

Wepener, C & Cilliers, J
University of Stellenbosch

Research on Liturgy and the Generation of Social Capital in Contexts of Poverty in South Africa

A Theoretical Departure¹

ABSTRACT

This specific contribution comes from the fields of Liturgy and Homiletics. By means of participatory action research ritual data were collected in several congregations. The data will later be analysed and interpreted by means of ritual criticism. In this article the theoretical foundation is being laid, and the specific way in which ritual criticism will be conducted is explained. This means that the concepts social capital and poverty will firstly be explored. Thereafter the so-called dimensions, processes and qualities of ritual are presented and discussed in the light of the concepts poverty and social capital. The hypothesis with which this research works, is that certain dimensions of rituals are 'better' or 'more adequate' with regards to the generation of social capital in contexts of poverty than other dimensions, and that depending on the context, some dimensions may even be counter productive in this regard.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article forms a part of a bigger NRF-research project in the Paarl-area, South Africa. This specific contribution comes from the fields of Liturgy and Homiletics. By means of participatory action research ritual data were collected in several congregations². The data will later be analysed and interpreted by means of ritual criticism³. In this article the theoretical foundation is being laid, and the specific way in which ritual criticism will be conducted is explained. This means that the concepts social capital and poverty will firstly be explored, specifically with regards to the relation between the two concepts, and Ammerman's⁴ use of the concept social capital within congregational studies. Thereafter the so-called dimensions, processes and qualities of ritual are presented and discussed in the light of the concepts poverty and social capital. The hypothesis with which this research works, is

1 This material is based upon work supported by the National Research Foundation under Grant number 2054070. Any opinion, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and therefore the NRF does not accept any liability in regard thereto.

2 For the specific application of PAR to liturgical research as used in this study, Cf Cas Wepener, *Researching Rituals. On the use of Participatory Action Research within liturgical studies*, (forthcoming) 2005. The ritual data was collected during 2004/5, making use of, amongst others, thick descriptions, focus group activities and interviews.

3 Cf Ronald Grimes, *Ritual Criticism. Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory*, Columbia (University of South Carolina Press) 1990.

4 Cf Nancy Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, New Brunswick/ New Jersey/ London (Rutgers University Press) 1999, 362.

that certain dimensions of rituals are ‘better’ or ‘more adequate’ with regards to the generation of social capital in contexts of poverty than other dimensions, and that depending on the context, some dimensions may even be counter productive in this regard. This hypothesis is then discussed in the light of the connection between poverty, social capital and certain dimensions of rituals. Thereafter the influence of different contexts in relation to the functioning of rituals is also explored. Lastly the way in which this insight will be applied to the collected and selected ritual data is explained.

2. TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital can be defined in numerous ways. Even a brief overview of literature in this regard reveals a rich tapestry of nuances and perspectives. It has been called the degree to which a community or society collaborates (through such mechanisms as networks, shared trust, norms and values) to achieve mutual benefits, or: the value of social networks (associated with trust, reciprocity, information and cooperation) that people can draw on to solve problems, or: the attitude, spirit and willingness of people to engage in collective, civic activities, or: skills and infrastructure that aid in social progress, or: a composite measure which reflects both the breadth and depth of civic community as well as the public’s participation in political life, or: the degree of social cohesion which exists in communities, etcetera⁵.

Some commentators have also pointed out that, whatever the definition of social capital might be, the dimension of “bonding” (the set of horizontal associations between people, consisting of social networks and associated norms) must be complemented by a vertical component, namely “bridging”, that is ties that transcend various social divides (e.g. religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.), in order to prevent the horizontal ties from becoming a basis for the pursuit of narrow, and even sectarian interests.⁶

It was clear to us from the outset that, in the light of the focus of this article, we would have to opt for a specific definition of social capital. To our knowledge, the contribution of Nancy Ammerman⁷ in this regard articulates our train of thought best.

Ammerman co-partnered research done in America within 23 congregations, which were specifically analysed in terms of the impact of social change and transformation on congregations, and vice versa: in terms of the impact that congregations (might) have on change and transformation in society. As a result of the freedom of religion in the USA there are at present no governmental regulations or subsidy to maintain traditional religious institutions, and therefore Ammerman⁸ can conclude: “*the social processes of community formation govern the rise and fall of congregations, and the spiritual energies generated in congregations help to shape the social structures of community*”. Ammerman’s research scrutinised this dynamic interaction between community and congregation.

