate further on these points in the next section.

For the first point, women's *strategic* control usually accompanied some form of *executive* control. I found this occurrence easily among women interviewees who were single and/or living in a household where they were not part of a couple. As I note in section 5.2.1, *strategic* control was evident in these women respondents' descriptions of their ability to choose how and on what to use their income. Specifically, if *strategic* control was clearly identified in the interview, *executive* control was also likely to be clearly identified. To Cher, a single Zimbabwean woman living in Mbekwini, her income as a contract farmworker allows her for the first time in her life to choose what to allocate her wages towards. Prior to coming to South Africa, she lived her whole life with her parents on their farm, never having earned her own wages. Now, she independently manages her routine expenses for food and the rent for the shack where she lives alone. She saves part of her wages to send to her two children and parents in Zimbabwe every four months. Cher also plans for longer-term expenditures, such as the trip she wants to make to Zimbabwe in six months' time. The trip will cost her at least 1500 Rands to go to Zvishavane, her hometown, and 2600 Rands to return to South Africa, but she is determined to save the

required amount in time. It is clear that Cher, a single woman living on her own, has both *strategic* and *executive* control over her income.

While Cher's story shows that *strategic* control accompanies *executive* control, I cannot argue that there is a perfect correlation between *strategic* control and *executive* control. I do not make this associative claim in light of the fact that I also found in my fieldwork that the first point was usually not true for couple households, where it seems men regularly had more *strategic* control than women but did not bother about managing the day-to-day expenses.[197]

For the second point, having *executive* control, either partly or completely, did not necessarily show women having clear *strategic* control. Especially among the women in couple households, many respondents said they managed the household income while pointing out that they did not make any decision about the use of income without first discussing it with their husband. One respondent from Mbekwini says she "stays with the money," referring to the act of physically managing the pooled income, but all spending decisions had to be made jointly.[198] Like some other respondents, she says she is satisfied with this system and sees no reason to make any decisions on her own without talking to her husband first. Another respondent living in Mbekwini says "we have to talk to each

[197] That these men 'did not bother' about day-to-day expenses, something I draw from interviews with mostly women, does not necessarily mean men do not have *executive* control. It is possible that men do not perform or enact *executive* control even though they have or possess the right. Li (2010) posits that husbands in some female-managed systems, a system of household income allocation where the wife manages routine expenses, refrained from day-to-day incidentals which they viewed as the wife's domain. The husbands in that study firstly had to approve of the household's spending priorities and then maintained final say over all major expenditures (Li, 2010). I return to this point again later in this chapter when I discuss 'final say' as it occurs from my respondents' experiences.

[198] Off-farm respondent from Mbekwini – Mitchel's Plain, June 8, 2019.

other" when I ask her if she can make any spending decisions on her own.[199] However, the meanings that some of the women respondents attach to their *executive* control of income suggest that sometimes these meanings have *strategic* motivations. Polite's story from earlier in this chapter is a case in point, and I illustrate below how the subject of remittances reflects her *strategic* motivations within a stance that more broadly displays her *executive* control over household income.

Polite's practice of sending in-kind assistance to both her parents and her husband's is the best way she has found to maintain some sense of control over the management of household income, specifically regarding remittances to their parents. Outwardly, based on what she says to me, she wields *executive* control over the management of remittances. More discreetly, the fact that she has managed to convince her husband to allow her to manage the remittances to both of their parents suggests a step toward *strategic* control over their household income. Most other female respondents describe having no say or influence over how much their partners send to their parents, which shows how Polite has leveraged *strategic* control to acquire that responsibility. That control however is not always secure. She relays that "sometimes, he is going to take money and send it to his parents without asking me. We're going to get money from work and he is going to send it directly from there before he even comes home". When I ask her how she feels about this practice of his, she remarks, "you cannot always be happy you know. I [on the other hand] always ask him before I spend anything". Her husband's occasional actions of sending cash directly to his parents without consulting her

[199] Off-farm respondent from Mbekwini – Mitchel's Plain, June 9, 2019.

downplays Polite's sense of control, clearly portraying her control over the household income as less *strategic* than she would prefer. In this case, based on what we know of Polite's story, one can imagine that greater *strategic* control for Polite could involve her husband discussing with her his desire to send cash to his parents on the random occasions, inviting her opinion on both the amounts to be sent and the timing of the remittance, which would allow her for instance to register her concerns about the financial needs of her own household if such a remittance would significantly disadvantage her. Polite's story also shows a woman's financial contribution to the household may be neither sufficient nor necessary in increasing her *executive* and (or) *strategic* control over income.

To summarize, *strategic* and *executive* control can act as a useful approach to distinguish and organize the ways that women respondents control and manage income. While I differentiate between *strategic* and *executive* control in sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2, I briefly noted in this section that these two ways of categorizing control over income are not mutually exclusive. I begin to demonstrate this by blurring the hard distinction between *executive* and *strategic* control. In particular, I discuss in the next section instances of *strategic* and *executive* control while also examining my respondents' underlying motivations and perceptions.

5.4 Enacting Strategic and Executive Financial Control

In the previous section, I show instances where women displayed *strategic* and/or *executive* control over income. I also occasionally pepper the descriptions with

information that shows the respondents' motivations and goals. In this section, I ask what motivates someone to pursue and/or accept *strategic* and/or *executive* control over income? During my fieldwork, I was able to listen to the stories of many different women about their lives, habits, experiences, and hopes. The interviews I collected, whether from individuals or focus groups, presented a rich array of instances where they described their experiences and perceptions. As diverse as their responses were, there were also commonalities in women's experiences and perceptions that stuck out.

In the next three sections, I draw from my interview data three aspects—financial histories, pocket money, and wife as husband's agent—of the women's lives that show the enactment of and/or motivation for *strategic* and/or *executive* control. I further explore the usefulness of categorizing financial control as *strategic* and *executive* by allowing space for the motivations and perceptions underlying the women's decision-making process about income to emerge through these categories. Then, through my respondents' perspectives, I begin to draw out the relational elements that complicate women's decision-making about income, yet relate to their agency.

5.4.1 Financial Histories

Many of the women I interviewed described learning from the past, be it through their own or others' experiences, in order to guide their management of income. For some women, their personal financial histories directly influenced their perceptions of how their income should be controlled. An individual's financial history, their 'money story' (Lawson, Klontz, & Britt, 2015), can affect the way s/he manages and perceives income. A person's 'money story' includes behaviors, ideas, and feelings about money resulting from past

personal experiences and contextual factors (Lawson et al., 2015). But how can someone's 'money story' influence his or her financial management, and specifically her desire for, and pursuit of, *strategic* and/or *executive* control? The adage 'experience is the mother of knowledge' may very well apply to many of the interviewees.

Financial histories show certain temporal dimensions in women's ideas about money and its management. For some respondents, their financial histories resonated with overcoming challenges—past, present, and/or future—in their lives that revolved specifically around *strategic* financial control. Tabetha's story from earlier is one example of how she is pursuing *strategic* control over her income because she does not want to go through the financial difficulties that she saw her mother go through with her father when she was growing up. Among women respondents who said they purposely remain unmarried, they explained choosing to be so in order to have full control over their income. Take for example Tarisai, a thirty-six year old, single (never married) mother with three children. As I interview Tarisai in an office in Mitchel's plain, her two-year-old son peers at me from behind his mother's back. She carries him on her back, a blanket tightly wrapped around him tying him to his mother. Her other two children are in Zimbabwe with her sister.

Tarisai's story is one of great bravery and determination, of someone whom experience taught to make her own financial decisions. Born in Mutare, Zimbabwe, she left school at the age of fourteen to help her family on their farm. She had been saving money for a while in order to come to South Africa and look for work. About six months before I interviewed her, she finally made the trip and eventually arrived to Mbekwini with only a

knapsack and her youngest child. Initially, she lived on the road, something she and my translator Mike say is not uncommon.[200] Tarisai came to South Africa to earn a living that could help support herself and her children. Once in Mbekwini, it took her a few days to get a job as a farmworker working for a contractor, which she secured by going to the marketplace where some contractors pick up their laborers in the mornings. Once she found work, it took her a week to secure space in a small shack in Mbekwini, which she shares with another woman. She started working while carrying her son on her back every day, something she still does. When I ask if she would like to have a boyfriend or get married, she says, "I'm not looking. Sometimes you get a man who can treat you better. Sometimes you get a man who cannot treat you better, and maybe take your money so you cannot use it for what you want". She defends her choice for remaining single as experience with previous boyfriends controlling her income has taught her not to trust her money in the hands of someone else. Tarisai's comment indicates that she, like some other single women I interviewed, recognizes the greater control, especially *strategic* control, that being a single woman allows her to have over her own income. While she admits to the difficulties of being a single mother and having to singularly bear the financial costs of all her children and herself, she further portrays how the decision to not marry or have a boyfriend can itself be a key strategic[201] decision in some women's lives.

[200] Hall (2013) recounts Zimbabwean migrants' stories of border crossings, which for many entailed being dropped off the side of the road and slowly moving toward farms in the border area and/or farther inside South Africa to other towns like Johannesburg.

[201] Kabeer (1999) calls these decisions 'strategic life choices' through the ways these decisions can alter the pathways one's life takes and expand one's agency as they occur "in contexts where such choices are customarily denied to women" (Kabeer, 2021, p. 101). These choices include, *inter alia*, who/when to marry, where to live, and when/whether to have children, whether to pursue paid work (Kabeer, 2005).

Some interviewees, despite acknowledging the presence of a financial history that motivates them to pursue more *strategic* control, show in their remarks that they did not necessarily display *strategic* control. This was mostly true for respondents who were living in a couple household. Polite's story (section 5.3) showed that despite her best attempts to improve her parents' future financial situation, which motivated her to get married earlier than she had preferred, her present control over income was not exactly as she had hoped for, especially when her husband would many times send remittances to his parents without first consulting with her. Could it be that her husband did not place as much value consulting with her on the matter of remittances as she valued it? If so, this dampens the motivational effect of her financial history, growing up poor and wanting to help her parents, on achieving her goal of being able to provide for her parents.[202] However, Polite's story also inclines toward the presence of other values, shared by herself and her husband, that mediate her behavior on this particular subject of remittances, conditioning Polite's response to her husband's actions regarding consultation on remittances and perhaps on other financial decisions as well. Some of these other values begin to emerge from the stories in the next two sections.

Finally, financial histories suggest the significance of analyzing motivations and agency temporally. Insights into many women's motivations for financial control, and ways of controlling income, show that many important decisions relating to this dimension of

[202] Some studies show that a lack of shared values between partners regarding the role of the wife in managing household income can disadvantage the wife in particular if her choice is not registered about some financial decisions. In a phenomenological study examining the link between couples' financial histories and their financial management practices, Baisden et al. (2018) found that the influence of individuals' financial histories on their intrahousehold financial management hinged on shared values. For instance, Ashby & Burgoyne (2008) found that shared perceptions of ownership among partners can reflect relationship commitment and permanence.

agency can be(come) clearer when analyzed in a broader temporal context that encompasses decisions women: have made in their past; make in their present; and expect to make in their future.[203] While financial histories were essential in helping me find links between some women's past experiences and their current financial practices and perceptions, this was easier to identify among respondents who had shared with me more in-depth information about their past, their current practices, and especially their opinions. Women who were single, like Tarisai, or in a non-couple household, like Tabetha, spoke more freely about their personal views, their past, and how they wanted to change their circumstances through their actions. Other women, like Polite, seemed almost resigned to their situation if they did not possess *strategic* control. In particular, women respondents in couple households described having mainly *executive* control over pooled income, and often indicated this way of managing finances was preferred. These respondents' stories relayed that financial histories, while important to some women, were often not enough to explain how and/or why these women manage income a certain way. Nonetheless, financial history proved to be an enlightening category, at the very least in identifying certain temporal dimensions of agency, for displaying some women's perceptions about their income and their motivations for managing it in certain ways.

As I analyze women's financial control further in the next two sections, it becomes clearer that the women respondents in couple households display mostly *executive* control over household income while one spending category, 'pocket money', stands out as an exception.

[203] I draw here from "Possible Selves" by Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius, an essential study that explains how different conceptions of self-knowledge (or the 'self') form the base of motivations that guide many people's actions (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

5.4.2 Pocket Money

When I asked respondents about how their household income was used and the amounts allocated toward different categories of spending, one particular spending category—what respondents called 'pocket money'—appeared as potentially relevant to financial control especially in couple households. Respondents described pocket money as money that could be spent on personal consumptions such as beer, snacks, transportation, airtime, and entertaining with friends.[204] For some respondents it was a separate allocation category and for others it was incorporated (sometimes creatively) into another spending category.[205] Discussions about pocket money, how much people allocated for themselves and what they spent it toward, emerged specifically with respondents in couple households where incomes were pooled.

Pooling usually occurred first, and then couples would make decisions about how much to allocate to different spending categories. Sometimes, a person would hold back a certain amount—his/her pocket money—before pooling his/her income; other times, respondents described that pocket money allocation would happen after incomes had been pooled. Pocket money was relevant to some respondents' financial control, but not every respondent in a couple household said there were specific amounts dedicated to individual pocket money, suggesting that having pocket money as a category of spending could potentially be determined by a household's financial constraints and/or the relative

[204] Pocket money is similar, or perhaps equivalent, to what some (Ashby & Burgoyne, 2009; Bennett, 2013; Bennett & Sung, 2013, 2014; Vogler et al., 2008) have defined as 'personal spending money' (PSM) in studies on intrahousehold financial management between couples.

[205] A few respondents in couple households said they did not take pocket money, whether directly or indirectly.

influence of individuals within the household to argue for the necessity of allocating pocket money.[206] Among the respondents in couple households, women describe allocating set amounts of pocket money to their husbands on a recurring basis such as per week or per month. Some men and women also take pocket money sporadically, using it only when needed such as to buy a birthday gift, get an extra beer, or give to the church. Antoine, a farmworker living on Elderberry Farm, says occasionally the pocket money he takes weekly runs out too soon. His wife does not work and manages their household income. Sometimes when Antoine runs out of beer on a Saturday, he says he would "steal some money from my wife's purse", adding playfully that, "she gets angry about it, but otherwise we are good".

Most women who manage income in couple households say their partner takes pocket money routinely while less than half of these same women take out regular, or the same amount of, pocket money for themselves. Yolanda, a thirty-two-year-old Zimbabwean respondent from Mbekwini, says she gives her husband about 200 Rands of pocket money every week after they have pooled their wages, and she takes 100 Rands for herself. She says she spends most of it on airtime. When I ask why she does not take the same amount of pocket money as her husband, she shrugs and says "he likes to drink beer". During the interview, Yolanda reveals that beer is the main cause of disagreements between herself and her husband. Especially when he comes home drunk and makes too much noise, Yolanda's neighbors complain to her. But oddly, Yolanda says she argues with him about

[206] The bargaining approach (Agarwal, 1997) described in chapter 1 offers a critical way to argue that 'how much' pocket money one gets or takes can be a strategic decision, and a form of strategic control if it shows that women can argue for more or less pocket money when they need it, but my interviews did not ask about these dynamics of decision-making (women's negotiations for pocket money) so I cannot substantiate this claim through my data.

the noise he makes, not about being drunk, even though she adds, “I don’t like him drinking so much beer”. Yolanda does not speak to him about spending less money on beer because she says he buys it from his pocket money. It initially seems to me that Yolanda is respecting her husband’s choices given that they have mutually agreed to use their pocket money on whatever they wanted.

As I interview Yolanda further however, she reveals that her pocket money is the only money that she spends toward whatever she wants, adding “I don’t have to ask his permission”. Sometimes she saves her pocket money for months in order to help out her parents in Zimbabwe. To Yolanda, challenging her husband’s spending choices would put her own spending choices on the spot, a situation she avoids by not asking him to drink less beer. Her pocket money appears to be the only amount of income over which she has *strategic* control, where she can spend on or save for what she independently chooses to without having to discuss it with her husband. A key revelation here is that *executive* control does not exactly give ‘choice’ to the woman, but rather she is enacting established preferences, whether those are her husband’s preferences mostly (as shown in the next section) or their joint preferences. She has no authority to change how much can get spent on what through *executive* control except what is within the established limits of spending amounts and agreed preferences (again, of her husband’s or both of them). Yolanda's story also shows that pocket money is not used only on personal or day-to-day personal items. It carries strategic meaning because through *strategic* control, motivated by purposeful choice, Yolanda is able to save her pocket money in order to help her parents, something she is not able to afford by simply drawing from her wages or the pooled income.

A number of women respondents did not take pocket money, or only took it on occasions, and their reasons were varied. Some respondents expressed that having tight budgets meant they did not take regular pocket money. Respondents who were single or lived with roommates did not describe allocating a specific amount toward a pocket money category; "I only buy what I need" said a single woman from Mbekwini. But the respondents from non-couple households would still categorize some of their spending toward particular uses such as "saving to send back home to my children"[207] or "buying clothes"[208].

When men earn more than women, there seems to be greater acceptance among some of the women respondents for the husband to take more pocket money, and sometimes more often, than the wife. Going back to Yolanda, who is an off-site farmworker, she earns between 700-800 Rands per week when there is farm work. Her husband is a construction worker who earns 1500 Rands per week, twice Yolanda's regular wages. He has a legal work permit, which she does not have, and a stable job with a construction company. While my earlier question to Yolanda about her reason for not taking as much pocket money as her husband shows her saying his personal expenses (i.e. beer) cost more than hers, it is also possible that she also sees these amounts as fair given their individual contributions to the pooled household income.[209] But this idea that fairness, at least in

[207] Woman respondent, Mbekwini, September 8th 2018.
[208] Woman respondent, Mbekwini, September 8th 2018.
[209] This draws from findings by Ashby & Burgoyne (2009) and Burgoyne (1990), where lower-earning partners (women) in UK households where earnings are pooled feel less entitled to personal spending money.

terms of pocket money amounts, may rely on the relative contributions of women and their partners in a couple household is challenged by some women respondents.

Looking at women respondents who claim to earn the same amount in own income as their partners and contribute to household expenses by pooling their wages, many of these women show a tendency to sometimes relinquish their own pocket money even as they say the husband or boyfriend will take a regular amount in pocket money. As one respondent[210] said, "I manage our money, after we put it together. My husband asks me and I will give him every week to buy something," but she will only take something for herself "if there is money left over" after the regular household expenses are made. There is a possibility here that this respondent may be displaying *strategic* control over the pooled finances if she has the ability to decide how much to give, or not give, in pocket money to her husband. While my interview with her did not ask this, further probing for *strategic* control could ask the respondent if she could decide how much to give her husband, even whether she could decide to give him less than what he asked for and whether he would accept her decision, take the amount he wants to anyway, or negotiate in some way with her. Women who did not take regular pocket money while saying their partners did often described this situation as "normal", "okay", or "fine". The same women also had *executive* control over the household budget, by managing the routine expenses, and did not see the necessity of taking something separately for themselves. Some of the women respondents who did not take regular pocket money said they spent on buying clothes or snacks for the kids, and "make-do" with what is left. As a respondent

[210] Woman respondent, Mbekwini, September 8th 2018.

from Mbekwini said, "I can't say it's my pocket money because I spend money on the kids. I take a little."[211] Her response shows how women's personal expenses could often be assumed within the couple household's budget for other routine expenses (here, money allocated for the kids).

Defining control over pocket money as solely *strategic* or *executive* would be misleading, at least for this group of respondents. As the interviews show, pocket money is firstly a categorization of money itself and emerges particularly in conversations with women whose household income is pooled. The social accounting processes that respondents reveal, the ways they ascribe social meaning to what they use (or are able to use) their pocket money for, shows the fungibility of this category.[212] This fungibility seems feasible through perceptions of ownership[213] that shape whether and how much individual respondents take and how they control their pocket money. It is possible that some women who pool their income in couple households do not view having a set amount of pocket money as necessary, as some of the respondents' quotes above showed that they would simply withdraw from the pooled income when they needed to purchase something for themselves or their children. A potential explanation for this is that

[211] Woman respondent from Mbekwini – Mitchel's Plain, June 9th 2019.
[212] My notion of 'fungibility' and 'social meaning' of money here stems from Viviana Zelizer's (1997) work. My interview data allows me to consider to some extent some of the subjective meanings attached to money and that pooled income does not carry "uncompromising objectivity" and "unconditional interchangeability" (Zelizer 1997: 7). Some research on intrahousehold bargaining (Antman, 2014; Duflo & Udry, 2004), wage sociality for farmworkers in Limpopo (Bolt, 2014), and social grants in South Africa (Ambler, 2016; Duflo, 2003) have been able to tap into some of these questions of money's social meaning from a relational and/or gendered perspective.
[213] For example, Ashby & Burgoyne (2008, 2009), Ashraf (2009), Evertsson & Nyman (2014), and Kamleitner, Marckgott, & Kirchler (2018) discuss the significance of perceptions of ownership in the management of household finances.

respondents may have a collective or joint perception of ownership where they view the pooled income as something 'shared' or 'ours'.[214]

On the other hand, those that see the necessity of taking regular pocket money to use it toward purposes that are more personal and perhaps not mutually shared by one's partner, such as one's own parents, reveal that their perception of ownership for pocket money is demarcated at the individual level. For these latter respondents, pocket money would seem to be the most fungible amount of money they have control over, namely that they could individually spend it toward what(ever) they deemed necessary. Fungibility here suggests that one may show *strategic* control over pocket money when s/he is able to: delineate it from a bigger (e.g., household) income pool; allocate it to the uses she values; and alter or change what it has been used for toward a new use she values. The interviews showed that the fungibility of pocket money also serves to maintain one's social interactions and responsibilities, particularly those beyond one's immediate household. Yolanda and Polite for example tried to maintain their social ties to their parents through remittances. Those that said they used part of their pocket money to donate to the church were managing their religious identity, something that is both individually-held and collectively-maintained when one's donation shapes one's social relations with others in the community who also share the same religious identity.[215]

[214] I do not want to overlook a key factor here, notably that the group of people I interviewed were low-income and several noted that they faced multiple deprivations occasionally, if not regularly, that may make it more relevant for them to focus on meeting their basic survival needs like shelter and food rather than assign extra categories of spending (eg. pocket money) to their incomes.
[215] I discuss more on identity in chapter 6.

Pocket money therefore may indicate *strategic* control for its owner when it is not money that one is simply 'managing'; it is money that can be used toward any purpose one values and therefore reflects one's agency freedom, the ability to pursue one's valued functionings. Its fungibility also suggests how this agency freedom can be linked to one's relational concerns through the social interactions one has and/or seeks to maintain with the uses of this pocket money.

5.4.3 Wife as Husband's Agent

When examining my respondents' accounts about financial control, a pattern emerged in interviews with women who were in couple households and displayed some form of *executive* control. The women often seemed to be acting on behalf of their husband or boyfriend. I analyze this pattern further in this section, by considering the ways women's decision-making and actions appeared to be guided more by their partner's wishes.

Women respondents in couple households, both those who had a job and those who did not have a job at the time of the interview, usually managed at least the food expenses, showing some *executive* control. The amounts to be spent on these routine decisions had generally already been agreed upon between partners, as my respondents would claim. Therefore, women who had *executive* control over certain spending categories were usually working within a budget. The interviews showed that through set budgetary groups particular amounts of income were assigned to certain spheres of spending managed specifically by women. In couple households for instance, women's *executive* control was limited to the particular spending category(ies) they were in charge of. Managing an amount of pooled income did not necessarily mean women could use or plan

to use part of that income, such as the left over after all expenses had been deducted, toward anything they wanted without first discussing it with their partner. Rather, women usually bore the role of safekeeper to physically protect that income. For women farmworkers who were South African, and non-South Africans who had legal work permits, the majority said at least one person in the household, usually the husband, had a bank account in which they deposited money. Some of these women even said they had possession of their husband's bank card and one said she "kept it safe", but many could not use the card except when they had asked their husband for permission.[216]

Managing a set amount of money and ensuring it covered everything that needed to be purchased was not always an easy feat. The sense of accountability that accompanied *executive* control over income often also came with its own brand of stress for women, and this was particularly prominent among unemployed women. As some women who were unemployed at the time I interviewed them argued, "we are feeling pressure. Prices of food is very high. And we don't even know what to cook because there is no nutritious food that we can cook with this money".[217] The stress experienced by some women who did not work and contribute their own wages to the pooled income was reflected in their feelings of inadequacy, where despite having *executive* control over household income these women still described feeling unable to meet their responsibilities. As one unemployed respondent said, denoting the power differential between herself and her husband, "our rights are limited, like we cannot say when our husband's salary comes 'give me that salary'," showing her inability to ask her husband for more money to cover the

[216] Respondent #4, women's focus group discussion, Poppy Rose Farm, July 11th 2018.
[217] Respondent #3, women's focus group discussion, Poppy Rose Farm, July 11th 2018.

expenses she is managing.[218] One respondent, an on-site seasonal farmworker unemployed at the time of the interview, said, "my man paid me this month only 2400 Rands and I must pay for rent, electricity, food, and accounts".[219] These women said they would just accept the amount their husband would give them to spend toward household expenses like groceries and rent, even when low amounts would add pressure for them to pay for everything within the budgeted amount.

Women who worked seemed less anxious about losing their *executive* control over household income than those who did not work. This is not to say that they were less stressed about meeting their household's financial obligations, as most women respondents described this was still a concern. Rather, it may be that women who worked felt less threatened about being denied *executive* control by their husband. I say this because the role the women saw themselves as holding through *executive* control seemed to be something they valued and did not want to lose, and that fit more with their notion of what it meant to be a good wife to their husband. These respondents, as Primadona's and Shamiso's stories below illustrate, describe their role in an *executive* capacity as key to these women's views on the responsibility of the wife.

Primadona is thirty years old and a South African contract farmworker originally from Durban, in Kwazulu-Natal province. Despite being a native Zulu speaker, she speaks to me

[218] Respondent #5, Women's focus group discussion, Poppy Rose Farm, July 11th 2018.
[219] Respondent #4, Women's focus group discussion, Poppy Rose Farm, July 11th 2018. As several from this group of women added, their husbands or boyfriends who were permanent farmworkers at Poppy Rose Farm did not get free housing but had to pay the farmer the costs of rent and electricity. The average salary of permanent male farmworkers at this farm was 3000 Rands, but those who looked after livestock also worked weekends and therefore could earn up to 4500 Rands.

in English and occasionally in Xhosa to my Zimbabwean translator. Her husband is a security officer born and raised in Eastern Cape province. Their combined monthly income is 6500 Rands when she works full time. He has a bank account into which his monthly salary of 3500 Rands gets deposited directly. Since she gets paid in cash at the end of the week, she deposits most of her wages into his bank account after taking out a small amount to buy things for the children at the local spaza shops in Mbekwini.

According to Primadona, a wife's "freedom" has to do with her managing the household income because "as women we must have a voice". But first, Primadona and her husband must agree on the amounts that she would spend toward their household expenses each month, like rent, electricity, and food. If he does not agree about her purchasing something, she says she will not buy it. When I enquire if her husband asks her before taking pocket money for himself, she says, "Of course. Remember, I'm the holder of the bank card". Primadona manages all expenses except her husband's pocket money, which is 300 Rands per month. She says "couples must put their money together, and the wife can manage the money," adding that "it is not okay for couples who do not put their money together". Primadona conveys an odd power dynamic in her relationship with her husband. She says that "the wife's authority[220] is to listen to her husband," meaning she

[220] I use the term *authority* as this is the term that Xhosa-speaking women respondents most often used to describe the ability that either the man or woman of the household had in managing income. Like the quote at the beginning of this chapter illustrates, I found it interesting that women also spoke of their own control over certain spheres of household spending as their *igunya* (authority in Xhosa). On-farm respondents who spoke Afrikaans referred to *mag*, which my interviewees used also in context as 'can', 'must', 'should'. *Ma*g is closely related to *magtig* which my research assistant translated to 'empowerment' and figuratively to 'might' (as in, *with all my might*), rather than *krag*, which my translators understand as force or 'power over' belonging to the possessor of physical strength. This contrasts with how I initially considered women understanding their agency, in terms of power (*Amandla* in Xhosa). So, while my interview questions often referred to the 'power' that women had, my translators and interviewees were speaking in terms of *authority*. Power or *Amandla*, it turns out, in local terms can

cannot make any decision without first consulting him. On the one hand, she says she will not spend toward anything that her husband does not agree on, deferring to his choices. Conversely, she also holds herself as the rightful manager of their household income. She almost infantilizes her husband, discussing the issuing of his pocket money as if *she* 'confers' it upon him. While she seems to be the manager of the routine expenditures, her description of her husband's role portrays him as someone who maintains a disengaged approach to household spending but yet holds 'final say' on all financial decisions.

Shamiso's story, restrained in tone when compared to Primadona when describing her own financial control, is more reminiscent (in tone, rather than substance) of the way many women respondents in couple households described their management of household income. Shamiso is a twenty-year-old Zimbabwean who got married a few months before I interviewed her in 2019. She and her husband are both contract farmworkers working for the same contractor. At the end of each week, they pool their wages together and decide on what must be bought and paid for that week. She does not make decisions about any purchases on her own without asking her husband for permission because she says "it's my husband, it's respect". For expenditures that she manages like groceries and airtime, he must agree to the various amounts of spending she proposes. He usually does not interfere in the actual disbursement of funds toward their various uses, leaving it to Shamiso to complete the necessary activities such as going to the supermarket. Shamiso's husband has final say over how much of their household income gets spent, and on what, while she manages the routine expenses.

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mean many things, from revolutionary notions and political rhetoric (Hirsch, 2002) to historical (Nguni) ideas of 'strength' and 'capacity' and more localized concepts of 'effort' and 'repair' (T. Cousins, 2020).

Shamiso's *executive* rather than *strategic* control over household income is evident not only in her everyday managerial role but specifically when she defers *final say* on spending decisions to her husband. The interviewees overwhelmingly assert that the influence over this last step belongs to the man in couple households. Final say indicates a key aspect of the decision-making process, a sort of last step before enacting a financial decision. Having final say would therefore indicate having *strategic* control over income as it reflects one's ability and authority to decide and influence how much gets spent and on what. That authority also defines the man's (husband's) primacy over decision-making, giving him priority over the woman (wife). None of the women respondents in couple households said they had that final say or authority over household income.

Among both employed and unemployed women respondents in couple households, I still found it challenging to identify clearer ways for women to show *strategic* control beyond pocket money. I began to analyze my interview transcripts for the times I asked my respondents about their reasons for managing (and not managing) income in certain ways to understand more about their thinking processes. Here, I found clues about some aspects of women's *strategic* control that were not as obvious as having final say, or other features discussed in section 5.2.1, but yet alluded to potential ways of women enacting agency. Analyzing women interviewees' thinking processes showed that respondents explained a lot in terms of their relationships. This motivated me to clarify that being attentive to the kinds of interpersonal context—which comprises of one's relationships with others—my respondents described would be key to identifying women's agency enactments. To lay the groundwork for these agency discussions, I first discuss some of

the ways relational elements appear in the interviews before weaving them into a conversation on agency.

5.5 The Interpersonal Context and Agency

Agency, particularly in the literature on women's empowerment and development, has usually taken a very individualistic stance. The element of agency I examine in this chapter, control over income, is one of the prime examples for individualism. My study began with this line of thought, by considering my respondents' control over income as the actions of individuals. However, my later categorization of control as *strategic* and *executive* complicates my initial individualistic view of agency. While the enactment of *strategic* and *executive* control is at the individual level, my interviews show that these forms of control often emerge through processes with relational elements. It seems relevant particularly in couple households, where decisions are usually not being made independently by individuals without consideration to one's position or role in relation to others in that household. But it was also obvious in interviews with women in non-couple households, particularly when considering what they thought as their 'responsibilities' to others. Let me review these with respect to women's financial histories.

Financial histories depict the influence of a number of relational elements in an individual's lifespan, be it through learning from failures of one's past relationship experiences (e.g., Tarisai) or seeking to improve the present and/or future financial situation of one's parents (e.g., Polite). Both Tarisai and Polite show an awareness of their responsibilities to certain others, and their valuation of their relationships with those

certain others play a key role in shaping their decision-making process. Pocket money shows that women respondents make decisions about the use of this money, when it was available, on at least two levels: based on their individual needs and desires; and taking into account relational concerns such as the needs of their children and families. The third category illustrates that women respondents often behave in accordance with their husband's wishes, as the latter's agent, even when it looks like they are independently managing the household income. Interviews indicate how some respondents viewed this *executive* control over income as important to their role, responsibility, and authority as wife. My respondents showed the significance of the relational elements, in what they viewed as their responsibilities and roles in relation to others, when it came to how they managed and perceived income.

If we go back to Sen's CA and its view of agency as being able to pursue what one values, including the agent's interpersonal concerns (see section 2.3), then a relational conception of agency is not only compatible with the CA but also allows us to consider *strategic* factors that may underlie *executive* control over income. That is because Sen's CA includes an understanding of agency as being purposeful (Klein, 2013, 2016; Sen, 1999; Sen & Drèze, 1995) or intentional, being aligned with one's instrumental and/or intrinsic value(s). In this understanding, the person with purposeful agency does not simply have 'choice' and 'decision-making' ability to achieve a specific end, the instrumental aspect, but these components of her agency are themselves meaningful to her, what is

intrinsically valuable. The nature or content of these values may have relational elements that motivate the instrumental and/or intrinsic function of these values.[221]

With most respondents, I was able to ask about their hopes for their futures, and it is in these conversations that interviewees would often reveal some dissatisfaction with financial control, or the way things were. In terms of the CA, a key purpose of development is to increase the capabilities that people have, that they value and have reason to value. If people are not satisfied with the course of their lives and feel unable to pursue futures that support their aspirations, then it is possible that their actions do not fully align with their values.

Going back to my interviews, there are instances showing that a woman with *executive* control over household income may still exercise some form(s) of purposeful agency even under the guise of being her husband's agent if doing so aligns with what she values. Yolanda's story in section 5.4.2 showed her *strategic* control over her pocket money; now I look at her control over her household income. Yolanda migrated to South Africa three years after her husband left Zimbabwe to help him pay for their children's expenses. When he was working alone in Western Cape, he would send her money in Zimbabwe occasionally but not regularly. His accounts at that time were not making sense to her and

[221] In this sense, one's purposeful agency relates to one's autonomy (from SDT), reflecting action that support one's intrinsic values (Ryan & Deci, 2011), and occurs in social settings that "catalyze both within- and between-person differences in motivation and personal growth" (68). This view of autonomy as relational (Freeman, 2011) differs from the liberal political theory definitions that center on individualism and independence. Mackenzie & Stoljar (1999) for instance present a feminist view of 'relational autonomy' that rejects the individualist view and argue that the social nature of human beings demands that we recognize that autonomy can only be experienced within one's social context, considering the relationships one has or wants to have.

she suspected that he was not managing his income properly because “the money he was saying he made and what he was sending to me was not balancing”. Her other reason for coming to Western Cape was to help him manage their income. Now that she is in South Africa and they both work, they pool their wages at the end of each week and Yolanda manages their pooled income. In this role as manager of their income, she sends about 800 Rands per month to their three kids who are living with their paternal grandmother in Zimbabwe. While the money is not a lot for them, she says “it is better than before” she came to South Africa when her children would not even get a monthly remittance on a regular basis. She seems to maintain only *executive* control over their household income because she asks for her husband’s permission before spending any amount on anything.

Yet, her story also indicates purposeful agency when considering the value components, or what I also call *strategic* motivations, of her actions. Her determination to seek work to help provide for her children shows she understands the instrumental significance of her actions to an outcome that matters to her, in this case her children’s wellbeing. Her *strategic* motivations are relationally-orientated because they involve the needs and wellbeing other than Yolanda’s own, through her sense of financial connection and responsibility that she maintains and wants to maintain with her children. She also acquires some sense of control over certain aspects of her life in her ability to manage her household’s income, which includes most of her husband’s wages, even if only in an *executive* capacity. This was a capacity she only gained—and sought to gain—when she chose to migrate to her husband in Western Cape to form a physical household with

him.[222] Her latter choices suggest another relational *strategic* motivation, that of being her husband's agent. A key example of this sense of control is manifested in her ability—as manager of their household income—to send remittances to their children, something that was not guaranteed when she did not have even *executive* control over his income.

Yolanda's story shows that it is possible to pursue one's instrumental value through *executive* control. She also shows that *strategic* motivations can underlie *executive* control where more direct *strategic* control is not possible. But having *executive* control without *strategic* control still appears limiting to one's purposeful agency, at least from my perspective. Sen's CA (1999) posits however that value ought to be judged in the terms of those who hold it, prioritizing the respondents' own perspectives on what is valuable. From the perspectives of my respondents, could it be that some women in couple households, like Shamiso and Primadona, also found intrinsic value in their *executive* role managing income? If so, this role itself would have to represent a need or desire that matters to one's sense of self (which was apparent in Shamiso's and Primadona's cases). Since Sen's CA allows us to view an intrinsic value as what is valuable on its own to the individual, without needing to lead to an outcome, women respondents' valuing of *executive* control—and the intentional pursuit of it—would also suggest their purposeful agency.

[222] Yolanda's story here reflects what Teresa Barnes (1999) discussed as "marital migrancy", where women in Zimbabwe who would migrate to urban centers in part did so to gain access to commodities (here, income) while maintaining patriarchal notions of social reproduction (here, being the husband's agent or subordinate).

For the rest of the chapter, as I present some of my respondents' reasons for valuing—instrumentally and/or intrinsically—*executive* and *strategic* control over income, I also examine their decision-making processes. Specifically, by investigating "the *process* of choice" from a comprehensive outcomes perspective, I observe some of the 'influences' that seem to motivate and constrain the choices and actions that respondents value and/or have reason to value (Baden, 2008; Sen, 1999, p. 320). This also allows me to situate certain relational elements of the respondents' actions and/or choices in two ways: by illustrating respondents' relational concerns as socially-situated; and by discussing potential ways for conceptualizing respondents' agency (i.e. control over income) relationally rather than simply individually.

5.6 Choice Process(es)

In the previous sections, I described some of the ways my respondents managed and viewed income, and specifically categorized individual control over income as *strategic* and *executive*. It became clear from focus group discussions and interviews that my respondents' actions and/or perceptions about control over income extended beyond what they valued for themselves to include other-regarding concerns. Discussions about how income is managed and by whom moreover lend insight into how control over income is not merely an individual's act but rather relational, both in how it was enacted and perceived by respondents.

I have so far suggested that women respondents in couple households usually maintained *executive* rather than *strategic* control over household income. Those with *executive*

control usually had responsibility for managing some area(s) of spending, such as groceries or remittances. While women who were single or living in non-couple households showed *strategic* control over their personal income, those who were married and/or living with a partner showed their personal income was part of the household income and they had less *strategic* control over this pooled income.[223] This lack of *strategic* control was particularly observed in women respondents who said they could (or would) not spend toward something that their husband would not approve of, showing that they would rather choose and/or act in ways that aligned with their husband's preferences. Do these women value this seemingly subordinate position, and if so, why? What about their situations can explain my respondents' choices and behaviors? I consider in the next few sections several possible explanations.

5.6.1 Gender Norms and Relational Concerns

Recall from chapter 2 that the *situation* or context is relationally-constituted and these relations draw meaning from what the group values and considers 'desirable' ways being and doing. Now consider this with regards to a pattern discovered among the women respondents: giving priority in decision-making about household income, displayed in one's 'final say' for example, to the man in couple households. That the majority of women respondents displayed a similarity in their thinking and behavior regarding the primacy of the husband is indicative of a wider (affecting the collective) and deeper (affecting the psyche of individuals) influence: gender-based social norms (or gender norms, for short).

[223] The exception for women who were married and/or living with a partner was in the category of pocket money; these women showed *strategic* control over their pocket money.

Specifically, *strategic* control over household income seems to balance on the gender-ascriptive nature of couple relationships, and the male breadwinner ideal.

Many relationships, such as husband/wife (or boyfriend/girlfriend) are gender ascriptive, where "to describe the position is to describe the gender" (Whitehead, 2006, p. 25). This means that these relationships, socially constituted, also carry implications (implicit/explicit) about the roles and responsibilities that highlight the significance of gender relations in particular societies. The male breadwinner ideal is one such socially-constituted norm that positions the man as the primary earner of the household and women as the primary caretakers of the home (Zuo & Tang, 2000).[224] In a context where women, often out of financial necessity, take up employment, the breadwinner ideal often relegates women to second-class providers within their households while maintaining relational hierarchies.[225] Vogler (1998) notes that adherence to male breadwinning means that even if individuals in couples believe in equal access to and control over household income, they may still accept the man's "legitimate right" to have more say in financial decisions and more personal spending money (701).

[224] The basis of many analyses using individual income and control over money as indicators of power and influence within households emerged from influential studies on resource theory (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). The first line of reasoning of resource theory argued that the partner who earned the larger income and contributed the most resources to the household also held the most power to dominate the decision-making process (Ferree, 1990; Moor & Kanji, 2019). Similar studies argued a second line of reasoning that women who worked had more power than those who did not (Safilios-Rothschild, 1976), and the more wives had their own sources of income, such as by engaging in paid employment, the more it would balance power relations with their husbands (Blood and Wolfe 1960). Specifically, these studies suggest that how much income a woman earns and could earn (her outside options) will influence how much control she has over household income now (Meurs & Ponthieux, 2015).

[225] Sardenberg (2010) confirms the limited effect of paid work on women's intrahousehold decision-making in Brazil, which she links to women's adherence to *pas de familia* (male breadwinner) and *dona de casa* (housewife) notions. In Europe, the appearance of the male breadwinner ideal has been found more prevalent in households where couples' contributions to pooled income are unequal and where women express higher satisfaction with their partner's, rather than their own, full-time employment status (De Henau & Himmelweit, 2013).

