



CHAPTER 1: POSITIONING

1.1. Introduction - Poverty is generational

“Vusiwana byi na xilanda”

“motlako ke leabela”

(The first proverb is in Tsonga and the second one in northern Sotho. Both of them mean that if your family lives in poverty, you too, will be poor).

There are many African proverbs that promote this kind of thought on generational poverty. It is as if, these proverbs are promoting the acceptance of a poverty situation to be how things are. Also the danger of the above thought can prevent poor people from trying anything that would help them in changing their lives.

The followings are the stories that I would like to share in order to demonstrate how bad it is to live in poverty:

The first story is about a man who lives in Nellmapius. He came to me crying bitterly, the tears were rolling down his cheeks. He told me that there is no food in the house, he can't pay water and electricity and he cannot pay the school transport. It was the first time I had seen the man crying like this. In our African language, we say "*monna ke nku o lela pelong*" it means in English that man is a sheep does not cry. The showing of your emotions is considered a sign of weakness. I could sense how serious this problem was for the man.

The second story is from a single-parent family, headed by the mother of two girls. The mother said to me that she did not think that her situation of poverty would change. She lived in a one roomed house with her children. She said "Life was hard pastor" as they call me. "We struggle to satisfy our basic needs". Both of these families felt that there was no hope of an improvement in their situation. They were giving up on life had had no plan for the future.

As I was listening to these stories, I have selected only two out of many similar stories from the community of Nellmapius. I was reminded of my own personal story of poverty. In my heart I felt what they were going through. I was born out of wedlock and did not have a stable family background. I was living in the house of my grandmother with other children of my mother's sisters. I could not see any future because I saw other people as being better than me. Also, there was anger inside of me. I felt that I had been robbed of something which belonged to me.

Listening to these stories of people who live in poverty, I felt, that I did not have enough answers for them. The only thing I did was to encourage them to trust in God. I kept saying to them, that God is able to change their situation and I started sharing my own story in order to encourage them. These two stories are so similar to the many stories that I hear in the community of Nellmapius.

1.2. Motivation

I am the pastor of Willow Manor Christian Center in Nellmapius community, situated in the North East of Pretoria,

this community is extremely poor. As a pastor in a poverty stricken community, I minister to these people on a daily basis. It broke my heart to listen to their stories and experiences because they mostly feel hopeless and defeated. As a pastor, I want to do something that could transform the community of Nellmapius. I feel that it is not enough to preach to them on Sundays.

1.3. Research gap

There has been much research carried out in the area of poverty, which I appreciate so much. Authors such as, (Meadows 2003:19) speaks about the rich thinking about the world's poor. In his book he is sharing that we do not listen to what the poor think about themselves and because of this we could find the wrong answers to their situation. In chapter 12 of his book he is saying "listen to us-say the poor-please slow down" (Meadow 2003:49).

Williams 1998 speaks more about the existence of poverty, causes of poverty and what different ideologies say about poverty, such as capitalism, socialism, and Christianity and how these ideologies help the poor and how can these ideologies improve their help of the poor.

Disadvantaged people need someone who can come and help them to restore their human identity and self respect (Maluleke, 1999:2). Here he is emphasizing the ministry of the church towards deprived people. The question is how can these disadvantaged people own their future and fulfil what God has given them.

Kotze (1997:2) is dealing more with the concept of development administration in third world communities. He is trying to demonstrate to us how to bring about development to those communities who live in poverty.

Schofield (2001:9) focuses on the debts cancellation instigated by the church and different organizations. It is impossible to eradicate poverty if the poor countries still owe the International banks. The emphasis is on those that have been colonized by western countries, the so called third world countries to rebuild and assist in developing them to their true potential. I would like to recognize the value of the research carried out on poverty by the researchers mentioned above.

In order to add to the knowledge and wisdom revealed above, I would like to explore the relationship between poverty and identity. What does living in poverty do to human identity? And what could be the role of the church in the identity formation of the whole person.