At the end of her research⁹ she draws certain conclusions under the following headings:

- Congregations and modern community life
- Congregations as Particularistic Spaces of Sociability

5 Cf www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/voluntarysector/bglossary.html 29/10/2004

6 Cf www.worldbank.org/prem/poverty/scapital/whatsc.htm 29/10/2004

7 Nancy Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, 362–367.

8 Nancy Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, 2–3.

9 *Ibid.*, 346–370.

- Congregations as Connected Communities
- Congregations as Generators of Social Capital
- The Moral and Spiritual Capital of Congregational Life

In this article we will only concentrate on what she calls: Congregations as generators of social capital.

Ammerman's definition of social capital

Ammerman¹⁰ defines *social capital* as “those connections of communication and trust that make the organization of a complex society possible”. Then she poses the question which type or quality of social capital is generated by congregations, and whether this form of social capital differs in any way from those generated by other voluntary organisations.

In the light of the abovementioned research she concludes that the contributions of congregations to a large extent do not differ from that of these organisations. Yet it can be stated that congregations offer certain markers for *identification* and a *sense of belonging*. *Relationships of trust* are formed here, and these relationships in turn facilitate *communication* and the *coordination of activities* in society and contribute towards the *well being* of participants. Both individuals and society as a whole benefit from this. The advantages of belonging to these organisations are enhanced by the fact that certain legitimacy is bestowed upon them, especially congregations. In this regard she talks about congregations as being “presumptively legitimate”¹¹. Groups that are recognised as congregations by definition enjoy a certain status and acknowledgment.

In addition to this basic, inherent social capital that congregations possess, they are also places where the voiceless can articulate themselves. This is of special relevance in our South African context – often during the struggle years the so-called black churches offered the only space where the cries of pain were heard and in the process became communities of solidarity and comfort. Furthermore church buildings became organisational spaces for struggle activities. In this regard liturgy played a decisive role. The Eucharist – to quote but one example – presented the story of the suffering of the people in a symbolic way, and in doing so not only re-interpreted their story, but re-configured their reality and generated new spiritual endurance¹².

Congregations also generate and enhance civil know-how. Ammerman refers to “civic capital” as a repertoire of abilities and connections for political life¹³. Ordinary abilities like the writing of letters, decision making, chairing of meetings, to name but a few, are encouraged and formed in congregations. Even when congregations organise something like the annual fete, it constitutes an opportunity to develop ‘civic capital’. Here people that were disadvantaged in terms of their background are benefited even more as they are given the opportunity to learn. In this regard she states: “congregations are the single most widespread and egalitarian providers of civic opportunity in the United States”¹⁴. She is of the opinion that even the most sectarian and private of congregations can indeed contribute towards the political life of a country, exactly because of this sort of civil capital, as those that learn to write letters and raise funds in congregations can use these abilities in service of certain political activities.

10 Ibid., 362.

11 Ibid., 363.

12 Cf in this regard also Robert Schreiter, *Reconciliation. Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order*. The Boston Theological Institute Series Volume 3, Maryknoll, NY (Orbis Books) 1992, 55&74-76.

13 Cf Nancy Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, 364.

14 Ibidem

Ammerman points out the concern of a number of researchers that these forms of formal organisations where people can learn certain basic skills are rapidly dwindling. She quotes from Putnam's book entitled *Bowling Alone*, in which he states that Americans no longer bowl in clubs or groups, but alone¹⁵. Ammerman is of the opinion that Putman's analysis is simplistic, and that he needs to take a closer look at society. People no longer bowl in the old clubs, but rather in new, more informal networks. According to her research old, formal structures that wither and die are replaced by new structures that are still generating social capital, be it in a new form.

To sum up then: according to Ammerman congregations are still producing two things: 1. Social capital of association and 2. civil capital of communication and organisational skills. To this she adds the fact that congregations are also providers of material sources, for example spaces for gatherings, etc. As a matter of fact, congregations often offer a whole infrastructure in and for societies, most visible in times of crises. These material sources Ammerman regards as a critical component of the social capital of a congregation. Not only do congregations possess certain sources, as well as the infrastructure to distribute these sources, but they also represent the place where volunteers can simply present themselves if the need to tackle crises' should arise. According to Ammerman, therefore, congregations can make three main contributions in the generation of social capital, namely:

1. the creation of a sense of belonging and relationships of trust
2. the development of skills that can be used as civil capital and
3. in terms of material infrastructure and sources.

3. SOCIAL CAPITAL AND POVERTY

As is the case with social capital, poverty can also be defined in numerous ways. The most common description of poverty would be an economic one based on incomes. A person or family is then considered poor if their income level falls below a certain minimum standard, which in turn is determined contextually, that is, in the light of a certain country's development, societal norms and values. The basic *reasons* for poverty are also complex, and will not be argued here. What we rather propose to do, is to focus on Ammerman's definition of social capital, and use that as a sort of flipside to describe the *results* of poverty, and furthermore, to refine this focus by concentrating on the liturgical and ritual implications of these results or symptoms of poverty.