The male breadwinner ideal is also an entrenched facet of the patriarchal system, which gives social legitimacy to views of men as the primary holders of power within society and women as inferior to men. From what I gathered through interviews, KIIs, and observations, unequal gender dynamics—a dominant facet of patriarchy—permeates daily life for agricultural workers living both on and off the farms, specifically in the actions and attitudes that show that the man's authority dominates and the woman is subordinated.[228] However, if patriarchal notions are (partly) responsible for supporting unequal gendered dynamics and power relations, some scholars have noted that women may also reclaim some of their power (or agency) by 'bargaining with patriarchy'.[229] Bargaining with patriarchy is a covert and/or implicit form of resistance to male dominance or action (Agarwal, 1997). Rather than changing or explicitly defying an entire social system, women who bargain with patriarchy are said to overtly accept their subordinated role(s) while performing implicit or hidden acts that change how they

[228] Secondary literature on farmworkers in the region has also highlighted gender relations and/or inequalities. Pamela Scully (1997) provides an elaborate discussion of gendered power relations on South Africa's commercial farms from a historical perspective. Teresa Barnes' (1999) historiography discusses several aspects of gender relations and social reproduction in colonial Zimbabwe, highlighting for instance how male notions of patriarchy came to define the meanings of respectability for women. Rather than patriarchy per se, most research about power dynamics on large commercial farms in South Africa have considered *paternalism*, which Bolt (2015) defines as "a recognisable *ideal*, drawing explicitly on racialised, generalised authority and responsibility to subordinates" (160). Rutherford (2001) brings a gendered perspective to paternalism in his analysis of "domestic government" on Zimbabwean farms in the 1990s, recognizing for instance patriarchal norms and practices that favor men farmworkers' labor over women's, where men's and women's labor are never treated the same, and providing rare insights into women's lives (in the story of Mai Chido, for instance) on the male-dominated farm space. Kritzinger & Vorster (1996) extend the paternalistic view of the 'farm family' by looking at how women farmworkers' work and lives are structured by and through patriarchal gender relations. Addison (2013) discusses farmworkers' gendered survival strategies, which is complemented by Hall (2013) who analyzes the lives, motivations, constraints, and options of migrant women farmworkers on farm compounds in some parts of South Africa.

[229] Kandiyoti (1988) coined the term "bargaining with patriarchy".

experience their gendered role(s).[230] Thus, women who 'bargain' can be viewed as purposeful agents seeking to improve their lives within unjust systems.

Considering patriarchal bargaining in the context of my study for example, a woman's position—and self-positioning—as her husband's agent may in some cases be a covert form of agency. My interviews suggest that some women farmworkers do not simply 'accept' their subordinate position in the patriarchal structure. Some women respondents also showed that sometimes they were subtly redefining the contours of their individual financial agency through choices of strategic consequence, such as purposefully opting to live away from some or all of their children, as in the case of Yolanda, in order to improve their earning capacity and gain *executive* control over their household income. Yolanda's and Polite's stories showed that they were accepting the 'primacy of the husband' in decision-making while also underlining a sense of agency that accompanied these women's *executive* control.[232]

[230] A number of empirical works examine women's covert forms of resistance to their subordination, often lying beneath seemingly adherent overt behaviors (Agarwal, 1995; Gram et al., 2018; Kandiyoti, 1988; Moore, 2020). For example, Eroglu (2009) demonstrates implicit bargaining in her study on how wives in Turkey's poor households compensate for male financial dominance through hidden savings mechanisms, 'secret kitties', while overtly behaving as complacent wives. By doing so, women are covertly 'bargaining with patriarchy' through what Bolak (1997) calls 'traditional defiance' (Eroglu 2009: 70). Gatwiri & Mumbi (2016) also identify implicit bargaining in their study on women in Kenya who used their silence as a tool of traditional defiance, to express dissatisfaction with their husbands. There, women displayed a covert form of agency in relation to their perceptions of the 'self' wielding bargaining power through silence. But there are also narratives within the gender and development literature, as a review by Cornwall et al. (2008) discuss, depicting conceptions of women in terms such as 'survivors' and/or "victims", "those with curtailed choices", and 'oppressed' (Cornwall et al., 2008, p. 2) without critically examining the ways women subvert, resist, and strategize within their circumscribed situations.

[232] These women are bargaining with patriarchy by overtly accepting their subordinate role to their husband in decision-making but are changing the way they experience that role through the less conspicuous pursuit of what is meaningful to them.

The presence of underlying strategic motivations for pursuing *executive* control over income may suggest that some of these women purposefully seek to be their husband's agent for household income management while implicitly bargaining with patriarchy by self-defining what this role means to them. Rather than changing the current system of power relations that favors male authority, women who 'bargain with patriarchy' accept the system and its gendered rules, enacting its gendered scripts, but are tactically seeking their individual advantage within it through intentional or purposeful action. At the risk of being categorized as social deviants if they do not pool their income with their partners' income, women are 'doing gender' by behaving according to what is considered their traditional gender roles, as (seemingly) submissive wives.[233] Being the husband's agent however, even when it is a purposeful action, is still likely to reflect women's own patriarchal views. Identifying patriarchal bargaining is therefore not straightforward (and I am at risk of having oversimplified it in my discussion); it requires looking at and through women's 'creative' and/or seemingly 'routine' actions, and demands a deeper and context-specific understanding of women's agency and valuation of their socially-defined gendered roles.

While I have argued that 'bargaining' with patriarchy may at times be a sign of purposeful agency, I also find it necessary to critique it as women's *complicity*[234] in maintaining

[233] See also Bittman, England, Sayer, Folbre, & Matheson (2003) and Himmelweit, Santos, Sevilla, & Sofer (2013) for how women enact their gender-appropriate roles in the management of household income. The term 'doing gender' is West's and Zimmerman's (1987).

[234] The term 'complicity' is from *The Second Sex*, where Simone de Beauvoir (1949, 2015) posits that women are often complicit in maintaining their unfreedom, choosing to remain dependent on men due to the social, psychic, and material benefits of doing so (see James (2003); C. Knowles (2018, 2019)). My argument attempts to extend de Beauvoir's by describing certain social processes and mechanics of dependence that shape a woman's choices and the forms of her complicity.

systems, rules, and institutions that perpetuate man's superiority and woman's inferiority through her dependence on man. As the interviews showed, women sometimes seemed to be holding themselves back, at the individual level, from actions that could potentially grant them more *strategic* control. While 'bargaining with patriarchy' shows women who are acting within the patriarchal system in ways that aim to bring about some change to the way(s) they individually experience living under that system, the fact that their actions do not overtly challenge the system alerts us that their non-challenging positions—such as 'respect' for one's husband, keeping one's husband happy—is evidence of what they view as appropriate behavior. 'Complicity' presents a woman as an active bearer of that patriarchal system, especially when notions of appropriate behaviors she has internalized and professes show she has come "to accept the legitimacy of the unequal order and becomes an implicit accomplice" (Sen, 1990a, p. 126).

But complicity can also directly relate to agency if we consider how the latter "is most influenced by a person's sense of obligation and perception of legitimate behavior" (Sen, 1990a, p. 127). Since 'complicity' (particularly the Simone de Beauvoir brand) tends to have a negative connotation, to avoid labeling my respondents in that indiscriminate negative light I use the term *self-limitation* instead. I suggest that self-limitation is another aspect of women's choice process. Self-limitation is not a descriptor for those without agency; it can in fact reflect the woman as an agent aware of her capabilities, and who I

posit *self-limits* or *restrains* her agency because she deems that doing so will benefit her.[235]

5.6.2 Self-Limitation and its Benefits

What is this self-limiting behavior, and how does it occur? If a woman is self-limiting what she can do and pursue, what her self-limitation demands, then she must be aware of the choices she has, what Sen calls her *opportunity freedom* or set of real options. Considering the specific focus of this chapter on 'control over income', self-limitation would first need to imply that women respondents are aware or conscious of the types (or options) of control they may have, and specifically choose between *executive* control, *strategic* control, and no control. Thereafter, self-limitation would entail valuing those options, and identifying their relative benefits. Once that valuational exercise occurs, a fair assumption would be that a woman has chosen the option whose benefit she deems relatively more valuable.[236] Examining the interviews, single women and those in non-couple households showed they had an awareness of *strategic* control over income as having complete influence over all or part of one's income. Those in couple households recognized their

[235] Self-limitation, my re-writing of de Beauvoir's 'complicity', is directly related to similar existing conceptualizations of women's agency such as: self-interest (Agarwal, 1997); bundling (U. Narayan, 2001); inappropriately adaptive preferences (Khader, 2011); self-subordination (Khader, 2014); self-deception (Han-Pile, 2020); impositions (Knowles, 2021). Agency in my thesis would seem also closely related to 'autonomy' in Ryan and Deci's (2000, 2011) Self Determination Theory (SDT), where a person is autonomous when he/she is able to self-regulate his/her actions according to his/her values. In particular, among SDT's analytical categories for motivation or 'regulation' (e.g., Intrinsic, extrinsic, introjected), autonomous action can be identified along a spectrum. Self-limitation therefore, when considering it occurs when a woman consider the costs-benefits of her actions and acts in order to maximize her choice (choosing what they deem is 'better' among the options they have), may sometimes reflect what SDT calls her 'introjected' regulation if she makes certain choices in order to gain the approval of others and/or avoid shame and guilt, even though those choices do not really align with her values.

[236] I say 'relatively' because my respondents—on account of multi-dimensional factors such as limited education, poverty, class or ethnic status, etc.—have limited capabilities and may not be able to take into account a wider range of benefits that are associated with the options. Their choices therefore are constrained by factors—structural and personal—that also limit their capabilities.

executive control, sometimes with underlying *strategic* motivations, over household income and often showed it was their preferred outcome than having no control at all.

The quotes and stories earlier in this chapter have illustrated in numerous ways how household decision-making for some respondents was also not mutual, especially when women in couple households showed they prioritized their husband's decision-making authority above their own authority in matters relating to the household income. For instance, the man's *authority* over household income was encased in women respondents' ideas of 'respect' and 'husband', and in what they viewed as their duties as 'good women' and 'wives'. When women consciously limit themselves from expressing *strategic* control, such as by relinquishing 'final say' over the use of household income, a logical (agency-supporting) explanation would suggest that they have identified some benefit(s) to doing so. In the case of my respondents, the relevance of benefits to self-limiting behavior also allows me to frame women's judgments of these benefits in terms of what they may possibly value other than *strategic* control, such as deference to the *authority* of the man of the house over household income.[237] I show two ways that the benefits to self-limitation, specifically by deferring to the authority of the man, emerged in the interviews: physical benefit with instrumental value; and non-physical (or psychological) benefit with instrumental and (arguably) intrinsic value.

[237] For some of the interviewees, especially those who were unemployed, financial deference was also accompanied by clear financial dependence on men. I discuss more about women's financial dependence on men, its sources and expressions, in chapter 2 in the context of Simone de Beauvoir's argument in *The Second Sex* on women's complicity in restraining their own freedoms.

To illustrate the physical benefit of self-limitation, I highlight the story of Sibusisiwe. A thirty-six-year-old South African, Sibusisiwe works as a contract farmworker. Her husband is a Zimbabwean and a truck driver. She gets paid in cash while his salary is transferred to his bank account. Married for seventeen years, they have four children together, two of whom live with her "in a shack" in Mbekwini and the others with her mother in Johannesburg. They have a somewhat loose income pooling arrangement in place where he is responsible for paying for major expenses like rent and electricity while she, when she has work and earns an income, uses her earnings for groceries and remittances to their children. She says she still has to discuss with him each week about how she was going to use their income, especially during times when she does not earn enough on her own to bear the full expenses. Sibusisiwe is very afraid of her husband, describing her marital relationship as tough due to money problems and his drinking habits. A particular point of concern for her is her husband's violence toward her when she does not ask him for permission before spending her income.

> Sometimes I want to spend my own money, like buy my parents something. My parents are not working. But he [the husband] sometimes doesn't allow it. I'm supposed to ask him and he doesn't always allow it. So I send money sometimes without asking him, then he beats me. He is too much violence.[238]

For Sibusisiwe, the instrumental value of deferring to her husband's authority is a very palpable, unmistakably physical, benefit[239]—and her preferred outcome—of not being

[238] Off-site respondent from Mbekwini – Mitchel's Plain, June 9, 2019.
[239] It is also possible to reverse this benefit view and present this story within an argument about the costs of no self-limitation.

beaten.[240] But being in this situation was also a choice she felt constrained by her circumstances to make, even though it was deliberate. She reveals that her husband used to beat her even when they both used to live in Johannesburg. The main reason she admits to coming to Mbekwini is to make sure that he gives her money for her children. She tells me that since she moved to Mbekwini, she is better able to control his income. Although she is unhappy with her situation, she bears it to ensure that her children are financially provided for. GBV, and the situation of structural violence it emerges from, and is constituted of (see section 4.2.2), is an important aspect of the context in which Sibusisiwe's life is entrenched.[241] Her story begins to show how domestic abuse coupled with poverty and her responsibility to care for her family impact her agency freedom. While we can deduce that she would rather not be beaten, a functioning she values, she also reveals constraints and responsibilities she has that make it difficult for her to avoid getting beaten by her husband.

SDT offers a way to deconstruct her agency freedom by examining her autonomy. Her situation suggests she has little autonomy, for some of her actions—such as not sending

[240] Wife beatings (Choi and Ting 2008) and other forms of gender-based violence toward women is rampant in South Africa (Adebayo, 2020; Dangor, Hoff, & Scott, 1998). Choi & Ting (2008) find evidence of physical violence in intimate relationships being attributed specifically to the imbalance in resource contributions (economic dependence of the wife on husband) and power dynamics (male-provider norm) within households. Even as President Ramaphosa recognizes violence against women is as big of a pandemic as Covid-19 in 2021, little shows this violence to be abating. Moore (2020) found that South African some women in Eastern Cape who experience husband beatings have begun to challenge male violence by appealing to the state, arguing against the pervasive patriarchal domination they experience, but she is one of the rare voices denoting a change. I discussed more about the context of violence in South Africa in chapter 4.

[241] Sibusisiwe's experience also reveals how violent masculinities (still) shape gendered interactions, even in a relation of assumed and/or seemingly mutual interdependence like marriage. Breckenridge points to the racial nature of violence for men in South Africa during apartheid. Both white and black men, abiding by respective norms of behavior, were socialized to accept that being violent "was central to the definition of masculinity for both groups" (Breckenridge, 1998, p. 674). In the post-apartheid era, violence in and outside workplaces have and continue to impact gendered relations, mutating to a 'crisis of masculinity' often blamed on high male unemployment (Hunter, 2010).

her parents money even when she wants to—have obvious external motivations, where she is behaving in this way to avoid punishment from her husband. To an outsider, her complacency at times may make her appear as dependently autonomous, guided by the decision of a husband whose wishes align with hers. Her story however clearly demonstrates she is self-limiting her agency under coercion, her behavior determined by the threat of punishment. The form of agency she demonstrates therefore, by self-limiting herself, is underlined by a stark sense of disempowerment as she lacks the ability to pursue what would make her feel truly autonomous.

To illustrate the non-physical benefits of self-limitation, insights emerge in some of the earlier stories of this chapter. Going back to Yolanda, having *executive* control had instrumental value because it was her preferred outcome given her limited options. Yolanda's self-limitation points to an underlying valuation of having some (sense of) control rather than no control at all over household finances. To Primadona, there was intrinsic value to the wife having *executive* control because that is what she believed to be the responsibility of the wife. To Shamiso, the 'respect' that she displayed by deferring to her husband's authority over household income held intrinsic value to her because it represented what she believed and valued to be her role as a wife.

These women respondents show they routinely assess the alternative choices at their disposal, or available within situations known to them. Their arguments for making particular decisions (over alternatives) indicate they actively evaluate the relative risks and benefits of particular choices. But each woman's cost-benefit analyses are mapped onto a set of values, or her perceptions of the latter, that define the choices she makes and

which can only be enabled through her capabilities. This suggests that her perceptions of her own values define the forms her agency takes in her enacted capabilities. By accepting and reinforcing their subordination to men's decisions, women respondents may not only have internalized this self-limiting behavior, but perhaps also perpetuate their self-limitation through their actions.

Considering these women's choices and actions within their interpersonal spheres, it is possible to argue that a woman's internalized self-limitation has not so much denied or robbed her of agency, but rather adapted its meaning by (re)defining her values relationally. The woman who views herself as primarily her husband's agent has defined her individual agency in a particular way that she believes aligns with her values. Like an extended or extra arm to her husband, she carries out her duties and accepts his authority because in doing so she is helping herself, an intrinsic value, by helping him. But if she is also purposefully aligning her behaviors and values to the values of her community, in her social context, then she has instrumental value in also trying to abide by what is viewed as appropriate of her in her particular social context. In her self-inquiry, which is socially embedded within the relations she maintains (or hopes to maintain) with those around her, she is more self-conscious of him than of those preferences that may be unbound to him. By prioritizing his wellbeing, specifically his decision-making authority over her own, she delays the task of differentiating herself from him in a non-relational sense and places his self-respect above (or equal) to her own.[242]

[242] This circumstance may not necessarily suggest inequality and her oppression if she, through self-inquiry of her beliefs in her own values, finds that the conditions for her wellbeing are the same (or very similar) to the conditions for his wellbeing. But this assumes that both partners have relayed to each other their true values, that these values are compatible, and that they both agree on the means to pursue their

Lastly, by defining values relationally, I note that self-limitation does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in context. Like an action occurs in a setting, the processes that shape individual choices, behaviors, and perceptions about the action emerge within specific contexts. A contextual approach is in line with the capability approach because Sen (1999) understood the role, and sometimes constraining effects, of social influences on individuals' choices and abilities. Sen (2009) posits in *The Idea of Justice* that if "women in traditionally sexist societies come to accept that women's position has to be standardly inferior to men, then that view—shared by individual women under social influence—is not, in any sense, independent of social conditions" (245). Thus, the capability view (Sen, 1999, 2009) demands that we view the actions and choices of an individual in the context of his/her societal relations. Doing so can allows us to identify and examine a person's choices by considering the range of opportunities available to him/her, the ways he/she can or cannot pursue and achieve the opportunities she values, and the reasons that may explain why she values certain choices over others.

Undoubtedly, certain social settings can be unfailingly coercive (Khader, 2011; Sen, 1999), and in such a *situation* it would be hard to prove the agent's active role in self-limitation (Knowles 2019).[243] Self-limitation and the meanings women attach to it derive from and

mutually shared goals. The circumstance I just described however requires a partnership of equals, where the vagaries of daily life do not distort their self-inquiry into their values based on presumed fundamental gender differences. That circumstance therefore cannot be assumed a priori and needs empirical verification.

[243] Both Susan James' (2003) and Knowles' (2019) reading of de Beauvoir conclude that if women accept being dominated and not struggle against it, it could very well be that "their dependent situation forms them into compliant subjects…[because] woman's "whole education conspires to bar her from paths of revolt and adventure"" (de Beauvoir, cited in Knowles 2019: 246).

within the *situation* that defines this self-limiting agency. Purposeful agency is constrained by a limited number of pursuable possibilities. Without the option of considering other valued possibilities, what Sen would call the existence of 'real opportunities', one has to acknowledge the likelihood of constrained choices and adaptive preferences.[244] In such a case, a woman's self-limitation in maintaining a *situation* that ties her into financial dependence on a man (or men) reflects constrained choices that place further limits on her agency freedom and achievements, and her empowerment. She sees her actions in maintaining the current system, the way things are, as unavoidable and therefore adapts her preferences to what is suitable within and given her *situation*. To Sibusisiwe for instance, the constrained options I, as an outsider, can observe are to: obey her husband and avoid being beaten, while potentially gaining some *executive* control over household income, or; disobey her husband and risk getting beaten (or worse), and potentially lose her sense (or actual) control over household income. Self-limitation can also be understood in terms of adaptive preferences (APs), or the choices a person makes after adjusting his/her expectations in light of what he/she considers feasible (i.e. after considering the consequences of their choice).[245] Recognizing and understanding the role of adaptive preferences, or "this adjustment of people's aspirations to feasible possibilities," is also important to an analysis of individual agency as their presence alerts us to "a process that preempts the choice" (Elster, 1982, p. 219).[246]

[244] On the issue of constrained choices and adaptive preferences from a capabilities view, I consider for example: Clark, 2012; Iversen, 2003; Khader, 2011, 2012; Teschl & Comim, 2005; and Sen, 1999.

[245] These are not routine choices, but choices of strategic significance which carry consequential weight (Kabeer, 2021).

[246] My goal is not to label any of my respondents' actions as adaptive preferences, but rather to argue that acknowledging the presence of APs widens the conceptualization of agency by highlighting potential/actual effects of one's *situation* on one's choices and choice process.

Self-limitation should be examined as self-limiting action that is intentional and therefore reflecting what Klein (2013, 2016) has called purposeful agency, albeit under highly constrained situations. It is purposeful by having instrumental and/or intrinsic value, which aligns with the capability view. It is also purposeful in the sense that it suggests the individual, who possesses a sense of agency, will act with deliberate intent after she has considered her options within given constraints, calculated the relative costs and/or benefits of her potential choices, and enacted a choice that is relatively more valuable to her. Specifically, her choice indicates that she has engaged in *choice maximizing* behavior, or "choosing an alternative that is not judged to be worse than any other" given her options (Sen, 1997, p. 746). I suggest 'deliberate intent' is significant to one's sense of agency, even within oppressive situations. For women's control over income, deliberate intent implies the agent has conducted a mental calculation of value given her options, and will pursue choice maximization by choosing and/or acting upon the option that she deems relatively more valuable and/or feasible to her given her *situation*.

5.6.3 Gender Needs and Agency

The situation of women farmworkers—from poverty-stricken households, violent behaviors from husbands and/or male bosses, limited job opportunities, tenure insecurity, and more—alert us to the constrained environment within which they live, work, and make decisions. It is precisely why where the identification of instances of agency within women's processes of decision-making has been possible, as shown using women's subjective perceptions in this chapter, these should be taken with a grain of salt (i.e. with certain contextual specificities in mind), as one's mental conditioning and/or adaptation

can serve to adjust one's expectations in unequal and oppressive circumstances (Sen, 1999, p. 62-63). For many of the women respondents, self-limitation is a 'practical gender need'.

Women's practical needs "are those needs which are formulated from the concrete conditions women experience, in their *engendered* position within the sexual division of labor, and deriving out of this their practical gender interests for human survival" (Moser, 1989, p. 1803. Emphasis in original). It is the women themselves that identify their practical needs, what they deem necessary to survive in their particular context. Rather than challenge prevailing structures of gender subordination, practical needs emerge from/within these structures (Moser, 1989) and are women's ways of coping with them. Conversely, women's 'strategic gender interests' are those needs that are necessary for women to overcome their subordination to men, resulting in an "alternative, more equal and satisfactory organization of society than that which exists at present, in terms of both the structure and nature of relationships between men and women" (Moser, 1989, p. 1803). To not confuse with the term *strategic* control I examine in this chapter, I henceforth refer to strategic gender needs as 'empowerment needs'. This terminology variation does not change the meaning because overcoming gendered subordination (strategic gender needs) implies processes of change leading to expansions in agency, and this transformative nature of strategic gender needs aligns with empowerment (as defined in chapter 1). It became clear from the key informants[249] I interviewed that self-limitation—in this case, pursuing (and sometimes, preferring) *executive* control—is a

[249] These were: Carmen Louw, Andries du Toit, Wendy Pekeur, and Mercia Andrews.

practical need for many women farmworkers; it is what allows them to survive with(in) constrained and/or oppressive situations.

As noted in chapter 4, the precarity and insecurities of farmworkers' lives is further amplified by the gendered nature of the structural and physical violence that women experience. Most women farmworkers, living on or off the farms, are seasonal workers without permanent jobs; this makes many of them to feel they do not deserve *strategic* control "as the man is still the breadwinner when she's at home unemployed" (Pekeur, 2022). Furthermore, "due to job and tenure insecurity, South African farmwomen are more dependent on men," adds Carmen Louw from WFP, and "men therefore have more [strategic] control over income they generate." Women are usually managing—through *executive* control—money allocated for food, but this has become extremely difficult with food insecurity so high among farmworkers (Andrews, 2022). For some households, receiving child support grants and/or old-age pensions can allay but not remove their financial worries. Nevertheless, social grants (especially for child support) play an essential function in many farmworker households, affecting the bargaining dynamics by allowing women some say in financial decision-making. Even though the monthly grant of 400 Rands per child is not even sufficient to feed one child, it is still important for what women end up being able to control as a result of this contribution to the household income because "if she didn't have this [grant], then the situation would be worse in terms of poverty and hunger" (Andrews, 2022). Meanwhile, many men already have a portion of their incomes that goes to pay for alcohol even before other household expenses have been prioritized and which the women cannot touch (Andrews, 2022). Some of these women are in such poverty that some days they do not have anything to eat, except

maybe porridge (Pekeur, 2022; Andrews, 2022). It is unsurprising that many farmworker households end up in very high debt, with women buying household items and clothes for themselves and their children on credit and/or borrowing from loan sharks (Andrews, 2022).

These anecdotes reveal certain aspects of the *situations* that women farmworkers are in which also indicate the ways they are constrained by (or 'victims' of) oppressive and gendered circumstances. They suggest that a more critical and contextualized scrutiny of people's preferences can also "reveal the many ways in which habit, fear, low expectations, and unjust background conditions deform people's choices and even their wishes for their own lives" (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 114). Recognizing people's constraints, contexts, and motivations can contribute to what Sen called a more 'comprehensive' understanding of people's agency. The accounts from the respondents in this chapter show that differentiating control over income can reveal how that control can have intrinsic and/or instrumental value to individual women, even those in potentially oppressive situations. By allowing the women to explain, in their own ways, what their way(s) of controlling income means and entails to them, I have tried to present the reasons that they may have for complying with potentially oppressive situations. These reasons, I have shown, are justified by an individual woman who, through her cost-benefit reasoning process, has chosen her practical needs, what she deems relatively more valuable given her situation. But for an empowerment pathway to be identified, defined, and enabled for women, it is necessary that women in positions subordinate to men are not only aware of this subordination but also have the ability to act in ways that question and/or overcome their subordination (Kabeer, 1999; Khader, 2014; Sen, 1999). If the goal

is 'change'—such as policy, social norms, behaviors—then identifying women farmworkers' practical needs and empowerment needs are essential; only then can change-makers envision and create "conditions in which people have real opportunities of judging the kind of lives they would like to lead" (Sen, 1999, p. 63). These real opportunities advance agency freedom by facilitating the identification and pursuit of alternative preferences, helping fulfil both the practical and empowerment needs of women, and opening the possibility of imagining and realizing different capabilities.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter considered the possibility of distinguishing between *strategic* and *executive* control over income when examining one type of agency—control over income—among women farmworkers in the Western Cape. My analyses suggest it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between women's *strategic* and *executive* control over income, but some patterns are noticeable. For women who were not part of a couple household, *strategic* control meant being able to have complete control over their income and using (or planning to use) it toward something they desired and/or valued. This finding though, that single women have greater *strategic* control over income, should not be decontextualized from the material realities and social taboos that make being a single-woman farmworker risky, difficult, and/or unwanted (chapters 6 and 7 reveal more of these gendered dynamics). For women in couple households where income was pooled, some *strategic* control was observed when women were able to successfully influence some aspect of the household income allocation process such as the categories and amounts spent on specific goods and services. The interviews with women suggested that

men's control over income in couple households was more indicative of *strategic* control through the man's primacy over decision-making and his final say. *Executive* control referred more to the management of income, whether individual or household, for day-to-day expenditures. This type of control appeared more relevant for women who managed the pooled income in couple households. The interviews suggested that this type of control was usually valued and pursued by women in couple households, but it did not indicate one's ability to change the amounts and/or uses of the income assigned to specific categories

I then turned to examine what my respondents' actions and perceptions indicated about what they valued and intentionally pursued, and whether (and how) these were in line with a purposeful agency view. Women who actively pursued *executive* control over income in a couple household may be guided by underlying *strategic* motivations. These *strategic* motivations in turn indicated that women may pursue specific ways of being and doing that may seem to limit their agency (such as not having *strategic* control) but nonetheless allowed them to pursue something they valued, such as having a sense of control over one's household income rather than no control at all. Seeking to understand the choice process(es) which could explain why women respondents would value what seemed to me as limiting to their agency, I provided a view of women's *self-limiting* behavior. An examination of gender norms, the benefits of self-limitation, and gender needs as key elements of the choice process broadened the contextual understanding of women's motivations, actions, and perceptions. 'Self-limitation' or self-limiting behavior could potentially portray the individual woman as an agent aware of her capabilities, and who self-limits her agency when she has assessed that doing so will be beneficial for her.

Furthermore, the imagined and/or experienced benefits of self-limitation can have instrumental and/or intrinsic value to particular respondents and which can in turn may motivate its pursuit.

These findings showed examples of what could arguably be viewed by some as women's financial dependence on men; these included the primacy of the husband in household decision-making about income (having 'final say'), and women respondents who felt they needed to pool their income with that of their husband's. But these behavioral patterns, when viewed through the lens of self-limitation, may not simply be a matter of habit when they indicated women's personal, relational, and/or social concerns. Self-limitation works by allowing women to pursue what they deem valuable, their practical gender needs, albeit in a context of limited possibilities. Therefore, there may be more than a financial motivation for women valuing their deference to, and/or dependence on, men, as discussed earlier in section 5.6.1. While *strategic* and *executive* control was analyzed at the individual level, these categories of control occurred and emerged through decision-making (choice) processes within these women's interpersonal contexts.

Throughout this chapter, it was possible to identify women's agency—or its enactments, such as through *strategic* and *executive* control—in certain instances. The analysis suggests that even where women's experiences and perceptions reveal instances of agency, the potential of this agency to move toward empowerment can be limited by highly constrained material circumstances. Arguably, many women's voices in this chapter were also coated by the language of the traditional, concealing socially-rooted gendered inequalities that further limit women's agency. These internalized, socially-embedded

notions over what women can(not) and should (not) do/be are further examined in chapter 7. In the next chapter, I continue exploring choice processes where I argue that an analysis of women's agency also ought to consider how individuals' identities influence their value calculations and hence their choices and actions.

Chapter 6. Articulating Value: An Identity-Based Approach to Women's Agency in their Decisions to Work

"Working at the farms, it's not so respected. Those who clean the houses for white people, that job is more respected."[251]

One of my arguments so far is that relational elements are important to my respondents' agency enactments. In chapter 5, I examined women farmworkers experiences and perceptions about financial control and showed that their relational considerations in decisions and actions have instrumental and/or intrinsic significance. In this chapter, I continue the task of conceptualizing individual agency by considering one aspect of my respondents' choice processes: their identities. I focus here on another dimension of agency—decisions to work.[252] In chapter 1, I noted that when we begin to understand what matters to the individual—with a focus on the self-reported, or subjective aspects (see section 1.1)—we can then assess if the act of choice in a particular situation holds

[251] Alma, off-site respondent – Mbekwini.

[252] I created the dimension 'decisions to work' from the indicators of agency listed in the WEAI in the domain 'production' (the latter aim to measure the agency of women smallholder farmers in decision-making). Since my respondents are not (to my knowledge) smallholder farmers but rather engaged in mostly agricultural wage labor and a few (had) engaged in entrepreneurial/self-employed (not farm related) activities, I sought to consider their decision to work itself as a dimension of agency.

intrinsic and/or instrumental significance to the individual; that is, her decision helps her achieve what she values and/or has reason to value. This understanding of meaningful choice also assumes that a woman's participation in the workforce—the choice analyzed here—may not directly reflect her agency (Chang et al., 2020; Duflo, 2012; Heath & Jayachandran, 2016; Weidel, 2018).

Wage work, or earning an independent income, has the potential to increase women's bargaining power within the household (see section 1.1.3.1), such as by improving their fall-back positions and/or raising the valuation of their contributions (Agarwal, 1997). For women farmworkers in Western Cape, this agency is highly constrained in contexts of extreme deprivation, inadequate access to different jobs and/or skills training, geographic isolation, limited social networks, and restrictive social norms and expectations (Andrews, 2022; Claasen & Lemke, 2019; Louw, 2022; WFP, 2020). In Western Cape (and broader South Africa), the absence of a job-rich rural economy, a casualizing farm workforce, low educational achievement (most of the interviewees having not completed secondary schooling), and a high-risk environment limits livelihood options for landless and/or tenure-insecure farmworkers (du Toit, 2004; Kruger et al., 2006; Mkhize, 2012). As one of the most marginalized groups in South Africa, farmworkers regularly experience seasonal hunger driven by their un(der)employment (Claasen & Lemke, 2019; Devereux & Tavener-Smith, 2019). Additionally, these workers live in environments with rampant alcoholism, violence, sexual harassment, and unequal pay and/or access to jobs (HRW, 2011; Orleck, 2018). Women are especially insecure as "there is a lot of abuse by men toward women on the farm," says Wendy Pekeur, the former general secretary of Sikhula Sonke. "Women stay in abusive relationships because of the house and for their children to eat," Pekeur

adds. This suggests that women farmworkers' lack of tenure and/or financial security, coupled with their reproductive role (Moser, 1989)[253], are crucial to the choices they (are able to) make. In such a context, where poverty is rife and the compulsion to earn an income is overwhelming, whether or not to work is not always a 'free' choice. Rather, it is a choice made under constraints and needs like starvation, shelter, physical and job insecurities, and familial obligations. Nevertheless, examining the meaningfulness of that choice can better inform us if and how the decision to work reflects agency. The key overall task I undertake in this chapter is to analyze how individual agency relates to identities individuals have. My empirical contribution examines how people's identities—specifically the meanings they attach to those identities—condition their individual agency (i.e. decision to work).[254]

But what does 'identity' signify? Stets & Burke (2014) sum up a multilayered understanding of identity, which they describe through three aspects: "a set of meanings that defines individuals in terms of the roles they occupy, the social categories or groups they belong to, and the individual characteristics that define them as unique persons" (p. 412).[255] Amartya Sen (2006) notes that the "collectivities" (p. xiii) and "groups" (p. 4) an individual belongs to and the "affiliations and associations" (p. 30) she has can each give

[253] See more on this in section 1.1.3.1.

[254] Note that I focus on 'agency to/through work' instead of 'agency at work'. In doing so, I focus on the reasons that motivate one to enter and/or remain in the workforce and how those motivations link to one's identity. A large literature exists on women's economic empowerment (WEE), which is also a category through which both types of agency (*to/through work* and *at work*) have usually been analyzed—though not necessarily jointly—that delves into the impact of women's labor force participation on their agency, and vice versa. For a review of this literature, see: Chang et al. (2020).

[255] Peter J. Burke, one of the authors cited here, was one of the leading sociologists to pioneer the development of identity theory, along with Lindesmith & Strauss (1956), McCall & Simons (1966), Stryker (1968). Among others, these authors, are noted for advancing identity theory within the symbolic interaction framework.

her particular identities while her simultaneous belonging to any combination of these identities also shape her own unique identity. Thus, an identity can serve to not only demarcate a certain group or category of people, but this demarcation may also carry implications for members of that identity regarding the superior significance of certain functionings—meaning-laden ways of being and doing. Identities can also act as social influences; when one is considering the identity of an individual, it is done in reference to the relevant collectivity(ies) of his/her situation, since "the self as a whole is a collection of identities, each of which is experienced indirectly through interaction with others" (Burke & Tully, 1977, p. 883). Identities therefore are always socially-situated—they belong in/to the collective(s)—and gain meaning as individuals relate to those with similar or different identities.

Identities matter to a ground-up conceptualization of agency since they influence people's decisions through choice processes. Sen himself has argued that "our understanding of our interests, well-being, obligations, objectives, and legitimate behavior is influenced by the various—and sometimes conflicting—effects of these diverse identities" (Sen, 1990a, p. 125). If agency is the pursuit of what an individual values and/or has reason to value, an understanding of the relevance of certain identities in an individual's life can better define his/her valuational calculations during the choice process. In particular, one's identities—i.e. what one considers valuable to the upholding of those identities—can influence one to choose and act in ways where that value is embodied/reflected in one's actions. If we take an example from chapter 5, it is possible that a woman who believes that the act of 'listening to her husband' is crucial—i.e. valuable—to her upholding her identity as a wife will tend to accept his 'final say' in key financial decisions. How she has

come to believe that listening to her husband is key to her identity as wife is a notion I consider in some places in chapter 7. For now though, I am interested in analyzing more of what my respondents consider important in upholding their identities; specifically, how individual decisions to work (or not) reflect one's considerations about one's identities.

In order to examine whether and how women enact agency in/through their decisions to work using an identity-based approach, there is a need to first understand how respondents describe and view their jobs, and themselves and others, in relation to their paid jobs. The first part of this chapter presents some aspects of the context of my respondents' work and their perspectives on their labor. These perspectives are important firstly because they begin to reveal the reasons why the women undertook and/or remain in their respective jobs.[256] After basic descriptions of their jobs and the mechanics of their labor, I analyze how the women's perceptions and actions may also reflect, and are motivated by, the many identities they hold. The task of linking an individual's agency to her considerations about one or more of her identities, as the chapter will show, is not straightforward, but it also allows me to expand my exploration of the respondents' relational considerations by examining what they value about certain identities they hold. For the women I interviewed living and/or working on farms, being a (farm)worker is simply *one* way of 'being and doing'. Respondents describe other functionings and/or roles they hold which by influencing whether/why they value their decisions to work also suggest how the latter may reflect agency.

[256] The decision to work sometimes also seemed constrained by this context one was (or could imagine being) in. As noted from the interviews and my observations, living on a large commercial farm is very different than living in an informal settlement (see chapter 4 and Appendix E for details). These differences include women's work experiences and their perceptions about their work options. Respondents' decision(s) to work could often be linked to where they lived and/or could imagine living.

I start this chapter by showcasing the stories of two South African women who consider themselves as 'farmworkers', although they perform quite different tasks in different physical environments as part of their jobs. Through their, and others', stories, I show that individuals working in the agricultural sector and who may be labeled as 'farmworkers' do not necessarily do the same kinds of work. On one hand, these women's decisions to work, or not work, as a farmworker may appear primarily motivated by what they believe and/or know about the mechanics of a particular position or type of farm job. On the other hand, other factors also influenced women's valuational considerations in their decisions to work. As the interviews showed, differences in what motivated the respondents' decisions to work extend beyond the mechanics of their labor to include other contextual and interpersonal factors such as personal circumstances, living arrangements, life experiences, personal relationships, and aspirations that could motivate their choices. A broader picture of women's agency emerges when considering how their decisions to work can also illustrate and/or embody the salience of various identities they hold, pursue, and enact in their daily lives.

6.1 One Sector, Different Jobs: The Stories of Elsa and Winni

Elsa is an on-site worker at Groot Constantia farm, and Winni is an off-site worker living in Nkqubela. Both women, whom I interviewed in July 2018, consider themselves 'farmworkers'. While they both work in the Western Cape agricultural sector, they are in different locations and labor positions with different responsibilities. Their stories depict differences as well as similarities in how they think and go about their daily lives, of which

their decision to work—a choice they have been making for years—is shaped by a number of factors.

Elsa is a cellar assistant at Groot Constantia. Now forty-six, she lives in a two-bedroom house on the farm with her husband, a nine-year-old son, two adult daughters, and two grandchildren. Her career in the agricultural sector has spanned several decades and numerous positions, and it all started when she was just a child. She was still in primary school when she started working on the farms in Robertson, where she was born and raised. The decision to work as a child was not really a choice as she could not refuse to do so. “You see,” she tells me, “that time you was young and you have to go to work. We was working in the vineyards even after school in the afternoon”. At the age of twenty, she and her husband, whom she met while working in the vineyards at Robertson, moved to Groot Constantia where they both worked as farmworkers in the fields. As a married woman and adult, Elsa chose to continue working on the farm as it was the only work she knew how to do, it was close to her home, and doing so would help her provide for her family. After a few years of marriage, Elsa had an accident and could not work in the fields, so she was temporarily assigned to “light duty” in the cellar and as a cleaner. As the wife of a permanent worker, she says she did not have to work, but she was then used to working and knew her husband’s income alone would not be sufficient for their family’s needs. A few months before she was supposed to start working in the fields again, the winemaker told her he was so impressed with how careful she was in the way she handled the wines during the production process that he was hiring her permanently, as an assistant in the cellar. She has since not regretted staying in this job.

Her decision to (continue to) work now is motivated by several factors, of which I note four—her living situation, her responsibilities to her family, her experiences in (or as a result of) this job, and her personal goals. The contract for the house where Elsa and her family live was made on her name when her husband had taken a non-farm job elsewhere since a few years.[257] To leave her current job would mean that she may be required to leave her house as the latter was tied to her work contract. When I interviewed her however, she said she was about to apply for a bigger house on the estate because her current house was getting too small to accommodate her growing family.[258] In her family, Elsa is also responsible for making decisions about the household expenses, to which she contributes part of her salary and receives a certain amount each month for these expenditures from the other two working adults in the house, her husband and eldest daughter. “I decide what we need,” she says, “otherwise you know, men do not think straight sometimes”. Without her own contributions to the household income, she notes that there would be a shortfall in meeting their household’s needs. For this reason also, she argues, she needs to work.

Elsa however also works because she enjoys working. Her story demonstrates not only how it is possible to pursue work for both instrumental and intrinsic reasons, but also how each highlights her agency. She was one of the few women I met who said she loved her job. Part of this love for her job emerges from how she feels she is treated as an employee. “They really support me”, she says, “I can't complain about it.” As she explains, “one

[257] Elsa was one of three on-site women, the other two being Zelda and Gladys, I met who had a house contract made on her name. Lisbet’s contract was voided when she left work.
[258] My interviews with other residents at Groot Constantia suggested that an application for a bigger house on the estate usually failed due to management’s downsizing efforts. But if Elsa was aware of this, she did not indicate it to me during her interview.

weekend I was in hospital with my daughter who had viral meningitis, and they [the farm management] sent food home". Some of her past experiences seem to have also solidified her belief that she is appreciated by the farm management as the latter showed that she is a valued employee. Furthermore, Elsa believes their appreciation of her work is shown in her paycheck. When I ask her how much she earns, she unreservedly shows me her fortnightly pay slip, which reads 2252 Rands. When she works weekends, she earns an additional 1000 Rands for overtime on her fortnightly check. Elsa is also talented at her job, saying "I'm very good with smelling wines. Me and my boss we can just smell it and tell you which glass is best for this wine. I can even pick up the difference of the cultivars". Her experience of this job is overall positive, one that she loves, is good at, and is appreciated for. Her confidence and ambition are also palpable. When I ask if there is anything she feels she cannot do or learn to do because she is a woman, she says "no, but other people do not help women sometimes", adding:

> You see, last year I was trying to drive the forklift at work. Sometimes you want to move stuff at work, like crates and wine, and then you also have to wait for a man to come and do it. Why must you wait? But it's difficult for women because sometimes the one who must teach you don't have that patience, you see? I think the thing is, they must have more patience with us as women. Then we can learn. I don't think we are asking too much for driving, that is a thing I really want to learn.

If this experience showed her a lack of confidence from others in her capability, she certainly has not allowed that to deter her from doing her job or temper her goals for advancement. Elsa argues that women who work on farms must be more confident if they want more opportunities and influence, saying "not everybody have the confidence you see. And I think for women we must stand up and uplift us. You know, have more

confidence to do things". Her answer indicates that she not only speaks about what she as Elsa, the individual, has experienced but also specifically what she believes other 'women' may experience, and what they ought to value, such as having confidence and helping one's self and each other. She adds that her goal now in this job is to improve her talents. "Maybe I will go to France", she says, "they mentioned this thing at work, and the winemaker is very helpful, so maybe next year". Seeing that she loves handling wines, I ask if she wants to be a winemaker, and she says "maybe, or a sommelier", she adds. Elsa has a clear objective though, which she feels her decision to continue working will help her achieve: "one day I want to make my own wine," she says, "my name must be on that bottle".