From the stories that I have shared previously including my own experience I have learned that poverty affects identity formation. This is supported by the literature such as (Smith 2005:41; Rob 2002:26). Poverty causes the development of the following, low self-esteem, lack of acceptance, hopelessness, psychological problems, anxiety, depression and stress in the lives of those who live in poverty. According to (Smith 2005:41) all of these effects can be found in third world countries such as Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa.

I think the worst enemy of the poor according to the stories that have shared and my own experience and supported by literature is that the poor must take charge of their lives and find how to control their lives from within them. The question is how the poor can take control from within them if poverty has affected their life identity.

1.4 Research problem

Due to the above discussion, the research problem would be; identity is a major problem to those who live within poverty stricken communities.

In the next section, since there is a connection between poverty and identity, I would like to look more closely at identity formation.

1.4.1 What is identity?

Delport & Olivier (2003:180; Pretorius 1989:12) describe personal identity as “person awareness of the self as a unique individual, and it centres on questions ‘Who am I?’, ‘Where am I going?’ and ‘What is the meaning of my life?’”. If a person is not sure about him/herself they cannot function properly.

Personal identity can be described as the commitment, and identification, which provides the frame within which one can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done (Taylor 1989:27).

Josselson (1987:10) describes identity like this “Identity is the stable, consistent, and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world”. According to the above definition, the reliable sense of who a person feels about himself/her and the reason why he/her lives for in the world.

Identity is how one sees himself/herself and is a sense of worthiness or acceptance? If one feels a sense of worthiness, that person will walk tall in life, but when one feels unworthy will walk short in life. It determines how a person will act in life, either positively or negatively. “Identity is how the person experiences him/herself” (Josselson 1987:13).

Modernists view identity in this way “In psychodynamic terms, identity is neither a structure nor a content but a property of the ego that organizes experience” (Josselson, 1987:12). It tells that identity is an essential or element of the personality. It is something someone has been born with (Samson, 1991:212).

Tatum (1997:18) describes the concept of identity as complex shaped by individual characteristics such as family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts. So, to speak about identity is not just to single out an element but it should be a multidimensional approach.

In the following section, I would like to explore the formation of identity in the life of the person.

1.4.2 Formation of identity

In this section, I will explore the numerous ways that affect the formation of human identity. I will do this by looking through the lenses of the following authors: Erikson 1980, Marcia (1980:159), Grotevant, (1987:203), Berszonsky' (1989:268), and (Phillips & Pittman 2003:20-21). I think the model above can help us to understand this difficult concept of identity formation. After we have understood identity formation, we can see the impact of the environment or context, such as living in poverty or not living in poverty has on a person.

1.4.2.1. Marcia's Identity status

The four statuses as developed by Marcia are as follows; achievements status, foreclosure status, moratorium status, and diffusion status (Marcia 1980:159; Philips and Pitman, 2003:119). These four statuses determine whether a person will feel good or bad about him/herself. They help in the identity formation of the person.

- **Achievements status**

In this status the person will go through a period of exploration and an individual commitment to self-chosen goals. In this status the person receives a sense of who he/she is (That is identity)

- **Foreclosure**

In this status the person is not able to analyse or experience a period of crisis and they commit themselves. He/she is influenced by what other people are saying about

him/herself. He/she will follow a particular profession because it pleases their parents.

- **Identity diffusion**

These are people who present low levels of commitment as well as low levels of identity exploration. This is why some people experience a low self-esteem in their life.

- **Moratorium**

This status describes a person who is experiencing a crisis but has not yet made a commitment to what he/she wants to be.

1.4.2.2. Grotevant's Process of Model of identity

In this process of model of identity, Grotevant (1987:203) describes identity as developmental, contextual, and life span in scope. This model takes consideration of the following; Individual characteristics or affective and cognitive, and context where people live, the identity process and interdependencies. Identity formation is a life long process; one cannot say I have arrived at my own identity (Philips and Pitman 2003:120).