First, the flip-side definition: If social capital entails "a sense of belonging", and the "building of relationships of trust", then poverty would mean the absence, or even destruction thereof. In this sense, poverty could be described as *social exclusion or even stigmatisation and ostracisation*¹⁶. The poor then literary have "no address", no one to turn to and no one to trust. Their identity (as human beings, members of society) is denied them.

An interesting implication of this understanding of poverty could be that people, who are materially well-off, can also suffer from a loss of sense of belonging. Which means: rich (individualistic) people can be poor. And vice versa: poor people (who belong to a community like a congregation) can be rich. This is a far cry from the one-sided economical and even capitalistic evaluation of poverty and affluence which is prevalent.

15 Cf Nancy Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, 365.

16 Robert Chambers, *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*, New York (Longman Scientific and Technical), 1989, 106-108 writes extensively about the different levels of stereotyping of poor people.

Furthermore, if social capital includes the development of skills that can be used as civil capital (Ammerman's second level), then poverty would mean *civil illiteracy*. There seems to be a vicious circle in operation here: the lack of a space where the sense of belonging and therefore identity is generated or sustained, leads to a lack of useful civil skills, and: the lack of civil skills in turn might lead to a feeling of shame and a shunning of community.

It is a known fact that the so-called black churches shattered this vicious circle during the apartheid years by cultivating and nurturing those skills that leaders needed to partake in the political sphere of the struggle. The question could be asked whether these churches are still playing this role of equipping the leaders for the political realities of the new dispensation, or whether other organisations have taken over this role. This is, in the opinion of the authors, an important issue that must be addressed during the research done in the Paarl area.

This brings us to Ammerman's third level of social capital, namely material infrastructure and sources, and the contrary: poverty as the lack of the most basic human resources with which to keep body and soul together. As pointed out, this is the most widely accepted understanding of poverty. But it is, at least according to Ammerman, but one component of a multi-faceted problem. Perhaps one should talk about a staggering effect or at least negative influence between the different levels of poverty: when the basic resources fail, the result could be a severing of ties with a community or communities, with a loss of civil training and skills, etc. Poverty could indeed be described or defined in this light: *a state of affairs where the absence of material resources, the denied space for trust and identity forming, as well as the loss of civil skills impact negatively on one another, in a seemingly unstoppable and negatively escalating spiral*.

The question that concerns us in this article is: in what way can liturgy, with its rituals, address this threefold problem of poverty in a congregation? We now take a closer look at this, and related questions.

4. LITURGY, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND POVERTY

Before embarking on an attempt to lay connections between these concepts, some theological tensions that such an attempt brings into play are briefly explored.

4.1 Functionalism versus symbolism

What is the meaning of liturgy? And if it does have (a) meaning, where is this meaning located? In the enacted liturgy or in the minds of the participants?¹⁷ How can one establish what the meaning is?¹⁸ And does liturgy have a function? Or should/may liturgy serve a specific function? What does celebrating the liturgy help us with? Or does it help us with anything at all? May liturgy be subjected to any purpose? Should the liturgy for example strive to socio-critically address causes in a pursuit of justice? Or should the liturgy only aim to assist believers in praising God and enjoying Him forever? Are these activities mutually exclusive?

17 Cf Martin Stringer, *On the Perception of Worship*, Birmingham (Birmingham University Press) 1999, 1-3.

18 For a proposed method for the research of rituals/liturgy through which the meaning of an enacted rite can also be established by means of appropriation and designation, cf Cas Wepener, *Researching Rituals*, 2005, and Paul Post, *Introduction and application. Feast as a key concept in a liturgical studies research design*, in: Paul Post *et al* (eds.), *Christian Feast and Festival: The Dynamics of Western Liturgy and Culture*, Leuven/ Paris/ Sterling, Virginia (Peeters), 2002, 47-77.

19 Cf Gerard Lukken, *Rituel en overvloed. Een kritische bezinning op de plaats en de gestalte van het christelijke ritueel in onze cultuur*, Baarn (Gooi & Sticht) 1999, 47.

These questions are fundamental to consider when one does research on liturgy and issues of poverty from a theological viewpoint. Some liturgists have coined this (seeming) paradox the tension between symbolism and functionalism in the celebration of the liturgy¹⁹. According to Lukken this is also a tension that is present in the Cultural Anthropology, where some researchers place the accent on the functional social dimension of ritual and others on ritual as symbolic action with meaning in itself. In order to explain his own position, a position that tries to hold on to both sides without fully opting just for one although leaning toward the more symbolic side, Lukken quotes M. Spiro, namely “... dat functionalisme zonder symbolisme blind is, en dat het symbolisme zonder functionalisme mank gaat”²⁰.