Over 150 kilometers away, in the Nkqubela settlement in Robertson, forty-year-old Winni shares a different story. Winni was born and raised in the former Transkei, a black homeland during the apartheid era in now Eastern Cape province. One of seven children, she left high school at eighteen in 1996 to attend an agricultural vocational school. There, she learned about crop management and intended to have her own plot of land where she could farm for an income. "Apartheid had just ended", she says, "I was hoping to have access to some sort of land from the government so that I can be a producer". That however did not pan out and instead she started working as a domestic in private houses, a decision she made when she had children and needed to provide for them. Winni now has four children and has been married twice. The first three children are from her first husband, and the last child is from her current husband. Both her marriages have had twisted stories. Her first husband had not proposed to her, but rather kidnapped her. She recounts:

> In fact, my [first] husband abducted me when I was a young girl and married me that way. So what happened was that I was on my way from the clinic when I met my uncle. He was walking with a man. I was informed a few days before by my parents about a man who was not married and was looking to get married. And then my uncle introduced me to this guy that was with him, but I never knew it was the same man that my parents had mentioned. And then me and this man became friends and then later in the day he had asked me to accompany him to his house. We went through a vacant piece of land where there were no houses, so then I said I want to go home. But he insisted that I should go to his house. So when I finally got there to a house, people were waiting for me with traditional clothing. And then I got dressed and married, and I was regarded as a married woman. We did not negotiate, we did not have any feelings for each other. But later on [years later], I learnt that my husband was involved in crime. He was bringing stolen goods into the house. Then I said to my husband, "listen here, I was not raised like this. I have to disagree with the way you are doing things". So this is when I left my husband. My husband passed away only after I have left him.

This account from Winni is shocking for several reasons. Firstly, to be kidnapped was very traumatic for Winni, but she did not try to escape once she got married. Did she not believe in her right over her own body, over her right to choose who to marry, or over her right to regain her physical freedom? She did not provide answers to any of these questions.[259] As noted earlier, she had made the decision to work as a domestic, even while married to her first husband, because she felt responsible for providing for her children. But that she says she did not try to escape, with or without her children, from her first husband even when her work outside her home may have provided her with the opportunity reveals the constrained situation Winni was likely in.[260] Her ability to work

[259] Back in the rural area where Winni is from, the practice of 'bride abduction', or *ukuthwala*, had been practiced for generations, especially within the Xhosa tribe, although mostly in secret and by a few people only in recent years. For more on *ukuthwala* in South Africa, please see: (Kaschula, Huisamen, Mostert, & Nosilela, 2013; Mfono, 2000; Mwambene & Sloth-Nielsen, 2011; Ndindwa, 2014)

[260] The analysis proceeds from the assumption that one's choices likely reflect the 'structures of constraint' of one's situation. Nancy Folbre defines these structures of constraint as the "sets of asset distributions, rules, norms, and preferences that empower given social groups. These structures locate certain boundaries of choice, but do not assign individuals to a single position…People occupy multiple, often contradictory positions, because they belong to different groups" (Folbre, 1994, p. 51).

had not given her the option of pursuing a different life than the one in which she was a kidnapped woman and forced wife. And yet, three children later, she was able, and maybe felt it her right, to then leave the husband who kidnapped her on other ethical grounds: she thought him stealing goods was wrong. From the way she explains it, she did not have to hide in order to leave him then; she simply walked out with her children. From that moment, her story shows she became individually more in control of her life and decisions. Years later when she remarried of her own accord, her second husband was physically assaulting her at times, and he used to cheat on her with other women. This time though, Winni seemed more aware, and perhaps less afraid, of how and where to seek help. Saying she did not want to be an abused woman anymore, she duly reported these incidents to social workers in Nkqubela, and adds that her husband now is a changed man who is "nice to me".

My interview with Winni showed me that she is a confident and determined person. It was clear to me that she did not let her abduction or forced marriage, marital abuse, and financial difficulties deter her in seeking jobs that would help her fulfil some of her responsibilities as a 'mother' to her children. She also displays a commitment to her own sense of ethics, and seems to allude to valuing her physical integrity and self-worth also by refusing to be abused as a 'wife' by her second husband. As a mother, she is not happy in Nkqubela where she is away from some of her children who are still staying with her mother in Eastern Cape. She wants to either bring them all to Nkqubela or move back to Eastern Cape. She also does not like her job working in the packhouse as it is only seasonal work and therefore not as reliable as a year-round source of income. Her dream is still to be a producer, as she says, "I would like to further practice agriculture or farming on my

own land in the Eastern Cape so that I could have access to an income. I do not like to depend on other people". For now though, she is in Western Cape as this is where she has found a job that, even though seasonal and one she does not like, is helping her to provide financial support to her children. Her past and present decisions to work seem to always have been linked mainly to the responsibilities she believes she has toward her children.

The two women whose stories I narrate above may seem unconventional in many ways. Firstly, they do not fit the 'typical' pictures, workers in the field doing various kinds of manual labor such as harvesting fruits or raising livestock, that may be envisioned when the word 'farmworkers' is raised.[261] Secondly, these women, like other respondents, indicate that their decisions to enter/remain in the workforce are driven by specific reasons even if the job one has is not liked. These reasons, or motivations, often link to some aspect(s) of who they believed they were and/or wanted to be, as well as their responsibilities to others and/or themselves. These different aspects, I suggest, relate to what certain identities mean to them. For example, it is not simply that Winni's identity as a 'mother' drove her to seek paid work in a different province, away from her children, in a job she is not completely satisfied with. It is more specifically what Winni believes she must 'be' and 'do' as a mother—what she believes is important in upholding her identity of mother—that may better articulate the meaning(s) or value she assigns to her decision

[261] Which is why farmworkers in this thesis are classified as individuals working (or those who have previously worked) on a physical farm, regardless of the type of duties they have/had and their position's level in the labor hierarchy.

to work. In this way, her decision to work also articulates what is most valuable to her, likely her children's wellbeing in this case.[262]

Wage labor is a dominant part of most of my respondents' lives, and key to the dimension of agency I analyze in this chapter. Hence, the first aspect of women's identities that I analyze is as 'workers'. Since 'work' is also deeply entwined with/within my respondents' social existence, whether as on-site or off-site workers, a number of elements about my respondents' social lives emerge in discussions about their work. In section 6.2 and its subsections below, I discuss some of these elements about my respondents' lives and work in order to also illustrate the range of options women believe they (do not) have when making their decisions to (not) work.

6.2 The Woman (Farm)Worker[263] in Western Cape: Deciding to (not) Work

The category 'farmworker' unifies over one hundred thousand people working in the commercial agricultural sector into one dominant system of classification in terms of their labor. This blanket labeling however can block more nuanced analyses and understandings of individuals, the jobs they do, and their agency. Is to be a 'farmworker' an identity that my respondents consciously held? If we refer to the definition by Stets and Burke (2014)

[262] I will later draw from my observations and interviews with respondents to try to provide a view of the different ways that people describe themselves and what they do, and how their descriptions and perceptions of who they believe they are (or should be)—i.e. their identities—can relate to their actions and choices. For now though, I focus on their decision to work and how they see themselves as workers.
[263] Recall that in chapter 1, I explained that the parentheses in '(farm)worker' serve to denote that some of the respondents no longer worked on farms.

earlier, the term 'farmworker' can represent a broad identity that denotes a social category or group of people who perform certain jobs in the agricultural sector. An identity therefore can be a way of socially distinguishing one group from others because "people's identity defines who they are—their social category" (Akerlof & Kranton, 2010, p. 13). But there are also differences that can further distinguish people within the same identity group; the interviews, including the two accounts in section 6.1, revealed many job variations among people who called themselves farmworkers. In the introduction to chapter 3 for instance, I outline two main ways to classify farmworkers: on-site (on-farm) and off-site (off-farm). In this section, where I examine my respondents' decisions to work, there are at least three categories of work that have been both practically (during fieldwork) and analytically useful in differentiating between farmworkers: permanent, temporary, and contract labor.[264] I discuss these categories and their relevance to individual agency below.

6.2.1 Categories of Work

The categories of work firstly inform us about how waged work is organized or structured. This structuring of work creates work options—e.g., to be a permanent, temporary, or contract worker—that are important in an individual's decision-making process (i.e. her agency). These categories can also reveal some insights into the social life of work through the organizing of both waged and unwaged work.[265] In particular, these insights reveal

[264] These ways of categorizing farmworkers—according to their labor categories—are consistent with the existing literature on commercial farms in South Africa (du Toit, 1993, 2005; du Toit & Ally, 2003; Eriksson, 2017; Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Hall, 2013; Hall et al., 2017, 2013; Kritzinger et al., 2004; Visser, 2016, 2016; Visser & Ferrer, 2015).

[265] The interaction between waged- and unwaged-labor on commercial farms in South Africa occurs within the processes of economic production and social reproduction that characterize those farms (Addison, 2019; Bolt, 2015; du Toit, 1993; Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Hall et al., 2013; Kheswa, 2015; Rutherford, 2001).

how women's experiences of work occur in social milieus and can (in part) be shaped—spatially and temporally—by their identities, or social categories.

In the rest of section 6.2, I relate some of the experiences of being a 'farmworker' specifically, and 'worker' more generally, through the narratives of on-site and off-site respondents. By illustrating how these experiences of 'work' or one's 'labor' often entwine with other experiences, I also begin to show how my respondents make decisions to work and in doing so negotiate different identities in their daily lives.

6.2.1.1 Permanent Labor

What does it mean to be a permanent farmworker and a woman on the commercial farms of Western Cape, where women have historically not been favored to be permanent workers? I present below the different permanent positions held by some of the on-site women I interviewed, which allow me to note some of the diversity in roles as well as experiences, and highlight certain aspects of their social lives/experiences that seemed relevant to and/or influenced the women's decisions to work. I begin with Gladys's story.

Gladys is a fifty-eight-year-old domestic worker at Butterfly Farm. Both she and her husband had worked in these vineyards since they got married decades ago. At the age of fifty, she took a permanent job as a domestic for the farm manager when she could not manage the physical labor of working in the fields anymore. It appears that asking for this job may have been a critical decision for Gladys because she is now the only woman on this farm whose house contract is on her name. The house she lives in used to be on her husband's name until he retired from his permanent post on the farm. Only a handful of

men have permanent work contracts and are consequently the only ones who live on site with their relatives. My translator tells me that most of the women who live here also used to work in the vineyards for this farm but had been dismissed a few years ago; since then, contract workers have been working in the vineyards. As we sit on big, upturned plastic buckets, huddled in front of the biggest of the worker houses, a two-bedroom concrete structure, I notice that living conditions on Butterfly Farm are relatively harsher than what I observed on other farms. There is no other concrete housing for farmworkers, which I am told were destroyed a few years back. Residents here live in cramped, one-room plywood houses and use outdoor mobile toilets like those found on construction sites.[266]

As we begin our focus group discussion, Gladys, who is also the eldest in the group, speaks first. "There is quite a big group of women who come on a seasonal basis with brokers," Gladys tells us, "but none of the women here works in the vineyards anymore." Another respondent[267] adds that only one of the women living in this community, called Sophia, still works in the vineyards because she is a contract worker.[268] The majority of the women were not employed, saying there were no jobs close enough to where they lived. Furthermore, these women said they refused to take on contract jobs because they believed it would not pay them well.

[266] Here is a flagrant depiction of the ways that Hall et al (2001) discussed among the responses that farmers who are hostile to ESTA (see section 4.4.2.1) have had to the latter. At Butterfly Farm, the farmer has destroyed more stable farmworker housing on the farm; and offered low standards of housing to those who are allowed to live on the farm.

[267] Respondent #1, Focus Group Discussion, Butterfly Farm – July 28, 2018.

[268] I am told Sophia is "passed out" from a hungover when I ask if we can interview her. My translator also adds that the women of this group do not like Sophia and that I should not question them more about her.

At the time of the interview on Butterfly Farm, only Gladys and her daughter Hailey had permanent jobs. These were jobs both women had actively lobbied for rather than jobs that had been handed out to them. Hailey works in a crèche[269] at the neighboring farm, looking after the children of women who work on the surrounding farms. She wakes up early every weekday and takes farm-provided transport with the men farmworkers to the nearby farm where the crèche is situated. It seems that the nearby farm has a bigger number of off-site and on-site farmworkers, including women, than Butterfly Farm, but Hailey does not confirm how many. What she does say is that the nearby farm is owned by a close relative of Butterfly Farm's owner, and that is why she feels she had no problem getting hired. With no other job prospects except farm work, and refusing to do contract labor, Hailey tells me that she is the one who approached a social worker with the idea of working in the crèche. As she recounts, after speaking with the owners of Butterfly Farm and the neighboring farm, "the social worker told me I can go and be a teacher at this nearby farm's crèche." Since she wanted to look after children, she says "I was seen as the right person to do this job."

Born and raised on Butterfly Farm, Hailey had little career options when she was growing up. She attended the farm schools as her mother instructed her to and studied till the final year without completing the matric exams, saying she was "tired". When I ask the group if they feel that they have rights as women, it is Hailey who answers first:

> For me, I feel we don't have any rights living on this farm because for example, we get told to go and work in the vineyards from young. The farmer's wife Annie is

[269] It seems this crèche that Hailey works at caters for the children of workers at a number of adjoined nearby farms rather than a single farm's workers.

> giving us instructions all the time. I say it doesn't feel like I have a choice. I work where I have been told to go into work so this feel like my rights have been infringed.

While Hailey told me she had asked to work in the crèche, her account above may indicate that she feels constrained even in this choice. Could it be that she asked to do this job because she saw her other work options as an on-farm resident—for example, to work in the fields as a contract laborer or doing nothing—as limited and/or relatively worse? The fact that she did not feel she had much choice could indicate that her decision was an adaptive preference, an option she selected within a situation of constrained choices. However, one could also argue that her situation indicates her agency to work if, through deliberate intent, she has maximized her choices and actively pursued the job she deemed relatively 'better' than her other options.[270] Additionally, the women seemed to intrinsically value *werk* (work) itself, all nodding in agreement when one of the respondents said "work is a way for women to be free".[271] The decision to work, even with constrained options, can still be meaningful to individuals. But when I asked these women what kinds of jobs they would like to have, their responses were limited to "domestic" or "teacher at farm schools".

Not only did it seem that they could not imagine having many job options to pursue, but the possibility of having to find work and a house outside of this farm truly frightened them (see also chapter 4). These women have lived only on white-owned farms their whole lives, first as children of farmworkers, then as farmworkers themselves and/or as

[270] See sections 5.6.2 - 5.6.3 for a review of choice-maximizing behavior and adaptive preferences.
[271] Respondent #3, Focus Group Discussion – Butterfly Farm, July 28, 2018.

partners of farmworkers. The nearest town from where they lived in northern Paarl was a thirty-minute ride away. While the women of Butterfly Farm were clearly not satisfied with the living conditions on the farm and with their job options, they also could not imagine a life that did not revolve around this farm, a social life that also seemed to impact the work options they believed they could (not) pursue. Andries du Toit, one of the key informants I interviewed, confirms this perspective. He notes that for those living on the farm, their "entire social life is on the farm, so the identity of 'farmworker' is tied to the farm and cannot be detached" (du Toit, 2022). Interviews with other on-site women showed that most of these women often pursued jobs in situations of constraint similar to those faced by respondents on Butterfly Farm, where they described feeling limited in the types of jobs they could pursue, especially if they wanted to live on the farm.

To be a permanent worker also meant to have a work contract that legally sealed one's position. It meant having a full-time job that pays someone a regular minimum salary, with the option of overtime. For most of the on-site women farmworkers I interviewed however, the notion of having a permanent work contract, which could also mean a housing contract to their name, seemed unachievable.[272] The possibility of being a 'permanent (farm)worker' was also a far-fetched notion for most off-site women I

[272] The exceptions are the women I interviewed from Groot Constantia, all of whom said they had permanent work contracts at the time. Jill is a wine steward and facilities cleaner at Groot Constantia, while Ruth is a cashier and occasional wine consultant. Zelda is a wine steward who started out by working in the vineyards during apartheid. Elsa, as we know from earlier, is a cellar assistant at Groot Constantia. As someone who started out on this farm nearly twenty years ago by working in the vineyards, Elsa worked her way up from the harsh physical labor required in the fields to the indoor, air-conditioned, yet attention-demanding job of cellar assistant. While some of her skills may be transferable and allow her to take a similar-level job off this farm, we know from the previous section that she has made her home at Groot Constantia; this is where she wants to stay and one of the key reasons she chooses to continue in her current job. It is also where her daughter Lydia holds a permanent position as a wine sales consultant.

interviewed. Instead, for many women, the option of working came without job permanence.

6.2.1.2 Temporary Labor

Of the five farms I visited and conducted interviews at, only Flora Farm, Butterfly Farm, and Groot Constantia had on-site women employed by the same farm at the time of the interviews. Interviewees at every farm told me of contract workers from "outside" who would come to work in the fields with labor brokers at different time periods. While the on-site women of Groot Constantia, and two women at Butterfly Farm, seem to have progressed from working in the vineyards to now working indoors in varied positions on the farm, the women of Flora Farm still worked in the fields. It was the women working at Flora Farm that said they were temporary workers, without permanent contracts. Mary's story below explains what being a 'temporary' worker means for her.

When I met and interviewed Mary in 2018, she told me she was a temporary worker. "We workers say there is periodically permanent work," Mary said. Her comment revealed a critical aspect of farm labor especially for on-site women, that of non-permanence. She explained to me that "the farmer tells the women workers living on the farm that they are temporarily permanent." She explains that the work is 'temporary' because it is only for a few months during the year, but during those few months it feels like a permanent job because she and the other women are working on a full-time basis. While the label 'seasonal farmworker' may seem more fitting to some for the kind of agricultural labor that Mary and some other on-site women workers are engaged in, it is not how many of

these women would classify their work.[273] Born and raised on this farm that grows mostly peaches and wine grapes, Mary has been a farmworker since she left school. She has only ever been a "temporary worker", working for specific periods of time when required by the farm management.

She also explains some aspects of how her work is socially organized. To start with, the harvesting months brings women and men to work alongside each other. "Men and women do basically the same work because we get the same money," she says, speaking of the piece-meal rate that is commonly applied for stock work during harvesting.[274] Furthermore, Mary has a particular role in addition to being a temporary on-site farmworker. For nearly five years, she has worked during the harvest seasons as a forewoman overseeing women who are on-site workers and those who come as contract labor. The role of forewoman, she tells me, is not as grand as she first thought it would be. "At first, it was nice to think that you don't have to do much work," she says, since as

[273] A number of studies have called the kind of ad-hoc labor performed by the women living on large commercial farms as 'seasonal' work, reflecting the cyclical nature of the agricultural sector and how some time periods, such as harvest time for grapes, require much more labor than other times (du Toit, 2005; Eriksson, 2017; Hall, 2003; Hall et al., 2013). I have however refrained from calling on-site farmworkers who are not permanent workers as 'seasonal' workers. I chose the term 'temporary' as it firstly denotes the non-permanence of the worker's role; it is also less restrictive to seasonality, as the term 'seasonal' implies, because my fieldwork indicated that farmers may need workers for any number of jobs at any point in the farming cycle which may or may not coincide with a particular agricultural and/or climatic season.

[274] A clarification is needed here. Men and women do not earn the same amount in wages because while the type of job they do may be the same, such as harvesting, the way of paying workers a piece-meal rate ensures that those who harvest more in weight can earn more in wages. 'Stock work' relied on the amounts, usually in weight or filled bags, of fruit that individual workers harvest. This structure of payment was mostly used for harvesting work as the more an individual harvests, the more her/his wages would be. This is a key disadvantage for women doing stock work and getting paid a piece-meal rate, many of whom said they found it difficult to work as quickly as male coworkers and to carry the heavy loads of their harvests. When it is not harvest season, respondents said their weekly or fortnightly wages would be calculated based on the daily rate or "day wage". The labor contractor I spoke to, Johan, tells me the government-set day wage is around 140 Rands per day, which several off-site respondents confirmed was the rate they received when they did not do stock work.

a forewoman, “you have to give the work over. You have to watch how the people are doing the work and make sure it is done well. It is actually difficult to do the physical work yourself.” When I ask if she gets paid more for her role, she tells me that a foreman or forewoman on this farm gets paid an extra 50 Rands per week. During harvest time, Mary would earn an average of 700 Rands per week through her own stock work, and an additional 50 Rands for being a forewoman. As time passed however, she realized that being a forewoman was time-consuming and gave her more managerial responsibility than she wanted; the extra pay for this role did not seem sufficient or appealing anymore.

When I ask if this role gave her more authority and/or “respect” among the women in the community and off-site workers, she admits it actually “made some things worse” for her. Another key reason she does not want to be a forewoman for the next work season is because the little extra money that she gets from this role is not worth the gossip and jealousy she has to deal with. She says:

> It’s about the stories that they [other women workers] take to the manager and then the manager doesn’t come to see you immediately about it. He holds it in his mind and after some time he comes to you and doesn’t ask if it’s true, he just accuse you ‘you are doing this and that’. How does the manager know what you are doing if *piempers* [informers] are not going to tell him?

Being in this appointed and seemingly coveted position, even as a temporary worker who is working full-time only for a few months of the year, appears to have made Mary less well-liked by some of her peers, perhaps less trusted by her managers, and less independent as a worker. She admits preferring to be an “ordinary worker” than one who

is a leader that is gossiped about.[275] Even if 'gossip' itself seemed commonplace, it was only among the community of farmworkers themselves, notes Mary. Gossip that is taken to a farmer (or manager) plays into "the politics of rivalry and personal favour" that structures paternalism and the farmer's role as the 'father' whose favor one wants to gain (du Toit, 1993, p. 324), especially given one's precarious role as a temporary worker.

Women at Butterfly Farm, Poppy Rose Farm, and Elderberry Farm had all been previously employed as temporary farmworkers by the farm where they lived. As one respondent from Poppy Rose Farm explains, "our salary was replaced by piecework, where we had to earn 12 cents per piece. So we refused."[276] They felt this kind of payment structure rendered them like contract workers, with a volatile wage rather than the stable salary they had come to depend on. In 2017, women workers at Poppy Rose Farm were dismissed by farm management for refusing to accept the new contractual terms. These women also claimed during the focus group interview that only the women workers were targeted, since no man was dismissed.

The women living on Elderberry Farm refused to speak to me, telling my translator that they feared that the farm manager would see them and, as Bongo told me, "create more problems" for them. When I held a focus group discussion with the men of Elderberry Farm, I was surprised to nonetheless see that some of the wives stood around the group to listen to their husbands and occasionally even chip in with their own comments while

[275] Interviews with both on-site and off-site women revealed that women who "gossip" or "carry stories" were not well-regarded, noted by du Toit (1993) as "someone who tells tales" (p. 324). I discuss some of these perceptions about gossip in chapter 7.
[276] Respondent #2, Focus Group Interview, Poppy Rose Farm, July 11, 2018.

refusing to accept Bongo's invitation to formerly participate.[277] All of the women at this farm had been dismissed in 2012, when the farm was acquired by a new owner. These women who still lived there were all in households where there was a permanent male worker. When I ask the men if any of their wives work, one anonymous woman responds, "women used to do seasonal work here. The new boss got rid of all the women workers because we were part of the union. Women were the first target." Like the respondents from Poppy Rose Farm, those at Elderberry Farm argued that women in particular were "targeted", saying it was "easier" since women were temporary rather than permanent workers.[278] They also seemed to believe they were dismissed because of their union membership. The men respondents at Elderberry Farm revealed that only 17 men were currently permanent workers at the farm, although closer to 25 men lived on the farm with their families.[279]

At Butterfly Farm, the small group of women residents tell me that none of them work in the vineyards anymore since nearly five years. The women who had been working in the fields had been temporary workers and used to receive a wage every fortnight during grape-harvesting months. Now, except for Gladys, her daughter Hailey, and the infamous Sophia who does contract labor, the rest of the on-site women did not do any paid work.

[277] I have considered these women's participation as informal, given that I have no names and biographic information to link to them, and include their suggestions as 'anonymous' contributions.
[278] That fewer women, and men, are getting (or remaining) employed at the farm they live on is mainly due to two massive shifts: the increased casualization of farm labor and declining overall employment in the sector (Devereux, 2020). Furthermore, many of those who mobilized for better rights and conditions lost their jobs and/or were evicted, pushed out to live in informal settlements (Devereux, 2020; Eriksson, 2018).
[279] Some of those men claimed to have been unfairly dismissed by the farm management, and were advised by the union to not leave their residence until the matter of their outstanding pay was fully resolved by the courts. Due to ESTA, these men and their families cannot be removed from their homes on the farm except with court permission, which can take a while and still require some form of compensation by the farmer (Hall et al, 2001).

A number of women respondents (farm dwellers) held temporary work positions outside of farms. Most of those women with temporary jobs were domestics who worked a few days per week, and none except two women, Winni and Cecilia,[280] had work contracts. Cecilia is another South African woman I interviewed in Nkqubela. She works in a farm packhouse in the Robertson area. She had showed up at the site looking for a job and was hired directly by the manager of the packhouse. The packhouse is located on a farm that grows table grapes. Her work is temporarily permanent and seasonal, since table grapes are harvested only for a few months in the year. She says, "I start work in November and I finish in April. We start at eight in the morning and leave maybe half six or seven." In her opinion, this job is not a "proper job" because it is not "permanent work where I can work for many years or one year at least." She has a labor contract, which entitles her to a fixed wage for the months that she is working. She is paid every fortnight a wage of around 1600 Rands, which means her monthly income just about meets the national minimum-wage requirements.

The majority of off-site respondents however were contract workers. The next section provides a view into the work lives of some women contract workers, most of whom were also migrants.

[280] These two were also the only ones working in farm packhouses.

6.2.1.3 Contract Labor

Contract farmworkers are those who are hired by labor contractors to work on farms.[281] Most of the off-site workers I interviewed worked for labor contractors, often without formal job contracts,[282] and were paid their wages in cash. All lived in the informal settlements of Nkqubela or Mbekwini. My own observations and respondents' depictions of their lives in these settlements indicate that while denser and larger (in population size) than any of the farms I visited (Appendix E for more details), informal settlements were also spaces where people could live as close-knit communities. While informal settlements boast higher reported incidents of crime and violence, often intersecting with gangs and xenophobic attacks (WFP, 2020), farmworkers living there are "freer to mobilise and campaign for their rights" without fear of the farmer retaliating (Devereux, 2020, p. 384). These were also places where one could find a farm job through one's connections or, sometimes, simply by pitching up in certain places where contractors picked up workers. For most off-site respondents, especially migrants, working for a contractor was the main way they believed they could get a job and earn an income.

A central feature of contract labor is that it is not determined by the harvest season of one particular crop or the needs of only one farm, but rather by the harvest seasons of many

[281] At the time I conducted fieldwork, my interviews with on-site workers and the labor contractor indicated that a number of farmers had adopted the contract labor route in order to avoid the penalties for not meeting their legal obligations toward their permanent employees. At the risk of oversimplifying, having a 'permanent' job contract means that one works full-time and has a basic set of rights, as a worker, that are legally established. For the employer, it means abiding by national labor regulations regarding workers' rights and working conditions such as defined in Sectoral Determination 13 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act. Aside from the increased hiring of contract labor by farmers, some of the on-site respondents like Mary also indicated that a few farms (still) employ some women from the families of permanent men workers, albeit on temporary bases.

[282] The exceptions were the two male foremen I interviewed, Mike and Jake, who had formal permanent work contracts with the labor contractor.

crops and the needs of different farms at any point during an agricultural cycle. Being a contract worker therefore can imply having more days of finding wage work, even if one did not have a permanent contract. One woman respondent living in Mbekwini says her boss, a labor broker, took them to a farm this week where she says "we are harvesting olives."[284] Unlike the on-site women respondents at Flora Farm who only work during the harvest seasons for peaches and grapes, contract workers have the opportunity to still work whenever their labor contractor is called for a job on a farm. Moreover, the respondents who had a consistent working relationship with a particular contractor seemed likely to be working throughout the year rather than during particular seasons only.[285]

When I interviewed some off-site respondents in Mitchel's Plain, it was the month of June, in 2019, with many cold and rainy days in the Western Cape. In such weather conditions, contractors usually did not take their workers to work on farms. But Cynthia, a twenty-two-year-old Zimbabwean says that the labor broker she worked for since several years had "a job" for them this week. "Right now we are pulling weeds," she says, with her wages around 800 Rands per week, adding:

> During harvest season, we work from seven to half five [17.30]. We have a break at lunch. Sometimes it's very painful. The whole day now walking, pulling weeds. It's very painful for me. I don't like the job. I only like the money. That's all. My

[284] Woman respondent [alma], Mbekwini – Mitchel's Plain, June 9, 2019.
[285] Johan, the labor broker, tells me a number of farmers have started using parts of their land to grow olive trees, which take about three years to mature, as a way to diversify their agricultural output and revenue streams. As mentioned in chapter 2, farmers in Western Cape have been diversifying their farms as competition is intense in the wine sector, and many vineyards are not as profitable as they used to be anymore. Agricultural diversification, while financially sensible for some farmers, also seems to increase the need for labor—albeit contract labor—at different times during the year. For contract workers who want to earn more, this means they have an opportunity to work more days.

> friend told me they [this broker] are taking people, so we went there together. Only this job was available. Working at the farms, it's not so respected. Those who clean the houses for white people, that job is more respected. Working like in the shops, cleaning the house, that is good jobs for women. I don't think working in the farms is very good, but we all have to it because we need money.

She decided to do this job because she needs money. For Cynthia, like most of the foreign migrants among my respondents, contract work was the only (or one of few) wage-earning jobs she believed she could have in South Africa. Her decision to take this job is constrained by the opportunities she can access in the labor market but also her perceptions about what she can pursue given her situation. Her decision to work indicates agency as the decision is purposeful; it matters to Cynthia that she is able to make money through her ability to decide to work. Her account also shows however that she did not hold this farm job in high regard or value it as a desirable position for women. Here, it is possible to notice how her decision to work takes into account certain considerations related to her identity as a 'woman'. Her revelation that she does not believe her job is respected by others or is good for women suggests she has certain ideas about what is valued by and/or for 'women'. Her account suggests that what is valued is not necessarily what one is able to, or will, pursue. Cynthia's reference to some other jobs, like cleaning or working in a shop, as 'good' for women and "more respected", makes these appear like more 'desirable' positions. Cynthia has justified her decision to work in this particular job because of her need for money, despite her belief that this job is not good for women.

One main reason that women explained farm work (as contract workers) was not respected was its association with stock work. Ruro, a thirty-two-year-old widow from Mozambique says stock work is not good for women. "They [stock workers] are always

running all over, it's too hard," Ruro adds, "you move hands fast to make more money. It's not a day [wage] work. It's a stock. You work on your own. No one going to tell you do this, do that. If we are lazy, we get small money." The notion that stock work is hard was held by most on-site women respondents as well, and given as a key reason by some women as to why they did not like stock work.

Not all women decided to do a job that they did not value, even when they were looking for work to meet their household's financial needs. Many of the on-site women I interviewed did not regard working for a labor contractor in the farms as a labor option they would consider. In the focus group discussion at Elderberry Farm for example, when I asked the men if they saw contract work as a potential job opportunity for their wives, it was the women standing by the discussion that responded with a resounding "no". This did not mean that women's work in general was shunned. Men respondents at Elderberry Farm said some of the women on the farm have secured jobs "outside in restaurants or [as] domestics", adding that "women have to go to work to assist their families". Earlier accounts in section 6.2 show that some of the on-site women respondents vehemently indicated that they would not choose to become contract farmworkers, or accept labor terms that they felt would equate their work to that of contract labor. From those interviews and my informal chats with on-site workers, it appeared that some women who lived on farms not only avoided contract work to reserve the availability of their labor on the farm, but many viewed contract labor as denigrating and something that a self-respecting woman living on the farm should not do. These women's decision to not work, in a particular job, seemed to relate to what they perceived would be disrespectful to/for them as women.

Women respondents at Poppy Rose Farm and Flora Farm could not envision working for a labor contractor because they did not want to have to go to different farms to work. For these women, their 'place of work' and 'home' have been entwined as *opi plaas* ('on the farm') for so long that it seemed unfathomable to work in the fields at a farm that was not their place of residence as well.[286] Some of the women at Poppy Rose Farm who had been dismissed by the manager had sought and found work outside their farm, as domestics and cleaners. They told me that they sought work in restaurants and private homes, but not with labor contractors because they said contract labor was "stock work", and the latter was simply "too hard".

The accounts in this section revealed how women, both on-site and off-site respondents, shared certain sentiments about farm work not being "respected", or stock work being "too hard" and "not good for women". Yet, some of these women still knowingly pursue stock/farm work. There are clear tensions between some women's negative perceptions about contract labor, and/or stock work, and their decisions to take contract jobs in spite of those perceptions. However, while only a few of the women I interviewed said they were happy with their job (like Elsa), none of them said they regretted making the decision to work in their respective jobs. In fact, each of the respondents defended their decision to work, suggesting that the choice to pursue work was deliberate and purposeful even if

[286] This relates to what du Toit (1993) has described as "the sociology of farm life" where he begins to consider not only the many identities that people who are farm *workers* and/or farm *dwellers* have, but also how those identities are "caught up in the politics of the paternalistic relationship" (p. 320). As he notes: "These are the consequences of workers' living on the farm: every aspect of life is bound up with the world inside the *wit hekke* (white gates). Agricultural workers depend on the farm for every aspect of their material survival… To lose your job, in Western Cape farming, is to lose your home" (p. 315).

one was unhappy with the job itself. Their decisions may indicate agency, but they also suggest a lack of options in some cases to pursue more meaningful agency. I have tried to analytically differentiate three categories of work in order to better understand if/how those categories relate to women's decisions to work. But to look at the respondents this way, simply and/or only as 'workers', has shed limited light on what motivates and constrains their individual agency, and what makes this agency meaningful.

So far, this chapter reveals that to categorize a respondent as a 'farmworker' and further distinguishing this identity through the three categories of farm labor seems neither sufficient nor particularly useful in my analysis of agency—i.e. women's decision to work—because the categorization remains at once too broad and too limiting. It is too broad because there are many different aspects to being a farmworker that complicate an analysis of agency from this single category. For instance, the analytical categories of labor—such as 'permanent', 'temporary', and 'contract'—can improve the usefulness of the term 'farmworker' when used as classifiers, clarifying the type of farmworker one is, wants to be, and/or does not want to be. Even with/within these classifiers, the farm-related jobs that respondents had were varied. Some of these variations could be in skill type, skill level, geographic location, contract type and length, and hierarchical position. These variants or options matter to an analysis of agency that seeks to understand whether and why a person values their decision to work or not. They are however not sufficient as women's responses indicate other factors—such as 'respect' and/or 'goodness' of a job—that can also play a role in women's choice processes and give meaning to their decisions.

The categorization of 'farmworker' is also too limiting for an analysis of individual agency, as it likely conceals other major differences and/or similarities among people that may be (more) relevant to how they view themselves and each other, and how they enact agency. Examining the intersectionality of the women's identity as workers with their other identities—as migrants, wives, mothers, etc.—can improve our understanding of the relational elements that are relevant to a more complete understanding of people's agency freedoms and ultimately their agency achievements. My interviews and dialogues with respondents reveal that (farm)workers tend to classify themselves as more than just (farm)workers. These classifications, or identities specifically, are key valuational aspects of an individual's choice process. Without understanding their identities, and the intersectionality of those identities, we may miss what motivates individual women in their decisions to work; those motivations likely reveal what they value about their identities and how/whether their work helps them fulfil what they value, adding meaning to their decisions to work.

6.3 Beyond Labor: Recurring Identities Throughout Fieldwork

I now consider some of those other identities that my respondents held in order to examine how they link to individual women's decisions to work. Given my particular attention to women's agency, I sought from my interviews evidence of women who pursued (or wanted to pursue) objectives that aligned with who they thought they were and/or wanted to be. This evidence focused on what the individual women revealed about their own behaviors, and their perceptions about others' and their own behaviors. By doing so, I sought to analyze what they valued about particular identities, and how those values motivated their decisions to work given that "identities predict the meanings that

are conveyed by behaviors" (Stets & Burke, 2014, p. 412). In this section, I discuss some of the identities my respondents have to illustrate *who* they are and/or (do not) want to be as individuals. Additionally, I examine below some of the ways my respondents spoke about their own work or jobs, and their perceptions of other jobs, in the context of other specific identities they hold.

6.3.1 Gender

Since my research focuses on *women's* agency, one of the obvious identities I consider is 'gender'. Specifically, how do respondents describe being a (farm)worker and/as 'a woman'? To many women I interviewed, the answer relied on varying opinions about whether being a farmworker was a "respected" job or not for a woman.[287] One pattern that emerged among the interviews seemed to link the respectability of the job to whether it was perceived as appropriate for women. These views about appropriateness sometimes varied among the respondents. For example, one respondent says that farm labor itself is "not respected" because it is hard. She states that men are "of course better able to do it" because they are "stronger".[288] Women respondents generally held the view that stock work was one of the worst aspects of farm work, with an off-site worker saying it is "not good at all to women."[289] What is appropriate for women in this case seems to rest on the physical requirements of the job and what those women consider bearable on their bodies. But contract labor is also notorious for being exploitative (WFP, 2020; Eriksson 2018).

[287] 'Respect' itself is a loaded term that came up often, in almost every interview I conducted, and which I unpack more in chapter 7.
[288] Off-site respondent, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019.
[289] Mozambican off-site farmworker, June 8, 2019 – Mbekwini (Mitchel's Plain).

In the previous sections, I noted instances where on-farm women chose not to pursue work with a contractor because they believed that their wages would be volatile (section 6.2.1.2), and the job itself being denigrating and/or too far away from home (section 6.2.1.3). “Many women living on farms don't do contract work because of the exploitation that goes with it”, notes Wendy Pekeur, “and they are often underpaid, work in precarious conditions, and lack basic sanitation” (Pekeur, 2022). This is not to say that all labor contractors are exploitative, for many are quite helpful to their workers (Visser, 2016), but the general perception of contractors is surely negative. “There’s greater vulnerability with contract labor,” says Mercia Andrews from TCOE, with on-farm women confused about how contractors pay their workers and not knowing where exactly they will be working each day since contractors move their workers from farm to farm (Andrews, 2022). For many on-farm respondents, the propriety of contract labor itself was questionable, influencing their decision to not be a contract worker. Women are concerned about improper mingling between men and women contract workers, with limited privacy for women, and having to leave their homes early and come back late, often exposing them to sexual exploitation and violence (Pekeur, 2022). “These women may be poor and needing money,” declares Wendy Pekeur, who grew up among on-farm workers, “but they do not all feel they need to be exposed to these unsafe, exploitative, and undignified conditions of contract work.” The inappropriateness of contract labor for on-farm women thus also related to the social environment of the job, and perceptions of its exploitative nature.

A key way the link between farm work and gender identity emerged in the interviews was through the discourse of propriety. Specifically, what respondents considered 'appropriate' jobs largely seemed to rely on what they deemed 'good' and 'not good' for women. While I would ask the women themselves to tell me of any job they thought women are usually 'good *at*', the respondents instead often responded with what they thought was 'good *for* women'. Jobs like "cleaner" or "maid" were lauded as 'good for' women. Jobs in construction, like a "builder", or a "security guard", were deemed 'not good' for women. An off-site woman farmworker states that security jobs were not good because it is "dangerous", further specifying that, "in this country, it's not good for the women."[290] For another off-site farmworker, security jobs were not good for women because of "nightshifts", suggesting it was not considered appropriate for women to work at night.[291] To each of these jobs were attached notions that revealed how propriety was gendered.

However, what some women considered inappropriate (for other women) could also be viewed as appropriate by those women given particular circumstances, shattering gendered notions of propriety. One respondent said construction jobs were not good for women because she saw it as "a man's job".[292] And yet, when I presented her with a hypothetical situation of there being job opportunities in construction that would pay a worker 1500 Rands per week, she immediately got excited and said she would take that job. "Even if you said this job is not good for women?", I asked her, and she answered, "Yeah. It's not good for women, but I will go." She was not the only respondent to indicate

[290] Off-site farmworker, June 9, 2019 – Mbekwini (Mitchel's Plain).
[291] Off-site farmworker, June 9, 2019 – Mbekwini (Mitchel's Plain).
[292] Off-site farmworker, June 9, 2019 – Mbekwini (Mitchel's Plain).

that given particular circumstances, such as an availability of other jobs with higher wages, and with particular motivations, such as one's need/desire to increase one's income, some women were willing to do jobs that they said were not good (i.e. inappropriate) for women. In this case, a woman's behavior (doing a certain job) may not necessarily indicate that her decision to work is based on her perceived notion of the job's appropriateness for women (although that is also a possibility). Instead, she may decide to do a certain job because it helps her fulfill/pursue functionings that she personally values more than she values doing what is appropriate for women.[293] This would suggest there is a hierarchy of values in her choice process, and which may be moderated by the intersectionality of her identities.

If behaviors convey the meanings that can be linked to what we value about our identities, those meanings may also carry and organize relational elements in the form of responsibilities and obligations—some of which may be more salient than others—we believe we have to others and/or ourselves. These meanings are also socially-situated or situationally-specific because identities, and the responsibilities and obligations we attach to them, emerge through and/or exists within a person's social and interpersonal context. This highlights the importance of understanding the individual's situation in her choice process and the particular influences of intersectional identities on her value calculations. In the case of the respondent above, one possibility is that she wants a higher income to help her pursue what is more valuable to her than even her beliefs about what she

[293] The choice to do a job that is traditionally not viewed as appropriate for women indicates a strategic choice, signifying a questioning of the *status quo*, and a determination to change the latter for one's self. This would suggest the presence of an empowerment process driven by these women's potential "recognition of injustice…[and] what they are actually able to achieve" (Kabeer, 2021, p. 101).

considers valuable to one identity (i.e. woman). Could the reason(s) be tied to another identity she has that is influencing her valuational calculations?