It can be seen here that the context or environment affects those people who live within a particular environment. For instance, if the environment is positive it will influence people positively and if it is negative, it will influence people negatively.

1.4.2.3. Berzonsky's Identity styles.

Berzonsky (1989:268) says that individuals differ in the manner in which they go about monitoring, utilizing, testing, and revising their identities. He is informing us that human beings respond differently to life. He uses three styles of self-theorizing:

- The informational style.

Is associated with a stronger orientation to explore and involves actively seeking out, processing and evaluating self-relevant information.

- The normative style

Is characterized by a concern with the standards and expectations of significant others (e.g. parent) and entails resisting change and resisting information that challenges currently held belief and values.

A child's identity is dependent on interaction with a trustworthy and meaningful hierarchy of roles by the generations living together in some form of family (Erikson, 1980:122; Phinney, 2000:28). This process starts as soon as the child tries to live out their lives according to the strong role model that they see and what they wish to be when they have grown up

Child and parent relationships will indeed affect the child's life. According to this identification process children will resemble their parents. Identification does not end when the person comes to the end of adolescent but will continue throughout the life time. In the community a person will be influenced by certain characteristic he/she sees from other people, such as a child relating with the elderly, husbands

with their wives, pastor and his congregation and the relationship with students at university.

Some research has shown that some ethnic minority children in USA have expressed a desire to be white (Phinney 2000:30). This suggests that these children are not happy with who they are and what they represent in life. Also, most of these minority children are growing up in poverty and they are black Americans. Whereas they see most of those people who are rich in the USA are white. This suggests that their desire to be white could be because they perceive that all good things are to be found in white communities.

- The diffuse-avoidance style

Is characterized by procrastination and the avoidance of dealing with personally relevant issues in life.

1.4.2.4. Identity formation as a social construction.

I would like to continue with the area of identity formation. In this part, I will discuss identity formation from a social constructionist perspective. In this perspective narratives play an important role. People organize themselves according to the stories they have about themselves. The following quotation stresses that identity is a social construction “He argues that identities are constructed and performed within the communication of stories” (Abel and Stokoe 2001:420).

Identity originates not from inside the person, but from social interactions between people, where people swim in a sea of language and other signs a sea that is invisible to us because it is as a very social being. “We can now say that our identity is constructed out of the discourses culturally

available to us, and which we draw upon in our communications with other people" (Burr 1995:51)

People see themselves according to the language they use. I know as a man, I have to behave in a particular way because of my language which describes how a man should behave. It is same with women, they cannot live differently or apart from what their particular society expects or that society has defined as being a woman. "Prevailing discourses of femininity speak of emotionality, illogically and intuitiveness-not the stuff of science" (Gergen 2001:418). Living out with this discourse, one can be treated as an outcast by the community, because you live out of the normal expectations of being a woman as described by the discourse.

Culture and history play an important role in shaping human identity (Gergen 2001:418). Two young people growing in two different cultures are not going to feel the same about themselves, because different discourses have been experienced and they are understood according to their respective cultures and context, "The self does not have existence apart from the society and history that construct and describe it" (Sampson 1991:210).

The identity of a person will be constructed through the stories about that person (Demasure & Muller 2006:412). Identity is not a God given characteristic, but it is something that would be constructed in a particular locality. Social constructionism will not follow the modernistic way of analysing a personality in order to understand the identity of a person. Social constructionism proposes 'relational self' (Demasure & Muller 2006:215). One will know his/her identity according to how his/her culture describes him/her. "For each of

us, then, a multitude of discourses is constantly at work constructing and producing our identity" Burr (1995:51)

Personal identity can be described as relational and linguistic. It means that personal identity exists in a dialogical mode (Du Toit 1997:86, 87). Always we need others to complete our personal identity.

Turner (2007:17) explains the self as follows: "I am a self only inasmuch as I am part of a given relationship at a given time". Context and relationship and locality play an important role in building the way I feel about myself. Again, the construction of self/identity is ongoing not static as the modernistic worldview has put it.