When looking at the title of this article, some readers might think that the authors have already opted for a more functionalist approach, which is, in a context of acute poverty such as the South African context, a very real temptation. This is however not the case. It is our explicit intention to try and keep this tension in balance. The liturgy may for us never for one moment ignore the context, but at the same time the liturgy is also a ‘meaningless game’ that believers play *coram Deo*²¹. It remains however a very serious game in which God and humans really encounter one another through rituals and symbols by means of a dialogical communication²², and therefore a game in which God through His Spirit can establish a connection between liturgy and life.

With this tension in mind (and specifically in relation to poverty and the generation of social capital), this article will now set out to explore different intentions or functions a liturgy or rituals may have in general, and thereafter specifically in a context of poverty. The idea is only to try to articulate the possibilities of liturgy and ritual as pertaining to social capital and poverty. Thereafter the concept ‘contexts of poverty’ is explored, in order to show that on the one hand there are many smaller congregational contexts with relation to poverty within the one large South African context of poverty, that the context has in influence on the meaning and functions of a given ritual, and on the other hand that knowledge of the specific setting of a liturgy is of critical importance when one engages in the making of liturgy in a context of poverty.

4.2 Dimensions of ritual

In his earlier books on the liturgy, the Dutch liturgist, Gerard Lukken²³ described seven functions of rituals. These functions were expanded in his latest book from seven to ten, but the for him too

20 Cf Gerard Lukken, *Rituelen in overvloed*, 47. In line with this distinction, Mark Searle, *Ritual in: Cheslyn Jones et al (eds.). The Study of Liturgy*, Revised Edition, London (SPCK), 1992, 54–55, distinguishes between three types of definitions of ritual, namely a formal (differentiating ritual from other forms of human behavior), functionalist (looking at the purpose of ritual in human life) and symbolic (looking at ritual in terms of communication and the conveying of meaning).

21 Cf Paul Post, *Ritualiteit: Drie illustraties, drie teksten*, in: Marcel Barnard and Paul Post (eds.) *Ritueel bestek. Antropologische kernwoorden van de liturgie*, Zoetermeer (Meinema) 2001, 43–44.

22 Cf Gerrit Immink, *Een dubbele beweging*, in: Paul Oskamp and Niek Schuman (eds.). *De weg van de liturgie. Tradities, achtergronden, praktijk*, Zoetermeer (Meinema) 1998, 67–89.

23 Cf Gerard Lukken, *Geen leven zonder rituelen. Antropologische beschouwingen met het oog op de christelijke liturgie*, Baarn (Gooi & Sticht) 1986, 25–31, as well as, Gerard Lukken, *No life Without Rituals*, in: Louis van Tongeren and Charles Caspers (eds.) *Per Visibilia Ad Invisibilia*, Anthropological, Theological and Semiotic Studies on the Liturgy and the Sacraments, Kampen (Kok Pharos Publishing House) 1994, 101–106. GB Thompson Jr., *Treasures in Clay Jars. New Ways to Understand Your Church*, Cleveland (The Pilgrim Press) 2003, 171, names the most important three functions of worship according to the participants themselves (which he acknowledges are all very individualistic and aimed at private experience): An oasis of peacefulness and rest amidst a hectic life; get inspired and lifted up; receive practical advice from the sermon that can be applied during the week.

functional term, 'functions', he replaced with 'dimensions'²⁴. This change is in line with his sensitivity for the tension between functionalism and symbolism. In line with these dimensions of ritual by a Roman Catholic liturgist, the Reformed systematic theologian Dirkie Smit²⁵ discusses eight processes that he sees working within the liturgy, but specifically with relation to the ethical tension between liturgy and life. According to the Ritual Studies expert, Ronald Grimes, one can identify qualities of ritual²⁶. On the one hand these qualities helps scholars to, instead of testing a given activity to their close knit definitions of ritual, rather identify what he calls "family characteristics"²⁷. In this way it is possible to "specify in what respects and to what extent an action is ritualized"²⁸.

4.3 Dimensions of ritual and the generation of social capital

With the earlier discussion of poverty and social capital in view, it will now be argued that some of these dimensions, qualities and processes are especially well suited for the generation of social capital in contexts of poverty.