Being a 'woman' and '(farm)worker' intersected with other ways of being and doing such as, for instance, 'wife', 'mother', or 'foreigner'. By examining some of these other ways of being and doing—which also assign them to specific social categories, or identities—I will further examine how women's decision to work reflects agency by articulating what is valuable to them. Part of the way I try to pursue this identity-based approach to agency is by parsing out what the individual respondent says she values (her functionings), examining the reasons she invokes for what she values, and analyzing how those reasons relate to her identity(ies). In the next few sections, I continue pursuing an identity-based approach by analyzing several of the other identities respondents had and/or often referred to in the interviews—wife, mother, Christian, migrant—independently and intersectionally. Doing so clarifies certain connections between women's decision to work and what they (have reason to) value, thereby strengthening the conceptualization of agency.

6.3.2 Intersectionality of Identities Influence Value Calculations

In the previous section, I began my analysis by examining one identity to show what individual women seemed to value about that identity (i.e. gender), and how their behaviors and perceptions of others' behaviors carried meanings about what those values were and/or ought to be. I continue that analysis in this section but complicate it by also demonstrating how certain identities intersect with each other. These intersections, or the intersectionality of those identities, make it difficult to assign what individuals seem

to value to any one identity only. Rather, respondents showed that their decisions to value certain functionings could be traced to what they considered valuable to the upholding of several identities. I particularly examine how these women's agency (decision to work) in turn reflected and/or embodied meanings that could be predicted by some of their identities and how those identities intersect. While I mark these identities out individually into sub-sections below for better clarity, I also underscore their intersectional nature. I begin by examining the next identity, that of wife.

6.3.2.1 Wife

Could being a wife influence how, and whether, a woman enacts agency and give her reason to value certain ways of being and doing over others? In chapter 5, I argued that the woman who actively pursues *executive* control, rather than *strategic* role, may in fact have mentally assessed the costs and benefits of the options available to her, albeit that she is aware of, and chosen to pursue *executive* control as the one she has 'reason to value'. In analyzing women's value calculations however, it was definitive what gave certain women 'reason to value' some functionings associated with *executive* control over other functionings. What an identity-based approach attempts to clarify is how identities connect to the 'reason to value' aspect and complicate an individual's value calculations. Here, I first examine how the identity of 'wife' gives some women 'reason to value' their decisions to work. Furthermore, I highlight the intersectionality of the identity of 'wife' among my respondents. Specifically, what women describe as significant to this identity also linked to what they described as significant to certain other identities. Thus, the functionings that a woman has associated with 'being a wife' are valued by her through the ways that several of her identities intersect and influence her valuational exercise.

In theory, adhering to the conceptualization of identity I presented at the beginning of this chapter, what a woman values about 'being a wife', the meanings she has associated with this identity, must be conveyed through her behavior (i.e. in her decision to work). Let me consider how this theory could be playing out in practice among women at one farm. Recalling the notion of the 'helpful wife' from section 5.6.1 is useful in demonstrating how a woman's decision to work can link to her identity as a wife (or partner). During a focus group interview, when I asked a group of unemployed women at Poppy Rose Farm if they would like to work, some of them noted that "yes…because men are looking for women who are helpful[294]…who can buy things for the house[295]…and put their money together."[296] In the case of these respondents, their ideas about being a helpful wife linked to their notion of the wife's ability to contribute to the household income and expenses, and this notion could arguably motivate them to decide to work. Specifically, the decision to work, and the wages this work brings, can enable women to fulfil some of those conditions of being a helpful wife. But ideas about what constitutes being a helpful wife are also socially situated. Their decision to work linked to their conception of being a helpful wife in ways that could also convey the additional situational specificity of their identities such as being, for instance, a *Zimbabwean wife*, or *a Zimbabwean wife from Masvingo*, or *a Xhosa wife from Eastern Cape*.[297] The more we unpack an individual's choice process, we find how initially singular identities like 'wife' can become more

[294] Respondent #4, Women focus group discussion, Poppy Rose Farm, July 11th 2018.
[295] Respondent #3, Women focus group discussion, Poppy Rose Farm, July 11th 2018.
[296] Respondent #6, Women focus group discussion, Poppy Rose Farm, July 11th 2018.
[297] Elaine Salo's research on personhood in Manenberg township in Cape Town draws out certain consequences that show how agency is situationally determined and complex. The physical and social survival of Manenberg residents hinged on a moral economy of being 'respectable mothers', 'tough men', and 'good daughters' (Salo, 2004).

specific in different ways and, with enough evidence, how those specificities—sometimes other identities—add meanings to people's choices.

In addition to the meanings that these other identities can add to one's choices, there are hierarchies among identities which can also organize an individual's choices according to the rank or salience of different identities. Stryker (1968) first argued that identities are not equal in value; some identities will have more influence than others on one's decisions. The salience of different identities creates a hierarchy of values that becomes relevant in the individual's choice process. Consider this in the case of Cher, a single woman who valued marriage—since she said that women "should be married"—but who also purposely chose to remain unmarried.[298] To Cher, the Zimbabwean respondent who seemed to have both *strategic* and *executive* control over her income in section 5.3, being single is "not normal". However, she does not feel that becoming a wife will be good for her either because she says she may not be able to financially provide for her children anymore. Here, we begin to see her identity as a mother emerge, and the meanings she has attached to being a mother supersede the meanings she assigned to the identity of wife.

[298] This contradiction between what Cher does and what she says 'ought to be' may be an example of what in SDT is termed as internalization of a value. As Ryan & Deci (2000) posit, "internalization refers to people's "taking in" a value or regulation, and integration refers to the further transformation of that regulation in their own" (p. 71). Cher exhibits an 'internalized' valuation of marriage but does not (seek to) integrate this value in her own life.

6.3.2.2 Mother

It seems that Cher has made the conscious decision to not get married because she values the ability to make certain key decisions on her own, and specifically the choice to work and earn an income in order to provide for her children. She says:

> It is normal and better to be married. I choose that [to be single] just because of situation. Just because I don't want to live with abusive husband. Because men are different. Someone says “you can't go to work because you're my wife” and you have to stay at home and doing jobs at home. Then [there is] shortage of money. And another one says, “you can go to work”. The children I left [in Zimbabwe], they need my support. So there will be a problem if someone marry me.

In her account above, she displays an awareness of certain meanings that the identity of wife carries. Perhaps she learned about those meanings in her home community, and/or from her personal experiences; either way, these meanings influence her perceptions about what she ought to value. For instance, she is aware that being married will require her to act in ways that reflect what she values, or ought to value, in the identity of wife, which necessitates she listen to her husband—such as by staying at home if he asks her—even if doing so may prevent her from pursuing work. She adds that a woman who is married must listen to her husband and “be together as one”, echoing many other respondents. It is possible that being married may have intrinsic value to her, since she says that to be married is “better” and “normal”. Cher also understands that this ‘togetherness’ and ‘listening to one’s husband’ may prevent her from being the kind of mother she wants to be to her children.[299] She values providing for her children more than

[299] Cher’s example suggests that it is possible that for some women, being married to a man with whom she does not share one or more children can signify less intersectionality between the identities of wife and mother.

she values being married herself, indicating how her value calculations organize her choices and her agency is other-related (for her children).

In this sense, her decision to work indicates work's immediate instrumental significance to Cher, since she says it affords her the financial means to support her children. This instrumental significance is further reflected in a major action she took; she purposely travelled from Zimbabwe to South Africa in search of work. From the perspective of SDT (as noted in section 2.2.1), a number of motivations can be sifted out. Cher is working in South Africa as a farmworker because she needs money to feed her children, a motivation that appears external as she is driven by her force of circumstance (poverty and the survival of her children) to seek wage work. However, her decision to work may also be regulated through identified motivations. For example, she consciously admits that providing for her children financially is personally important to her, relating to how she sees herself as a mother. An examination of her motivations through SDT's typology importantly shows how individual choices can be regulated through a combination of motivations that complicate not only an analysis of agency but also of empowerment. If Cher was acting only from external motivations, she would lack autonomy. The likelihood that she is also acting on identified motivations here suggests that her decision to work has also moved her in the direction of also being more empowered, albeit highly circumscribed.

While Cher told us why being a 'mother' is more important to her than being a 'wife', it was based on her experience of not being married, and this has also afforded her freedom from having to wrestle between the responsibilities of being a wife and a mother. In the

hierarchy of identities, she has ranked being a mother as more important than being a wife in her current situation. To help her fulfill the responsibilities she has as a mother, Cher has also had to assume another identity, that of being a migrant.

6.3.2.3 Migrant

In Cher's mental valuation of her options, certain life choices such as migrating to seek work, rather than getting married, have been more conducive to helping her fulfil her responsibility as mother-provider to her children. She is not the only respondent who recognized how her migration was key to helping her fulfill the responsibilities and obligations that she had attached to one or more other identities she held. Cecilia, a South African Sotho woman who migrated from Eastern Cape province, says she could not find work in her hometown and decided to come to Nkqubela about three years ago when a friend told her about a job here. As I noted in section 6.1.2.2, she has a temporary job in a packhouse. She sends about 600 Rands each month when she works to her mother and three children in Eastern Cape. When I ask if that amount is enough, she says "it is, because my mother is staying with my children, [so] she has got access to the children support grant from the government." Cecilia's contribution from work therefore supplements the government grants that her children receive, but it is nonetheless a crucial contribution because her children's expenses have grown as they get older. Staying in Eastern Cape did not allow her to contribute to her children's financial needs as she could not find a job there.

Lisa, a thirty-seven-year-old international migrant from Midlands, Zimbabwe, tells me life in Mbekwini is hard as she does not feel safe there, but that she needs the work she is

doing as a farmworker in South Africa, saying “we are working for our children”. As the stories of Yolanda and Sibusisiwe in chapter 5 shows, a woman can also be motivated to migrate by her desire to be with her husband in order to have some control over pooled income. Being a migrant—whether a foreigner or local—in South Africa however was not a simple and cost-free endeavor, as the respondents clarified. Most migrant women respondents worked because that was the main purpose for their migration—to earn an income. Some of these respondents were not working at the time of their interviews because they were temporary workers and/or looking for work. The interviews suggest however that being a ‘migrant’—both domestic and international—is an identity that many respondents consciously held. It was also an identity that intersected with other identities individuals had. For the women respondents who deliberately pursued migration, they displayed how being/becoming a migrant could be a key enabler and/or indicator of an individual’s agency when that migration is motivated by the individual’s pursuit of what she values.

Lastly, another identity that emerged as significant to my respondents during the interviews was that of religion. All of my respondents, except for one off-site respondent, said they were Christian. Religion first appeared central in my respondents’ daily lives, and to their agency, when I asked them about the kinds of groups they were part of.

6.3.2.4 Religion

In order to understand the kinds of lives that women led outside of their work, and further explore their agency enactments, respondents were asked if they were part of any groups. In particular, I sought to understand if women valued being part of specific groups, and

how their participation in such groups, or collective actions, helped them enact agency. The interviews clarified that religion—i.e. being Christian—was a key part of how women respondents viewed themselves. The majority of my respondents said they were part of a church, which many also attended weekly. On-site women said they travelled to church in groups in hired taxis or church-funded buses. Off-site women said they usually walked to their churches in the settlements, or travelled in *kumbis* to a church in town. But what did religion—being Christian and/or a church-goer—have to do with individual women's decisions to work? The answer is layered, and relies on understanding how the responsibilities and roles women assigned to certain other identities intersected with their religious identity.

Consider this in the case of Emma, an on-site respondent whose story I expand in chapter 7. As I interviewed Emma, I noticed that she carried her strong attachment to her faith in her everyday life, from the way she said she dressed by wearing only skirts, and not pants, to her descriptions of regular interactions with people at her church. Emma is an on-site respondent who works as a maid since leaving her job as a farmworker a few years ago. Despite having two sons who are permanent farmworkers, Emma has other children and a grandchild who live with her. She is the main provider in her household since her husband deserted her. While her decision to work seems bound to her perceived sense of duty as mother/grandmother-provider for her family, it is in her description of her religious identity and activities that she most strongly validates her decision to work. She explains that church is the place where she feels she belongs and is part of a community that listens to her. She enjoys speaking with the other "sisters" at church and "enquire about what is happening in each others' lives." Her experience presents the church as a

site of regular meetings and friendly catch-ups, and also a place where the "advice" she receives makes her feel "encouraged as a Christian woman" to continue working. Through those interactions, she describes gaining the sense that the work she does is important, saying "I'm a good worker and I work hard," because it helps her pursue what she values as a mother/grandmother: providing for her family.

Church was also a place where other women sought, and sometimes gained, a sense of direction and guidance in navigating the hurdles in their lives as well as support in dealing with the feelings of alienation they sometimes felt. Sometimes, this sense of direction helped them feel more confident about their choices. To Sarah, a Zimbabwean off-site worker, she does not like the idea of being a farmworker but "going to church" and "going to work" help her feel more in control of her life. She adds that "to pray will make my life better, to feel comfort. Nothing else." In this way, her religious identity helps her cope with her decision to do a job she does not like.

Some respondents relied on their religious identity for moral guidance. Being a contract worker, as Primadona reveals, can also take one to "places where you meet different people, different characters" who can become "a negative influence in your life." For one off-site worker, a thirty-four-year-old widow, she feels that being part of her church in Mbekwini keeps her "safe", while also adding that "it drives me away from a lot of evil things."[300] Women who said they attended church regularly often spoke passionately about what going to church and/or being a Christian meant to them. One of the off-site

[300] Of-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 8, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.

respondents in Mbekwini told me she goes to church every Sunday. Sometimes, if she is practicing in the choir, she will also attend church on Saturdays. When asked why she attends church, she says:

> It's only to go to worship God. Because He's the one, almighty God protect me in South Africa. If I didn't worship God, who else am I going to worship? God who give me to see another day and day after tomorrow. He always protect me. So I'm just thank God.[301]

For the respondent above, who is also an international migrant, attending church gave her the feeling that they she was not alone, that her God was with her and helping her in her pursuit of work. For migrants in particular, holding on to their belief in God reflected the trust they were putting in this God to help them survive and morally guide them in a foreign place where they came to look for work. It was clear from the interviews that respondents, whether migrants or not, valued the ability to go to church and practice their faith. This feeling was palpable among both on-site and off-site women. To another off-site respondent in Mbekwini, attending church and participating in the choir is "good because they teach me about God," reminding her that there is more to her life than working on the farms. These teachings that women gained, and practices that they engaged in, not only confirmed their religious identity but also added meaning to their moral values and behaviors in other dimensions of their lives, including their decision to, and experience of, work.

[301] Of-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 9, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.

The churches women attend, as described by both on-site and off-site respondents, are centers buzzing with activity. From choirs and masses to food sales and get-togethers at different people's houses, the church seems to give women the opportunity to be part of a group where they feel valued and cared for, and where they learn how to be and behave as Christians and women. These spaces are therefore key to the women's constructions of meanings, specifically how and which meanings get to be assigned to which behaviors. As Burke & Tully (1977, p. 883) posit, "these meanings come to be known and understood through interaction with others in situations in which those others respond to the person as a performer in a particular role." A person's 'role' in this way is the external representation or component of her identities, the enactment of one or more identities. Her role is embodied in her behaviors and actions, the latter translating the meanings of her identities associated with that role. Consider the example of a woman performing the role of 'church-goer'. Her action not only indicates her religious identity (i.e. Christian), but suggests religious commitment, which others around her perceive of her in this role.

Given these understandings/definitions of identities—as roles and predictors of meaning—and the discussions in this section of different but intersecting identities, choice processes that align with one's agency freedom, or one's ability to pursue functionings one values, will necessarily include the intersectionality of one's identities. That is because when one's behavior represents what is (perceived to be) meaningful to one about one's identities, that behavior becomes the person's articulation of what he/she values. While one's identities influence one's value calculations, the intersectionality of identities complicates an analysis of these value calculations, making it difficult to attribute what individuals have 'reason to value' to any one identity specifically. One potential way

around this hurdle is to recall that identities, as noted earlier, are not all equal—some identities are more valued than others. Sometimes, the link between an individual's action(s) and what she has reason to value (more) can be clear(er) if the evidence suggests that her behavior articulates what she values about the higher-ranked identity.

6.4 Ranking One's Identities Is Agency

A person who individually chooses how to enact her agency is also ranking the various identities she holds, especially when that agency relates to fulfilling certain responsibilities she has. An assessment of individuals' identities can help us understand 'why' the pursuit and achievement of certain functionings matter to them more than other functionings. For some of the women I interviewed, the meanings they have attached to their decisions to work can suggest if/how their agency is purposeful and relational. As I explain in chapter 5 (see section 5.5), an individual with purposeful agency values her decision-making ability and choice, intrinsically significant components, in her pursuit of functionings she values. Individuals however are also social beings whose decisions do not occur in a social vacuum but rather in the context of their relationships with others. People have and pursue similar and different ways of being and doing within their specific situations. By placing an understanding of the instrumental value of their work in light of the identities they hold and value, such as through the relationships they have with others, we can begin to understand not only what the respondents value but also some of the reason(s) they value and choose to value certain functionings. Let me illustrate this point in the story of Ruro, whom I have referenced briefly in earlier sections of this chapter. I begin by presenting aspects of her history which she raised and focused on in her interview. By identifying

some of the identities she mentions, I depict who she has been—some of the identities/roles she holds—and the experiences she has been through, who she says she still is, and who she wants to be. Her story shows how her decision to work has been a key factor in helping her pursue what she values and has reason to value.[303]

Ruro was a thirty-two-year-old Mozambican widowed woman who had been living for two years in Mbekwini at the time of the interview. From a young age, she recalled wanting to be married. When she got married at the age of twenty, she became a doting wife and described her husband as her best friend. When he got sick a few years ago in Mozambique, her life turned upside down. "It was just a simple headache," she recalled about her husband:

> We go to hospital, they gave some tablets, but the pain never stop. We go back to hospital and they said maybe he have meningitis. So by the time they want to take the lumbar pump [puncture] from his spinal cord, he didn't make it to wake up. Just passed away. That situation was so bad because my mother-in-law thought I was going to give problem to her. She just asked me to go back to my mother's house and she reject my child.

Thus, Ruro became a widow when she was three months pregnant with her first, and only, child. She needed to find a way to earn an income, and so she started to cross the South African border while she was pregnant to buy items that she would then sell in Mozambique. But things were tough for her, and she was constantly battling the choice of working to have food or staying home and breastfeeding her child. When her daughter was eight months old, she decided to leave Mozambique in search of more stable work,

[303] 'Work' is not necessarily important to how all women enact their agency. Given the focus of this chapter on women's agency and work, I have chosen to focus on those respondents for whom 'work' was a central component in their experiences and pursuits.

saying “I saw I didn’t make it if I continue to stay. I decided to come here to work for my child.” When I asked if she was happy with her decision, she said, “I left my child with my mother. It’s hard for me.” The promise of finding work in South Africa however was higher than finding work in Mozambique, and she was not disappointed when she migrated and eventually arrived in Mbekwini, where a friend had been waiting for her. She first started out as a farm worker for a labor contractor, and this job helped her get on her feet. But she kept searching for something else, saying “farm work is very hard, so painful. When you go there you feel your body sore everywhere.” She has for about a year been working as a domestic for a private household three days a week, a job she found through a friend who knew her current employer. She earns 2800 Rands per month, which her boss deposits into the bank account of Ruro’s friend since Ruro herself does not have the documents required to open her own bank account. From this wage, she sends 1000 Rands every month to her mother in Beira, where her three-year-old daughter also lives. Since food is very expensive in Beira, she occasionally “must make a plan to send the food [as well as] money.” She sometimes spends only 200 Rands on food per month for herself after sending remittances and paying for expenses like rent and electricity. She has a meager lifestyle and says she often goes to bed hungry:

> Where can I get money to buy more food? If I want to kill myself with food, what about my child? If you don’t have money, you will just know what is good for you because you didn’t come here to enjoy yourself. Just come here to work. To achieve something.

For Ruro to even imagine a scenario where she does not have to work seems impossible, stating “I never get anything if I just sit at home. I will just continue, I will go to work every day. I must make sure.” Ruro’s story, like many of the other women’s stories, shows that

it is not enough to examine women farmworkers' agency through their work only. Specifically, her decision to work indicates her agency, but on its own it does not convey the meaning of this decision. Instead, as her story shows, what she believes about her intersecting roles—such as being a mother, widow, a work migrant—have articulated how her decision to work is meaningful to her. She also indicates how some of her identities, like being a worker and a migrant, help her fulfill her role as a mother, her higher-ranked identity.

This is just an example of the difficult choices that some of the women I interviewed wrestle with, in pursuit of a situation that they aspire and imagine to be better than the one they are in. Understanding the multiplicity and intersectionality of an individual's identities can help us understand how and why people value different ways of being and doing, revealing some aspect of the meaning(s) they attach to their agency. Action gains meaning when one's own perception of one's identity drives one to pursue what one values as holder of that identity.

An examination of my respondents' identities so far also reveals how limited my own understanding of people's motivations, and reasons for valuing certain functionings, still is. For instance, we know that Ruro is a widow with a small child, lives at starvation level, and is the sole provider for herself and her child. We however do not know the full extent of her circumstances and motivations for migrating to South Africa for work, a task which would require more than a one-hour interview. Specifically, Ruro may be constrained in multiple (more) ways that inhibit her from pursuing other ways of being and doing that she may prefer. Does she, or is it possible for her to, receive financial help from any family

members or the Mozambican government? We also do not know if she would have chosen to come to work in South Africa if she had been given other work options in Mozambique or if she had remarried someone in her country. As Amartya Sen notes, “choices are always made within the limits of what are seen as feasible” (Sen, 2006, p. 5). Therefore, we also can assume that the choices she, and other respondents, make are choices that they deemed most feasible for them at those times given their individual circumstances. While Ruro’s interview reveals some serious material deprivations she experiences and the social constraints of her situation, these are part of the background of the functional relationship between Ruro’s goals and her agency. Aliya Khalid’s work draws some of the implications of this situation here. As she argues, “For mothers navigating their aspirations through socially constrained conditions, a particular form of agency may be exposed - an agency to ‘say no’ to the negativities of oppression” (Khalid, 2020, p. 32). Ruro has been saying this ‘no’ through her decision to work to provide for her child.

I also do not know if Ruro would have chosen to work if the choice to do so did not involve her (and her child’s) survival. While I have been analyzing agency as the respondents’ exercise of their choices (i.e. to work or not work), a key aspect of many these women’s lives, including Ruro’s, is poverty. Poverty not only shapes routine experiences but it also defines what alternative functionings are available to people, their capability set, and how free they are to pursue such alternatives. In this way, poverty can shift agency. If a person is so poor that they cannot envisage not working, even if that choice would be their preferred choice (what they intrinsically value), because doing so would compromise their

survival (or that of their loved ones, as was the case also for Tarisai[304]), then that person may not have the option to not work. The choice to work in these instances may actually represent a lack of choice, undermining agency. It bears reminding therefore that while I have analyzed the choice to work or not to work as an important choice among the women respondents and suggestive of their agency, it is also a choice that is too often directly influenced by one's force of circumstance for the very poor.

My analyses of Ruro's and other respondents' experiences and perceptions as workers so far shows these women's agency in pursuing their hopes and dreams while recognizing some of the identitities that seem to be behind some of the choices they make as individuals. By defining who an individual is, or her perception of who she is and/or is supposed to be, an identity can influence a person's agency freedom and/or decisions. In particular, each individual has attached certain meanings to specific behaviors, meanings that can reflect certain identities she values, and what she values about those identities.

My approach in this chapter so far also shows that while the multiplicity and intersectionality of an individual's identities add meaning to her agency, these aspects can also make it difficult to clearly link one specific identity as the direct motivation behind the decision to work. My goal however is not to identity one identity as the 'direct cause' of an action, but rather to recognize how certain identities intersect and influence an individual's value calculations. To an individual, some identities (or one specific identity)

[304] See Tarisai's story in section 5.4.1.

may be more salient than the rest.[305] By considering how the relevance of different identities I discussed above play out in individuals' decision-making processes, this approach so far reveals the different and nuanced ways that the (farm)workers and their choices can be categorized and understood. Furthermore, the interviews show that work itself is not an end goal for these respondents; it has *instrumental value* as performing the role of a (farm)worker is usually a route linked to respondents' other goals. Women respondents were clear that they were working in order to achieve certain objectives.

In the next part of this chapter, I present some of the motivations that women have for working. Specifically, I link their 'motivations to work' to the pursuit and achievement of their hopes and dreams, or aspirations. The aspirations that respondents reveal in turn also clarifies a conceptual link between 'work' and agency freedom. Specifically, my respondents' understanding of their motivations for work(ing) indicates *agency freedom* in their pursuit of functionings that they value and have reason to value, and the latter link to the meanings they have attached to certain roles they have.

[305] The relevance of identity salience—that some identities are deemed more important than others—was first raised by Sheldon Stryker in his work that also shaped the field of symbolic interactionism (1968). The notion of identity salience is particularly relevant in how individuals are able to imagine themselves, what Markus and Nurius (1986) call 'possible selves'. Individuals have ideas about their possible selves—who they can(not) become and what they (do not) want to become. While an individual can pursue any combination of possible selves, "the pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual's particular sociocultural and historical context and from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and by the individual's immediate social experiences" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). While these factors can shape one's current view of one's self, and mediate one's agentic behavior through current and/or future actions, they also importantly suggest how this agency bears the markings of social influences and constraints.

6.5 Working for One's Dreams: Aspirations and Agency

It is clear so far that the respondents come from many different backgrounds, live in varied conditions, and have diverse capabilities. Each one however also had her own purpose, held in her aspirations. Some described feeling constrained by their circumstances from fully pursuing their aspirations. Most however actively pursued, or planned to pursue, at least some of their aspirations despite the constraints they faced. I argue that aspirations are important in an identity-based analysis of women's agency because aspirations illuminate a key link between agency freedom and agency achievement.[306] Here, parallels can be drawn from recent studies on the relationship between aspirations and agency within the CA (Conradie & Robeyns, 2013; DeJaeghere, 2018; Unterhalter, 2018). For example, aspirations can signal the limits of one's opportunities especially when agents do not (or cannot) imagine alternatives beyond their current conditions of constraint (Conradie & Robeyns, 2013; DeJaeghere, 2018). While this suggests the relationship between agency and aspirations is dialectic (DeJaeghere, 2018; Unterhalter, 2018), that relationship is also temporal, oriented toward socially-situated (future) valued wellbeing (DeJaeghere, 2018). This temporal dimension of the agency-aspiration link allows what DeJaeghere (2018) has called "openings in agency to occur even when faced with gendered constraints to aspirations" (p. 237).

If we consider one's aspiration as a future achievement that one hopes to realize, then present (or near-future) behavior that aligns with the pursuit of that aspiration should also

[306] A number of recent studies examine the impact of changes in aspirations on individuals' agency among the poor (Bernard et al., 2019; DeJaeghere, 2018; Kosec et al., 2022). For example, Bernard et al. (2014)found that when people's aspirations changed, so did their forward-looking behaviors.

indicate one's ability to enact agency freedom. Aspirations also add meaning to an individual's choice that can directly relate to their identities, thus being important in an identity-based approach to agency.[307] Specifically, a person's aspirations can reveal what she considers important in upholding her sense of identity. In the context of women's decisions to work, analyzing respondents' aspirations inextricably linked to the meanings individuals attach to the significance of their work.

6.5.1 Meanings behind the Value of Work

Recall that meaning is conveyed by one's behavior(s) and can be understood in the context of an individual's particular identities within his/her social milieu. Identities however also influence an individual's perceptions about a particular behavior, coloring the meaning(s) he/she associates with the behavior. Here, I consider the various reasons that individuals give for valuing work—instrumentally and/or intrinsically—before examining how the meanings they attach to the act of 'working' (or 'not working'), a (set of) behavior(s), relate to particular identities.

There is the immediate instrumental value of work in enabling one to meet one's basic survival needs. An on-site respondent from Poppy Rose Farm says being able to work helps "bring an income, we can buy food and things for the house. If you are employed, you don't stress so much like a woman sitting at home."[308] She suggests that work, through the income it brings, can ease the apprehensions that individuals may have about meeting

[307] In South Africa for instance, Deborah James (2017) shows that aspirations, which influence people's behaviors, can link to ideas people have about social class and reciprocal/family obligations while being shaped by new value formations that occur within/through Bible churches (D. James, 2018).
[308] On-site respondent, Poppy Rose Farm – July 18, 2018.

their basic needs, even if the latter are not fully met through that income. Beyond meeting one's survival needs, work is a means through which many respondents try, or hope, to enact agency in the pursuit of other functionings. As one off-site respondent says, "I am choosing work because I want to achieve my dream," which in her case is to someday open her own clothing shop in Zimbabwe.[309] Another off-site respondent from Nkqubela says "when I'm employed, I am able to buy things for my children and do other things because I am employed," indicating how the wages she earns through work gives her the ability to purchase certain things, for herself and/or others, that she otherwise may not be able to afford.[310]

Several of the off-site respondents I interviewed told me they were working to save money toward a specific goal, like buying a house or starting a business. Twenty-two-year-old Cynthia is from Gwekwe, Zimbabwe. She arrived in Mbekwini four years ago and has been a contract farmworker since. "I always wanted to be an accountant," she says, but she had to leave school at sixteen, saying "my mother didn't have money for me to go further." A year after moving to South Africa, in 2016, she met a Zimbabwean man whom she says was "very kind" and she married him soon that same year. She describes having a "very good" relationship with her husband. He is a painter and earns 850 Rands per week while her weekly wages as an off-site farmworker is 800 Rands when she works full-time. Cynthia's earlier comment (in section 6.2.1.3) indicates that she does not like being a farmworker, but it also revealed that she does this job because she needs the money. In her comment below, we find that the intended use of her, and her husband's, savings is

[309] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 8, 2019, Mitchel's Pain.
[310] Off-site respondent, Nkqubela – August 4, 2018.

to buy a property in Zimbabwe, a house. As she recounts, she and her husband came to South Africa for a specific purpose:

> After expenses, the rest of it [wages] we keep it. If we save, we put it in the house.[311] It is for something we want to use in Zimbabwe, our property. We are still saving and buying in Zimbabwe.

Cynthia's dream is to have her own house in her country, where she hopes to return to someday. The hypothetical situation that my enumerator presents her with, as detailed below, indicates that she is not against the idea of work per se, but is rather not happy with farm labor:

> [Enumerator]: *If you had a choice to work or not to work, what would you choose? If your husband made 20 000 Rands a month and he said, "Cynthia, you can work if you want to, but you don't have to work if you don't want to." Would you work?*
> [Cynthia]: I'd like to start a business. A tuck-shop. My dream job like I said was to be accountant, but I didn't finish my school. So right now I think my good job is to clean the house for white people. That one is work I need. What I want to do is tuck-shop. I really want to go back to my country, to stay there with my family and start my own business there. Working here in the farms is very hard. I think if I start my business, my life will be better.

The account above shows that Cynthia believes her life will be better if she can have a tuck-shop business, and she is endeavoring toward having that life by working as a contract farmworker, a job she does not like. She would have preferred to work as a domestic, as she notes. She believes cleaning houses is 'better' than doing farm labor, and this connects to another comment she made (see quote at the beginning of chapter 6) regarding what she perceived to be the respectability of certain jobs. For Cynthia, like

[311] Like many other Zimbabwean respondents I spoke to, Cynthia and her husband keep their savings, physical cash from their earnings, in their house in Mbekwini. Neither she nor her husband have a bank account.

most respondents, work is firstly a means to an end. Cynthia has clearly associated the achievement of her dreams to have a house and business as important to the betterment of her life. The job she is doing as a farmworker, which she describes as hard and not respected, is the future-oriented behavior that she believes will help her achieve her goal.

Another off-site respondent responded to the same hypothetical question by saying she would choose to work, even if her husband had enough money, because "working I think make you less stressing. I feel comfortable if I'm working."[312] While some respondents answered the hypothetical question by saying they would still like to work or have their own business, others said they would choose not to work if they had the option, suggesting work held little (or no) intrinsic value to them. One respondent said "if I don't have to work, I won't work. I rather stay at home with my child."[313] Another [Talent] said she would assess her household's financial situation and then make a decision, saying "when everything is fine, I will stay at home. But I see right now it's not enough money, so I will work."[314] These responses show that there are various value calculations at play in women's choice processes which reflect work's instrumental and/or intrinsic value to individuals.

A few respondents displayed an understanding of their work having both intrinsic and instrumental value. To Emma for example, from Poppy Rose Farm, work has both instrumental and intrinsic significance. She would choose to work over not working because she "cannot think of not having to work", saying:

[312] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 9, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.
[313] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 9, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.
[314] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 9, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.

> We need work to survive. We don't want to stay at home and become housewives. When I walk to work, it gives me a chance to speak to myself, understand and think. This I feel is good. Working in the vineyards, I don't want to ever work there again. I'm happy being a domestic.

Emma expresses satisfaction not only in the type of job she does, but also in what her job allows her to do and be. Her comment shows that she needs to work to survive, making work instrumental. She also claims that 'walking to work' provides her with a personal time that she values for introspection, an intrinsic component. She has been able to pursue a job that she is satisfied with, and which safeguards her from what she does not want to be: a farmworker, and a stay-at-home housewife.

Perpetual, an off-site respondent, expresses another dimension to work's instrumental value, notably in improving others' perception of her. She explains the different, and seemingly conflicting, ideas she holds about the respectability of a job. She adds that "in Zimbabwe, they don't respect this [farm job]. [There they respect you] only when you have a qualification maybe, something better." Her comments indicate what she believes are others' low perceptions of farm work, which makes this job less respected in her view. However, she also argues that 'work' itself is something worthy and that ought to be valued, denoting its intrinsic value to her through the sense of independence she feels. She says "I love to work," adding that she would work even if her husband made enough money to pay for everything. Her reason is a pragmatic one:

> I love to be independent. Like getting my money on my own. Not depending on someone. It's going to be hard when you depending on someone. Let's say for

> example he can die any day and you used to depend on him. It's going to be hard to just to take it from there.

While Perpetual, like some other respondents, indicates certain views about the respectability of certain jobs, she also shows that she values her work nonetheless. Both on-site and off-site respondents provided ample reasons for why they work, seek work, and/or (would) choose between working and not working. My task in the rest of this chapter is to present those 'reasons' or motivations as aspirations that my respondents say they value and that work helps them pursue and/or fulfill.

At the same time, I try to use an identity-based approach when examining why they have reason to pursue those aspirations by also highlighting the relationships that they value. By unpacking an individual's choice process in this way, it can become clearer in some cases to identify how certain identities give meaning to the individual's choices. These meanings can further reveal how individual agency (i.e. agency freedom) can sometimes also be relational when one's (pursued) aspirations are (also) other-related. I categorize aspirations under three broad categories: self-related; other-related; and mutually-related. By analyzing how aspirations can be self-, other-related (i.e. others' wellbeing), and/or mutually-related (own wellbeing and others' wellbeing) in the next three sections, my first emphasis is to review their usefulness as analytical categories.[315] These categories are also by no means mutually exclusive. Instead, the explanations given by respondents indicate that what individuals sometimes perceived to be related to their own wellbeing could sometimes also be linked to the wellbeing of others they cared for, and vice versa.

[315] Responses show that individuals did not pursue their goals by distinctly categorizing them as self- and other-related. This distinction is merely an analytical tool I use to examine their goals.

Lastly, by categorizing aspirations this way and situating them within women's decisions to work, the analysis that follows also suggests that it is sometimes, though not always, possible to identify how a specific identity may be influencing their individual value calculations.

6.5.1.1 Aspirations as Self-Related

Self-related aspirations are those that refer to what an individual wanted to pursue and achieve for her personal self. Among women respondents, one of their key self-related aspirations was getting a (particular type of) job. Often, these dream jobs that respondents mentioned required specific education or training which the respondents were aware of. For most of these respondents, it was not clear if/how education was valued for itself (i.e. intrinsically), but their explanations indicate that education had instrumental significance to them; they believed that getting an education, or learning specific skills, would improve their job options.

Women in particular seemed to associate having a better job with feeling more in control of their lives. To an off-site respondent who left school in Zimbabwe at the age of thirteen, going back to school is important, as she says "this farm-working business, I don't see it going far", but getting an "education is the thing, [then] I can get a better job. If I had this, I think I will be more in control in my life".[316] For on-site respondent Emma, that control translates into better self-reliance. Emma wants the opportunity to learn new skills so that she can do a job that she likes. She says, "I want to take a course to be an electrician." She

[316] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 8, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.

likes the idea of being an electrician because she says "I like fixing things." For Emma, learning these new skills is also about being self-sufficient in a way. As she adds, "when appliances in my house get broken, I have to look for someone to help me and I don't like that. I want to be able to do that myself." For Perpetual, an off-site respondent, having a "career, maybe a nurse or something," would make her feel that she can "do more things" in her life.[317] She also adds how this sense of greater control she imagines from being/becoming a nurse may not materialize the same way if she was in her native country, Zimbabwe. She does not envision doing this job in Zimbabwe, saying, "I'd love to work here [in South Africa]. Here you will have more quickly the opportunity to get a job and I'm sure I can get well paid, more than in Zim." The diversity in individuals' self-related aspirations were often also temporally spaced. Cynthia's story from earlier (section 6.5.1) showed that one's aspirations for better work could also be layered temporally into shorter- and longer-term goals. For example, her near-term aspiration was to get a job that was better than farm work, such as being a domestic. Her long-term aspiration however, what seems to motivate her to persevere in her current job, is to have her own tuck-shop.

Respondents also spoke about their worries when discussing their dream of a job. For instance, being un(der)employed could give some women a sense of unfulfillment. As one off-site respondent notes, "I want to go on with life. I want to see myself in my house with my children, raising my children it will mean a lot to me. The hold-up is that I'm unemployed."[318] Another respondent felt that additional work to the one she was doing

[317] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 8, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.
[318] Off-site respondent, Nkqubela – August 4, 2018.

as a contract worker would help her have better control over her life, saying, "*kushanda* (work). More work will change my situation".[319] The way an individuals' aspirations were temporally spaced could also become a source of worry for some respondents. Longer-term goals were sometimes described with hesitation, and some respondents raised those goals as their "worries". Polite is worried that she will not earn enough money in her current job, saying "I want to build my house but money to [do this] I still don't have." What she described as her "hope" for the future however, like some others I interviewed, is the shorter-term goal of "*kushanda*", to have work or a good job. This shorter-term goal is not only an aspiration that she came to South Africa in search of, but it is also an aspiration that she believes will enable her to achieve her longer-term goal of building a house in Zimbabwe.

The decision to work was held in many women's aspirations for a (better) job. Some of the accounts above however also indicate how this aspiration linked to other goals that were not (only) self-related. Women often described their decision to work as one that they believed would advance goals and/or commitments that connected to their relationships with certain others, which the next section elaborates on.

6.5.1.2 Aspirations as Other-Related

An individual's aspirations do not necessarily have to only reflect the achievements that she values for herself; her valuation of certain identities she holds—such as through the responsibilities and commitments she believes she has to certain others—can better

[319] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 8, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.

explain the meanings she has attached to some of her decisions and goals. Aspirations that are other-related are those that are pursued in order to (also) benefit someone other than the agent, reflecting the individual's concern for the wellbeing of one or more person(s). While the intention of pursuing those other-related aspirations are often others' wellbeing, and that is how I try to identify these aspirations, the findings show that others' wellbeing can also influence the agent's own wellbeing.

Cecilia's account below shows that it is not always possible to clearly delineate an individual's aspirations to self-related, given the considerations individuals have for certain others and the commitments they have assumed. Cecilia, the off-site packhouse worker in Nkqubela, is a single mother whose desire is to live for her children. She was intent on speaking directly to me in English, even though my translator offered to translate for her from Sesotho. She says:

> Lose my boyfriend? I don't fear that. My fear is to be unemployed and I'm a parent. I want to live for my children so that I can be able to see when my children are growing up, going to school, and becoming something in life.

Cecilia's dream as a child was to become a nurse or teacher, and she studied till grade 11 but then could not continue, saying "I got pregnant and then I leave the school." When she heard from my translator, who is in his thirties, that he had completed his secondary education recently and was attending night school in order to get his qualification in law while being a single father of two boys, she was shocked. She questioned the very idea that she could still get an education as a parent, arguing "I can go to the school and also my children go to the school? *Haai*, I'm supposed to work for my children!" Cecilia's

reaction highlights how her perceptions of her own ability to achieve certain personal aspirations, like furthering her own education, is complicated by her perceptions of her responsibilities to her children.[320] Her response indicates that one of the meanings she has attached to her decision to work is to fulfil certain responsibilities she believes she has as a mother to her children. The aspirations she described above, as her account shows, are mainly other-related.

The following quote from an off-site Zimbabwean respondent illustrates this often cross-cutting nature of individual aspirations. When I asked Sandra what her hope for her future was, this was her response:

> To live a better life. Have a house, a nice job. If my husband is working a better job, not farm job, I think it's going [to be] better. I want my baby to go school [more] than me, because me I'm not finish school because of money. So I want to pay the school fees for my baby.[321]

Sandra's response shows not only self-related objectives like a better life, a house, and job but also how the basis of these aspirations is the life she shares with her husband and child.[322] By asking my respondents what their hopes and dreams were, I began to identify and connect their agency enactments to specific objectives that they were aiming for and/or working towards. Respondents however always discussed multiple hopes and

[320] Drawing from Markus and Nurius (1986), there is also a degree to which Cecilia's *situation*, the extent to which her view of herself is determined and constrained by her material and social positions, affects her psychological perception by preventing her from imagining this educated version of herself as a possible self.

[321] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 9, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.

[322] Sandra's aspiration for her child's education is related to what Khalid (2020) terms mothers' "anticipated gains from education", which hold the potential though not promise of a better future (p. 226).

dreams, illustrating how the decision to work among this group of women is tied to aspirations that are more than self- and/or other-related. This diversity of their aspirations also underscored the multiplicity of their identities and the meanings that each woman has attached to certain identities she holds. For example, for some respondents, having a good job and/or one's own business was tied to their dream of a 'better life' for one's self *and* one's family. While some were explicit about working to ensure their children finish school and have good futures, others focused on discussing their aim of saving enough money to have a house of their own so that they could live together with their families and/or return to their native country/town. These aspirations that work helped them pursue could sometimes reflect the salience of one identity over others, and the meanings they attached to that identity. Let me consider the identity of 'mother' below.