People give meaning to their life by telling the stories of their past experiences. Our identity comes from those narratives of our lives. According to social constructionism, identity is socially constructed. This means that identity is the product of social interaction (Gergen 1994:186).

Ricoeur (1984) in (Whitty 2000:212) argues that "there seems to be no other way of describing lived time except in the form of narrative". To talk about who I am, I must share my story first. My narratives shape my identity and telling of my story will include sharing my identity.

Whitty (2002:212) states that "if we were to give a brief account of events that have happened to us, these events would be chosen according to how we now see ourselves to be and thus would take their place in the form of narratives". It is true that we cannot speak of identity without speaking of stories that people have lived.

Phinney, (2000:28) argues that “a narrative approach is being recognized as a means of examining the ways in which individuals make sense of their lives within a changing socio-historical context”. People as they tell their stories come to terms with who they are.

Krog (1998: 99) states that what you believe to be true depends on who you believe yourself to be”. Also, it will depend on how I think people view me. My identity depend on relationship with others and context.

The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur’s advocacy is that identities be studied as identity narratives. Identity always includes the existence of others. (Martin 1999:188; Delport & Olivier 2003:180).

Identity can be stated as a social construction of meaning, meaning of actions and by social actors. Identity will be always rooted outside of experiences (Castell 2000:6, 7; Dawson 2007:460).

Identity can be understood not as an absolute or pre-given but as something constantly in process of change and formation (Walker 2005:133). In a narrative approach and in social constructionism the concept of identity shall always be in a process of change. Identity as a discourse shall receive different understandings and meanings in different contexts.

Discourse is understood here in the Foucaultian sense as socially organizes frameworks of meaning, a way of thinking, speaking, and acting that presents particular relationships as self-evidently true, it allows for certain things, to be said or thought and not others. So identity viewed as a discourse will never be absolute (Walker 2005:134).

Looking into the different descriptions of identity, I have learned that there is no single way in which we can describe identity formation but I have understood from those who speak about identity ego and the role that has played by context and culture. Identity is socially constructed. Identity is constructed in endlessly different ways in spite of similar circumstances. And this supports my philosophical and theological positioning which I will state in the coming sections.

1.5. Biblical perspective on identity formation

In this section, I would like to explore identity formation from a biblical understanding or point of view. The biblical perspective might differ from social construction by virtue of adding God in discussions or the bible in the discussion. Being a theologian, it is important to bring in theology because the research is taking place in the faculty of theology.

1.5.1. God's image and likeness in man

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness..." (Gen. 1:26). When He says let us, we do not know who us is. Most biblical commentators say it refers to heavenly or the trinity, in this research I will not go deeply into the meaning of it. The main thing that I would like to look at more critically is God's image and likeness in man. This could mean four things: A spiritual being capable of immortality, a moral being, bearing God's likeness and an

intellectual being with the capacity for reason and ruler ship (Livingstone G.H. 1969).

Van Huyssteen (2006:120), explains the image as *tselem* in Hebrew it refers to an image, a physical representation of a thing. *Demut*, translated “likeness” or form, and appearance, model, or pattern.

Van Huysteen (2006:121) and (Towner 2001:26) have stated that humans are walking representations of God, and as such are of exquisite value and importance. Humans are taking care of what God has created and what He values so much.

As Genesis 1:26-28 puts it we were created in God’s image and likeness to have dominion over the earth, the animals, and the fishes of the sea. (Towner 2001: 28) explains dominion in this way that dominion is the stewardship, nurture, and responsibility towards the things God loves. Humans are occupying such an important position in the creation of God which was stated by the Psalmist in (Psalm 8:6) “You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands”.

According to my understanding man has been separated from animals because of this role that was given to man by God. He is responsible for the creations of God here on the earth.