4.3.1 *Ritual and a sense of belonging and relationships of trust*

Lukken²⁹ talks about *the social dimension* of ritual, namely that ritual is not only an expression of the self, but also a call to the other to communicate with me. Both individuals³⁰ and groups find

24 These ten dimensions are 1. a mediatory dimension to the past 2. a formalising dimension 3. a condensing dimension 4. a relieving and canalising dimension 5. an expressive dimension 6. an exorcising dimension 7. an ethical dimension 9. a social dimension and 10. a political dimension. Cf Gerard Lukken, *Rituelen in overvloed*, 58-70.

25 Cf Dirkie Smit, *Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex (con)vivendi? – Oriënterende inleiding tot liturgie en etiek*. (Paper read at meeting titled *Liturgy and ethics*, Buvton, Stellenbosch University) 2004, 11-16. In short the processes are 1. undermining 2. liberation 3. community 4. articulation 5. calling 6. formation and transformation 7. confirmation and 8. commitment.

26 According to Paul Post *et al*, *Disaster Ritual. Explorations of an Emerging Ritual Repertoire*. Liturgia Condenda 15, Leuven (Peeters) 2003, 41, there is a close connection between Lukken's dimensions and Grimes's qualities. These qualities are: (in parenthesis is given what ritual is not). Ronald Grimes, *Ritual Criticism*, 1990, 14.

- performed, embodied, enacted, gestural (not merely thought or said);
- formalised, elevated, stylised, differentiated (not ordinary, unadorned, or undifferentiated);
- repetitive, redundant, rhythmic, (not singular or once-for-all);
- collective, institutionalised, consensual (not personal or private);
- patterned, invariant, standardised, stereotyped, ordered, rehearsed (not improvised, idiosyncratic, or spontaneous);
- traditional, archaic, primordial (not invented or recent);
- valued highly or ultimately, deeply felt, sentiment laden, meaningful, serious (not trivial or shallow);
- condensed, multilayered (not obvious; requiring interpretation);
- symbolic, referential (not merely technological or primarily means-end oriented);
- perfected, idealised, pure, ideal (not conflictual or subject to criticism and failure);
- dramatic, ludic [i.e., playlike] (not primarily discursive or explanatory; not without special framing or boundaries);
- paradigmatic (not ineffectual in modeling either other rites or non-ritualised action);
- mystical, transcendent, religious, cosmic (not secular or merely empirical);
- adaptive, functional (not obsessional, neurotic, dysfunctional);
- conscious, deliberate (not unconscious or preconscious);

27 Ronald Grimes, *Ritual Criticism*, 13.

28 Ibidem

29 Gerard Lukken, *Rituelen in overvloed*, 1999, 67–69.

30 On the role of ritual regarding an individual's identity and integration into a new life phase and in the process a new social group, there is an abundance of literature. One interesting recent example is, Ronald

their identity in and through ritual. The congregation, the family, the small group, realise themselves through ritual, and ritual integrates the individual into the community³¹. This social dimension with its ability regarding identity³² and group formation is crucial in the creation of a sense of belonging and trust relationships. This dimension however also has a dark side. Smit³³ calls attention to this in the new community that is formed through the liturgy, where the liturgy should be an open space for the weak and marginalised of this world, and churches may not practice and overt or covert apartheid. And Lukken³⁴ warns that this same dimension can be manipulated by evil powers³⁵. Therefore, as with all the other dimensions, this research will aim to not only identify if this dimension is present in a ritual, but also how this dimension is present. In this regard Grimes' positive and negative qualities are very helpful³⁶, where he mentions qualities such as friendly, warm, welcome, at home, comfortable, personal, shared, communal and assembly orientated, as positive qualities over and against qualities such as distant, cold, impersonal, formalised, private, individualistic and hierarchical.

A typical characteristic of ritual is repetition, and closely connected to this repetition is *the mediatory dimension to the past*. Rituals were there before us and also connect us with those before us and they give us a sense of familiarity. And through this connection to the past and feeling of familiarity and belonging they give us confidence for the future³⁷. In this way ritual helps with a temporal broadening of the sense of belonging to more than just the immediate group, but also generations past and future. Theologically speaking ritual helps to integrate believers into the cloud of witnesses, into the heavenly liturgy, into the already and not yet of the kingdom of God, which helps believers to "look in the right direction". This mediatory dimension is thus beneficial for both the development of a sense of belonging as well as relationships of trust. The weakness of this dimension is however that ritual can become media to maintain the status quo and resist any change. This dimension which is also inherent in Grimes' repetitive/ redundant/ rhythmic quality is important to guard against functionalism where rituals are abused for once-off uses.