Even though the overwhelming majority of women I interviewed did not complete secondary schooling, a common aspiration among women respondents who were also (or wanted to become) mothers was the education of their children. They described wanting their children to be well-educated, clearly an other-related aspiration when those women work to help fund their children's educaton. The stories of Cher and Cecilia above illustrate how these women's decisions to works strongly reflects the responsibilities they believe they have toward their children, and each woman is working in pursuit of what they aspire—for both the short- and long-term—for their children. Sarah, an off-site Zimbabwean respondent tells me that, "going to work has made my life better," suggesting that work improved her life; but then she adds how this 'betterment' of her

life relates to her child. She says that working helps her keep her child in school.[323] She adds that "I want to feel her [my child] happy, and for her future I want to educate her." Mirriam, an off-site respondent, says her hope for the future is for her children to "finish school" and accomplish what she did not. She adds, "my parents died when I was young and my wish was to go to school. I grew up suffering. I feel I have some control now because I'm doing it on my own, even though I didn't finish school." Lisbet from Poppy Rose Farm told me that her children's future and education are most important to her. As she argues:

> What I want is a better life, a bright future for my children, for them to be educated up to the level of university. For example, my little girl just said she wants to be a chef in the ships that are travelling, so it puts me in a certain position that I want to assist them to fulfill their dreams. I'm sure even if I go to the farmer he will not assist me. So I constantly have to think where can I raise money for my children for them to fulfil their dreams.

Clearly, she is worried about how to help her children achieve their dreams. But she also shows how she views her role and responsibilities as a mother, where she has assumed her children's aspirations almost as if they were her own. This makes it difficult to delineate her goal as only self-related or other-related, because it seems to be both. She has undertaken the task, at least mentally if not yet physically, of devising ways of helping her children in their pursuits by considering and searching for options that may facilitate their achievement of those aspirations. In her interpretation of her role as a mother, she has convinced herself that she *has reason to value* the education of her children.

[323] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 8, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.

Endeavoring to help her children achieve that education is one of the ways Lisbet's identity as a 'mother' give meaning to her actions and choices.

In this section, I examined some of my respondents' goals and dreams by categorizing them as other-related while also highlighting some interconnections between self- and other-related aspirations. I presented some of the women's responses to illustrate how their decisions to work connected to varied aspirations that could be self- and/or other-related. In some cases, it was possible to draw out from the data how an individual's identities—what she valued about specific roles—gave meaning to her choices and pursuits. As the interviews showed, sometimes what initially appeared to me as a self-related aspiration was primarily other-related. In the next section, I discuss how some women described aspirations that they shared and sometimes jointly pursued with another person; I examine these aspirations below as mutually-related.

6.5.1.3 Aspirations as Mutually-Related

Mutually-related aspirations are defined here as the goals and dreams that were shared, valued, and often (though not always) jointly pursued by two individuals.[324] In particular, women respondents often described aspirations that they shared and strived for with their husband. While these women had certain identities that differed from their husband's, their responses suggest that the 'sharing' and 'pursuing' of certain mutual goals are behaviors that may convey certain meanings about what they value in their identity as 'wives'. In other words, I posit that a woman's identity as wife predicts the

[324] In my research, those two individuals refer to married couples.

meanings she associates with the particular behaviors of sharing and pursuing mutual goals with her husband.

The women's perceived mutuality in aspirations with their husbands is suggestive of an interconnectedness[325] between them and their husbands.[326] If one's behaviors convey meanings about one's identities, the women's responses may also indicate how sharing and pursuing a common aspiration with their husband can relate to how these individual women experience, and give meaning to, their choices through their identity of 'wife'.[327] Below, I first discuss what emerged from the interviews as one of the most common mutually-aspired and jointly-pursued goals, or what women described as their dream of a house of their own.

To many of the respondents I interviewed, both on-site and off-site, having a house of their own was important and the meanings they attached to this aspiration could be self-related, other-related, and/or mutually-related. Whether they were South Africans waiting for government housing or foreigners saving their money to build homes in their

[325] In SDT, this interconnectedness is akin to what has been described as 'mutuality of autonomy' (Deci, La Guardia, Moller, Scheiner, & Ryan, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2011). Recall from chapter 2 that in SDT, autonomy is not necessarily individualistic and/or self-centered behavior but rather an internal volition or "perceived locus of causality" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70). Similarly, relatedness gives individuals a "sense of security" (p. 71), and/through "the need to feel belongingness or connectedness with others" (p. 73) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Relatedness and autonomy are synergistic in SDT and not in conflict with each other (Ryan & Deci, 2011). Aspirations that are mutually-related may reflect individuals' need for relatedness and autonomy in their relationships with each other, and also indicate how individual agency can be relational by highlighting the importance of two individuals acting in concert to satisfy their relatedness need and/or autonomy need.

[326] Burke and Tully (1977) describe the way this interconnectedness plays out as counter-roles, or identities that "can only be understood in relation to counter-roles" (Burke & Tully, 1977, p. 883). For example, the identity 'wife' can be assumed to relate to the identity 'husband' through the role that a wife plays to/with/in relation to her husband.

[327] In this way, sharing a common aspiration and pursuing it jointly—albeit in potentially different ways—also shows how identities are experienced through one's interactions with others, as Burke and Tully (1977) noted, and these interactions add to the meanings that individuals give to their identities.

native countries,[328] these respondents were clear that having their own house was something they "dreamed of", "worked for", and "hoped for".

Among Zimbabwean respondents in particular, women indicate that having a job, or working, is a key factor in helping them build their house. This aspiration is corroborated by Lincoln Addison's (2013) study, where he elaborates on this in the chiShona concept of *kuvaka musha*, which literally means 'building a rural homestead'.[329] Rapunzel, a contract farmworker, says she and her husband save some cash every month from their wages and "send it home to build our house. We are busy building because we bought our land." Pursuing a mutually-related goal also seemed to enhance some women's feeling of relatedness to their husbands. One Mbekwini resident, who works with her husband for the same contractor, describes how she feels when she and her husband talk to each other about their future home. "I feel good," she says, "we talk about the future. He tell me 'I want to live a better life for our future. So we work and will bring money because we want to buy our house in Zimbabwe." Here, her remark indicates that having one's own house in Zimbabwe can also link to aspirations for, and perceptions of, a 'better life'.[330] Privilege has been in Mbekwini for two years working along with her husband so that they can build their house in Zimbabwe. Having been married for six years, she confides that not having her own house yet is worrying her, and adds that "if I get money and build my house, I see

[328] This is not to suggest that South Africans do not save to build a home also, but rather that the ones I interviewed did not mention this as a key goal.

[329] The term however has broader significance and can refer to acts of support to one's family back 'home' such as paying for food and school fees, and adding to the livestock or plot of land in one's rural home (p. 249). He argues that this idiom is dominant among Zimbabwean farmworkers and pervades their labor and lives in South Africa.

[330] The perception that having one's own house will lead to a better life has to be understood beyond a material or basic-need view of shelter here to also include a need for interconnectedness and maintaining social bonds. Taken in its cultural context, it reflects a moral code: one works for *kuvaka musha*. As Addison (2013) notes, *kuvaka musha* relates to Zimbabweans' belief "that to obtain prestige or maintain good standing with friends and relatives in the rural home, one must demonstrate improvements to the homestead…[that] is the 'proper' use of wealth" (p. 249).

my life is better."[331] Thirty-three-year-old Mirriam, married for fifteen years, adds that she came four years ago to South Africa with her husband so that they can work together to "build our own house together in Zimbabwe."

These accounts show how these particular Zimbabwean women believe they are pursuing their goal of having their own house, *together* with their husbands, and which links to their vision of a better life. I identify this goal as mutually-related through the women's references to *joint actions*, such as migrating and contributing/building together, and/or *joint ownership*, such as "our house". I cannot however directly connect the mutuality of their goal to their specific identities—the counter roles of wife and husband—using these accounts alone.[332] I can only infer from the accounts here that these women believe it is important for them to have their own house. Since they say they are pursuing this goal jointly with their husbands, I suggest this joint action may reflect some meaning about those two identities, namely their counter roles as 'wife' and 'husband'.

Another mutually-related goal that emerged among some respondents was having their own business. Talent, a Zimbabwean contract worker, wants to go back to her country and open a business. "I want to start my business, any business. And live in my home, my house," she says. Having already built a house with her husband in Zimbabwe, where her younger sister is currently living, Talent is still in South Africa to work alongside her husband so that they can save enough money to go back and open a business in Zimbabwe. Faith, also a Zimbabwean off-site worker, says "I already have my own house

[331] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 9, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.
[332] In chapter 7, I present further evidence to consider for instance how this goal of having a house connects to women's ideas about 'a good woman/wife'.

in Zimbabwe. My wish [now] is to have a business so that I can have more money to make a better life." She and her husband are working as farmworkers for a specific reason, "we came here [to South Africa] to save money for our business," she says, "because we want to open a supermarket in Zimbabwe." For Talent and Faith, having already acquired a house together with their husbands did not end the mutuality of their aspirations. As their accounts show, these women display that they still have mutually-related aspirations with their husbands by seeking to create a business together and to build better lives together.[333] Women's decisions to work and its associated behaviors—such as migrating, saving money with their husbands, making decisions together with their husbands—may convey what they deem meaningful and valuable as wives.[334] If so, these women's aspirations tie to certain aspects they value about their identities; notably, through their decisions to work, the women intend to convey certain meanings that will define them as individuals in some specific role(s) they have. However, by examining their decisions to work in the context of their aspirations only has not provided me with enough information to identify all the relevant identities that can predict the meanings these women's individual behaviors convey.

To conclude, discussions with respondents about work and its significance to the women were inextricably linked to respondents' aspirations. By asking my respondents their own reasons for pursuing specific aspirations, it was clear that one's hopes and dreams might

[333] In chapter 5, women who described wanting to pool their incomes with their husband's and to make spending decisions together with their husband indicate this pursuit of relatedness through the joining of incomes and decision-making.

[334] In the next chapter (7), the analyses of women's responses to other questions seeks to establish a clearer link between their individual aspirations and the specific valued identities motivating those aspirations and their pursuits.

not only be self-related but also (or rather) other-related and/or mutually-related. That these aspirations were self-, other-, and/or mutually-related also suggest the intersectionality of different identities that women held and negotiated. Some of those aspirations were specific concrete objectives that reflected certain meanings about their roles, like the mothers who worked to provide for their children's specific immediate and longer-term needs/desires. Other goals seemed more encompassing, like the desire that many mothers expressed for their children to have better futures, with the latter sometimes involving specific objectives like better life/living conditions, higher education, a house, and good jobs.

Respondents however generally showed an understanding of what they believed they needed to do in order to achieve their objectives, whether these were specific or general ideas, short- or long-term goals that were self-, other-, and/or mutually-related. If we consider aspirations, or one's hopes and dreams, as valued functionings that have yet to be realized, then the pursuit of one's aspirations indicates *agency freedom*. Most of the women I interviewed exhibited an understanding of the agency freedom that their work, or earning of wages, enabled in the pursuit of their aspirations. By describing the explicit ways and reasons that women said they pursued or intended to pursue their valued functionings, I suggest that these women's understandings of their agency freedom in relation to the roles and responsibilities they have and value seem key to their articulation of what is valuable to them.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter clarified that 'identity' is not singular but rather multifaceted. The overwhelming, and often singular, way of categorizing people who work on commercial farms in South Africa—as farmworkers—is historically and racially rooted. But this blanket categorization omits many other identities that these individuals hold and negotiate. Unpacking these different identities better illustrates the motivations that underline people's decisions to work and add meaning to their aspirations. A key aspect to the argument is that an individual goes through his/her life as a host of different, and often intersecting, identities which connect the individual's valuation of 'work' to his/her pursuits and aspirations. Some of these identities are more salient than others, which could be shown by depicting how my respondents described themselves, their hopes and pursuits, and what they claimed to be (or should be) important to them and others.

By analytically distinguishing and empirically presenting some of the various aspirations that individuals revealed, it is possible to identify and analyze some of the ways that women enact, or seek to enact, more purposeful agency in their lives through their decisions to work. I also examined how aspirations could relate to the roles people have and influence people's motivations to work, their choice of what kind of work to do, and/or the value they assign to their work. Identities imply obligations and responsibilities also; for instance, a number of examples showed some women's motivation to work was underscored by their individual sense of duty and responsibility to their children. However, I have not always been able to provide a clear picture about how specific meanings, conveyed by individual behaviors, link to what respondents value about their

specific identities. Furthermore, although many of the women's stories reveal instances of purposeful agency, the latter is still highly constrained. The vulnerable situations that these women are in—massive structural unemployment and violence, precarious jobs and tenure, lack of higher education and skills, poverty, deprivation, seasonal hunger, and more—reveal that their agency (i.e. the decision to work or not) is intimately linked to their survival. The areas critical to their survival, and which influence the choice to work or not for most women, are their ability to provide enough food and ensure physical and material security for themselves and their families.

On the one hand, most of the accounts of women I provide display an agency that is arguably purposeful—through the women's motivations for pursuing what they value—and relational—accounting for their valued relationships within their interpersonal spheres. Conversely, the decision to work for these women is highly constrained and limited contextually. All the farmworkers interviewed were low-income; the majority were poor and several were destitute, suffering from seasonal starvation. Their lives are dominated by a key practical need: generating an income to feed themselves and/or their families. The responses from women farmworkers indicate that wage work, while helping serve women's practical needs, is not fully supporting most of the women's economic independence from men. For instance, seasonal female labor on farms and contract labor for off-farm women have helped many women meet their practical gender needs. By giving women economically productive roles, they allow both on-farm and off-farm women to also fulfil what Moser (1989) called their 'reproductive role' by contributing to the household income to meet their household's needs, such as food and children's school fees. Although women would benefit greatly from more and better access to jobs, serving

their practical needs, it will require women to become and feel economically independent of men—for their productive role to be recognized as strategically important to them and not merely as an extension of their reproductive role—for work to address their empowerment needs. Furthermore, numerous anecdotes in the chapter reveal that women's decision to work is also constrained by their perceptions about what work is appropriate or not for them. These social perceptions limit women's bargaining power in the labor market and their homes (Agarwal, 1997), and as I examine in the next chapter, critically influence the decisions women (are able to) make. These women's stories, which relate some of their experiences and aspirations, are nonetheless useful in allowing us to better understand the different roles they have and value, the role(s) they rank higher than others, and how they enact agency.

The core argument about the link between identities and agency is that an identity-based approach to examining agency should highlight the complexities of various value calculations that comprise an individual's choice processes. This identity-based approach suggests that articulating value is about articulating meaning. While identities can give meaning to people's choices, the limitations of my data do not always allow me to clarify the processes through which this happens. An identity-based approach can in some instances be helpful in analyses of agency if there is enough evidence to suggest that the decision to work reflects the agent's articulation of what is valuable to her, and that this value/valuation relates to the meaning(s) she has attached to her identity(ies).

A dearth of more definitive evidence linking specific identities to certain associated behaviors and their meanings makes this identity-based approach incomplete however. In the next chapter, I try to better identify and link women's conceptions of themselves (and others) to specific functionings.

Chapter 7. Having Respect, Being a 'Good Woman': The Role of Agency in Women's Pursuit of an Exemplar

"When I was growing up, I wanted to be a respectable woman—a good woman."[335]

My final approach to examining women's agency tends toward analyzing what emerged from my interviews as a particular concept of self—the 'good woman'. This concept is not an objective reality but rather, as I will argue, an exemplar that represents certain values. I illustrate throughout this chapter that the 'good woman' is an iteration of the images, or what I later call *personas*, of the self. The notion of the 'good woman' was alluded to in almost every interview I conducted, but it was not universally achieved since most women respondents did not view themselves as possessing all the qualities and features that they deemed, in their individual views, a 'good woman' has. Neither is the 'good woman' a passive concept. Variations in how my respondents describe what it personally means to

[335] Merlin, off-site respondent from Zimbabwe.

them to be a 'good woman' suggests that purposeful agency mediates how this concept of the self is individually contextualized, enacted, and (re)constituted in daily life.[336]

Considering the argument that purposeful agency is self-motivated, I have also suggested in the previous chapters that this 'self' is not necessarily inclined (only) toward the individual's personal interests. The findings appear compatible with the CA's notion of agency freedom as (also) 'other-oriented'. I continue my argument that purposeful agency is the pursuit of what is meaningful while also considering from where meaning emerges. Specifically, if what is meaningful to my respondents is what they value and/or have reason to value—what they find 'good' or 'desirable' (Robbins, 2012)—then positioning the 'good woman' as an *exemplar* affords me a way to examine how "values exist in the form of socially concrete, enacted examples" (Robbins, 2015, p. 18).[337] I also take into account the social-relational influences on what is/becomes meaningful in my analysis of the 'good woman'. Critically, I draw from Markus and Nurius's (1986) study to position the 'good woman' exemplar as an ideal 'possible self'. In particular, if "possible selves are the ideal selves that we would very much like to become," (p. 954), and "many important decisions involve a process of imagining the self under various alternative outcomes" (p. 966), then individual agency is present in creating, enacting, and pursuing the exemplar through those possible selves along a temporal spectrum—rather than at one specific

[336] By providing my respondents' descriptions of their actions, motivations, goals, and hopes, my objective is firstly to offer an account of women (farm)workers' lives.

[337] While I draw inspiration from Joel Robbins' work here, the way I examine the exemplar differs from Robbins' (2015) analysis in two keys way. My analysis is based on, and presents, the exemplar as a human representation of more than one value. Robbins (2015) does not examine the person but rather the particular action(s)—i.e. rituals—done by certain persons to analyze how values are represented and become socially available. He also defines "examples as representations that model the realization of single values in full form" (pp. 18). A successful *ritual* for instance, the main form he examines, is one that allows "the full realization of a single value" (Robbins, 2015, p. 26).

moment in time. With these objectives in mind, I discuss a key functioning—respect—that most respondents associate with their idea of the 'good woman', its three dimensions or 'faces', and certain other functionings that respondents associate with respect. This allows me to develop an argument for positioning 'respect' as a multidimensional functioning. I then discuss different ways some women pursue to be (seen as) 'good women' before considering how identities and community expectations inform women's choices as sources of meaning.

Some contextualization is key before I proceed with the analysis. Among most farmworkers, the moral discourse of the 'good woman' is firmly bound to notions of class and religiosity.[338] As Bolt (2015) notes, maintaining a "Christian sense of propriety" ties to specific "notions of proper conduct" that emphasize respectability (p. 155). In particular, one's respectability could stand as a marker of one's (aspiring) middle-class status (James, 2018), offering "a way to maintain a sense of distinction alongside undesirable farm work" (Bolt, 2015, p. 143). Christian moral values and practices underpin the moral discourse. The pervasiveness of this moral discourse influences women's behavior and perceptions of themselves and others to the point that even major agency achievements, like having one's own house and having a good job like a nurse or teacher, were often not deemed worthy of being 'respected' if those women were not also married. Catherine Dolan's (2001) study in Kenya presents the church as a channel through which "discourses about hierarchy, morality and patriarchy are circulated in village life" (p. 61). She finds evidence

[338] Elaine Salo's (2004) work in Manenberg township (Cape Town) shows how moral discourses permeate communities beyond farmworkers, structuring both men's and women's lives and pursuits in very gendered ways (see also footnote 296). Her work also critically examines the ways women wield overt and covert forms of agency in pursuing specific and gendered conceptions of the self, which I call images or personas of the self.

of the "*mwekuru umwega*", a Kimeru term meaning 'good woman', as a cultural ideal through which traditional gender roles of women are propagated via Christian teachings (Dolan, 2001). Having worked with thousands of women farmworkers in Western Cape, Wendy Pekeur concurs, noting that women farmworkers attend churches that propagate similar views. "There's this thing of 'big sin' and 'small sin' that is propagated to these women," says Pekeur, adding that "this idea has a lot of gender inequality, because some things women do are considered worse 'sins' than if men do it, like relationships prior to or outside of marriage" (Pekeur, 2022). The analysis of respondents' agency precedes from an understanding of the deeply constrained and gendered contexts women farmworkers are in and that motivate their choices and behaviors.

To understand why someone would be (considered) a 'good woman', I begin by examining the accounts of some of the respondents who deemed themselves to be good women. The life history interviews provided the 'big picture' view that showed—through who one was, is, and wants to be and do—how these women experienced being and/or becoming good women. Below, I illustrate the story of on-farm respondent Emma, who believes she is a 'good woman'.

7.1 "I am a Good Woman": Story of Emma

Talking about her childhood, forty-three-year-old Emma describes herself as a happy child whose parents took good care of her.[339] At the age of seventeen, she left school after her

[339] When I interviewed Emma, we were sitting in a restaurant in Paarl, both of us sipping our drinks as I asked her about the current town we were in. Since I could not interview Emma and others from Poppy

boyfriend impregnated her and they got married shortly after she turned eighteen. It was not long until she moved with her husband to a different farm, Poppy Rose Farm, where both started living and working in the vineyards. “For me, it wasn’t hard,” she says about moving to a new farm, “I just wanted to be a wife and a woman.”

As noted in chapter 6, Emma now works as a maid on a part-time basis. She quit her job as a temporary farmworker in the vineyards in 2006 when she was told her new wage would be stock-based rather than a set salary. She has four sons, two of whom are still in school and two are working as permanent workers on the farm. In 2017, one year before our interview, her husband left her and their four sons. “He was cheating on me,” she explains, “he was seeing another woman.” With pain in her voice, she continues:

> I didn’t know until another brother in the church called me and informed me. I didn’t know they were dating since 2009. Then, when I confronted him, he made an announcement in the church that he was leaving me for another woman. They stay together now and have a child together. It’s painful, but I have to be strong for my children. At the beginning I used to think it’s my fault. I thought I was not performing sexually. But I used to go even beyond what I have to do, sometime wake up early and make him coffee in bed and pack him a lunchbox for work. He was a very nice man. I couldn’t even see he was having something with someone outside. I still think it’s my fault.

Ella’s comment above shows that she does not seem to hold her husband personally responsible for the breakdown of their marriage. In fact, she blames herself here, casting doubt on the fulfilment of her own duties as a wife. Yet, she also seemingly tries to clear herself from blame by revealing how she used to go above what she believed she was

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Rose Farm individually on site, I had to arrange this interview with her at a local venue which was about a twenty-minute drive from the farm. Born and raised in northern Paarl at a farm where her parents lived and worked, Emma was very familiar with the area.

supposed to do in caring for her husband. She carries herself as if she is (still) a married woman. During the interview, I notice Emma still wears her wedding ring. When I ask her about it, she responds:

> I think I can bring my husband back to me. That's why I still wear the ring. Although they have gone to a *sangoma* [witch] and have done this witchcraft to him, I strongly believe he will return to me. I said 'The Lord, you're the only one who can return my husband to me'.

Her response here, where she attributes her husband's desertion to supernatural forces, is at odds with her earlier expression of personal guilt in the failure of her marriage. A clarification during the interview reveals that the "they" who have sought supernatural help are the "other woman and her mother". She blames herself for being deserted, but she also explains why she does not believe she should be blamed. She seems determined to seemingly absolve her husband from any personal wrongdoing toward her. And Emma's conviction—in her faith and her marriage—does not go unnoticed, especially at her church where her marital situation is well-known. She believes she carries herself in ways that a Christian woman in her community should, saying:

> Other people look up to me as a Christian woman. I am a good woman. At the church, people call me 'sister Emma'. They love me and respect me. When they see me, they hug me. They ask me how I'm feeling after my husband left me. And I tell them I'm doing good. I'm strong. I'm happy about their concern.

We now begin to see Emma as a loved and respected member of her community, a bearer of her faith, and someone who conceives herself as a 'good woman'. The concern that members of her religious community in particular, fellow church-goers like herself, show her regarding her husband's desertion also reveals her community's esteem for her.

Would her community hold her in such high regard if its members believed she was blameworthy of her husband's desertion? Or is the account of blame she has presented consistent with what her community expects of her?

Through her accounts, there are several ways or reasons we can deduce for why Emma would believe herself to be a 'good woman'. It could be her religiosity, her hard-working attitude, her dedication to her children,[340] her commitment to her marriage despite having been deserted by her husband, and/or her reputation as "sister Emma". I began with Emma's story because its paradoxes suggest that an examination of women's agency among my respondents should consider their individual motivations within their social and relational context. I try in this chapter to unpack some of the meanings that respondents attach to their idea of the 'good woman', a particular type of woman that many women respondents aspired to be. In the next section, I underline the respondents' social context and interactions while drawing from the narratives a diversity of perceptions illustrating who a 'good woman' is and what she does. Respect emerges as a key and multidimensional functioning.

7.2 Beings' and 'Doings' of the Good Woman: Respect as a Key Functioning

The analysis of the 'good woman' begins with a 'functionings' view from the capability framework. I explained in chapter 4 that *functionings* represent "the various things a

[340] See section 6.3.2.4.

person may value doing or being" (Sen, 1999, p. 75). A person's functionings are basically her actions and states. She can *be* 'poor', 'educated', 'a mother'. She can also *do* certain things, like 'negotiate', 'work', and 'take care of her children'. If we are to assess the real opportunity or ability a person has to pursue and achieve her objectives—have agency—then we need to first identify and analyze the functionings that she deems are key to her agency. I start by presenting the different ways that respondents described the 'good woman'. What emerges is a multidimensional view of 'respect', a key cross-cutting functioning that many respondents value and pursue.

'Respect' is a recurring theme that emerges in the respondents' descriptions of the 'good woman'. Its common recurrence suggests that 'respect' is a key aspect of the functionings of a 'good woman'. But respect itself was explained in many ways by the respondents, and did not have one, unifying definition. Respect had different meanings that were perceived by others and conveyed through the behaviors, and sometimes possessions, of individuals. For some of the women I interviewed, 'respect' can be how others treat you, how you treat others, and/or your conduct of/to yourself. To better present these faces or multidimensionality of 'respect', I describe it below through three dimensions: respect to/for others; respect from others; and respect to/for one's self. While I delimit these three dimensions for analytical purposes, the chapter will show that the exemplar of the 'good woman' does not rest on only achieving one dimension; rather, the exemplar encompasses multiple dimensions of 'respect' that intersect with each other through several associated functionings.

7.2.1 Respect to/for Others

'Respect to/for others' revolves around how an individual treats others. For off-site respondent Sandra, a "good woman must have the good character". This to her means showing "respect" to/for others by "not shouting at other people. You stay good with other people". Another off-site respondent adds that "someone with good respect has good manners with others and [good] character."[341] It seems that these women describe 'good manners' as the enactments showing 'respect to/for others'. Consider this in the case of Lisbet, for whom it was important to not lose respect.

For Lisbet, to be a 'good woman', "you have good character in the way you talk to people and do things." As noted in section 6.2.1.1, Lisbet had resigned from her job as a farmworker at Poppy Rose Farm because of the verbally abusive way the farm manager treated her. For Lisbet, the problem was not just how she had felt after receiving such abuse but also how she might behave in response. She decided to quit, saying "I couldn't take this amount of verbal abuse because I would lose respect and speak [back] in a way that I would regret. So I decided to stop working." Lisbet feared her 'good character', or her reputation as someone with good character, would be compromised if she lost respect for someone else, even if that someone had himself showed no respect *to* her.

One's *good manners* or *good character* can be classified using these accounts as 'respect to or for others'. Rachel, an off-site respondent from Zimbabwe, believes how one treats others is important, saying a "good woman is a Christian woman, a woman with good

[341] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 8, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.

behavior." Although respect to/for others was important among resopondents, it was not the only way they described a 'good woman'. To be (known as) a 'good woman', one was also respected by others.

7.2.2 Respect from Others

The interviews indicated that it was important for the 'good woman' to have 'respect from others', which could be identified in how respondents believed a 'good woman' was treated by (be respected by) others.[342] Lisbet believes her religious standing has been an important factor is gaining her respect by members of her community on the farm and at church. Her interview reveals that the respect she believes she has is also attached to how she thinks others treat her due to her position in her community, a position she specifically associates with her religious standing. As she says:

> My husband was a pastor at our church. Due to that fact, I automatically gained that respect. I also hold an important position in church, so I'm very respected in the community and outside because I was married to a pastor.

For Lisbet to lose respect in the first dimension—such as by speaking in ways that she considers disrespectful to others—would not only reflect negatively on her character as a 'good woman' but also potentially tarnish the good reputation and respect she enjoys

[342] I would like to briefly point out that this dimension of respect may be seen by certain readers as related to the concept of dignity advanced by Martha Nussbaum. Nussbaum has argued that "all human beings ought to acknowledge and respect the entitlement of others to live lives commensurate with human dignity" (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 53). To Nussbaum, there are ten central capabilities that are the bare minimum required to live a life worthy of human dignity (see for example Nussbaum (2000)). She presents dignity as "a vague idea that needs to be given content by placing it in a network of related notions" such as equality, respect, and dignity (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 30). Her argument for the notion of respect to be tied to the concept of human dignity is specified in terms of the respect one receives from others, specifically "all, that is, deserve equal respect from the laws and institutions" (2011: 31).

from others as the wife (now widow) of a pastor. She endeavors to behave and be seen as a 'good woman' because she values her reputation. She is not the only respondent who seems to act with the aim of gaining/maintaining others' respect of her and/or being considered to have respect for others. Fifty-nine-year-old Sandy from Flora Farm believes she is treated well and "respected" by the people in her community because of her care for those around her. She believes that her faith as a Christian woman influenced her to be a certain way, and she explains:

> People in my community have great respect for me. When they are lost and they need guidance, they come and seek advice from me as to how to move forward. People respect me because I don't drink or smoke. I don't fool around and I'm a housewife, so people respect me for those. I'm a very calm person. I'm not an active person shouting or chasing people around.

Sandy suggests that being 'respected by others' can be seen in how others behave in specific ways with/around her, giving her a sense of respect from others that she also associates with power. As she says, "in our community, women and men that drink don't come to my house when they are under the influence [of alcohol] because they know I'm not a drinker. So this is how I feel I have power." She notes that women can have respect from others when "they influence good things in the community." For Sandy, to have 'influence' through the respect she receives from others is akin to having a kind of 'power' that members of her community recognize. The respect she receives from others also seems self-fulfilling as members of her community, it appears, accept the respect Sandy has and show respect to her by not disturbing her at her house when they are drunk.

Interviews with some off-site respondents also seem to associate 'respect from others' with 'power' and 'influence'. Speaking of her landlady, Sibo adds that "people respect her [landlady] because she have her own house, she have power." She describes 'respect from others' as akin to 'power', the latter being partly associated here to having one's own house. For Perpetual, she believes she is respected by others in her community in Zimbabwe, saying "I grew up there and I actually know most of the people." She suggests here that one's respect from others would also depend on knowing and/or being known by others in the community. This notion supports some of the previous quotes above; Lisbet and Sandy would likely not have others come to them for advice if they were not acknowledged and respected by others in their community as women with good reputations. Respondents also seemed to judge one's reputation, good behavior and manners, treatment of others, and treatment from others along with judgments on how well one's behavior showed one as a morally responsible person. Respecting others and being respected by others illustrate certain social-relational processes that are key to how one could/would be judged as a 'good woman'. But the 'good woman' was also described as someone who behaved in ways that implied she had respect for herself.

7.2.3 Respect to/for One's Self – Self-Respect

Identifying the respect women had for themselves through their responses was not always straightforward. There were several respondents who specified certain behaviors that would lead others to not respect a woman as a 'good woman' because that woman was seen as not having respect for herself. These descriptions linked respect to "morally principled conduct" (Clucas, 2020, p. 852). Drawing from the interviews and value theory (see section 2.2.3), I suggest that certain individual behaviors that respondents described

seem to refer to self-respect, the respect one has/shows to one's self, which is "derived specifically from a favorable appraisal of one's character and conduct, often from a moral viewpoint" (Clucas, 2020, p. 840). In line with this view of 'respect to one's self', evidenced through an "adherence to morals" (Clucas, 2020, p. 851) and notions about what it means to be 'good' or 'bad' (Hirose & Olson, 2015), my analysis of the interviews tries to identify self-respect by demonstrating how some respondents associate certain behaviors by other women to the latter's lack of 'respect to one's self'. Since my data mostly allowed me to search for self-respect in certain respondents' judgments of other women (rather than judgments of themselves), a lack of self-respect was sometimes also linked with not being respected by others.

Moral values underpinned behaviors respondents described as "not good".[343] Philis, an off-site respondent says, "in our community, a woman is not good if she doesn't have good behavior. Like for example some of them they are prostitutes." She is echoed by another respondent who seems to allude to prostitutes when she said, "to go into the bar to make money is not good. That's no respect."[344] Lisbet believes herself to be a 'good woman' because avoids speaking in ways that she does not consider good conduct for a Christian woman. For Lisbet, it is possible that how she speaks, in the words she uses, is also part of the respect she has for herself in addition to this behavior being part of how she is seen having respect for others. An off-site respondent from Mbekwini says she respects "a woman with good behavior," and when I asked what that means, certain moral elements of good behavior become clearer for she adds: "someone who does not lie. A woman who

[343] Recall from section 2.2.3 that 'value'—what is 'good', 'desirable', what a person 'ought to want'—is inherent in morality.
[344] Off-site respondent [Pretty], Mbekwini – June 8, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.

does not have too much freedom, like going out and drinking beer, and going clubbing."[345] Good behavior here is an extension of how one treats others (see 'respect to others') and includes how ones is seen to treat one's self. Sibo, who is from Zimbabwe, says "the women who do drugs, they have no respect". Some responses also highlight a link between not being a 'good woman', not having self-respect, and not being respected by others. For example, when I asked what kind of woman was not respected (by others), one off-site respondent[346] said "the women who go to the *shebeen* [bar]" while another woman[347] said "the woman who drinks and smokes". These actions were earlier linked by respondents to women who do not respect themselves.

Consider self-respect in relation to one particular behavior that seems to have moral implications for many respondents: drinking alcohol. The consumption of alcohol had varying levels of acceptance among respondents. Among on-site respondents, drinking alcohol itself was often considered "okay" as long as one "does not drink too much".[348] The drinking of alcohol was considered normal,[349] following certain rules of behavior, for men and women on three of the five farms I visited. Jill, an on-site farmworker at Groot Constantia, was six months pregnant and sipping some pinot blanc when I interviewed her. As she explains, "I also drink, but not so much that I cannot do what I am supposed to." For Jill, drinking alcohol would only be problematic if this action deterred her from

[345] Off-site respondent [Faith], Mbekwini – June 8, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.
[346] Off-site respondent, Nkqubela – August 5, 2018.
[347] On-site respondent, Flora Farm – July 12, 2018.
[348] On-site respondent, Groot Constantia – July 21, 2018.
[349] What I mean is that the act of drinking alcohol was considered 'normal', nothing extraordinary, unless one's excessive drinking incapacitated one from work and other duties.

her responsibilities and job. She alludes to a practical reason why on-farm respondents avoid consuming (too much) alcohol: losing one's job.[350]

While for some women complete abstention is seen as the mark of a woman's self-respect as a 'good woman', for others one's self-respect is also determined by different measures of self-restraint an individual maintains over his/her drinking and behavior while under the influence of alcohol. When I asked the women at Butterfly Farm during a focus group discussion if a 'good woman' drinks alcohol, one respondent said "she can drink but not so much [as] to lose respect [to others]," which she explains as "not speak in a good way to other people".[351] Lisbet from Poppy Rose farm says that someone who does not drink is a respectful woman and thinks like a Christian, but she adds that one can still have "respect for yourself" if one does not "abuse" alcohol. For Lisbet, the drinking of alcohol is tied to one's propriety, here a trope of self-respect, and links to her idea of Christian moral practice.

Most off-farm respondents seem to associate having self-respect, as a woman, with abstention from alcohol. For Mike, an off-site farmworker who is a native Zimbabwean living in a community with South Africans and foreigners, his sense of propriety or morally-appropriate behavior is further informed by his identity and experience as a Zimbabwean

[350] Du Toit (1993) rationalized that alcoholism among farmworkers, a legacy of the *dop* system, would eventually drive out workers whose excessive drinking renders them less productive (p. 336). Some have argued that alcohol abuse among farmworkers in the post-apartheid context persists through the availability of cheap liquor (Gossage et al., 2014; Viall, James, & Gerwel, 2011). Taken in this socio-historical context, how these respondents link respect to the avoidance or moderate consumption of alcohol is suggestive, and such behaviors may reflect forms of agency that (also) seek to overcome alcoholism as a remnant of the *dop* system.

[351] Respondent #1, Focus Group Discussion, Butterfly Farm – July 28, 2018.

man who has lived in both South Africa and Zimbabwe. Mike's account suggests he bases his judgment of socially acceptable behavior heavily on his understanding of propriety as a Zimbabwean man. The following explanation draws from a discussion I had with him about people who drink. While he found no issue with men who drink, his account below illustrates his perception about women who drink.

> In the Zimbabwean community [in Mbekwini], we can disapprove of the behavior [women drinking beer]. Zimbabwean women in Mbekwini, they will not be friends with those women [who drink]. Especially those who are married. That's why you heard that lady saying her husband always fighting her about her friends. Because she will go and be friends with someone who don't have a husband and also doing that [drinking]. Then her husband will come and tell her he doesn't want this [drinking]. It's already creating a problem. So there's no way he will approve. He will say 'you are going to stop being friend with that one because they drink beer'. They cannot be friends [the married woman and unmarried woman who drinks]. They cannot be.

Mike's account is revealing on several fronts, but I focus here on the social context and consequences he draws about the expected behavior of Zimbabwean, especially married, women. First, he delimits the Zimbabwean community from other socio-cultural communities in Mbekwini, suggesting that it is not okay for women in the Zimbabwean community to drink. Then, he delineates women who drink from women who do not drink, suggesting they do not share similar codes of conduct and behave differently. The woman who drinks here (if she is married) is seen as not showing respect to her husband. Mike maintains that women, specifically those married, who do not drink should not be friends with those who drink. He justifies this argument by highlighting how drinking affects marital life through discord between the husband and wife. He seems to suggest that balance to the marital relationship can be restored/maintained when the wife 'listens

to her husband' about who to (not) be friends with. The marital ideal[353] is likely evident here, and being respectably married (the respect one receives from others as a result of being married) requires the wife to act in certain morally-appropriate ways—i.e. listen to her husband, avoid drinking (here a trope of personal decency), only be friends with women who have the same values—that will (also) define the respect she has for herself.

In conclusion, it appears from the interviews that respect is connected to how one behaves, through one's words and/or actions. These behaviors, for some, can indicate the respect one has for one's self through adherence to what is (deemed) morally appropriate. Respect was linked to how one treated others and how one was treated by others. For some respondents, respect was also tied to what one owned, such as a house, which could be(come) a source of respect from others. From a multidimensional view, respect can have a two-directional, almost self-fulfilling, value in supporting one's status as a 'good woman'—she is a 'good woman' and hence is respected; and/or, she is/has respect(ed) and is therefore viewed as a 'good woman'. In one direction, purposely behaving in ways, or showcasing certain qualities, that reflect one as a 'good woman' could influence the respect one holds. This line of thought indicates that respect can also represent something that is an end goal in itself. In the reverse direction, the respect one holds—from others, to others, and/or to one's self—can lead others to view one as a 'good woman'. In this way, respect can be instrumental to one's standing in the community as well as something that the 'good woman' receives from others and gives to others/herself.

[353] Knobloch-Fedders & Knudson (2009) define marital ideals as "cognitive models of the perfect marriage", and these models "may refer to any aspect of an ideal marriage (eg., ideal partner, lifestyle, sexual relationship, etc.). For instance, the interviews suggest the ideal partner (i.e. wife) seems to be the woman who 'listens to her husband'.

The term ‘respect’ itself still seems vague, described by respondents so far mostly through the term itself or behaviors associated with it, without a clear unifying definition. These accounts, especially when describing the ‘good woman’, show how respondents’ ideas of ‘respect’ exist in their views of individuals’ behaviors. By analyzing those described behaviors, certain functionings emerge.

7.2.4 Functionings Associated with Respect

The interviewees portray ‘respect’ in ways that imply many characteristics that respondents value such as being “nice”, “admired”, “religious”, “married”, and having “influence” and “power”. If, as the interviews suggest, ‘respect’ cannot be divorced from the descriptions of the ‘good woman’, then the various functionings that emerged as important to my respondents’ notion of the ‘good woman’ should also stand to define a multidimensional view of respect. By analyzing how respect is perceived, embodied, and/or pursued via these analytical dimensions of respect, the entanglements of certain key functionings of the ‘good woman’ also became clearer. Below, I identify and describe three[354] of these key functionings—being admired, married, religious—that linked to respondents’ ideas of the ‘good woman’.[355]

[354] When I examined the interviews for discernible patterns of/among functionings that could indicate what my respondents deemed to be the foundations of respect, these were three functionings that the interviews provided sufficient information about in order for me to analyze. However, I do not suggest that these are necessarily the only key functionings of the ‘good woman’.

[355] The extent to which these functionings were deemed necessary in order for someone to be considered a ‘good woman’ varied among the respondents. Some considered all as crucial, while others noted that being lacking in one functioning did not necessarily mean one was not a ‘good woman’.

7.2.4.1 Being Admired

One of the key functionings of the 'good woman' that emerged from the narratives is that she is admired by others. Admiration differed from respect in two key ways. Firstly, the admirer did not always need to behave in any specific way toward the admired; one could admire someone from afar, without engaging with them directly. On the other hand, as the previous section shows, respect—being respected by others and showing respect to others—involves some level of direct social interaction. Secondly, asking respondents what kind of woman they admire led to either the description of a real person or a persona. While respect was shown/received to/by real people, admiration was held for real and/or fictitious persons.[356]

I begin to examine this functioning by considering a material achievement that many respondents value: having a house.[357] Some respondents said they admire women who have their own houses. Among those respondents is Sandra, an off-site Zimbabwean farmworker in Mbekwini. During her interview, Sandra says "I admire my landlord", who is a South African woman. "She has power," Sandra explains, "if she says 'we need to do this and this in the community', people listen [to her] and they do it". Although Sandra herself does not want this kind of power in South Africa, she wants to be admired as a woman with her own house,[358] saying "I want to be like that". She would like to be a

[356] I gathered from the respondents that admiration—which revolves around the admirer wanting or trying to emulate the admired in some way(s)—rests on the admired person having certain characteristics and/or achievements (i.e. functionings) that the admirer values.
[357] As I noted in chapter 6, many of the respondents are working toward getting and/or building their own house. To these women, having a house of their own is an achievement they value—they aspire to it and some actively work towards it.
[358] This relates to the objective of *kuvaka musha* (see section 6.5.1.3) held by many Zimbabweans.

landlady in her own country someday, and part of her reason for wanting that is because of the power[359] she imagines she will gain in her community when she has her own house.

Other respondents describe admiring certain characteristics or features. A Zimbabwean respondent says, "I admire a woman who works hard, who think about tomorrow's life,"[360] suggesting she values what someone does with her life toward the broader objective of *kuvaka musha*—trying what she can in the present to secure her future.[361] Another off-site respondent tells me that she admires "the one who is responsible. Like well-mannered and well-behaved."[362] When I ask her if she believes she is a woman like that, she says "yes". She and several others illustrate that sometimes, the features women admired in others were (also) those that respondents saw in their own selves.