Only humans alone of all the members, alone of all the plants are invited into a personal relationship with God the creator (Van Huyssteen 2006:121). Man receives his identity from God. Genesis 1:26-28 tells us that men are like God. Men

have the image of God in their lives. This means that mankind has a high value because of the image of God.

The image of God is what gives human beings their identity or self of man. (Grenz 1994:182) argues that humans are not arising from own, but from God. Our lives have derived from God. We owe our existence to God the creator. Paul said “For in Him we live, and move, and have our being, as some of your own poets have said, ‘for we are His offspring’” (Acts 17:28). It gives them a sense of worth or significance. Men will start to accept and be joyous about him/her because of knowing that they are created by God and humans bear the image of God.

The image of God has been squarely put into the reason of human beings. Its reason or rationality is what gives human beings their uniqueness (Herzfeld 2002:17). It separates human beings from other animals. Other theologians such as (Niebuhr 1942:161) speak of human beings being able to reach beyond themselves. They are more than rational beings. They are able to be self-transcendent because they are in the image of God.

Also, it is not only giving us our being, but it encompasses our individual purpose. This includes personal purpose, goal and destiny (Grenz 1994:182). God is giving us who we are. Our self identity is derived from God not from self or a world that is theologically positioned.

Pannenberg (1975:47) argues freedom in this way “Christian theology from the beginning understood freedom in relation to its content, as participation in the truth and life of God, as likeness of God”. (Pannenberg 1975:49) continued saying

that the destiny of man is to be truly himself in openness to the divine mystery of his life by freely giving himself to the world and to his fellow man.

Man was created in the image of God that alone must give him inviolability (Pannenberg 1975:43). We must respect one another because of this God image in man. Prohibition of the shedding of human blood is coming from that concept of human as the representation of God, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man” (Gen. 9:6).

Pannenberg (1975:43) states that to attack the life of a human being is to commit an offence against God because man is the representation of God here on earth. He is the ruler of the earth on behalf of God.

Functional interpretation was followed up by other theologians. They said that the image of God is all about the function God has given to man. The function was about dominion over the creatures and the earth as it is stated in (Gen. 1:26-28) (Van Huyssteen 2006:134; Shults 2003:231; Herzfeld 2002:20), as if man is ruling the earth on behalf of God. Actually as a researcher I think that man is god on earth.

Psalm (139:14) stress as this by saying “I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are your works, and that my soul knows very well”. The psalmist is stressing that God made each one of us. He says, each one of us is fearfully and wonderfully made. Human identity comes from God. If human beings can have this understanding, it will bring a sense of worthiness and self

acceptance and self appreciation. Human beings will feel good about themselves.

1.5.2. The fall of man

In Genesis (3:6-9), man disobeyed God by eating from the tree that was in the midst of the Garden of Eden. “By our own actions we have become flawed, so that we fail to live in accordance with the divine intent” (Grenz 1994:245). They saw their nakedness and ran away from God and hide themselves. Sin has entered the earth, brought separation between God and man. Man lost his right to stand with God.

1.5.3. The nature of sin

Grenz (1994:237) stated the nature of sin following the Hebrew words as follows: *avah* (“bent” or “crooked”), *aval* which refers to the lack of integrity, *avar* (“to cross over” or “transgress”), *ra* (“the rule of evil”) and *ma al* (“breach of trust”). *Pasha* (“to revolt or refuse subjection to authority”) and *chatha* means “to miss the right point” or “to deviate from the norm”.

Also, Grenz 1994:137) continues giving the meaning of sin, using the Greek words: *parabasis* (“the transgression of a boundary”), *parkoe* (“disobedience to a voice”), *paraptoma* (“falling where one should have stood upright”), *agnoema* (“ignorance of what one ought to have known”), *hettama* (“the diminishing of what should have been fully rendered”), and *plemmeleia* (“a discord in harmonies of God’s universe”).

Following these meanings of the nature of sin from both the Hebrew and Greek languages, one can understand that man lost his rightful position with God and his responsibilities here on earth.