In today's society many people have lost contact with what Lukken³⁸ calls the deeper roots of our existence. In this regard the *therapeutic dimension* of ritual plays an important role in reconnecting people with those deeper levels. It is about the restoration of wholeness and of healing, and this restoration has got everything to do with who we are as human beings. It is about breaking through our dualistic thoughts about body and spirit by means of something which incorporates body, mind and spirit – ritual. Here the earlier notion of how 'rich' people can be 'poor' is important, and is this dimension aimed at restoring a sense of belonging in all 'poor' people.

Grimes, Deeply Into The Bone. Re-Inventing Rites of Passage, Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ London (University of California Press) 2000.

31 Cf Gerard Lukken, Rituelen in overvloed, 1999, 68.

32 Cf with regard to ritual and identity formation, Hennie Pieterse, Die rol van rituele en simbole in die identiteitsvorming van 'n geloofsgemeenskap – 'n Gereformeerde perspektief, Skrif en Kerk, 19/2, 1998, 342–347.

33 Cf Dirkie Smit, Lex orandi, lex credendi, 2004, 12.

34 Cf Gerard Lukken, Rituelen in overvloed, 1999, 91.

35 So for example can a ritual legitimate an unjust system like the ritual of the Lord's Supper in South Africa that was celebrated by different races in different liturgical spaces. Cf Cas Wepener, Still because of the weakness of some? – A descriptive exploration of the Lord's Supper in South Africa, 1948 – 2002, in: Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek 18, 2002, 139-158.

36 Cf Ronald Grimes, Ritual Criticism, 1990, 46.

37 Cf Gerard Lukken, Rituelen in overvloed, 1999, 58.

38 Cf Ibid., 61.

Certain dimensions of ritual is thus very helpful in cultivating a sense of belonging, but the particulars of the groups into which ritual integrates people is crucial in the South African (and other) context. Ritual that functions in the integration of people into homogenous groups based on criteria such as race or class (as has already been noted under the social dimension), can be counter productive with regards to the generation of social capital in South Africa. The notion of bridging is important here. The sense of belonging must be established over certain borders, such as generation, race and class. In this regard the *formalising dimension*³⁹ of ritual is important, in as far as ritual can convey complicated socio-cultural messages in a very economic way. Lukken⁴⁰ gives, amongst others, the examples of clothing and the arrangement of people at a table. Ritual must thus have the capability to help participants with engaging with diversity and embracing it as a (Christian) value. It is thus imperative to scrutinise a ritual in order to establish exactly what kind of message it conveys in this regard.

4.3.2 Ritual and the development of skills

According to Lukken⁴¹, rituals help us to make our experience real experience. He talks about the *expressive dimension* of ritual. And by giving people the opportunity to articulate their experience in for example acts of lament and praise, has got psychological value. But there is also more at stake here than can be described in mere psychological terms. It is also an articulation of our experience in the language of belief⁴². This dimension can thus help humans with both psychological and spiritual skills which are closely related to the therapeutic dimension, and also helps people to be whole and healed. This is something that is often a need with 'poor' people.

Poverty is something that those whom are suffering under it, regularly wants to exorcise. Poverty is like a demon that must be exorcised from their lives, and the use of exorcism for the poor can be called 'de-finalisation'. In other words, the forces that leads to poverty in this world does not have the last say. Jennings⁴³ talks about the naming of the demons in order to exorcise them, and Lukken⁴⁴ calls this the *exorcising dimension* of ritual. Along with expression, exorcising is essential for the poor in order to make a reframing⁴⁵ possible, for the process of undermining⁴⁶, so that people/believers can steer their conduct with an alternative symbolic universe. Despite the theological truth inherent to a Biblical alternative universe (as is for example found in the apocalyptic literature) and the comfort that such a view can bring to the poor, the ability of being able to look at one's own reality through such an alternative framework is in a certain sense a skill that can and should be practiced through ritual.

Within an alternative Biblical symbolic universe, believer's conduct is being shaped. According to Lukken⁴⁷ any good ritual that is participated in with real dedication will have this *ethical dimension* and therefore ritual influences ethical conduct. Participants in ritual who benefit from this dimension will enjoy enriched lives and good ethical conduct will benefit the bigger

39 Cf Ibid., 59.

40 Cf Ibidim.

41 Cf Ibid., 64

42 Cf Dirkie Smit, *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, 12.

43 Cf Theodore Jennings Jr., *The liturgy of liberation*, Nashville (Abingdon) 1988.

44 Cf Gerard Lukken, *Rituelen in overvloed*, 66.

45 Cf Donald Capps, *Reframing. A new method in pastoral care*, Minneapolis (Fortress) 1990.

46 Cf Dirkie Smit, *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, 11.

47 Cf Gerard Lukken, *Rituelen in overvloed*, 67.

community. This is in line with the process of formation and transformation⁴⁸ which is being practiced through the various liturgical acts, and where believers through ritual for example learn to give and receive, to forgive and be themselves forgiven. According to Smit they practice a life of justice and love⁴⁹. In line with the process of formation and transformation, the process of empowerment⁵⁰ which is especially present in the didactic elements in the liturgy can have an impact on believers. They gain knowledge and are equipped for the work of the Kingdom which can be beneficial for the development of skills and thus of social capital.