For others though, some of the features they admire in a good woman are not features that they see in themselves, at least not yet. Cynthia, the Zimbabwean off-site worker, is very specific when asked what kind of woman she admires. "I admire Grace Mugabe," she says, "she was our President's wife. She's powerful."[363] She demonstrates her admiration by praising Grace Mugabe's way of speaking and dressing, saying the latter "must be a good woman". Talent, an off-site farmworker, tells me she admires those with stable jobs,

[359] What Sandra calls 'power' links closely to what Addison (2013) called the "prestige" or "good standing with friends and relatives in the rural home" (p. 249)
[360] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 9, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.
[361] Addison (2013) describes this broader objective as "the 'proper' use of wealth"—such as adding assets like cattle, educating one's children, starting a small business in the homestead—which reinforces family ties, and invests in future livelihood security (p. 249-250).
[362] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 8, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.
[363] Cynthia's interview occurred after Grace Mugabe's husband, Robert Mugabe, was deposed from power in a coup d'état that occurred in November 2017. Cynthia, it seems, believes Grace Mugabe is still powerful. Incidentally, Cynthia admires and praises a woman who is also a highly controversial figure both within and outside Zimbabwe.

"a woman with her own money," especially if this woman is "working in government, like teacher or office job." But when I ask if this woman can be married or unmarried, she says, "no, she must be married." While she would like to have such a stable job herself, she cannot envision achieving this unless she is also married. Her answer is echoed by the majority of women I interviewed, whether they were married or not at the time. As a Zimbabwean off-site respondent notes, "we women admire a woman who helps her husband".[364] In this line of thinking, a woman who works and/or has a stable job is helping her husband, and this instrumental function of her job is something that some respondents find more admirable. The next part of the analysis examines this functioning—to be married—that respondents often associated with their idea of the 'good woman'.

7.2.4.2 Being Married

Being married is a functioning that was valued by most of the women I interviewed. Being a married woman brings some recognition in the form of admiration. Primadona believes that only as a wife she is able to be admired by people. She does not believe that the community will admire a woman who is not married because "they [an unmarried woman] doesn't have dignity." Lisa, an off-site respondent, adds that even if a woman in her community in Zimbabwe became a nurse or doctor, "the community will just admire her because she's working, but you see they will be saying 'no, you must be married. You can't be alone'." Shalom, an off-site respondent from Mashingwa, Zimbabwe, adds that "a woman who is not married is not good. Doesn't matter she have money or plenty of

[364] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – September 8, 2018, Wellington.

whatever, but as long as she's not married, they don't even respect her." Consider the following account from Merlin:

> *Merlin:* When I was growing up, I wanted to be a respectable woman—a good woman. A woman who has a nice house, her own property, doing her own job, having the right source of income.
> *Interviewer:* Did you think you would be married?
> *Merlin:* Of course. Because here only the married woman is respected.

It appears that a woman may have other functionings that other people admire and value, but she is more likely to be respected by others, and considered a 'good woman', if she is (also) married. For many, like Merlin, this attitude about being married rests on social expectations they learned about while growing up.

Being married was usually a key component of being a 'good woman' for most of my respondents. From the capability view, if we consider 'being married' as a valued functioning for the women respondents, then being a 'good wife' seems to be one of the *agency achievements*[365] of being married. The women have several ideas about what they think being a good wife means and the ways to be(come) one, but their responses tend to return to the various dimensions of 'respect'. The quotes below reflect some of the ways being married requires respect to/for others, especially the respect the married woman has for her husband.

[365] Recall that "achievement is concerned with what we manage to accomplish," (Sen, 1992, p. 31). An agency achievement is the achievement of a valued functioning.

A respondent from Butterfly Farm says "a good wife must have respect and love for everybody."[366] Another adds that a good wife "must have good relationship with everyone in the community, and respect."[367] One of the off-site respondents in Mbekwini tells me that a 'good woman' must "first have respect for husband and family".[368] She indicates that this woman's husband and family come first, thereby implying that the 'good woman' is married. "She [a good woman] has to be married," says Coleen, a Malawian respondent, echoing most on-site and off-site women, adding "in our culture, you have to get married." Marriage, it seems, is important to building and maintaining one's respect, but that is only the beginning. Being married also entailed a labor of commitments, showing one had to work toward respect for/from an(other) person(s) through the fulfillment of individual and mutual responsibilities and meaningful interdependence. The interviews reveal that being married also involves behaving in ways that are deemed moral, such as not drinking alcohol, in a particular social context.

In particular, the importance of behaving in certain ways suggests it is not sufficient to be married to "have respect". This can be illustrated when examining what having respect for one's husband entails. For an off-site respondent from Zimbabwe,[369] it meant helping their husband. "It can be a good thing if you're married and working because you help your husband to provide," she says, adding that she respects those kinds of women because "you make plan with your husband, helping each other. You are a helper. You can be admired then. For Shamiso and Primadona (see section 5.4.3), showing respect to their

[366] Respondent #1, Focus Group Discussion – Butterfly Farm, July 28, 2018.
[367] Respondent #3, Focus Group Discussion – Butterfly Farm, July 28, 2018.
[368] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – June 9, 2019, Mitchel's Plain.
[369] Off-site respondent, Mbekwini – September 8, 2018, Wellington.

husband meant “listening” to him, asking for his “permission”, and letting him have final say in financial decisions. Coleen’s story below depicts how the aspect of listening to her husband can play out, even if she had to internally disagree with her husband.

Coleen, who is Malawian, tells me she admires a woman who is independent. She thinks a ‘good woman’ is “a lady who work for herself, say own a shop, or do business. Or anything like doctor. As long as she’s making something. She makes money.” However, Coleen adds that this woman must also be “married”. This “lady” should not make any decisions on her own, but rather “have to discuss with the husband first, and then plan together”. When I ask if she would feel the same way about asking her husband for permission if she won the lottery and wanted to buy her mother a house, she laughs and says, “of course I have to ask him. That is family.” One way the ‘good woman’ behaves as a ‘good wife’ here is by letting her husband’s choice comes first.

If being married, a key functioning of the ‘good woman’, seems to also be a precursor to being (considered) a ‘good woman’, then the widowed respondents’ narratives illustrate how the latter could contest this prerequisite. Earlier accounts from widowed women like Lisbet and Ruro showed they believed they were respected as ‘good women’. When asked if a ‘good woman’ must be married, Rachel, a widow, answers, “it doesn’t matter she’s married or not. As long as she have good behavior.” Jane, a forty-eight-year-old widow from Zimbabwe, believes that a ‘good woman’ is someone other people in the community “listen to” and “respect”. She explains how this respect from others is shown to her when others come to ask her for advice. Other non-widowed respondents did not consider the situation of widowed women in discussions of the ‘good woman’ except for Lisa, a

Zimbabwean, who discussed that “young” widowed women “can remarry” under some conditions. The conditions she outlines are that the woman does not have too many children from her previous marriage; and she is able to bear more children, adding “no husband can marry you [otherwise], he will want some more children.” Lisa notes that a widow whose husband’s “families don't want their bride to be re-married can just stay alone and with the children,” suggesting how a widow may potentially continue to perform the function of ‘listening to her husband’ even after he has died by ‘listening to her husband’s family’.[371]

In this section, I have tried to show through the narratives how ‘being married’ was a key functioning to women. They specify that a ‘good woman’ is a good wife who has respect that she gives to others, such as her husband, her family, and those around her. Furthermore, the ‘good woman’s admirable behavior, where purposeful, suggests agency. These accounts of people’s perspectives show that the ‘good woman’ who is a good wife does not exist merely in an interpersonal marital relationship but also within a wider social context where social judgments occur regarding one’s behavior as a ‘good woman’ and/or good wife. How the ‘good woman’ is perceived and/or conceived seems contingent on her own behaviors as well as how others behave toward her. A key way the social, and moral, basis of one’s standing as a ‘good woman’ could be examined was through the motivations

[371] A number of studies document the cultural practice of ‘widow inheritance’ in some sub-Saharan countries (Ntozi, 1997; Perry et al., 2014; Whyte, 1990). It is not clear however if Lisa’s comment is indicative of a common practice of widow inheritance in South Africa, or if it only indicates her opinion. Conversely, being widowed can also have implications for certain women’s improved agency freedom in some contexts. There is a notable study by (Oya & Sender, 2009) who found that among women rural wageworkers in Mozambique, women who were widowed, divorced, or separated performed better on a number of empowerment outcomes, including access to jobs and investment in children’s (girls’) education.

respondents described having for religiously-inclined behaviors. The next section shows that to be respected as a 'good woman', one's religiosity had to reflect in one's actions toward others as well as toward one's self, such as by doing what one views as one's duty as a Christian woman.

7.2.4.3 Religiosity[372]

Religion[373], and usually the church(es) women attend, are an important presence in most of the respondents' lives. The previous chapter (section 6.3.4) provided a glimpse of how the practical and spiritual aspects of religion impart a sense of shared identity for my respondents, such as "worshipping" and "praising" God both communally and individually.[374] For most of the women interviewed, being Christian is one of their key identities which also further influence other identities. The church as a religious institution also propagates lessons from the Bible, and transmits the expectations and values of good Christians, good wives, and good women. In this section, I discuss some of the ways that women expressed their religiosity through their religious practices, and how they linked being a 'good woman' and/or 'good wife' to being a 'good Christian'. I noted earlier that one of the key features of being a 'good woman' for many respondents was to be married. As the women of Butterfly Farm reveal, to be married is also one of the ways they believed they could uphold their religion.

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[372] Behaving in a manner that shows one's commitment to certain religiously-sanctioned behaviors and morals.

[373] All of the women respondents who identified with a religion said they were Christians except for one respondent (Coleen) who said she was Muslim.

[374] While I refer to the church as one entity, it does not suggest that the respondents were all part of one church or denomination. I did not ask respondents specifically about their Christian denomination or variant of church they were members of, but there is ample evidence from existing literature indicating varied memberships, including to Pentecostal or neo-charismatic churches (D. James, 2018), and the importance of being a member of the church among both on-site and off-site farmworkers (Addison, 2019; du Toit, 1993)..

During an FGD on Butterfly Farm, I asked the women if it is better for women to be married or not married. Gladys immediately answered, "it is better to be married." Another said that the reason to be married was "because the Bible says you must get married. Christianity promotes marriage."[376] So I asked the group of women, "is it okay to have a boyfriend?".[377] Gladys at once looked at the youngest participant, who only now I realized was her daughter Hailey, and lashed out at her in a tirade in Afrikaans.[378] "Our children have not listened to us," Gladys said when she had calmed down slightly and my translator was able to restart translating, "according to the Bible, we should get married and then have sexual contact and then have children. But our children don't listen to us, they do as they please." This disagreement between Gladys and her daughter suggests that there is sometimes a clash between generations even within the same household, and community, over upholding 'being married' as a religious value.[379] While it was not clear how significant religiosity was to Hailey, the Biblical imperative to be married was prevalent at Butterfly Farm and within the other on-site farmworker communities.

One's religious commitment was a source of respect for many women. A Zimbabwean off-site respondent tells me she is respected in Mbekwini because she goes to church every Sunday.[380] She credits the particular act of attending church to have granted her 'respect

[376] Woman respondent #5, Focus Group Discussion – Butterfly Farm - July 28, 2018.
[377] This question (not from the FGD questionnaire) drew from the answers to the previous question, which prodded me to look back to my tally notes as I remembered seeing that one of the respondents, the youngest, had said she was not married and had one child.
[378] My translator was too entranced in hearing out what Gladys was saying to bother about translating for me at this point. All the other women in the group were intently listening while I realized my mistake too late.
[379] An individual interview with Gladys's daughter Hailey later, which I illustrate in section 7.3.2.1, confirms that the latter does not believe one has to be married to be a good woman.
[380] Woman respondent [Sibo], June 9, 2019 – Mbekwini.

from others' in her community. Shalom adds that the "one [woman] who have a husband and doing good deeds like a Christian, they respect that woman." Sandy, like most of the women from Flora Farm, is a member of the Old Apostolic Church. She believes she is respected in her community because of her devotion as a Christian, saying:

> I am a Christian woman who was brought up as a churchgoer, so I have great respect for Christianity. When I moved to this farm, a lot of women used to abuse alcohol and being disrespectful. When I entered, I saw that they were in need of Christianity, so I started to speak to them about the importance of being a woman thinking like a Christian. I kept on and never give up, and then most of these women have now converted from what they used to be. Most of them no longer drink [alcohol] and some [who drink] don't drink so much as they used to.

Sandy's words firstly suggest that being a Christian is important to her status in the community. This status has been influential in helping her advocate for and against certain types of behaviors on moral grounds among other women. Her account further indicates that contrary to popular thinking, while drinking alcohol was historically cast as commonplace for many farmworkers in Western Cape, it now carries negative religious connotations and is therefore not necessarily viewed positively or even neutrally in some farmworker communities.[381] Specifically for those respondents who professed being religious (see section 6.3.4), drinking alcohol, or doing so in an excessive manner and/or publicly, was painted almost as an un-Christian behavior.[382] Drinking alcohol was not the kind of behavior a self-respecting 'good woman' would do because, as Sandy's account above suggests, that may mean one was not "thinking like a Christian."

[381] I refer here to the *dop* (or *tot*) system mentioned earlier (see section 7.2.3).
[382] Bolt's (2015) study among Zimbabwean farmworkers in South Africa corroborates this, where he notes that those workers, especially married couples, seeking to distinguish their respectable status did not mix with those who drank and partied.

The interviews further indicate that one's religiosity could impact one's actions, more specifically by influencing what was *feasible*[383] or possible for a 'good woman' to do and be. Let us consider the cases of two women, Emma from Poppy Rose Farm and Mary from Flora Farm.

Emma, whose story I recounted at the beginning of this chapter, has been working as a domestic on other farms since she quit her job on the vineyards a few years ago. Beyond the more obvious immoral doings that some respondents say one must not do as Christians, such as 'sleeping around' and 'lying' (see section 7.4.1), Emma notes that there can be more subtle aspects to one's behavior as a 'good Christian woman'. For instance, Emma thinks she should not do is ride a bicycle. She says that in 2012, after she had been complaining about high taxi fares to her employer, her boss gave her a bicycle. At first, she was excited about the prospect of saving transport money and tried using the bicycle. Soon however, she realized that riding the bicycle posed a practical problem for her. She says, "when I was cycling, my skirt would lift up and men would make fun of me. So I decided to stop cycling. I gave my bicycle to my son." When I ask her why she did not wear pants instead, she explains that "as a Christian woman I cannot wear pants. I must wear a skirt." At first glance, her religious beliefs about what she could wear seem to have played a role in Emma's unwillingness to use the bicycle, her religiosity trumping practicality. Knowing more of Emma's life story however, we know she also considers herself a 'good woman' in her community, and as a result it may (also) not be socially feasible for her to wear pants instead of a skirt. Maintaining that image of a good Christian woman was

[383] 'Feasible' here aims to denote the constrained situations within which all individuals find themselves making choices. As Sen (2006) notes, "choices of all kinds are always made within particular constraints" (pp. 31).

undeniably more important to her than saving a few bucks and potentially risking the respect she gets—and values—from those in her community.

For some like Mary, socially-enforced religious values can limit what one can do and participate in. Her experience suggests that some functionings, like being married, are so important to some respondents' Christian identity that they can even impinge upon one's religion-oriented ambitions. Mary does not belong to any groups, saying "I just go to church". Six years ago, Mary was elected to be on the church's board. She took great pride in this role, which she assumed seriously as it enabled her to be active in her church's community. This year though, there was another election and she did not run for a position because she had been told by the other board members that she was still "unmarried" and "living in an un-Christian relationship". "To be unmarried is not easy," she says, "it is against our culture as Christians to sit in the board with married women while you are not married". Here, she seems to downplay—consciously or unconsciously—the fact that it is also (or more so) her cohabitation with her boyfriend while still unmarried, a religiously unsanctioned practice,[384] that may make participation on the church's board more difficult for her. Nevertheless, she still loves attending church regularly and being part of her community of Christian women.

[384] I assume this based on two factors. First, Mary had previously served on the church's board while unmarried, suggesting that the board was willing to accept her as an unmarried woman in this position. What changed between the previous election and the latest election is that her boyfriend and her started living together (in her parents' house on the farm). Second, the comments from Gladys earlier in this section clarify how being married is linked to one's Christian identity on an on-farm community, and suggest how being married is the proper/moral/Christian way of being if a woman wants to be respected and accepted in her community.

The discussions so far on the functionings of the 'good woman' reveal that the women I interviewed value certain ways of being and doing that they associate with their idea of the 'good woman'. In particular, the 'good woman' "has respect" in various dimensions. She has 'respect' because, through her 'beings' and 'doings', she: is 'respected by others', shows 'respect to others', and displays 'self-respect'. The multidimensionality of 'respect' as a functioning was further described through certain associated functionings. If a functioning within the CA is "what a person is able to do or be" (K. Basu & Lòpez-Calva, 2011, p. 154), the discussion so far suggests the possibility of assessing 'respect' as a functioning from multiple dimensions.

7.2.5 Respect as a Multidimensional Functioning

Classifying 'respect' as a multidimensional functioning expands our understanding of functionings within the capability approach in at least three ways. Firstly, it allows us to consider that in some cases what appears to be one functioning may have several 'faces'. Examining respect in the functionings language, to 'have respect' (a state) can mean a person 'gives respect to others' (an action), 'is respected by others' (a state), and/or 'shows respect to herself' (an action)[386]. While it is not possible to analyze most functionings multidimensionally, the consideration of a multidimensional view of a functioning like respect shows it is possible to further widen the informational bases from which subsequent assessments—such as of agency—can be enhanced. Sen (2011) notes that different social choice processes or principles of social judgment have informational bases which can reveal a great(er) deal about what these procedures do, and what they

[386] This latter dimension could be a state rather than an action if it is viewed as 'having self-respect', but this state would still be dependent on one acting in ways that show respect to one's self.

can(not) achieve. If respect is important to one's social standing, and one will be socially judged for the respect one has, then defining what respect means and entails in this particular context from multiple dimensions further "qualify the nature of the [social] judgments that can—or cannot—be made" (Sen, 2011, p. 30). This can improve our understanding of the agency goals that women have, and what they count as agency achievements.

Secondly, the expanded view enriches our understanding of how agency may be experienced, pursued, and valued in/from several dimensions or perspectives of respect. Consider how 'having/expressing power' has been conceptualized in the women's empowerment literature.[387] These different expressions of power imply different meanings for empowerment, and here indicate that agency is a positive manifestation of power (Kabeer, 1999, 2005; van Eerdewijk et al., 2017).[388] Similarly, analyzing respect through its multiple dimensions can better reveal the agency motivations of an individual who values this functioning as well as illustrate some of the pathways of his/her agency freedom.

Thirdly, by broadening the informational basis, the multidimensional view can better illustrate how respect is imbued with social-relational influences. When examining the dimensions of showing 'respect to others' and being 'respected by others', it is possible to argue that one of the reasons the functioning of 'respect' is valued by an individual is

[387] Table 8 in Appendix D summarizes four expressions (or dimensions) of power advanced within this literature (Oxaal & Baden, 1997; Rowlands, 1997; VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002).
[388] This does not preclude however that power can also be negative, such as when it infringes on another's freedoms. For example, negative manifestations of agency can become evident through expressions of 'power over', such as through physical violence.

because it fulfils some need he/she has for what Ryan and Deci (2000, 2011) called relatedness. This examination would benefit from connecting what the individual values to her situation, or the conditions that reflect the personal reasons for, and social space in, which these functionings are valued. The explanatory capacity of a multidimensional functioning like 'respect' is enhanced when we consider the social context, or what Snyder (2002, p. 158) has called the "web of relations", within and through which a person learns, acquires, develops, and/or expresses this functioning.

An emphasis on the importance of relationships, which I have discussed in chapter 6, points to a key link between individual agency and personhood.[389] Using Appell-Warren's (2007) definition of 'personhood', the attainment of which describes someone who is "an accepted member of adult society" (p. 91), analyzing a multidimensional functioning like 'respect' can help us understand how the agency enactment(s) of an individual from a particular context enable her to pursue, achieve, and display her personhood. In other words, the pursuit, achievement, and/or exhibition of one's 'personhood' or 'social acceptability' may (also) explain why individual women value certain functionings often associated with 'respect'. Consider this for one of the most oft-repeated valued functionings associated with 'respect': being married. As noted previously, respondents

[389] The definition of 'personhood' I rely on is Appell-Warren's, which is: ""Personhood" is an analytical term used by anthropologists to indicate who, within any given culture, is considered to be either a fully functioning and accepted member of adult society, or, in the case of children, who is considered to being on the way to being a fully functioning and accepted member of adult society. "Personhood" thus entails the attainment of physiological, psychological and social competence as it is defined by a given culture" (Appell-Warren, 2007, p. 91). Several works, some more dated than others, have elaborated how individual agency, especially from non-atomistic perspectives, connects to personhood in different African contexts. See for example: Jacobson-Widding (1990), in Congo; Snyder (2002), in Tanzania; Whyte (1990), in Kenya.

often said they would not respect and/or admire a woman who was not married. Gladys from Butterfly Farm explains:

> Men are looking for women who are not drinking, [are] honest, have respect for their husbands, and look after their family. A woman that drinks, smokes, and sleeps around is not accepted in this community, because most of us are married and respectful people. Even if she comes sit with us, she will not be comfortable.

Gladys makes it clear that in her community, an unmarried woman will find it hard to be respected by others because she will not be 'accepted' as a fully recognized member in the communal society.[390] Being married here seems key to a woman's personhood. One of the ways this non-acceptance plays out is in social interactions with those in one's community (not being "comfortable" or able to "sit with us"), limiting the kinds of relationships that a non-accepted person can build and maintain with those around her.

While most respondents insisted that being married was key to being respected, a few felt that it was not an absolute necessity. To the respondents in the latter group, a woman who is not married can still be admired if she upholds those values that most members of her community hold, albeit in a limited way. But 'acceptability' also has implications for the functions one is able (or considered able) to perform in one's community, as Mary's example earlier illustrates. Being married was a valued functioning that women of Flora Farm deemed important, and Mary, while praised by her neighbors for being pleasant, was not given permission to perform a certain function in her religious community, suggesting she may still not be a fully 'accepted' member. This implication, on what one

[390] Considering that Gladys' daughter Hailey is one of those members of the same community who does not feel she is taken seriously as an adult, may reflect how the latter is not fully accepted as a member of the community given the conditions that Gladys describes for social acceptability.

is able to be and do in one's community, may be one explanation why the majority of respondents valued being married and considered it a key feature/functioning of the 'good woman'.

Not only is marriage valued in the respondents' communities but it is also a moral requirement[391] for many who wish to be considered 'good Christian women'. However, for those who claim marriage as a necessary feature of the 'good woman', one is not readily viewed as a good woman simply by being married. Earlier accounts showed that some respondents judge someone married to be a 'good woman' if she is (also) a 'good wife'. Chapter 6 showed that being a 'wife' itself was to many respondents' a valued identity. Most of the married women I interviewed valued their role as 'wife', but they also valued their role as 'mother', 'daughter', and more. The accounts presented so far therefore portend the significance of several social relations—weaved through intersectional identities—in my respondents' actions and perceptions. The women valued certain functionings partly because they valued the (social) meanings carried by and enclosed within those functionings. A multidimensional functioning like 'respect' helps illustrate how individual agency cannot be detached from its social embeddedness, especially through the roles and responsibilities the individual has, values, and/or ought to have/value. An examination of the relational aspects of my respondents' actions and perceptions reflect how certain functionings have social consequences as well as derive meaning from the social.[392]

[391] The main source of morality for these women here is religion, i.e. Christianity.
[392] In particular, "if we take personhood to mean people's notions of what a human being is and ought to be, then one strong theme here is that bodies and social identities are intimately connected. A person is/has both a corporeal and a social condition which should correspond to and express one another" (Whyte, 1990, p. 108).

Having presented some of the functionings that my respondents associate with the respect that the 'good woman' has, and depicted 'respect' as multidimensional, my goal in the rest of this chapter is to further explore how the idea of 'good woman' emerges as an exemplar that not only reflects what is socially expected of women in their communities but is (also) the embodiment of certain 'roles' that are played by individuals. In the next section, I first examine how these roles come to life in individual personas and discuss how these personas lend a view of the 'good woman' as it is manifested and dramatized on the stage of communal and social life.

7.3 Purposeful Agency and Playing One's Role(s)

When discussing the aspirations of my respondents in chapter 6, I argued that their dreams and hopes allude to the purpose(s) of their agency. When considering the instrumental and/or intrinsic values that women respondents give to their work, those values attach to one or more of their identities. Some identities were more relevant than others. As Sen notes, "in each social context, there would be a number of potentially viable and relevant identities which one could assess in terms of their acceptability and their relative importance" (Sen, 2006, p. 29). The individual therefore has to decide, given her *situation*—including what she personally values and/or what she believes is expected of her—which identities she will give more relative importance to when deciding on a particular matter, assuming her identity as a role that she enacts.[393] Rather than *reject* an identity per se, she *chooses*—and in so doing, enacts agency—to rank the different

[393] See explanation of 'role' in section 6.3.2.4.

identities that she holds in light of the objectives she aims to accomplish. Pretty's story below shows a progression from the functionings she values in the kind of woman she wants to be, the identities that she holds, and the relative importance she gives to different roles she has and/or aspires to, with her main role being that of dutiful wife.

A nineteen-year-old Zimbabwean off-site farmworker living in Mbekwini, Pretty admires women who have influence. Her idea of a woman with influence is one who is religiously active and runs her own business, saying "if she have a business and she go to church, yeah, that woman is wise." Her impression is based on what she has witnessed in her communities both in Zimbabwe and Mbekwini, saying "because I saw those women, they are building something big. So, *eish*, I say 'God, I want to be like this woman'." She wants to be like those women she admires, inspired by those functionings she sees in them that she personally values. Her motivations are also relational, especially when considering certain aspects of her social and interpersonal context:

> If you do something for yourself, you can see your husband say, 'yeah that's my wife'. I get more respected by my husband if he see me doing my business. And the people here [in the community] too, when they see me doing my own [business], see me participate in church, doing everything to my Lord. They will say 'I love this woman, she so good'.

Pretty longs to be admired by her community, especially to be seen by others as a 'good woman'. She also reveals that her husband's respect for her will grow if she can do her own work, and she endeavors to gain that respect.[394] Having been in Mbekwini for five

[394] It is not clear (as Pretty did not specify) why her husband would respect her more if she had her own business. Perhaps he is keen to see her pursue her dream of being a businesswoman, or building something of herself. It could also be because he prefers she earns her own income and perhaps, as some

months, Pretty is keenly aware that being in South Africa puts her in a better position to gain the kind of influence and respect she wants, sharing that:

> I'm more able to make decisions now. Because if I was in Zimbabwe, there I was suffering because there's no job. There's nothing to do. So I'm coming to South Africa. My wish, my dream job was to be a nurse, but school I didn't [even] finish the form 4. If I get money, I want to go back to school. Now even we are doing those farm jobs, we can get money. It's better than nothing.

Pretty is prepared to work hard to change her situation and that of her family. Her immediate concern is to have more job security, as she also has responsibilities to her family in Zimbabwe. "If I get a better job, maybe my life get better," she continues, "because I have family in Zimbabwe. My father, I need to look after him. I have to send him something, like grocery money to survive." In the long term, her future hope is to have her own family and business. She confides that she does not think she is a woman (yet), instead saying "I'm still a girl". When asked when she thinks she will be a woman, she says, "when I have a child," and adds that, "I want to do my business to serve my child."

Pretty's story also suggests there are certain social meaning(s) she attaches to her work and income. She believes that having her own business, while treading the religious path as a churchgoer, will make others in her community admire her. She claims that her husband will be proud to have a wife who runs her own business, citing the respect she will gain from him. She is trying to maintain her ties with her family in Zimbabwe in part

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of the other respondents noted of their reasons for wanting to work in chapter 5, be less financially dependent on him while also assisting him in meeting their financial obligations.

by sending money to help her father. And she hopes that someday when she becomes a mother—and woman—having her own business will help her provide for her child. In her short interview, she has named several ways that she is (or will be) maintaining, building, and expanding her social ties through the work she does and/or income she earns now and/or in the future.

Her story reveals several of the valued functionings associated with having 'respect'. Pretty values being a devout Christian and regularly attending church because she believes these are (and will be) important to how she is seen—her image—as an admired person in her community. Being a wife and mother are functionings and identities that Pretty prioritizes, and her goal is to be good in these roles[395] such as by making her husband proud of her and providing for her (future) child. Pretty's story also indicates that individual awareness of the social meanings of certain functionings and identities can guide women like her to play their role(s) in particular ways. This awareness is gained within the communities she identifies strongly with, transmitted through social expectations.[396] Pretty admires (and is expected to admire) the good Christian women who are independently building something "big", and she expects her community to admire her when she shows them she is such a woman too. Her story shows one's actions are not bereft of social meaning(s). In fact, her valued functionings, identities, and ideas

[395] The view of identity as a role that a person enacts also stems mainly from Butler's (1990) argument of gender as "performative" through the embodiment, incorporation, and enactment of various acts that are socially accepted and acceptable.

[396] These claims so far detract from most liberal understandings of agency (and empowerment) where resistance to, rather than acceptance of, one's situation is a necessary factor (see for example Kabeer (1999, 2021). Conversely, they support the argument that Khalid (2020) makes, "that if the lens is shifted to cultural contexts as sites of knowledge production, then agency emerges as a reaction to the structural patriarchy in complex gendered societies" (p. 244). Specifically, agency here is "the capacity to leverage real opportunities" within situations of disadvantage (Khalid, 2020, p. 244).

about others' expectations reflect and/or influence what is (and should be) socially meaningful to her. How she is seen—her image or persona—by others in turn will convey whether she meets their expectations of a 'good woman'.

7.3.1 Persona of the 'Good Woman'

I inclined previously that an individual's actions paint a particular image of him/her, and I now explore how exactly this unravels for my respondents. The idea of the 'good woman' is socially engineered as it relies on a respondent's perceptions of what is socially expected of her—what she thinks, and what she thinks others think.

Respondents were aware that their actions presented a particular image of them as individuals, and for most women it was an image they tried to shape through purposeful action. It was not a static image, however; it was a living, breathing character or *persona*. Respondents regularly portrayed various morally 'good' roles to others in their communities—such as dutiful wife, good mother, devoted Christian, hard worker—that built toward their own *persona*. This persona was not necessarily a complete depiction of someone, but rather those aspects which she has allowed others to see. Similarly, when a respondent says she knows someone who is a 'good woman', she is relying on specific knowledge of that someone's persona—what she, and even others, perceive of this person.

This knowledge is not objective, but rather entrenched within the particular moral expectations of a context (since expectations likely vary across and within communities). These expectations are in turn expressed, rejected, and/or redefined via the persona(s)

that individuals display. Some expectations, by defining for instance what 'respect from others' should mean in a community, may limit a woman's agency freedom by compelling her to act in ways that she may not personally value. For example, a woman farmworker who wants to drink alcohol openly may choose to not do so in order to maintain her persona as a non-drinker in the farm community. That persona is something that she *has reason to value* as someone who wants to be respected by others and viewed as a 'good woman' in her community. In this case, she has ranked some functionings, such as being respected by others, as relatively more important than drinking openly.

The interviews show that women in different communities are being judged, and judging others, based on their personas. The basis of these judgments depended on how closely a woman's individual persona aligned with an ideal image, the *exemplar* of the 'good woman'.

7.4 The Exemplar

An exemplar is more like an ideal, a benchmark or standard which can be individually and/or collectively created and held. Based on the narratives, I argue that the idea of the 'good woman', which I outline by drawing together the views of my respondents, be understood in theory as an exemplar. The 'good woman' refers to a standard that some women respondents say they strive toward and/or value, though do not necessarily fully achieve in practice. This standard represents a combination of valued functionings which I argue are shaped by, and gain further salience through, one's identities and community expectations. How this exemplar is developed, enacted and/or rejected at the individual level in turn can reflect its value to the individual. While the interviews indicate that many

women shared a notion of the 'good woman', the specific features of the 'good woman' could vary based on the functionings that individuals valued. Some women claimed one had to be married in order to be considered a 'good woman', while others like widows suggested that being married did not have to be a (main) consideration in judging if one was a 'good woman'. By parsing through some of the factors that give meaning to the women respondents' choices and actions, I find that their agency is often deeply entwined with being (or being seen as) a 'good woman'.

The lens of the exemplar facilitates a conceptualization of the 'good woman' as socially situated and shaped by the social expectations of one's community, the latter serving as criteria by which the personas that individual women portray are perceived and judged by themselves and others. For many of the women (farm)workers I interviewed, individual agency entwined with sociality, their tendencies to form social bonds within their communities. Social relations form the base of the community expectations that shape, and become the basis for judging, each other's personas. The analysis in chapter 6 suggests that different social relations associated with certain roles have relative values to individual women. Those relative values in turn tend to influence the direction and purpose of a woman's agency in pursuing some, but perhaps not all, aspects of the exemplar of the 'good woman' in their personas. Consequently, the exemplar of the 'good woman' provides a socially-influenced but individually-maintained benchmark against which many respondents assess their own and/or each other's' personas; it establishes certain expectations for those who have this ideal.

The exemplar of the 'good woman' is also *performed* by women through the various roles they play and which constitute the construction of their identities. By defining what is socially expected and/or acceptable, the exemplar is constituted of and (re)established by the very practices, or bodily acts, that it governs. According to Butler (2004), "this suggests not only that the relation between practices and the idealizations under which they work is contingent, but that the very idealization can be brought into question and crisis potentially undergoing deidealization and divestiture" (p48). This implies that the 'good woman' comes to be and perseveres through actions that seek to emulate it and (re)produce images of the exemplar.[397] To what extent though is the exemplar achievable if pursued, and is its pursuit a form of agency?

7.4.1 Being and Becoming the 'Good Woman'

My presentation of the empirical data so far examines women's agency through its various 'embodiments'—actions (experiences) and perceptions (thoughts)—and women's reasonings. Are only actions, experiences, and views instances of agency? Or is agency also independent of these instances? It would be problematic to speak of agency only in terms of its empirical manifestations without considering if, and how, these manifestations suggest, in the abstract, the presence of underlying processes by which a person becomes/is an agent. Where I examine my respondents' underlying motivations, I undertake the task partly with the intention of examining what women say they value—

[397] It also suggests there is a difference between the *concept* and *enactment* of the exemplar of the 'good woman', with the concept of the 'good woman' seeming more enduring, unchanged by revisions that may come about through individual enactments. In this sense, the concept depicts and establishes what is 'normal' for the exemplar, while the enactments of the exemplar seek to embody or re-create manifestations of what is 'normal'.

intrinsically and instrumentally—while also considering the potential relevance of various identities and their relative significance to women's actions and decision-making.

The discussions so far suggest that the 'good woman' can be understood as an agency goal as well as agency manifestation for many women farmworkers, its value resting in both the pursuit and (partial) achievement of the exemplar, even if some women described the difficulty of its full actualization. From the respondents' descriptions of individual actions and behaviors to the roles and personas that are portrayed, played, and idealized, the 'good woman' is a guide to behavior for many women. Conversely, the ways that it also appears to 'control' women's behavior suggest that it could also represent the systematization—the way to establish and standardize—of a process through which an individual is 'accepted' as a woman and/or person in their community. Nonetheless, I suggest that where a person's pursuit of being a 'good woman' can be linked to the individual's goals–such as being 'accepted' in/by one's community, to be seen/considered as 'normal'—such a pursuit stands as a form of agency.

The references of so many interviewees to the notion of the 'good woman' demonstrates there is a thought pattern dominating the reasoning of most of these women. The 'good woman' is an inherent and pervasive notion, idealized by the respondents, and conveys a sense of who one is (should be) and/or (should) aspire(s) to be. There are no *de jure* laws and regulations in South Africa to control women's behaviors to align with a concept like the 'good woman'. Rather, the exemplar of the 'good woman' guides and instructs some women to assume and/or pursue certain personas under the influence of a more discreet but effective kind of control, what Judith Butler called the 'gender norm'.

In Butler's (2004) analysis, the gender norm is not a rule or law, which is how social norms are generally defined.[398] It is rather a set of traits, functions, and representations in a social space that the norm constitutes and is constituted by.[399] The gender norm has regulatory power, and "to become subject to [this type of] regulation is also to become subjectivated by it, that is, to be brought into being as a subject [or person] precisely through being regulated" (Butler, 2004, p. 41). In line with the Foucaultian reasoning that 'power is everywhere', Butler argues that the gender norm's power is not only in its ability to encourage specific kinds of behaviors and views among people but to also define and establish what it means to be a woman. This argument suggests that a person who identifies, and is identified, as 'woman' is also subjectivated through, and a subject in, the regulatory discourses around the 'good woman'.

The 'good woman' is therefore 'embodied' by individuals who are also acting under specific social influences (or constraints), strengthening certain interdependencies. Louw (2022) confirms the pervasiveness of the moral discourse of the 'good woman', saying it is "rooted in religion and tradition (culture)" and perpetuated through churches women farmworkers attend. Sen (2006) argues that sometimes one of our identities becomes more relevant than all other identities we hold, and we naturally prioritize belonging to the community group of those sharing that identity. If 'belonging' means to be 'accepted' in/by a community, then a person's reasoning regarding what are feasible ways for her to

[398] Social norms are unwritten rules that reflect what a community or group of people deem to be appropriate and inappropriate behavior by its members (Bicchieri, 2015; Bicchieri & McNally, 2018; Mackie, Moneti, Shakya, & Denny, 2015; Paluck & Ball, 2010).

[399] Being part of and reflecting the gender norm, the exemplar of the 'good woman' would therefore "always and only tenuously [be] embodied by any particular actor" (Butler, 2004, p. 41).

behave and be is firmly rooted in the views and assertions that are considered ‘normal’ and ‘normalized’ in her prime community. Among women farmworkers, whose educational achievements are generally low and who live in contexts of extreme deprivations and limited job options, there are structural “limits on their societal ‘position and value’”, Louw (2022) explains. She adds that “one way in which they can enhance their status is by being a ‘good woman’ and giving themselves (time, carework, good reputation) to their household and society” (Louw, 2022).

Within such constraints, the social acceptability of the ‘good woman’ enables the cultivation of purposeful agency for those women whose agency freedom connects to being/pursuing what is normal/normalized and accepted/acceptable in their communities. For those who pursue being/becoming a ‘good woman’, the latter’s functionings are enacted/enactable yet never fully achieved/achievable by/for many women. However, each woman’s deliberate pursuit and enactment is also a site of operationalizing purposeful agency for those women whose personas and roles preserve and (re)present the exemplar of the ‘good woman’.

The next sub-sections illustrate not only how individuals perform different roles but how the exemplar is valued in different ways by different individuals. While some women actively pursue to be ‘good women’, others seem to care more about not being seen as ‘not good’.

7.4.2 Enacting One's Role(s)

I noted in chapter 6 that individuals performing a 'role' are enacting one or more identities. A woman performing a specific role is behaving in certain ways she associates with that role; her behavior(s) furthermore convey(s) meaning(s) that she and others—those who perceive her performing her role—associate with one or more identities. The respondents' descriptions of the 'good woman' so far suggest that the latter performs several roles, as deduced from her key functionings. By examining how these women recognize and value—through conscious pursuit of—the meanings their behaviors have and convey also paves the way to better demonstrate their agency in their own terms. I illustrate this in the story of Rapunzel below, examining why she values her role(s) by examining the meanings she attaches to particular behaviors relating to specific role(s).

7.4.2.1 Story of Rapunzel: Doing What Others Expect

The quotes and stories in these chapters show that while some of the women I interviewed said they were unhappy with some of their circumstances and/or wanted something better, for themselves and/or their loved ones, in their lives, there were also women who spoke of being satisfied with how things already were. Some of those satisfied women still endeavored to change some aspects of their situation though. Rapunzel is one such woman from the latter group. Her interview reveals that she is conflicted between appreciating her current situation while also wanting some things to be different.

Rapunzel is one of the few respondents I met who had completed her secondary education, or A-levels. Born and raised in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, her father was a

policeman and her mother a subsistence farmer. She came to South Africa four years ago with her husband and both worked as farmworkers for a contractor. The year I interviewed her, in 2019, she had found a job as a housemaid. When she was growing up, she wanted to be a teacher. “I love children,” she says laughingly, “love to teach. And I love talking.” She wanted to go to university or a teacher’s academy after secondary school, but her circumstances made that difficult. Firstly, she became pregnant shortly after completing secondary school. While her then-boyfriend told her that she could continue her education when she felt ready, it became increasingly hard when she had her second child two years later. She married her boyfriend when she was twenty-four, saying “I was happy because I love him.” But once she got married, she realized some things changed and her now-husband expected different things. “Before we got married,” she recounts, “he said I going to go through with my education. By the time we get married there was nothing like that. Everything changed.” Her constraints, she feels, are not simply because she is a woman but also, or rather, because she is a wife. As she says:

> There are many things that I want to do, but because I’m a woman and because I’m married, I can’t do it. Like my dream job, being a teacher. And also, because of the situation coming here [to South Africa], I did take my driver’s license, but my husband didn’t allow me to do driving job, so I can’t. I dream what I want to be, what I want to do. I want to be a teacher, he doesn’t want. I want to do driving, he doesn’t want.

When Rapunzel says “because I’m a woman”, she adds “because I’m married” shortly after. Her gender constrains her agency in a specific way, through her role as a married woman. She indicates that listening to her husband is a key part of the role she plays as wife. It is obvious from the quote above that Rapunzel’s preferences for herself sometimes are not supported by her husband. While this lack of support directly translates into some

diminishment in agency freedom for Rapunzel, she still seems to listen to her husband by not going against his wishes.

Paradoxically, Rapunzel also appears satisfied with her life in general. Firstly, she notes that her relationship with her husband is fine. He treats her well, and even does some chores with her. “We are doing washing, and cooking together,” she says, “it makes me happy.” Both earn a living that she considers decent, and are able to meet all their financial commitments most of the time. Her husband earns around 4500 Rands per month as a construction worker. “He does everything,” Rapunzel says:

> He doesn’t care about my money. His money does everything. If I just want to help because he’s my husband, sometimes I see the budget is not so good, so I just help him. But he don’t mind about my money. He just says ‘send it to your parents’. He doesn’t mind.

Her husband seems to assume all or most of their household expenses. Unlike some of the accounts from other women respondents, Rapunzel’s husband allows her to use more of her income towards ends she values and that do not pertain to him, like helping her parents. By willingly helping her husband out financially sometimes, she demonstrates how she performs her role as wife by being helpful to her husband.[403]

She decided to quit her job as a contract farmworker a few months ago and since then works part-time as a maid, earning about 2300 Rands monthly. She found her current job by advertising on the internet. “I put on the Gumtree,” she tells me, saying it was not her

[403] See more about the ‘helpful wife’ in sections 6.3.2.1 and 5.6.1.

idea to seek a housekeeping job "because it's not my dream job. I just do it because I want money and this what my husband allow." Rapunzel also does not think she is well-respected in her community because of her current job. While being a maid has been physically easier than doing farm labor, she confesses that her dreams were different. "Those housekeeping work," she says, "I don't like it. I don't think other people respect it.[404] In my dream, I just want somebody to work for me. Not me to work [as a maid] for somebody."

Rapunzel is also keenly aware that her situation is better than some other women around her. When I ask her about how she thinks other couples manage their money, she judges her own situation by comparing it to what she knows of others' situations, saying, "it's very different. I've got my own sister that is going through a lot. I see my situation is better." Unsurprisingly, her main arguments with her husband are about the things she wants to do, such as "the jobs. I want to do some work. He doesn't want me." Her way to resolve her disagreements with her husband about the jobs issue has been by accepting his choice and not fight him more about it. "Just keep quiet, because I'm married," she tells me. Her account so far has mainly described her behaviors in her role of 'wife'.

How does Rapunzel's story lend a sense that, as a wife, she is fulfilling a role that she values? A role is firstly the enactment of one's identity (see chapter 6). Rapunzel's account shows that her role as wife comes with attached functionings as well as responsibilities, the latter being what she believes she must do as a wife, such as listening to her husband.

[404] Recall that Rapunzel is more educated than most of the women (farm)workers I interviewed. Her view regarding the low respectability of working as a maid, which many women noted was a "respected" job (see chapter 6), is likely colored by her perceptions of her own abilities/knowledge/background.

These responsibilities reflect certain expectations, which give personal and social meaning(s) to one's actions. For example, she says they have disagreements because she "does not keep quiet"; but she says she accepts his choice because she is married. The particular behavior of 'keeping quiet' is corroborated by the accounts of some other women respondents as well; Coleen for instance says, "the matter is to keep quiet and let him [the husband] do what he wants." It also illuminates an underlying expectation that 'good' married women should keep quiet and accept their husband's choice. If so, the married woman may enact her identity, such as play the role of 'wife', by performing the duties and responsibilities she has associated with that role. Those duties and responsibilities may (likely) reflect what she is 'expected' to do and be as someone in that role. Her performance also serves as an indicator of her success or failure in her role. When I ask Rapunzel what kind of woman she admires, she says "a good woman", and explains:

> I admire a woman that respects her husband, respects her family. Do everything together with her husband. Am I a woman like that? Maybe half. Because I was wondering what I want. I always have my dream job, but no, I must listen to my husband. I respect his choice. He say I mustn't do this job, so I can't. I agreed to marry him. And in our culture, I must listen to my husband.

Twice, Rapunzel tells me that she must listen to her husband. Respecting her husband's choice, prioritizing what he says and wants, is a key facet of her role as a 'good woman', and she believes she successfully assumes this role at least "half" well. Despite her present behavior, she has not relinquished her hopes, saying "I think maybe one day, my husband is going to agree for me to do my dream job." Her story indicates that one may value competing functionings, but there may be other more pressing reasons—such as successfully performing one's role(s), fulfilling one's responsibilities, and/or meeting

certain expectations—that encourage one to choose an option that one has ranked as relatively lower in value. Rapunzel chooses to do a job that in her calculation of value is relatively low-ranking, when considering the options of other jobs she could pursue that are within her capability set, in order to please her husband. In the choice of roles she has however, she valued her role as 'wife' above all else, dutifully being a wife who listens to her husband, at least for the time-being.

Is Rapunzel socially 'expected' to respect her husband as such, even if she wants to do a job that he does not approve of? Very likely, if her goal is to be (seen as) a 'good woman' (consider section 7.2). As the last line in her above passage indicates, she is "culturally" expected to respect her husband in this way. This cultural expectation appears to be a strong enough motivation for her to play her role in such a way. However, I also do not have a direct way of knowing if she adheres to the expectation because she personally values it or because she is avoiding the potential negative repercussions of defiance. I do not have an example from my interviews about what could happen if a married woman did not respect and/or listen to her husband, thereby defying what was expected of her. However, I do find that the presence and influence of expectations became clearer in interviews with some non-married women who did not seem to follow what was socially expected of them.

7.4.3 Not Following What is Expected of One: Renegades?

Examining the link between what women valued and what they believed was expected of them is a complex endeavor I do not claim to have successfully completed, especially with limited data. The kinds of expectations I discuss here are grounded in a discourse of

morality which incorporates “the demand that people adhere to shared models of action” (Robbins, 2012, p. 118). I illustrated several instances where some women specified behaviors that were not deemed appropriate for a ‘good woman’ to do or say (e.g., gossiping, drinking alcohol (excessively), a wife not listening her husband, a wife not pooling her income with her husband). The ‘appropriate’ behaviors that the women referred to in their interviews were everyday behaviors which reflect the “kind of moral action[s] that [reproduce] already existing patterns of behavior” (Robbins, 2012, p. 118). Occasionally though, a respondent would reveal behaving in ways that was likely (deemed) inappropriate in her community.

Cher, the single Zimbabwean farmworker, tells me she admires a “well to do” woman, someone who has her own business and is financially independent. Having worked from the time she was fourteen, selling drinks and biscuits on the streets of Zvishavane, Cher has worked hard to survive and raise her kids. She however adds that the people in her community in Zimbabwe admire “respected married women, those who have got things like money, and even a house.” In her personal view, she confides that she admires a ‘good woman’, even if this woman was not married. However, she says members of her community would find it “difficult to respect that type of woman, even if you have money, because they say it’s wrong if you’re not married.” From her responses, we may deduce that Cher is possibly risking being seen as ‘not good’ or ‘not normal’ by those in her community in order to have autonomy over her decisions to work and control her finances.

In the story below, we learn from Hailey[405], an on-site respondent, that women may sometimes experience different treatments from members of their community when defying certain social rules of behavior. Hailey, it seems, has reasoned to herself that it is more worthy for her to stand by what she personally values—pursuing the kind of life she really wants—than what she personally does not agree with, even if that means going against what others in her community value and want her to value.

7.4.3.1 Story of Hailey

Hailey is a 23-year-old woman who was born, raised, and still lives on Butterfly Farm. When she was sixteen years old, she began her first job as a seasonal worker during school holidays on the vineyards of Butterfly Farm. With two elder brothers, she recalls often being side-lined by her parents, both of whom were agricultural workers on the same farm, while her brothers would get more attention and spending-money. She left school at seventeen and continued working as a temporary farmworker till she was twenty. That is when she started her current job as a child-carer in a crèche for the neighboring farm.

Hailey never completed school due to both the need to help her parents pay their bills and because she did not have particular interest in schoolwork at the time. She says she grew up a "very quiet and peculiar child", adding she was never "mixing with the crowds." During her later years of secondary school, she made some friends and started enjoying being in the company of others. That is also when she met her first and current boyfriend Shane, who lives on a nearby farm and with whom she has a 2-year-old daughter. Hailey

[405] I started the story of Hailey in chapter 6 (see section 6.2.1.1).

stays with her daughter, parents, and one brother in one of the farmworker houses. Despite her mother's open opposition to her unmarried state, she refuses to marry Shane. "He treats me well," she says, "like a man should treat a woman". Yet, Hailey has reasoned that she is (and will be) better off by not getting married. She explains:

> If I get married, my life is going to be different. For example, if I have to go to other places when I am married, I will have to ask my husband's permission. But now, I just inform [my boyfriend] sometimes. Like if I want to go to the farm next door to meet and socialize with my friends there. If I have a husband, I feel that will not happen, he will not allow me to go out. If I have to go shopping as a married woman, I will have to inform him before I go anywhere. I will even have to tell him what kind of shopping I want to do, and then he might even tell me I cannot buy something I want. But now, I just tell my mother ahead of time when I want to go somewhere, and sometimes maybe she will even watch my baby.

Her response above shows us her understanding of how married life is for a woman in her community. By refusing to lead that kind of life, she reveals that she has made some major decisions regarding how she wants to lead her life, indicating purposeful agency that is also integrated with her values. Her behavior nevertheless has some social costs. When asked how she feels she is treated in her community, she says:

> There are times they treat me very bad and sometimes very well. Sometimes people would hear gossip and rumors and approach me violently. They would shout at me, intimidate me without asking my side. A few of them [do this], mostly it's Sophia. Sophia is always approaching me while she's drunk and shouts at me. She doesn't approach me like I'm an adult.

The way Sophia, a woman who is not exactly well-liked herself by the women on Butterfly Farm (see footnote in section 6.2.1.1), treats her, while nobody in her community intervenes on her behalf, reminds Hailey of how little respect others show her on this farm. Although it is not clear why exactly Sophia mistreats her, it seems clear that Hailey does not feel others judge her favorably. "When they begin to respect me," she says, "then

I can be able to make important decisions in my life". Her belief that she has yet to make important decisions in her life indicates she has low self-esteem, or a diminished perception of her own abilities and agency.[406] From the CA's perspective, one of the most important decisions Hailey has already consciously made in her life has been her refusal to marry, despite the social pressures she feels to do so.[407] Yet, she does not think that was a crucial decision, seeming to think she is not yet able to make important decisions.

In her opinion, her position on the farm will improve "when people will come to me with difficulties, and I will try to give them good advice." That notion reflects the Butterfly Farm community's description earlier of what a 'good woman' does. Hailey's perception of herself however, perhaps more critically, indicates that she may not be a fully 'accepted' member of Butterfly Farm, which seems to have a bearing on the meaning of 'personhood' for herself and/or others in her community. If she does not feel she is treated like an "adult", then how is she treated? Her earlier account shows that she is not always respected by others because sometimes members of her community speak to her in a denigrating manner. Her experience in making certain decisions for herself, despite facing social criticisms and rebuke, indicates purposeful agency. But the agency she has enacted has come at the cost of her low self-esteem, diminished sense of respect from others, and

[406] Self-esteem is often viewed to be worth-related and efficacy-related (Stets & Burke, 2014). Hailey's answer suggests she has feelings of low self-worth, "the degree to which individuals feel positive about themselves, that is, they feel that they are good and valuable" (Stets & Burke, 2014, p. 410). Her low self-worth also seems to affect her beliefs of *self-efficacy*, what she believes she can do to achieve certain ends (Bandura, 1997, 2005). Self-efficacy is considered important in individual agency as one's beliefs about what one can do are "mechanisms of personal agency", making it possible for one to envision the possibility of achieving a desired outcome through one's action(s) (Bandura, 1997, pp. 2–3).

[407] A woman's choice of *who* to marry and *when* to marry have been noted as key indicators of individual agency (Boudet, Petesch, & Turk, 2013; Kabeer, 1999).

being treated as less than an adult. These are costs that many of the women I interviewed are likely trying to avoid, even if some of them did not necessarily pursue 'respect' per se.

7.4.4 Seeking Respect or Avoiding Stigma?

'Respect' was both instrumentally and/or intrinsically valuable to the respondents' idea of the 'good woman'. As the quotes earlier depicted (see section 7.2.1), there were different dimensions and diverse views on what 'respect' meant, and if (and how) one retained, sought, or lost it. It would be naïve to suggest however that every respondent who valued 'respect' also pursued it. For some respondents, it seemed clearer from their interviews that they were trying to avoid what was not 'respect', or what I call *stigma*.[408] If 'respect' had a positive connotation among respondents, its opposite alluded to what respondents held as negative and undesirable

Some accounts in the previous sections (see for instance section 7.2.3) indicate that respondents did not respect women whose behaviors indicated lack of self-respect—such as visiting the *shebeen* and/or being a prostitute. Such behaviors were viewed as clearly aberrant from these women's notion of 'respect' and not characteristic of a 'good woman'. Respect, as I outlined through its multidimensionality in section 7.2, can also appear unreachable when considering the lofty ways some of the women described it. If 'respect' is what gives one honor and a good name among members of one's community, then its opposite will be what gives one shame and dishonor. It is possible that some

[408] For simplification purposes, I use the term 'stigma' to denote the opposite of 'respect' in this context. The word 'stigma' itself is not brought up by any of my respondents while the word 'respect' is overwhelmingly invoked.

women did not specifically seek ‘respect’ or personally contemplate what it would mean for them to achieve it, but rather avoided what they deemed its opposite: stigma, from the loss of respect from others.

One aspect that seems to arise in many responses regarding respect, or stigma, is that these perceptions are fair. Specifically, the women I interviewed hold their perceptions as good and accurate assessments of others and their character. But as several respondents explained, there is also gossip that occurs, and talks that victims of slander feel are unfair, untrue, or malicious. When Lisbet from Poppy Rose Farm said the farm director gossips about her to the farmer (see section. 4.4.2.1), she deemed this was unjust and undermined her respected position on the farm. Mary (see section 6.2.1.2) had to resign as forewoman because she thought the jealousy of others and false rumors being spread about her were damaging her respect among the women workers and with the farm manager. For a person to lose respect from others (and what may accompany that respect, such as Mary’s job as a forewoman) because of the slander or gossip that she/he is a victim of would be an unjust loss, indicating that respect, or ‘disrespect’, from others is not always justified.

Furthermore, that such a perceived unjustified loss of respect led Mary to relinquish her position as forewoman shows how gossip has implications for some women’s agency. Her behavior indicates that perhaps she had taken the role of forewoman in part to be further approved/respected by others, an introjected motivation within SDT. To be forewoman was a choice that she assessed would make others respect her more, her sense of worth partly contingent on the approval of others. When the gossip arising around that role

started damaging the respect she had from others, she decided it was not a worthy position to hold. In this light, assuming the role of forewoman was not an empowering move for Mary because it made her behavior less autonomous. That there was subsequent gossip which motivated her to quit this role highlighted the introjected motivation underlying her decision to become forewoman, something which was not clear without an analysis of the gossip incident.

Whether one pursues 'respect' or avoids stigma, either action can still suggest purposeful agency. The costs that women are trying to circumvent by avoiding stigma—such as lack of self-esteem, no respect from others, not feeling valued by others—is indicative of agency. The individual who has thought about what to pursue and/or what to avoid, aware that her actions will create an image of herself that others will see and judge, is enacting agency. Whether her motivation is to have characteristics that she personally values—an intrinsic motivation—and/or to be seen, perhaps even lauded, by others around her in a certain way—an instrumental motivation—purposeful agency enables her to pursue 'respect' and/or avoid 'stigma'.

If framed through the lens of SDT, different behaviors associated with (the pursuit of) respect may be positioned along a continuum of motivations (see description of the five motivations in section 2.2.1) and suggest different degrees of autonomy as defined in SDT. One may have *identified* having respect as personally essential, and this identification may (or not) eventually lead to an *integrated* motivation where one sees having respect as aligning with one's values and needs. In a less autonomous situation, one may be driven by an *introjected* motivation, such as wanting to have respect in order to be praised by

others. Or, in the least empowered situation, one may want to have (or be seen as having) respect and therefore complies with certain rules of the community that define what this respect entails in order to avoid the negative repercussions (e.g., being rejected as a member of the community) for not complying. SDT here enables one to recognize the complexity of these various motivations, acknowledge how they may coexist along different shades of autonomy, and how women who pursue respect for identified and/or integrated motivations are more autonomous (empowered) while those pursuing respect only for external or introjected reasons are not/less empowered.

In the next section, by considering where 'meaning' or 'value' seems to come from for my respondents, I draw from some of the key findings and analyses in the empirical chapters to consolidate and deepen the conceptualizations of individual agency that emerged in the exemplar of the 'good woman'.

7.5 Sources of Meaning: Identities and Communities

The findings and analysis so far reveal that women's actions and perceptions seem to be based on functionings they value and/or have reason to value. But what makes certain functionings worth pursuing? As noted in section 2.2.3 from Graeber's (2001) value framework, the 'desirable' is not only what people value but sometimes also what they ought to value. What gives value to what is (or should be) 'desirable'—what appear to be my respondents' sources of *meaning*? I began to answer these questions throughout the empirical chapters, presenting the respondents' motivations through the instrumental and intrinsic significance of their choices and/or their identities. I have

examined their agency by taking into account their *situation*, including the social context they are in as well as who they (say they) are in the roles they play. I have also expanded the original understanding of *situation*, as proposed by Simone de Beauvoir, by including a temporal dimension when discussing respondents' aspirations. I have argued that my respondents' hopes and dreams are crucial to understanding their purposeful agency in the context of their actions, perceptions, and what they value and have reason to value. While women drew from multiple aspects of their situations to give meaning to certain functionings, their identities and communities deserve additional conceptual attention, especially because they can explain more about the socio-relational aspects that motivate individual purposeful agency.[409]

I argued in chapter 6 that my respondents seem to act in pursuit of valued functionings that usually connect to their identities, and specifically those identities that are relatively more important to them as individuals. Individuals make choices and decisions within their particular *situations* (chapter 5), and make sense of knowledge within their social context(s)—what they are in—while considering the role(s) they hold and value (chapter 6)—who they are. This relied on a constructionist assumption that identities are social constructs, defined, redefined, and given meaning within and by different individuals interacting with others within their societies and communities.

What it means to be a 'good woman' (or by extension, a 'good man') therefore can vary across individuals and groups based on the socially available constructions of gender. If

[409] I do not imply that these two sources of meaning are collectively exhaustive but simply that they emerged as the most obvious when I analyzed my primary data.

being married is key to some women's notion of the 'good woman', we cannot assume that what it means to be a wife for someone who is a Zimbabwean woman, a high-school drop-out, and a contract farmworker in Western Cape will be the same as a woman who is Zimbabwean and a doctor in Western Cape. While both these individuals are 'Zimbabwean' and 'women', likely sharing some aspects of their identities and culture, their differences also position them in markedly different social situations that can influence how they each conceive and enact the meaning of 'being a wife' in line with their notion of the 'good woman'. Thinking in terms of social constructs is especially important in helping us understand certain variations in terms of women's 'choice' and 'agency' because these constructs influence how one reasons and what one considers feasible, within one's social situation, as a 'good woman'.[412]

Being a 'good woman' spans having certain functionings. If we assume that the respondents are each able to reason, or conduct internal cost-benefit calculations, about the functionings they individually prefer (or deem would be most beneficial for them), then the way(s) one enacts her identity is(are) based on deliberate choices one makes. Agency therefore is not only central to enacting one's identities but it is (already) present when one is consciously reasoning about one's choices relating to one's identities in/given one's situation. Consider identities as a source of meaning in the case of another common valued functioning that respondents associated with their idea of the 'good woman': going to church.

[412] If we think of the 'good woman' as (also) a culturally-situated aspiration, Appadurai's (2004) framework of culture as 'terms of recognition' provide another way of examining how one's aspirations entwine with the traditions in one's society, and how one's perceptions of and (non)adherence to those traditions—themselves socially constructed—may (not) limit what one may aspire to.

Among the farmworker respondents I interviewed, the women overwhelmingly said they attended church regularly (although that could mean weekly or monthly or some other schedule among different respondents). An intrinsic value to attending church was that it made one feel connected to God. Attending church regularly symbolized, at a basic level, that one was dedicated to one's religion and religious obligations (one of which being church attendance). There was also instrumental significance to church attendance when it allowed one to (try to) be (or feel like) a valued member of one's community. Church attendance mattered because it gave some women respondents, both locals and migrants, the feeling of being part of their (or a) community. There was also a sense that church attendance was "culturally expected" of these women, so much so that attending church could to some extent be a "moral accomplishment" and regular non-attendance a "moral breach" (Robbins, 2012, p. 118). Church attendance, as a specific moral action,[413] hence gave meaning to one's experience as a Christian woman in a community. A woman's church attendance is an agentic action (shows her agency) when she values attending church, for intrinsic and/or instrumental reasons, and has reason to value such attendance, such as through a shared sense of moral purpose and/or belonging that is made possible through her presence in and/or commitment to her community. It also illustrates how these women's individual agency is relational as that individual action (i.e. attending church) is motivated and/or shaped by their valued relationships with significant others: God, family, living/home community, fellow

[413] Church attendance therefore, while valued by the women, is a lower-order value serving the higher-order value of faithfulness to Christianity.

Christians, and others. Christian ideals disseminated at church also prescribed the moral ways for Christian women (and likely men) to conduct themselves.

Positioning religious identity in the moralizing discourse of the 'good woman' allows an interrogation of agency and its limits. "Religion is what teaches farmwomen to be 'good', to not do this or that, to follow Christian values and the Bible," says Wendy Pekeur, who also grew up among farmworkers. While women farmworkers' subordination to men is historically and racially rooted (see chapter 4), much of the origins and effects of this moralizing language around the 'good woman' is nascent of respondents' socio-religious beliefs (Andrews, 2022). "There are norms of what society expects a good woman to do, like to respect the husband, dress a certain way, not drink, take care of the family," adds Pekeur (2022), "we grew up in this culture, and are taught this from small." As earlier anecdotes show, religion has also been crucial in providing women farmworkers with forms of associational life and solidarity, and material support in contexts of highly limited economic and social opportunities. But most of these women also do not always have the physical and social option to learn about, contest, and make informed choices about different values. Churches influence this moralizing discourse, and they often "control the narrative" (Louw, 2022) that underpins it. "Religious groupings are [often] the only social circles farmwomen belong to; they're isolated, even in informal settlements, and don't have money for other social activities, or cars to travel elsewhere," says Carmen Louw. A more comprehensive view here begins to show how constrained women farmworkers' capabilities are, highlighting the limits on their agency.

For many of these women, pursuing and/or expressing approval of what is 'good', which sometimes appears to be about rescinding personal choice, does not necessarily suggest accepting 'unfreedom' if their conception of 'freedom' is more relationally situated. The pursuit of the 'good woman' may in some aspects "speak back to the normative liberal assumptions about human nature…such as the belief that all human beings have an innate desire for freedom, that we all somehow seek to assert our autonomy when allowed to do so, that human agency primarily consists of acts that challenge social norms and not those that uphold them" (p.5). Mahmood's (2005) analysis of the women's mosque revival movement in Cairo argues for a conceptualization of agency that connects to socially-situated and relational meaning-making, to make "the meaning of agency open and allow it to emerge from within semantic and institutional networks that define and make possible particular ways of relating to people, things, and oneself" (34). Such agency leads to a conceptualization of freedom as one's efforts for social connectedness through "practices of belonging" (Weir, 2013, p. 336). With this relational notion of freedom, agency in this southern African context can also be examined as and through what James Ferguson (2013) called "relations of dependence," in a social world where certain forms of dependence can be acts of agency. It closely links to Comaroff's and Comaroff's (2001) historical study of the Southern Tswana people where agency is the process of "becoming", rooted in one's social and interdependent relations, or who one is to others. These views importantly allow us to move beyond definitions of agency found in individual political autonomy, which are important but nonetheless may restrain other explorations into human agency where social belonging and relatedness are still central to some individuals' conceptions of freedom.

My task in examining women's agency is not to judge what is worth valuing and not, but to shape an understanding of where meaning comes from for my respondents. I have argued so far that meaning partly emerges and is derived from one's social relations, within one's communities, and through the identities one has and values. As Sen argues, the "choices we can make are constrained by feasibility…and these constraints would rule out all kinds of alternatives as being nonfeasible" (Sen, 2006, p. 30).[416] The choices one makes of which identity to pursue rests not only on its instrumental and/or intrinsic significance, but also on one's agency freedom—whether it is possible for the person to pursue the role(s) it entails. The meanings of these roles, which also relate to what they can envision as 'possible selves' (Markus & Nurius, 1986), are linked to the societies and communities where individuals live, come from, and/or feel they belong. One's social interactions and relationships in turn can have extraordinary influence on the identities one values or not, and how one chooses to enact or eschew certain identities in the roles one plays.

Sen maintains in *The Idea of Justice* that society is not detached from the ways individuals choose, think, and behave.[417] Agency from the capability view entails pursuing what one has reason to value. When considering what gives someone *reason to value* some 'thing' or 'functioning', we have to contend with "what [social] influences operate on their values" (Sen, 2009, p. 244). If we are to better understand how and why an individual thinks, chooses, and acts, then we need to have some knowledge of the

[416] Undoubtedly, there are many constraints, such as material capability deprivations, that can inhibit one from making (or having the option to make) certain choices.
[417] Sen (2009) here was responding to critics that claimed the capability approach as methodological individualism.

society (or community) she is in and her societal relations. The influence of society, or community, on my respondents' agency became apparent through how my respondents spoke in the language of expectations. I label these expectations as 'community expectations' as they seem to be based partly on what individuals believe certain others in their communities expect of them.

Consider for instance the notion that a 'good wife'. To listen to one's husband was something that was 'expected' of the good wife.[418] One however is not born knowing that she must be a good wife; she learns to do this, and often accepts that this way is the 'right' and 'normal' way, from the social environment(s) where she grows up and/or lives in. The people in those environments—one's families, friends, societies, and communities—define their identities and the associated moral obligations by maintaining, challenging, and/or (re)creating social meanings.[419] My respondents were relying on their *perceptions* of what they thought was expected of them and/or of others. These perceptions came across when I asked my respondents what they *would* or *should* 'be' and/or 'do'.[420] I also asked them what they thought other women *should not* 'be' or 'do'. For example, some women said they *would not* respect and/or admire a woman who was not married; others said a good wife *should* or *must* listen to her husband. These expectations are specific not only to the individual respondents who claim them but also to the social context(s) where they emerge and/or have relevance.

[418] Even though not every respondent agreed with and/or enacted this idea.
[419] This line of thought draws from the symbolic interactionist framework, where individual behaviors and interactions are interpreted through/as symbols—carriers of specific socially-situated meanings—in individuals' minds, and where social relations and processes are learned, maintained, and recreated through those meaningful interactions among individuals (Blumer, 1969).
[420] This way of identifying expectations, through textual analysis of words like *would* or *should*, was taken from Mackie, Moneti, Shakya, & Denny (2015).

Community expectations can also be relationally situated through the bonds that each individual seeks to create and maintain with others in their communities. I have noted in chapter 5 some of the ways that a woman's existence is broadly relational and specifically gendered. It is difficult to evaluate the true extent of a woman respondent's agency achievement in the choice of who made particular spending decisions in her household because she could be acting in line with what she deems is socially and/or relationally expected of her in/by her community. As noted in section 3.5, another key limitation was having male enumerators, potentially leading to response bias. Carmen Louw, co-director of WFP, and Wendy Pekeur, former general secretary of now-defunct trade union for women farmworkers Sikhula Sonke, reveal that many women farmworkers often want more financial control, especially when it comes to how much money their husbands or partners spend on alcohol rather than on their households. However, many women feel constrained because of tenure insecurity and financial dependence on men. These women's situations, and the community expectations borne of these, constrain the range of choices and actions women deem feasible. A community may thus also shape and police what its members ought to value through community expectations. In this light, we may note that expectations may be so internalized by individual women that it may not always be possible to analytically detangle how their ideas of what is feasible and not feasible—and/or appropriate and inappropriate—for them are shaped by what those expectations promulgate.

Social or community expectations may also lead some individuals to profess certain beliefs that in reality they do not follow. Most of the women I interviewed explained that

a ‘good woman’ does not drink or abuse alcohol; but their feedback likely contained response bias that relate to social expectations and/or interviewer bias.[431] While women’s ideas about the ‘good woman’ in this chapter portray her as someone who does not drink (too much), this notion also clearly contradicts the reality for most farmworkers. Not only is alcohol consumption among farm workers and dwellers extremely high[432]–with Western Cape having the highest rate of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and alcoholism closely linked to high levels of GBV against women (Amanuel et al., 2018; Walls et al., 2020)—but there is social stigma attached to women drinkers (Walls et al., 2020). Here, women’s professed beliefs about alcohol consumption juxtaposes to an empirical reality of alcoholism among farmworkers that, as chapter 4 illustrated, is also historically and racially situated. Andries du Toit (2022) notes that “drunkenness,” especially when farmers gave alcohol to their workers, “was used as a tool of oppression” against colored people to ensure the maintenance of the agricultural labor force. But sobriety, seen in the moralizing discourse of the ‘good woman’ in this chapter, has also been a tool of oppression (du Toit, 2022), and historically was predicated on notions of ‘respectability’ differentiating the slave and the free before becoming attached to adherence to Christianity (Ross, 2015). “Values of respectability were inculcated by ruling class culture,” adds du Toit (2022), who spent decades examining the nature of colored racial oppression. For colored on-farm women, this has meant demonstrating their “propriety by not drinking, becoming Christian and married” (du Toit, 2022). A consideration, even if broadly, of how community expectations inform

[431] See section 3.5 where response bias linked to social expectations is raised, and section 3.2.1.2 on interviewer bias.

[432] This reality is confirmed through both empirical research (London, 1999; Walls et al., 2020; WFP, 2020) and key informants (Pekeur, 2022; Louw, 2022). I discuss more on alcohol statistics in chapter 4.

women's beliefs is helpful as it allows us to view the exemplar of the 'good woman' in light of the social meaning(s) it may convey and/or hold to/among the respondents.

7.6 Conclusion

The findings in this chapter suggest that one way of understanding and conceptualizing agency for women (farm)workers in Western Cape is through the concept of the 'good woman', a key concept of the self that emerged from the interviews. The 'good woman', while being aspired to and aimed for by individual women, was perceived and described in similar as well as different ways by the respondents. For example, while respondents agreed that 'respect' was a key feature of the 'good woman', not everyone agreed that the 'good woman' had to be a married woman. Therefore, what 'respect' is and how it is portrayed sometimes varied (though only slightly) among respondents. Nonetheless, 'respect' was a key aspect of the functionings of the 'good woman', encased in one's behavior, and respondents described wanting to have respect.

The interviews and analysis further revealed that women's ideas about the 'good woman' were also driven by their perceptions about social expectations, which their behaviors did not always reflect in practice. For instance, alcohol consumption among farmworkers and farm dwellers remains extremely high in Western Cape, and alcoholism intricately links to violence against women (London, 1999; WFP, 2020; Pekeur, 2022). Social stigma attached to women's consumption of alcohol (Amanuel et al., 2018), along with the moralizing discourse of the 'good woman'—often disseminated through women's communities and churches (Pekeur, 2022; Louw, 2022)—suggest that many women respondents may be

saying something but doing another thing. In such cases, it is challenging to detangle women's motivations without further probing, through interviews which time-limited interviews did not allow.

Analyses of the interviews reveal that the idea of a 'good woman' can be associated with one's personal experiences, perceptions, as well as emerge from the various identities one holds and values. I suggested that identities and community expectations, as sources of meaning can explain what motivates the individual's purposeful agency. By extracting the concept of the 'good woman' from the narratives and exploring its significance to individual enactments of agency, it was also possible to examine how respondents manage their social relations. Assuming that the respondents' actions and perceptions did not necessarily always align also implies that, at the experiential level, the meaning(s) of the 'good woman' can be dynamic—varying across (and within) contexts—and relationally constituted—through the coming-together of individuals who perceive, create, and wield personas that emulate as well as redefine what constitutes the 'good woman'. Drawing from the interview data to gradually build the outlines of a persona of 'the good woman', what emerged can best be called an exemplar that is socially and relationally defined (and redefined), individually pursued (or not pursued), and gains personal (instrumental/intrinsic) value within each individual's *situation* which encompasses one's sources of meaning. Finally, the exemplar of the 'good woman' provides a framework for understanding some respondents' ways of reasoning by demonstrating how and why agency is 'embodied' (to use Butler's (2004) conceptualization), and how some women's individual agency can (also) be understood as a performance of interdependencies.

While I have argued that purposeful agency—as the pursuit of what is meaningful—is important to the women I interviewed, I cannot argue that all women in the farmworker communities of Western Cape are able to freely enact agency in the pursuit of what is truly meaningful to them. But understanding women's valued functionings, identities, and the communities they come from help explain what likely motivates individuals' purposeful agency.

In the next and final chapter, I discuss my findings on women's agency in the context of future research and implications.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

"My hope is to stay hopeful."[433]

This thesis is a modest piece of research that qualitatively explored and examined the individual agency of women (farm)workers in Western Cape province. The research question guiding this thesis was: what are women's perceptions and experiences as (farm)workers, and what do they reveal about their individual agency? This question was accompanied by three main research objectives to: analyze women (farm)workers' descriptions of their decision-making processes regarding household finances and own labor, and how these processes (do not) reflect agency; explore how their experiences and motivations suggest individual agency can be 'other-related'; and examine what women (seem to have reason to) value by considering the meanings they associate with particular choices and/or behaviors.

By examining how women make decisions about their household finances and own labor, I sought to gain and present a ground-up understanding of these dimensions of agency in my respondents' lives. By examining how women's individual agency tied to what they intrinsically and/or instrumentally valued, I worked to expose how personal and situational aspects complicate their choice process. The second objective sought to

[433] Off-site respondent from Zimbabwe – June 9, 2019, Mbekwini/Mitchel's Plain.

advance the capability approach's view of individual agency by better situating it socio-relationally, such as within people's 'structures of living together'. In doing so, I sought to analyze how social influences relate to individual agency. I identified certain relational motivations and social aspects in respondents' individual choice processes relevant to how women conceived of, and enacted, their agency. Through the third objective, I aimed to analyze the meaningfulness of respondents' choices. In particular, by examining the intrinsic and/or instrumental value of the choices individuals make, I also sought to understand processes underlying purposeful agency using respondents' own perspectives to derive an understanding of the meanings they (seem to) associate with particular behaviors.

8.1 Key Findings

There are several key conclusions I draw from the empirical chapters of this thesis, which I also further interrogate here.

8.1.1 Strategic and Executive Control Over Income

Categorizing women's control over income as *strategic* and/or *executive* enhances the analysis of agency in this dimension, especially when analyzing agency for women who live in couple households and pool their incomes with that of their partners. While *executive* control refers to the routine 'management' of income for day-to-day expenses (e.g., groceries), *strategic* control suggests one is able to influence non-routine financial decisions, and/or reallocate income to other purposes. In *strategic* control, one is able to determine and/or change a course of action if one chooses to do so. *Executive* control

involves the 'responsibility' of managing income using an agreed-upon rubric, while *strategic* control includes the 'ability' to (re)allocate—independently and/or through successful negotiation with one's partner—funds to specific purposes. The interviews and focus group discussions showed that it is possible to analyze individual agency by classifying women's control over household income as *strategic* and/or *executive*. One implication of this typology is its potential contribution to questionnaires like the DHS, where questions regarding control over income can be enhanced through the nuance that is afforded by the typology of *strategic* and *executive* control.

It proved useful to consider women's gender needs in evaluating their agency. The allocation of pocket-money illustrates how socially-constructed perceptions about gender needs can differ from women's real needs. (Agarwal, 1997: p. 11). Respondents discussed the clear allocation of pocket money for men from the household income. Conversely, many women either took pocket money sporadically or not at all, the latter referring to their personal needs as even being met through other household spending categories. Not only does this situation underplay women's needs, subsuming the latter within the household's or family's needs, it reinforces gendered deprivations based on an undervaluation of women's needs and/or contributions (Agarwal, 1997: p. 11). That most of the women explicitly accept men to have 'final say' in financial control (section 5.6.1), even if some do not implicitly agree with this, suggests gender norms support implicit differences in bargaining power within the household (Agarwal, 1997). This is supported by research conducted among farmworkers by WFP, which highlights that gender-based social norms "appoint men as the heads of households," giving men "control over money" (WFP, 2020, p. 24), even when the woman makes financial contributions to the household.

Here, the concept of self-limitation importantly demonstrates how women choosing their 'practical' gender needs can still be an act of agency, albeit constrained.

Chapter 5 especially showed that these ways of controlling income can have instrumental and/or intrinsic value to the women respondents. By analyzing the ways women said they controlled income and why it mattered to them—instrumentally and/or intrinsically—two aspects became clearer. First, an individual who has *executive* control may display purposeful agency if she has identified certain *strategic* reasons or motivations for having *executive* control over household income. This indicates one can intentionally pursue and/or maintain *executive* control over income (as in Yolanda's case). Secondly, examining why control over income mattered to women clarified how their agency was also relational. When identifying the ways women showed *strategic* and/or *executive* control over income, the significance of creating and/or maintaining certain relationships emerged as key reasons why women controlled income in certain ways. Relational elements also highlighted how enacting agency involved women's consideration of the needs of their children and/or other relatives—their responsibilities and roles. A relational conception of agency further expounded how purposeful agency can be self- as well as other-oriented, as noted within the CA (Alkire, 2010; Klein, 2016; Sen, 1999; Sen & Drèze, 1995).

8.1.2 People's Identities and their Decision to Work

People's decision(s) to work (or not) emerged as a useful dimension of individual agency to analyze when considering what makes this decision or 'choice' meaningful.[434] *Who* a person was—his/her identities—emerged as an important factor to consider for several reasons. Identities matter to individual agency because the former impart meaning to the latter. What individuals believe and value about their identities influence their understanding of the choices they have, prefer, and (should) pursue. Identities thus play a valuational role in an individual's choice processes. Identities, specifically what one knows and/or values about an identity, can also serve as internal valuational compasses that individuals turn to when making and ranking their choices. This may be reflected when a person chooses to behave in a certain way that embodies what he/she considers valuable in upholding his/her identity, indicating why some choices (and the identities they link to) appear more salient than others. That individuals rank their identities (some are valued more than others) is not a new idea, but this thesis argued it has implications for the choices that are (or can be) linked to those identities.

An analysis of identities also highlighted some relational elements underlying people's motivations to work and perceptions about work. When describing how respondents' work in the agricultural sector are structured (as permanent, temporary, and contract), it was possible to demonstrate how the work options, defined through this structuring, can underlie people's decisions to (not) work. These decisions were further linked to how they required individual decision-makers to negotiate their different, often intersectional,

[434] Understanding the processes underlying the agency of women wageworkers also relates to recent efforts, such as the latest WEAI for Market Inclusion (WEAI+ MI) which aims to measure women's agency within value chains.

identities. Analyzing women's intersectional identities—as workers, migrants, wives, mothers—enhances our understanding of their agency freedoms and achievements by highlighting certain relational elements that are constitutive of this agency. Understanding the value of individuals' identities can also indicate what motivates these individuals to their decisions (i.e. to work or not). By offering a way to understand people's motivations, and give meaning to those motivations, uncovering the valuational function of identities in analyses of agency can help us better articulate the meaning(s) of that agency.

Situating this analysis within Western Cape farmworkers' particularly circumstances also highlights the limits of their agency. In a context of high poverty, precarious tenure and livelihoods, and other forms of structural violence and social limitations, the decision to work is also one that is not always free on account of the extreme deprivations most farmworkers face. Work, therefore, is often a highly constrained choice one makes to survive, provide food for one's family, and/or seek some form of physical security.

8.1.3 Agency and the Exemplar

The concept of the 'good woman' was a recurring pattern in the narratives. In chapter 7, I argued that individual purposeful agency was involved in contextualizing, enacting, and repurposing one's persona to align with one's idea of a 'good woman'. Most women respondents either wanted to be, and/or described themselves as, 'good women', while some seemed to avoid behaviors that they believed were associated with women who were 'not good women'. As a concept of the self, the 'good woman' represented certain values and ideas about behaviors or functionings that were deemed 'good', proper, or moral, for and by women in their communities.

Analysis of the 'good woman' as an exemplar illuminated how, and why, some women enacted agency and revealed the meanings that its pursuit and achievement held to those respondents. The exemplar gained, and conveyed, meanings through the behaviors of individual women. The agency of some women was better understood, as reflected in their actions, when it was possible to connect their decisions to what they deemed meaningful or valuable. Drawing from the narratives, I argued that identities and community expectations are sources of meaning in an individual's choice process, motivating and influencing the choices available to, and/or valued by, respondents. Furthermore, the sources of meaning illustrated how agency could be relational by highlighting the roles and responsibilities individuals have, value, and have reason to (or ought to) value/have. Despite the exemplar being a concept of the self, analyzing 'respect' as a key functioning and the sources of meaning underlined certain processes that indicated how the criteria to be (considered) a 'good woman' was socially embedded. The agency underlying the deliberate pursuit of the exemplar—i.e. individual women who oriented their behaviors for specific reasons to be (seen as) a 'good woman'—was purposeful and relational.

The nature and structure of the moral self, inherent in the 'good woman' exemplar, is more complex than the analysis in this thesis has allowed.[435] For instance, my research does not investigate how components of the exemplar function within a broader system of rewards and punishment, but relies instead on a few individual respondents'

[435] Some key articles detangling this complexity include: Frimer et al., 2011; Jennings et al., 2015; Walker & Hennig, 2004.

perceptions. Here, aspects such as individual motivations (Bandura, 1997; 2005), self-regulation (using SDT), and the influence of certain organizational and/or institutional structures like religion and churches impact moral ideas and/or behavior within a more complex system that deserves further disentangling.

8.2 Contributions and Implications for Researchers on Agency

Discussions about the definitions and measures of women's agency and empowerment have been widely debated in international development. The findings and analyses in this thesis speak to the ongoing conversations on this subject by examining how the experiences and perceptions of a group of women help us conceptualize their agency in several ways.

Firstly, the findings from this study contribute to literature arguing for more recognition of the 'subjective' dimensions of women's empowerment and agency (Alkire, 2005; Martínez-Restrepo & Ramos-Jaimes, 2017; Quisumbing et al., 2016; Woodruff, 2015). This thesis examined how agency is experienced and perceived by individuals in a South(ern) African context, and allowed for an examination of the subjective significance of their individual choices. It emphasizes that people's experiences and/or perceptions can reveal key, sometimes interconnected, motivating factors underlying their agency. It argues for treating people's myriad modes of social differentiation (e.g., identities) and ways of managing income (i.e. *strategic* and *executive*) as worthy categories of analysis, offering insight into how agency is subjectively experienced and/or perceived by linking values to particular motivations, roles, and/or responsibilities.