When talking about the development of skills, Grimes' qualities are of great importance. Several of the qualities that he names help people to develop skills within the context of the liturgy, which they would otherwise not have the opportunity to develop. Some of the qualities that stand out in this regard are performance, participation, symbolic, and dramatic/ ludic⁵¹. So for example can active participation of lay people in preaching help them to develop oratory skills which can also be applied in other spheres of life, or can the symbolic side of ritual help to equip people to cope with the paradoxes of life and the polysemantic character of truth in a confusing society. In the same breath one can say that the absence of these qualities in rituals make the rituals less prone with regards to the generation of this kind of social capital.

4.3.3 *Ritual and the development of material infrastructures and resources*

The *social* dimension has already been discussed, although more can be added here. This dimension has the added benefit that believers learn to care for one another, to share each other's sorrows⁵², and through this spiritual and material caring, a material infrastructure and resources are formed as a by-product. Those dimensions of ritual which are beneficial for open friendly ritual spaces can make a contribution towards the establishment of an infrastructure where the poor can receive a voice, as one example of such a by-product⁵³. In such a safe friendly space the poor and marginalised can also contribute to discussions, lead in prayer etcetera and develop their civil skills in the process.

Closely connected to this social dimension is the *political dimension* of ritual, where ritual functions in the legitimating and promotion of specific political power⁵⁴. This dimension is crucial for the establishment and functioning of political power which will have a huge influence on the specific way in which the material infrastructure develops and resources are shared. The obvious dark side of the political dimension is the legitimising of political powers by whom people are being oppressed, or the promotion of political powers whose inabilities hinders the development of material infrastructures and resources.

Poverty brings along with it many negative emotions. Ritual is in no way a miracle cure for negative emotions. Ritual does however have a so-called *channelling dimension* whereby the

48 Cf Dirkie Smit, *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, 13 – 14.

49 Ibid., 14. In a way most of Smit's processes can resort under Lukken's ethical dimension, because they are all concerned with the connection between the moral conduct of believers and the liturgy.

50 Cf Dirkie Smit, *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, 14.

51 Cf Ronald Grimes, *Ritual Criticism*, 14&46.

52 Cf Dirkie Smit, *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, 12.

53 Cf also 4.3.1 as well as Patrick Keifert, *Welcoming the stranger. A public theology of worship and evangelism*, Minneapolis (Fortress) 1992.

54 Cf Gerard Lukken, *Rituelen in overvloed*, 69–70, as well as Lukas Vischer, *Worship as a Christian Witness to Society*, in: Lukas Vischer (ed.), *Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Past and Present*. Grand Rapids/ Cambridge (W.B. Eerdmans) 2003, 415–426, and Bill Kellerman, *Seasons of Faith and Conscience*. Kairos, Confession, Liturgy, Maryknoll, NY (Orbis Books) 1990, who views every act of worship as being expressly political.

emotions aren't repressed or denied, but rather structured⁵⁵. In this sense the emotions can be better steered and formed, and the poor can give their emotions an address in and through ritual. Being able to give both negative and positive emotions an address is beneficial with regards to the formation of a very specific identity in and through ritual. And at the same time this dimension of ritual makes the liturgy of the church a kind of emotional space, which is an important source which churches can provide to the poor. The dark side of this dimension of which one must be aware, is escapism⁵⁶. When talking about the power of ritual with regard to reconciliation, Schreiter⁵⁷ describes the channelling dimension of ritual as helping with "deeply felt but hardly articulated feelings" and also "ritual can speak of that for which we have no words", and Arbuckle⁵⁸ gave a book on this subject the significant title *Grieving for change*.

On a very direct level certain (Christian) rituals has the potential to provide in the material needs of participants, for example offerings or food from an Agape meal. In this way the liturgy becomes in itself part of an infrastructure with sources to provide in some of the material needs of the poor. We will add this dimension of ritual here and call it the *provisioning dimension* of ritual, keeping in mind that this is an atypical dimension of ritual with the very serious threat of functionalism being latent.