Secondly, by considering how the instrumental and intrinsic value of people's choices and actions refine conceptualizations of their agency (Ibrahim, 2006; Klein, 2013), the findings highlight the significance of studies seeking to improve measurements of women's empowerment and agency in developing contexts (Jones et al., 2019; Lecoutere & Jassogne, 2019; Malapit et al., 2015, 2019, 2020). Malapit et al.'s (2019) study is an example of how the WEAI is evolving, conceptualizing agency along intrinsic, instrumental, and collective dimensions.[436] Although these authors define agency in these dimensions in often different ways that I define them in this thesis,[437] they are part of a growing literature that emphasizes the necessity for improving our understandings and measures of agency and empowerment in development contexts. Additionally, the link between the valuational role of identities to agency made in this thesis highlights a key process between two key elements of agency that Donald et al. (2017), among others, identify: goal-setting and acting upon one's goal. One way of further conceptualizing this is that the gap between 'setting a goal' and 'acting upon that goal' is closely related to the distance between a choice and the salience of the identity (or identities) this choice can be linked to. Differentiating between individuals' instrumental and intrinsic values broadens the analysis of agency in ways that better consider women's personal situations. I also find that connecting these values to the meanings individuals hold about certain roles they

[436] Jones et al.'s (2019) study for instance measure empowerment along two of these dimensions—intrinsic and instrumental agency—and show direct effects between women's (i.e., maternal) empowerment and improved child nutrition.

[437] These authors differ from my application of Sen's CA in that they define intrinsic agency as 'power within', instrumental agency as 'power to', and collective agency as 'power with' (Malapit et al., 2019). They also operationalize these dimensions in specific ways. One of the ways intrinsic agency is measured is via women's attitudes about IPV; instrumental agency is assessed across several indices such as through women's influence in household decision making. Collective agency is measured using information on group membership and the influence of these groups (Malapit et al., 2019, Jones et al., 2019).

have can improve our understanding of what motivates them (or not) to purposeful action. The analyses undertaken in this thesis, by uncovering for instance certain context-specific processes important to individual decision-making, contribute to an ongoing discussion within the field of development that is seeking to refine our conceptualizations of agency and empowerment in ways that better resonate with local contexts and values (Doss & Quisumbing, 2020; Jones et al., 2019; Malapit et al., 2019, 2020).

The thesis points out the relevance of *exemplars*, or constructs of the ideal self, to individual agency. One major global study that highlights concepts close to the 'good woman'—e.g., good girl/boy, good wife/husband—is a qualitative research undertaken by Boudet et al. (2013). Their study shows how these concepts can be key to (understanding) the aspirations people have and the agency of the individuals in pursuing those aspirations in various countries. Such studies also stand to provide significant insights into how social influences, such as social norms and traditions, can impact women's (and men's) agency and empowerment pathways. My study shows how a concept like the 'good woman' motivates and defines agency for certain women—it is key to understanding what these women want to achieve and how it works as an exemplar against which women's judge their own and/or other women's behaviors. The 'good woman' exemplar is relevant to analyzing women's agency and empowerment in rural and/or developing contexts (Doss & Quisumbing, 2020) as it can further our understanding of certain motivations deemed important by women during decision-making and goal-setting. While the characteristics of the 'good woman' exemplar will be specific to different contexts, and even across individuals, the work of identifying its key elements and developing its structure through participatory approaches firstly offers

research participants the possibility of thinking about what they value (and why). For example, exploring the possibility of incorporating 'respect' and its multiple dimensions, as synthesized in Table 6 (below), when designing and implementing research instruments for studies on women's agency and empowerment can support more nuanced analyses of expressions of agency and people's goals.

Secondly, specific facets of an exemplar can be particularly useful when incorporated into vignettes—which can be descriptions of people, situations, and/or events—for these are increasingly being used in development studies as a measurement tool for investigating people's attitudes and behaviors (Bernard et al., 2018; Bradbury-Jones & Herber, 2014; Donald et al., 2017). Vignettes that incorporate aspects of an exemplar can be useful in "understanding people's beliefs, perceptions, values and dispositions" or the "moral codes" underlying their motivations (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2014, p. 429). Clarifying the bases of these motivations is relevant to research seeking to analyze the gender/social norms surrounding women's agency (Chang et al., 2020). Exemplars can be key pathways to understanding locally-derived conceptions of people's lives and behaviors, further highlighting how context matters in assessments of development.

Table 6 – Three Dimensions of Respect

Respect to/for others	Respect from others	Respect to/for the self
How one treats others – not shouting at others; good manners and good character with others; how one talks/responds to others (e.g. to speak calmly, to listen to one's husband)	How one is treated by others – to be sought by others for advice and guidance; to have one's wishes regarding social interactions be honored by others (e.g. to not be approached by people who drink and smoke if one does not wish to interact with people in such states); to be listened to by others in one's community (e.g. to have power/influence over certain matters); to be known/recognized by others	How one's behavior shows one treats herself – good conduct; good (socially-approved) moral behavior (e.g. not lying, not going clubbing, not drinking (too much) beer, not taking drugs, not sleeping around as a prostitute, not smoking, being friends with people with good morals/behavior);

Lastly, the discussions in this thesis—on women's choices, roles and identities, and living situations—are relevant to certain studies that examine agrarian questions, of which I note two around women's rural wage labor (Oya & Pontara, 2015). The first asks us to rethink the idea that self-employment, such as smallholder farming, is the dominant form

of employment in rural areas of developing countries.[438] As this thesis on individual agency argued, examining the gendered experiences of women agricultural wage laborers improve our understanding of these women's agency by suggesting specific ways of conceptualizing certain choices and actions as forms of agency—as acts done by women in pursuit of valued goals. The second question asks how including a gendered analysis helps to detangle and differentiate the experiences of agricultural wageworkers in South(ern) Africa.[439] Through its focus on women's individual agency, this study augments our subjective understanding of what it means to be a woman (farm)worker working for a wage in South Africa's Western Cape. The study also faced certain limitations, which along with the findings, lay down several implications.

8.3 Limitations and Some Suggestions for Future Research

There are considerable questions about achieving gender justice with respect to how agency has been conceptualized in this thesis. Gender and power relations within households, communities, and the broader country(side) impact marginalized groups like women farmworkers. This also has implications for how change, through greater agency and empowerment, can be managed—by individuals, collectives, the state—in gender-equitable ways. I highlight a few factors below.

[438] There is an extensive literature that challenges the over-emphasis of certain studies (and the subsequent policies they inform and/or draw from) on smallholder farming as the key source of income for people in rural and/or agricultural societies (Hurst et al., 2005; Maertens & Verhofstadt, 2013; Oya & Pontara, 2015; Rizzo et al., 2015).

[439] In this regard, a number of studies provide critical insights into the gender(ed) dynamics (Addison, 2019; Bolt, 2015; T. Cousins, 2020; du Toit, 1993; Eriksson, 2018; Greenberg, 2010; Hall, 2013; Hall et al., 2017, 2013; Lazzarini, 2017; Rutherford, 2011; Rutherford & Addison, 2007; Visser, 2016).

The church is an integral part of many of these women's lives, a space for collective agency to manifest. While forces of circumstance—chiefly the lack of significant alternative social activities, mobility limitations, and lack of independent and/or sufficient own/household income—has been a coercive factor in many women's church involvement, women are also aware of their collective power as church-goers, knowledgeable of the intricacies of community norms. In the collective space of the church, under the watchful and judging gaze of the public eye, women participate, organize, share, and advise. As grassroots organizers who regularly interact with women farmworkers, Wendy Pekeur (2022) and Carmen Louw (2022) argue that if the same individual energy and collective effort that women give to their churches could (also) be channeled toward activities and collectives that also support their empowerment and develop their individual agency, more of these women may lead lives that better align with what they truly value rather than what they perceive or have been socialized to believe as 'good'.

While wage work is a response to a practical need for most women I interviewed, it can also be(come) a means for more empowerment needs, especially with external interventions from the state and/or grassroots organizations (Moses, 1989; WFP, 2020; White, 2010). But women in Western Cape face a number of hurdles complicating their access to, and achievement of, practical and empowerment needs. That most on-farm women continue to be denied permanent roles reflects ingrained perceptions that have proven difficult to undo practically, not the least due to historically-rooted and gendered views that women are only supplemental earners to the men who are the main 'breadwinners' (Louw et al., 2021; White, 2010). For some on-farm women, their status as temporary and/or seasonal workers on the farm limit them from seeking work with

contractors to reserve the availability of their on-farm labor (WFP, 2020; Claasen & Lemke, 2019). For others, it also suggested deep-seated, socially-constructed notions around gender, race, and class (Louw et al., 2021; Louw, 2022; du Toit, 2022). Until women's income-generating activities can serve their broader empowerment needs, such as making them financially independent from men and in better positions to leave abusive and violent relationships, work will continue to be mostly a survival mechanism rather than also an empowerment channel. The type of agency observed in parts of this thesis is one where women are pursuing what they value and/or have reason to value within constrained contexts, allowing them to meet some of their practical needs but where their empowerment needs are largely neglected.

For South African women farmworkers with access to statutory services like child-support grants, old-age pensions, Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), and government-subsidized housing (although these can take years to materialize, if they do at all), "the state as a source of equity for women" (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003, p. 102) should not be overlooked, although the case studies show that the extent of its equalizing power in intrahousehold income management is highly debatable, given both material and social dimensions. This issue deserves more attention than my thesis allows. What this thesis does reveal is that women's behaviors and choices are shaped by a complex interplay between several broad dimensions: their own ideas about what they can/should do; what their community norms, expectations, and/or traditions dictate; and the personal material circumstances they are in. Structural violence permeates this interplay and limits these women's agency. There is much scope here to study women farmworkers'

(non)adherence to social norms and expectations.[441] The ways individuals navigate these informal structures, in open and/or covert forms of defiance and/or adherence, widens how agency can be conceptualized. How individual women navigate these dimensions demonstrate limits to their agency, but they also importantly present ways that women strategize within such limits—set by traditions and personal circumstances—to maximize their agency, albeit circumscribed.

Building the foundations for women farmworkers' agency *and* empowerment will require addressing economic and social inequality in Western Cape and South Africa. The dual issues of massive structural violence and unemployment need to be addressed in conjunction with more political work around social inequality, such as the grassroots and collective approach taken by the now-defunct Sikhula Sonke trade union, to improve: gender relations, employer-employee relations, and relations between workers of different races (White, 2010, p. 677). The material deprivations, particularly around food security,[442] that most farmworkers face highlights the necessity for deeper agrarian transformation around wages, land reform, and importantly accessibility and affordability of food (Claasen & Lemke, 2019; Devereux & Tavener-Smith, 2019; Louw et al., 2021). Furthermore, while my research occurred before the Coronavirus pandemic began, the pervasive precarity that defines farmworkers' lives and livelihoods was heightened during and since the pandemic and lockdowns, with many occupational health and safety regulations violated and over 20, 000 jobs lost (Luig, 2021). Social support that was

[441] As I have noted previously (see section 3.5), response bias likely underplayed socio-cultural influences on women's behaviors.

[442] Those who work for the minimum wage are supposed to earn about 800 rands per week, which is one third of the living wage for a household (Luig, 2021).

implemented by the government to temporarily mitigate people's loss of employment incomes, such as food parcels and special grants, were not accessible to most farmworkers living on farms who could neither leave the farms due to transport limitations nor could be reached due to legal access issues (Louw et al., 2021). These underscore key deprivations farmworkers face as well as constraints on their individual agency.

Women's bodies and behaviors have long carried meanings that extend beyond their biological structure into the realm of morality. Gender is 'performative' (Butler, 2004), and women's bodies are constituted and regulated by mechanisms of discrimination that subordinates them. This injustice is inherent in certain social practices and discourses that influence gender relations among farmworkers. Within their communities, women's propriety is evaluated by labeling individual behaviors as 'good' or 'not good'; the same 'improper' behaviors from men however, remarks former farmworker and activist Wendy Pekeur, go largely tolerated. The pursuit of the 'exemplar' by many women respondents is defined and normal(ized) within these traditional and marginalized communities, but there is much scope for further research on agency interrogating how women are/become "exemplars of an alternative 'solution' to cope with and move beyond social and economic despair" (Akerstedt, 2020, p. 47). The 'good woman' as a construct of the self can emphasize certain moral dimensions that underpin women's individual agency. While the interviews suggest that the exemplar's capacity to motivate some women's agency cannot be denied, it also establishes their morality and in so doing becomes a process and rhetoric that controls the boundaries of women's behaviors. Deeper understanding of the 'good woman' and other exemplars, in the context of social norms and expectations, is essential to advancing research on farmworker/rural communities in Western Cape and elsewhere.

Without a clearer understanding of the social perceptions that women have, it is difficult to distinguish the motivations they have for valuing certain choices, hence limiting our understanding of their agency.

Further research could also investigate where women farmworkers' motivations lie along SDT's continuum of internalization.[443] This will be especially helpful to understanding a broader range of constraints, particularly gendered notions impacting what individuals perceive as appropriate and inappropriate, that impact women's agency in addition to the limited opportunities they have. As Amartya Sen duly notes, "there is much evidence in history that acute inequalities often survive precisely by making allies out of the deprived" (Sen, 1990a, p. 126). In a context of both competing and allied discourses, both individual values and social expectations are deeply embedded in inextricable ways in people's daily lives through their functionings and their choices. Agency therefore does not suggest the absence of constraints, but rather the knowledge that purposeful action can and does occur despite constraints.

[443] This will be crucial to providing a clearer view of which choices women make out of fear of punishment and/or to gain reward (external motivation), to avoid guilt and/or to gain approval (introjected motivation), and those they make because they personally value the behaviors (identified motivation) and have evaluated them to align with their own/other values (integrated motivation).

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Appendix A. Interview and Focus Group Schedules

1. Individual In-Depth interviews (Phase 1)

(Questions highlighted in blue were always asked; questions highlighted in green were asked at least half the time; and unhighlighted questions were asked depending on time availability, interviewee openness, and/or relevance to interviewee's previous answers)

LIFE STAGE/QUESTIONS

A. **Topics:** General understanding of empowerment (dimensions); Gender roles/norms; Mobility

Childhood and adolescence

When were you born?

Where did you grow up as a child?

What was your mother like, as you were growing up? What kinds of work did she do?

What was your father like, as you were growing up? What kinds of work did he do?

How would you describe yourself as a child?

[Optional questions in italics to reduce time if needed]

What were some particularities in how you were raised because you were a girl/boy, if any? Examples?

What were some things you could/could not do because you were a girl/boy? How did you feel about that?

Where were some places you could/could not go (by yourself or accompanied by others) because you were a girl/boy? How did you feel about that?

What did you want to be or do when you grew up? Did you have someone you wanted to become like, and why?

Did you receive any formal education? If so, what kinds of school did you go to? Were you a good student? What did you like/not like about school?

How far did you go in school (level of schooling completed), and why?

What dreams and goals did you have for your life when your schooling ended?

In your opinion, when did you become an "adult"? What happened then?

B. Topics: General understanding of empowerment (dimensions); Gender roles/norms; Mobility; Decision-making related to income-earning, children, health, care and foods; Household harmony/ intra-HH dynamics; Response to shocks; Self-efficacy; Group participation

Adulthood

Who do you live with now?

(if ever married) How did you meet your spouse/partner? What did you like about him/her?

(if ever married) When did you get married? How did you feel getting married?

How many children did you want to have? Did you and your spouse/partner talk about having children, and why?

How many children do you have? When were they born?

How do you feel about raising your children? What was/is the best part, and why? The hardest part, and why?

Do you raise your girl/boy children differently? If so, how? Why?

In your opinion, which are the most important decisions to be made for ensuring your children have a good future (*health, education, food, etc.)? How much influence to do you have in making those decisions? What future do you wish for your children?
How is your relationship with your spouse/partner? How does he/she treat you? Any examples (eg. how often you both sit and talk)? How does that make you feel?
How are decisions usually made in your household (related to the household, yourself, your spouse/partner, your children, etc.)? What are some decisions you make on your own? What are some decisions you make together with your spouse/partner? How do you feel about how decisions are made in your household? Would you like to have more/less influence on making the decisions, and why (lottery vignette given as alternative or follow-up to this question sometimes)? What is keeping you from having more/less influence on making the decisions? (***Probe for decisions related to income-generating work/activities, use of income, what foods to purchase, foods to prepare, foods you can eat, foods children can eat, your health, children's health, childcare, children's education, extended family support, etc***.)
In the past five years, have there been changes on how decisions are made in your household? What caused those changes? On what topics have the decision-making changed?
In the past five years, what were the biggest disagreements you have had with your spouse/partner? What happened as a result? How were they resolved?
In the past five years, has your relationship with your spouse/partner changed? If so, how? Has your relationship with other household members changed? If so, how?
In the past five years, what are the most difficult things that have happened to you? How did you deal with them?
Please tell me about any work you do for income. What do you like or not like about it? How is your income used?
Do you belong to any groups inside or outside your community, and why? How do you participate in these groups? What are some benefits to participating in these groups? What are some difficulties/challenges to participating in these groups?
What are some things you can/cannot do because you are a woman/man? Are there certain women/men who can do/not do those things? Why? How do you feel about that?
FOR WOMEN: Are there any things you would like to do, but cannot because you are a woman? Why? Under what conditions could you do those things? What would happen if you did those things?
FOR WOMEN: Are there any places you would like to go (alone), but cannot because you are a woman? Why? How far away from home is that? Under what conditions could you go to those places? What would happen if you went to those places?

C. Topics: Local definition of empowerment; Household harmony/ intra-HH dynamics; Group leadership

The Present/Self
How would you describe yourself as a person today *(nowadays, not necessarily this particular day)*?
How are you treated in your community, and why? Do you feel that you have influence in your community, and why? Would you like to have more influence in your community, and why/why not? What would help you to have more influence in your community?

What do you think are the "turning points" (most influential experiences) that have shaped you as a person have been in your life? What were you like before then?
How would you describe a woman in your community who is able to make important decisions in her life and to put those into action? OR how would you describe a woman who you admire?
Do you consider yourself like that, and why or why not?
Do you consider yourself more/less empowered than other women/men in your community, and why?
Have your views of your own ability to make important decisions changed over time? If so, what caused those changes? (***Probe also for any influence of policies, government and/or local projects***)
Are there some things in your life now (something you have or are doing or circumstances) that help you feel more empowered?
What are some things or circumstances that would make you more empowered, if you had them?

D. Topic: Aspirations; Life satisfaction

The Future/Self
What are your concerns for the future?
How do you see yourself in the future, and why?
What do you look forward to (hope for) for yourself? For your children (or younger generation)?
What would make your life better?

2. Individual In-Depth Interviews (Phase 2)

Note: Many of the questions here were shortened from the original WEAI questionnaire (see previous section). Questions marked by an asterisk (*) sought to understand if/how the actions/choices in question could reflect interdependent practices. Using the methodology of Mackie, Moneti, Shakya, & Denny (2015), who study social norms, the questions I asked about interviewees' own beliefs and what one thinks others believe sought to identify interdependencies among individuals' behaviors. Does the individual's behavior reflect own belief and/or what she thinks others believe/do? Does the individual's behavior reflect what she thinks others approve/disapprove of? The main research interest is to find if a social expectation/s underlies particular actions/choices, and what that expectation is/seems to be.

LIFE STAGE/QUESTIONS

B. **Topics:** General understanding of background to feed into empowerment (dimensions);

Childhood and adolescence

When were you born?
Where did you grow up as a child?
What kind/s of work did your mother do when you were growing up?
What kind/s of work did your father do when you were growing up?
How would you describe yourself as a child?
How far did you go in school (level of schooling completed), and why?
What did you want to be or do when you grew up? Did you have someone you wanted to become like, and why?
In your opinion, when did you become an "adult"? What happened then?

C. Topics: General understanding of empowerment (dimensions); Gender roles/norms; Mobility; Household harmony/ intra-HH dynamics; Decision-making related to income-expenditure and income-earning; Self-efficacy;

Adulthood

Who do you live with now?
(If ever married) How did you meet your spouse/partner? What did you like about him/her?
(If ever married) When did you get married? How did you feel about getting married?
How many children do you have? How old are they? How many children did you want to have?
What was/is the best part of raising children, and why? The hardest part, and why?
Do you raise your girl/boy children differently? If so, how? Why?
Are you dealing (or have you recently dealt) with difficult things that have happened to you? How did you deal with them?

Gender-Constraints

Are there any things you would like to do, but cannot because you are a woman? Why? For what reason would you do those things? What would happen if you did those things?
Are there any places you would like to go (alone), but cannot because you are a woman? Why? How far away from home is that? For what reason would you go to those places? What would happen if you went to those places?

Intra-household dynamics

How is your relationship with your spouse/partner? How does he/she treat you? Any examples (eg. how often you both sit and talk)? How does that make you feel?

Has your relationship with your spouse/partner changed over time (Was it different before)? If so, how? (If relevant: Has your relationship with other household members changed? If so, how?)

When you have disagreements with your husband, what are they usually about? How are they resolved?

(If children are over 18) How is your relationship with your older children? How do they treat you?

Income Decisions

Who in your household works for wages? How is this wage received (cash, bank transfer) and in what form is it stored (cash, bank account)?

How much does each one contribute to household expenses?

How is your income used (if she's currently not working, ask about when she was working also)? Who else has control over how income is used? Would you prefer it to be different? (Probe for how wages are managed: is it pooled, independently managed, etc.)

What are some spending decisions you make on your own? What are some spending decisions you make together with your spouse/partner? Was this always the same or have there been changes? What caused those changes? (On what topics have the decision-making changed?)

*How do you feel about how spending decisions are made in your household?

*Do you think others in your community would approve of how your household makes spending decisions?

*What is the 'normal'/usual way that households in your community make decisions about income use (*Probing what she thinks others value/believe and do*)?

*What is different about those who do not act this way (e.g., woman makes some decisions separately)? Would people in the community look at a woman differently (i.e. dis*approve of her*) if she did not act the 'normal' way?

Would you like to have more/less influence on making spending decisions? Why? Is anything/anyone keeping you from having more/less influence on making the decisions (or in the way you prefer)? (*Probe for decisions related to income-generating work/activities, use of income, what foods to purchase, foods to prepare, foods you can eat, foods children can eat, your health, children's health, child care, children's education, extended family support, etc*.)

Wage Work and Income

Please tell me about any work you do for income. What do you like or not like about it (own beliefs)?

*How did you find this job? What made you choose to do this particular job? (Probe for influences like relative, husband, distance, etc.)

*Do others in the community respect this job? What jobs are more respected and less respected?

What jobs are women in your community doing for income? (List examples) What is the most common job in your opinion?

*What jobs do others in the community think is 'good' for women; What jobs do others think is 'not good'?

*Do other women in your community value/respect a woman who works?
*If you had a choice to work or not to work, what would you choose? Why? (Probe for what she values about work (or no work); what she thinks others value about work (or no work)) –If she answers *to work*, ask: What is the ideal job for you (your dream job)? Why? (Describe it)

D. Topics: Local definition of empowerment; community dynamics; group participation; group/female leadership; gender roles/norms; agency

The Present/Self and Finding Reference Group

Do you belong to any groups inside or outside your community? How do you participate in these groups? What are some benefits to participating in these groups? What are some difficulties/challenges to participating in these groups?
*How are you treated in this community (where you live), and why? Do you feel that you have influence/power in your community, and why?
*Who (what kind of woman) has influence/power in your community?
Would you like to have more influence in your community, and why/why not? If yes: What would help you to have more influence in your community?
*What kind of woman/women do you admire? (Describe her)

- Do you consider yourself like that? Why or why not?
- Would others in your community approve of such a woman?

*What kind of woman/women do people in your community admire? (Describe her)

- Do you consider yourself like that? Why or why not? (If not, probe for a different reference group that she maybe feels more closely associated to, like her village of origin, etc.)

Sense of Agency

Do you think your ability to make important decisions about your life changed over time? If so, why did it change and what actually changed? (**Probe also for any influence of policies, government and/or local projects*)
What are some things or circumstances that if you had them, you would feel more in control of your life and decisions?

E. Topic: Aspirations; Life satisfaction

The Future/Self

What are your concerns for the future?
How do you see yourself in the future, and why?
What do you look forward to (hope for) for yourself? For your children (or younger generation)?
What would make your life better?

3. Focus Group Discussions (Question Guide)

Topic: General Understanding of Empowerment

Introduction	Can you tell me a bit about women in your community? What do most women do here? (allow free listing; if only domestic tasks are listed, ask "Do any women work for income, or work outside the house?"
Role model of women and men	What types of women are admired in your village/community? - Who is considered a good woman and why? What types of women are admired, have high status/reputation and why? By men, and by women? What types of men are admired in your village/community? - Who is considered a good man and why? What types of men are admired, have high status/reputation and why? By men, and by women?
Local definitions of empowerment	How would you describe a woman in your community who is able to make important decisions in her life and to put those into action? - What is this woman like? What is her life like? - How is this different than a man?
Local perceptions of empowered men and women	Are there many women like that in your community? Why/why not? How are these women regarded: By other women? By other men? - What do you think a husband would think if his wife was like this? - Is it harder or easier for women to make important decisions and act upon them at different points in their lives (young, old, married,etc.)?
Community members' perceptions of their own empowerment change over time (optional)	Do you think the number of empowered women has changed since apartheid ended? Why or why not?

Topic: Specific Dimensions of Empowerment

A. Mobility	- What kinds of places can women from your community go by themselves? - Are there places women would like to go but cannot? (1) Is this due to norms/cultural traditions regarding women's mobility or because women do not feel safe physically (probe if other reasons)? - Are there place they can go only if they are accompanied? - Are there places where a woman can go but must ask for permission from her husband (if she has one) or a family member?

	- Does it make a difference if a woman is single (unmarried, separated, widowed) or married? Or if she has children? What about if her husband is away? - Does it make a difference if a woman is young or old? - Do women travel more or less than in the past [since apartheid]? - What situations within the community and beyond might be causing this change?
B. Decision making related to labor and household reproduction	• Which labor/work decisions do men and women make together, if any? - When men and women in a household make a decision about work (wage labor), how much influence does each person have and who has the final say? • What are the most common topics of disagreement? How is disagreement resolved? Are there any decisions related to work that women make alone? Which ones? - Are there any that men make alone? Which ones? • Why are certain decisions over work made together or alone? • Do you think that the ways work decisions are typically made are good or would you like to see changes? What changes, and Why? - Have the ways women and men make decisions about work changed in your community since apartheid ended?
C. Decision-making related to income	• How are decisions about expenses made in your houses? • Do men and women make decisions over the use of income together? Whose income? • What does it mean to make decisions together? How much influence does each person have and does any one person have the final say? What are the common sources of disagreement, and how are they resolved? • Do you think the ways decisions over income are made in your houses/community are good or would you like to see these change? Why?

Appendix B. Interview and Focus Group Lists

1. Focus Groups

Flora Farm, Paarl region, July 11, 2018 – women's FGD.
Poppy Rose Farm, Paarl region, July 11, 2018 – women's FGD.
Elderberry Farm, Stellenbosch area, July 15, 2018 – men's FGD.
Groot Constantia, Constantia area, July 28, 2018 – men's FGD.
Butterfly Farm, Paarl region, July 28, 2018 – women's FGD.

2. Key Informant Interviews

Johan (pseudonym used; labor contractor in Western Cape) – interviewed in person Aug. 6, 2018.
Carmen Louw (co-director of WFP) – interviewed by phone Nov. 25, 2022.
Dr. Andries du Toit (University of Western Cape professor, well-known researcher on farmworkers in Western Cape, and director of PLAAS) – interviewed by phone Nov. 29, 2022.
Wendy Pekeur (former general secretary of Sikhula Sonke, a social movement and trade union promoting the rights and interests of women farmworkers in Western Cape; current activist) – interviewed by phone Dec. 1, 2022.
Mercia Andrews (national director of the TCOE) – interviewed by phone Dec. 7, 2022.

3. Individual In-Depth Interviews

Sandy, Flora Farm – July 12, 2018
Mary, Flora Farm – July 12, 2018
Antoine, Elderberry Farm – July 15, 2018
Jacob, Elderberry Farm – July 15, 2018
Lisbet, Poppy Rose Farm – July 18, 2018
Emma, Poppy Rose Farm – July 18, 2018
Ruth, Groot Constantia – July 21, 2018
Lydia, Groot Constantia – July 21, 2018
Elsa, Groot Constantia – July 21, 2018
Jill, Groot Constantia – July 21, 2018
Zelda, Groot Constantia – July 21, 2018
Hailey, Butterfly Farm – July 28, 2018
Maggie, Nkqubela – August 4, 2018
Cecilia, Nkqubela – August 4, 2018
Camilla, Nkqubela – August 4, 2018
Winnie, Nkqubela – August 5, 2018
Maritaba, Nkqubela – August 5, 2018
Puleng, Nkqubela – August 5, 2018
Mike, Wellington area – August 30, 2018
Jake, Wellington area – August 30, 2018
Coleen, Wellington (Mbekwini resident) – September 9, 2018
Sandile, Wellington (Mbekwini resident) – September 9, 2018
Lisa, Wellington (Mbekwini resident) – September 9, 2018
Merlin, Wellington (Mbekwini resident) – September 9, 2018

Obvious, Wellington (Mbekwini resident) – September 9, 2018
Sharon, Wellington (Mbekwini resident) – September 9, 2018
Emma, Wellington (Mbekwini resident) – September 9, 2018
Nyembesi, Wellington (Mbekwini resident) – September 9, 2018
Mollen, Wellington (Mbekwini resident) – September 9, 2018
Shalom, Wellington (Mbekwini resident) – September 9, 2018
Annesa, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Ruro, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Sharon, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Pretty, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Sithabile, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Cynthia, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Alma, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Immaculate, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Sara, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Patience, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Perpetual, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Loina, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Juliet, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Cher, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Faith, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Phillis, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Precious, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Shamiso, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Sibusisiwe, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Tarisai, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 8, 2019
Alma, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Immaculate, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Jane, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Rapunzel, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Melody, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Chippo, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Sandra, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Ester, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Trish, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Felistas, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Happimori, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Average, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Miriam, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Sibongile, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Talent, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Yolanda, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Polite, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Primadona, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Privilege, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019
Tabetha, Mitchel's Plain (Mbekwini resident) – June 9, 2019

Appendix C. Qualitative Coding Example

Table 7 below follows Gallicano's (2013) methodology of using Charmaz's (2006) guidelines (see section 3.1 for an explanation) and provides a brief illustration of how I coded the data for one of the individual interview questions (asked in both Phase 1 and Phase 2) that asked: "what kind of woman/women do you admire".

Table 7 – Open, Axial, and Selective Code Example

Open Codes	*Axial Codes*	*Selective Code*
She is married; takes care of her home; takes care of her family; pays attention to what husband says; looks after her children well; elderly; widow; wife of a pastor; husband has status in community; husband has lot of money; stands by her husband	Married woman	A good woman
She works to support her family; works to support herself (if unmarried); she doesn't rely on others; she is able to pay for her own without being a burden; she is willing to do any job to support herself and her family; does not beg; does not owe people	Hard-working	
Have to dress like a respectable woman; people must be comfortable speaking to her and ask her for advice; goes to church; looks like a lady; does not stay out late at night (if unmarried); takes care of her children; she helps others in her community; does not steal; does not drink too much; does not abuse her family and neighbors; does not have a foul mouth; does not carry stories (gossip); has her own house	Respectable	

Appendix D. Four Expressions of Power

Table 8 – The Four Expressions of Power

Power over – control over personal decisions (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007) and resources like income (Batliwala and Pittman 2010); resisting manipulation (Samman and Santos 2009); negotiation (visible power over) and deception (hidden power over) (Van Eerdewijk et al 2017)	*Power to* – choice, such as over household decision-making and domain-specific autonomy (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007); ability to create new opportunities, to pursue new possibilities (Samman and Santos 2009)
Power with – act as part of a group (Samman and Santos 2009); collaboration (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002; 2007); collective action (Oxaal and Baden 1997)	*Power within* – self-respect, self-esteem (Samman and Santos 2009); self-consciousness (Rowlands 1997)

Appendix E. Research Site Descriptions

The sites are listed in chronological order of my first visit to them. Sites with an * (asterisk) next to their name are real names, not pseudonyms.

1. **Flora Farm**

Flora Farm is situated in the Paarl region of Western Cape and grows mainly peaches and wine grapes. It is a short (50 meter) distance between the farmworkers' houses and the nearest asphalted main road, with a thick line of trees blocking the two sides from view. A small community of agricultural workers and their families reside on a patch of land where there are ten one- and two-bedroom brick houses lined to face each other with a mud lane separating the two lines. While each house was meant to house only one nuclear family, some houses have extended families and others have two or more unrelated nuclear and extended families. The living situation is severely cramped and cold in the winter. The flooring inside the houses is mixed, with some sections uneven with patches of earth and some sections smoothly cemented. There is running water, though of dubious quality, and electricity is available in every house but could only be bought at what workers deemed exorbitant prices from the farm owner. Women usually stayed in their houses or in the communal area outside the houses. Those who work on the farm only found employment 'during season', like harvest time, and only as temporary workers. Not everyone who resides in the farmworker houses works on Flora Farm; some adult children or partners of permanent workers hold jobs in the neighboring town or farms.

2. **Poppy Rose Farm**

Poppy Rose Farm is situated in the Paarl region of Western Cape, having rows upon endless rows of vineyards and some scattered sheep. Like so many of the vineyards and fruit farms in Western Cape, my first view of Poppy Rose was of a picturesque scene of natural beauty and tranquility. That view would slowly change the more I moved toward the settlement area of the farm. The place where I had to meet some of the women farm residents for a focus group interview was located closer to their farm dwellings, about one kilometer from the nearest asphalted road. In a non-SUV hatch car, it was a rough five-minute ride (or ten minutes if it was raining, like it did when I visited) on gravel paths from the main road to the farm gate. These gravel paths also formed interconnected routes among a few other farms that were interspersed over dozens of square kilometers of farmland belonging to members of the same farmer family. I could not physically visit workers' houses there as the farmer had locked the gate leading to the workers' residences on the farm. This ensured that anyone who walked through the gates would be noticed by the farm manager. I could only observe the decrepit-looking brick houses from a distance. Even the residents I interviewed said they were not allowed to bring in any vehicles through the gate. When residents had to travel somewhere, they needed to walk in order to reach the nearest asphalt road and hail a taxi. No taxi would even venture as far as I had into the farm. The first instinct of my focus group participants was to describe their living conditions to me. They complained about having to buy electricity at exorbitant prices from the farmer. Some had running water in their homes, but of dubious quality, while most others would fetch water from taps placed in a communal space by the residences. They needed to travel by *kumbi* every weekend to the nearest local town in order to buy household items like groceries. *Kumbi* fares were heavy for them, running

at 20 Rands per person. Therefore, if someone for instance ran out of bread in the middle of the week, this usually meant she and her family would have to wait till the weekend to buy bread again or find someone who was going to town before the weekend to purchase the bread for them. They described having appliances as varied as toasters, fridges, washing machines, and stoves. Those who had washing machines said they did not want to use the murky water from the household taps and would carry up to eight buckets of water to wash one load of clothes in the machine. All women residents I interviewed had been temporary or permanent workers on the farm but had been laid off two years ago (in 2015) when new management took control. Many of these women, some of whom had been farmworkers since apartheid, were working at other jobs such as domestics in private homes while most were unemployed. Although these women had lived and worked on this farm for many years before being laid off, their current claim to their homes was through a husband, partner, or son who was still a permanent worker on the farm.

3. Elderberry Farm

Elderberry Farm is located in Stellenbosch, a region known to be the source of many famous exported wines and also home to some of the richest people in South Africa. This particular farm grows wine grapes over lush hills where there are also bike trails for individuals and families to use for a fee. It has an on-site restaurant that both locals and tourists rave about. The workers' residences are about 100 meters from the main road but are easily reachable when entering the publicly-accessible areas of the farm itself. There are about a dozen worker houses, all built of concrete with some having extensions that were added as particular families grew. I also saw two households had personal cars parked in make-shift garages. Residents receive free electricity, running water in their homes, and some even have indoor toilets. All permanent and temporary women workers who used to work here had been laid off a year before the interviews. The women residing on the farm are either unemployed or have jobs off the farm. Only a handful of men residing on site still work as permanent workers on the farm. Most men and women have taken jobs off the farm, often at neighboring farms as seasonal or (quasi) permanent workers[446]. Some households have no member working for Elderberry Farm, and while they report receiving legal notices and threats of evictions, they have also been exploiting their union membership to halt and delay evictions based on legal claims for prior length of tenure.[447]

4. Groot Constantia*

Groot Constantia, which claims to be the oldest surviving wine estate in South Africa, is one of the most beautiful provincial farms I visited in Cape Town. It is also very touristy,

[446] These men told me they have a contract with the farm management at the farm(s) they work at but do not have employer-provided housing facility. They work during the week (or on weekend when called), like a permanent job requires without the housing benefit that has normally been attached to permanent farm labor.

[447] The union has advised these workers in this instance to not leave their homes. The union is providing legal support, in the form of advice and attorneys, to help these workers get a kind of retirement package, contingent upon lifetime of service, from the farmer or farm management.

boasting space for wine tastings, event facilities, and accommodations for visitors. I visited the farm twice, first to conduct individual interviews with on-farm women workers, and second to conduct a focus group discussion with men farmworkers. The farm extends over rolling hills, and tarred roads make it easy to access various locations within the farm by car. The on-farm workers I interviewed all live on site in concrete houses provided to them by the estate. These houses have running water, electricity, indoor sanitation, and personal small yards. There are also security cameras placed by the farm management near the workers' residences. The first time I visited Groot Constantia was on a Saturday, and I noticed some residents were having a barbeque by the front yard of a house. This scene gave me a sense that life on this farm for resident workers was more free than on any other farm I had visited thus far (except for Elderberry Farm, where I noticed resident workers enjoyed a similar lifestyle). The second time I visited Groot Constantia was on a Sunday, the week after my first visit, and it was much quieter by the workers' houses. When I asked the men why it was quieter than last Saturday, one of them told me that many people were "hung-over" from drinking the previous night, and some women had gone to the supermarket in town for grocery shopping. There were local and foreign visitors at the wine-tasting activities at the cellars all throughout the day both times I visited the estate. The workers' accommodations can be seen in the distance when driving on the primary road toward the main reception within the estate, but to reach these houses one has to drive off the asphalted road and onto dirt lanes for several meters.

5. Butterfly Farm

Butterfly Farm is also in Paarl, reachable via gravel road through vineyards, and about a two-minute drive from an asphalted road. There are only six resident houses on the farm. One house is made of concrete and looks to be the oldest, with two bedrooms and a kitchen. The rest of the houses look relatively recent and resembled temporary structures like those often erected on construction sites. These houses are made of wooden planks, with one bedroom and kitchen each. All have roofs made of sheets of corrugated iron. The workers' residential area initially look like a scene from a peaceful countryside painting, surrounded by lush greenery and a serene atmosphere. The sight of portable toilets near the houses however brings home the stench of poverty and precarity, depicting a difficult interplay of the region's natural beauty and human insecurity for these on-farm workers.

6. Nkqubela*

Nkqubela is an informal settlement in Robertson, an area known as the *land of wine and roses*, and is situated about 158 kilometers from central Cape Town. It is the main hub for agricultural laborers in Robertson area farms and home to local South Africans as well as ethnic migrant communities such as Sothos (from Lesotho), Zimbabweans, and Mozambicans. My first view of it was preceded by the acrid smell of chemicals and sewage. From the driver's seat in the car I drove, I saw a town sprawled over a hilly but wide expanse of land. The main road I drove on literally cut through the area's racial lines, with Nkqubela—and mostly Black residents—on one side of the road and Robertson town—with overwhelmingly White residents—on the other side, facing the settlement. While the roads in Robertson, where I stayed in a guest house for several nights, are well laid-out and mostly smooth, the roads leading into Nkqubela are mostly patchy and uneven. Nkqubela itself is a sprawling settlement with, to my initial surprise or naivete, distinct socio-economic differences in how its residents lived. In addition to boasting

facilities like schools, churches, and even a hospital, the residential housing is mixed, with some concrete-made houses, a sign of wealth for some, and a majority of the square-shaped dwellings made of corrugated metal, characteristic of many South African informal settlements. Many labor contractors and farmers draw their agricultural workers from Nkqubela, and many of those workers—working as casual laborers, without permanent contracts—are migrants from neighboring countries and provinces. Being situated over a hilly area meant that moving deeper into the township also brought me higher up. I had to reluctantly park my rented car in a low-lying area, by the house of my translator's friend, and continue on foot, while I secretly prayed that nobody would steal the vehicle. The houses at the low edges of Nkqubela tend to look in better condition that those higher up, accessible via asphalted—though usually decrepit—roads and lanes. Many small shops line these lanes, and the low areas are also where it is possible to roam in a car and safest to visit as a tourist or non-Black person. The interviews I conducted in Nkqubela occurred with individuals who live in the middle-lying areas and a few from the high-lying areas. As I walked (and sometimes hiked) higher up, the dwellings looked simpler and more homogeneous. The smells got more pungent, and murky pools of water along with barking unleashed dogs needed to be avoided when walking along the dirt lanes. A few *shebeens* creep up here and there, with men hanging out inside and outside, and the sound of local music coming from within. There were also a few *braai* stands, set up for grilling meats over open fires, outside homes selling local delicacies like grilled chicken feet. The dwellings of those we visited and interviewed varied in contents. Those that were higher up the hills tended to be more basic, often having only a mattress and blankets propped up on cardboard boxes with a few extras such as a chair and makeshift table, and usually without electricity. Dwellings that had electricity in the middle-lying areas were also more packed with appliances such as a fridge, kettle, and TV. All dwellings used some form of outdoor toilets, and many people who lived uphill went to the top of the hills to relieve themselves in the bushes.

7. Wellington* (Mbekwini residents)

Wellington is a rural town about an hour's drive from Cape Town city center. Despite being located amidst large farms, the town is easily reached via national highways and roads. My first impression of Wellington was its small size and racially homogenous population of mostly Afrikaners, similar to Robertson town just outside Nkqubela. The off-farm workers I interviewed there hailed from Mbekwini, a settlement on the outskirts of Wellington. I did not enter Mbekwini as my assistant warned me that it would be risky for me given that even he, as a resident, did not feel safe there.

8. Mitchel's Plain* (Mbekwini residents)

All the interviews in Phase 2 were conducted in the offices of an NGO called Mosaic in Mitchel's Plain. This NGO works to support battered women and victims of domestic violence in Cape Town and surrounding towns by providing advice, trauma support, and help in acquiring government assistance. Mitchel's Plain is one of the largest and notorious suburbs in the Cape Flats area of Cape Town. Primarily a designated area for Colored people during apartheid, it is now slightly more diverse. The inside of the facility was spacious, with a kitchen from which respondents received lunch I had arranged for on each day, bathrooms, and several rooms that served as interview offices for me and David. When not being interviewed, participants chose to spend their day either in the inside

lounge or the sunny inner courtyard while chatting to each other. It was interesting to see that participants had come well-dressed (some as if going to a wedding party) to the interview site in Mitchel's Plain. Their excitement was obvious each day when they arrived and I imagined (also based on what Mike told me) continued when they would recount their day in Cape Town to their friends and family upon returning to Mbekwini.