4.4 Dimensions of ritual and the generation of social capital in contexts of poverty

With this view of ritual dimensions and the generation of social capital in a context of poverty in mind, it is however important to make some remarks on the issue contexts. After one has identified the preferred dimensions in ritual that you would like to optimise in the liturgy, it is of critical importance to know that this finding does not have a universal validity pertaining to all liturgical contexts. The context in which a ritual is enacted is definitive with regards to the meaning of the ritual. And with this in mind it is important to not only do exegesis of the ritual, but also of the ritual context, in order to be able to criticise the existing rituals and to also consider the formation of new rituals. For this research the different contexts of poverty in South Africa is especially important to consider.

In the Paarl area, as in the rest of South Africa, different congregations have different economic situations. And depending on the context, the aim of the liturgy will be different. So for example the aim of liturgy in a rich congregation as pertaining to poverty and social capital will be, amongst others, awareness⁵⁹. This will definitely *not* be an aim in a financially really poor congregation. During the fieldwork of this research this truth also came to the fore. So for example in the one congregation almost two thirds of the worshippers at an average Sunday service are jobless. According to the minister he knows for a fact that some of the kids who are in the service will not receive any food when they arrive home afterwards. It is rather apparent, different financial contexts ask for different approaches to the liturgy in this regard.

Thus, before embarking on a process of changing or enhancing the existing liturgy with an eye to poverty and social capital, a contextual analysis as pertaining to finance is imperative. With this

55 Cf Gerard Lukken, *Rituelen in overvloed*, 60.

56 Cf *Ibid.*, 87.

57 Robert Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 74.

58 Gerald Arbuckle, *Grieving for Change. A spirituality for refounding gospel communities*, London (Geoffrey Chapman) 1991.

59 Cf Cas Wepener and Johan Cilliers, In herinnering aan die kinders...wat aan honger en koue moet sterf Liturgie in 'n konteks van armoede. *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 45/2 (Poverty Supplementum), 2004, 364 - 372.

in mind, different congregations were used during the collection of the ritual data. Although all are Reformed congregations, they differ significantly along racial and financial lines. These differences in context will throughout the process of ritual criticism be taken into account, and will help to show the importance of context when working with ritual.

5. APPLICATION

My means of ritual criticism⁶⁰ the collected ritual data will be scrutinised for the aforementioned and discussed dimensions, processes and qualities. The aim will be to establish *if, where and how* these dimensions, processes and qualities are present in the different rituals and sermons. The presence, place and way in which they occur will be theologically discussed in the light of liturgical, Biblical and demographic/contextual notions concerning worship and poverty. Such an analyses and discussion will be aimed at establishing how the dimensions that enhance the generation of social capital in contexts of poverty can be developed, or better liturgically inculturated. And this will pave the way for a contribution to the *liturgia condenda* where some practical suggestions will be given for the liturgy in the making in South Africa in the light of a context of acute poverty and the possibility of rituals and sermons for the generation of social capital. But throughout this whole process, it is important to always keep the Roman Catholic Lukken's warning in mind, namely that the power of ritual is only revealed to those who participate in them with devotion⁶¹, as well as remembering with the Reformed theologian Noordmans that we cannot say "dat God ook naar de kerk gaat als wij er naar toe gaat"⁶².

TREFWOORDE

Liturgie
Ritueel
Armoede
Sosiale kapitaal
Erediens
Ontwikkeling

KEY WORDS

Liturgy
Ritual
Poverty
Social capital
Worship
Development

Prof. JH Cilliers
Fakulteit Teologie
Universiteit van Stellenbosch
Privaatsak X1

60 According to Ronald Grimes, *Ritual Criticism*, 16&18, "ritual criticism is the interpretation of a rite or ritual system with a view to implicating its practice". Cf also Marcel Barnard, *Dinamiek van cultus en kultuur*, in: Marcel Barnard and Paul Post (eds.), *Ritueel bestek. Antropologiese kernwoorde van de liturgie*. Zoetermeer (Meinema) 2001, 49, as well as Tollie Swinkels and Paul Post, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* according to Ronald Grimes, *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 19, 2003, 227, who calls ritual criticism "an open practice of judgement and evaluation".

61 Cf Gerard Lukken, *Rituelen in overvloed*, 61.

62 Oepke Noordmans, *Liturgie*, Amsterdam (Uitgeversmaatschappij Holland), 1939, 72

Matieland
7602

Dr Cas Wepener
Fakulteit Teologie
Universiteit van Stellenbosch
Privaatsak X1
Matieland
7602

jcilliers@sun.ac.za

cwepener@sun.ac.za