1.5.4. The results of sin

- Alienation as we have said in the previous section is that human beings have originated from God and their destiny is with God. Sin caused us to fail to live in that design from God (Grenz 1994:268). Because of sin, came the destruction of our relationship with God, our fellowmen and the environment.
- Condemnation refers to the sentence or judgement placed on us as we live in sin (Grenz 1994:170). Sin robs from us the sense of identity as the children of God. That originality as the children of God has been removed from humans.
- Enslavement refers to the loss of choice that God has given us. Our will in bondage, cannot choose the life that God desired us to live (Grenz 1994:273).
- Depravity as a result of sin makes us humans powerless to remedy our situation (Grenz 1994:274). The remedy must come from the Creator.

1.5.5. Righteousness

In this section I would like to explore the meaning of the word righteousness and its implication to the formation of human identity. First, we look at the Hebrew word; Sedeq: meaning righteousness, justice, rightness, acting according to a proper

(God's) standard, doing what is right, being in the right (The strongest NIV Exhaustive concordance 1999).

Then at the Greek word: dikaiosyne-righteousness, what is right, justice, the act of doing what is in agreement with God's standard, state of being in proper relationship with God (The strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance 1999).

According to the definition given above, I can see that the following words in English tries to give us the meaning of righteousness, here are those English words: proper relationship with God, and being justified meaning that man has been acquitted or freely pronounced righteous.

Paul is explaining the righteousness of God in the following scripture: (Romans 3:21-26);

“21. But, now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the law and prophets,

22, even the righteousness of God, through Faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no different;

23. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24. Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

25 whom God set forth as propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

26. to demonstrate at present time His righteousness, that He might be just and justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus”.

People have been justified by faith in Christ Jesus, who shared his blood on the cross of Calvary. I call righteousness a position in God and again a restoration of God's image in man.

People do not need to work for acceptance because they are already accepted in Christ. God bestowed his righteousness on the people. This act of God gives good sense to people about themselves, which is their identity. The results of the fall had been dealt with through the righteousness of God. "And I will put enmity between you and woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His head" (Gen.3:15).

This verse is telling us about continuing the struggle between the off springs of a woman and serpent, and off springs of the children of God and children of Satan. This prophesies were fulfilled at the cross where Jesus crushed the head of Satan. The blood of Jesus restores our identity. The battle is still continuing, but those who believe know that victory belongs to them (Wycliffe Bible Commentary 1962).

According to the righteousness of mankind he receives the sense of identity. We became right with God. "No more condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom.8:1). No more sense of guilty or sense of unworthiness. God justified us through Jesus Christ our Lord. People came into the right position with God.

1.6. Research objectives

My first objective is to explore the relationship between identity formation and poverty. I would like to see if there is

Indeed any relationship between identity formation and poverty.

My second objective is to explore the role of the church in combating the effects of poverty on the lives of those people who are living in poverty stricken communities.

How can the church play a role in shaping a positive identity formation?

1.7. PARADIGMATIC APPROACH

1.7.1. Introduction

I position myself in a postmodernistic worldview, postfoundationalism and social constructionism. We are not striving to get an objective truth but we strive to be truthful in the way that we conduct the research process. Journey with me as I would like to explore my philosophical position.

1.7.2. Paradigms shifting: Moving between two worlds

1.7.2.1. Modernist epistemology

Modernism as a way of thinking that has originated from the western intellectual and artistic era of life called enlightenment (Burr 1995:12). The enlightenment project was to search for truth, to understand the true nature of reality. It started about the mid-eighteenth century. “Fundamental to

modernism is the privilege of human rationality over other ways of knowing" (Hodge & Deregotes 2008: 105).

During the mediaeval period the church was the sole arbiter of truth (Burr 1995:12). This means that people were receiving their direction for life from the church. Metaphysical was the epistemology of the time. The church and scripture was the only way people received knowledge. Nobody could question that.

The epistemology was heaven to earth knowledge and it could not be questioned by anybody. Thinkers who believed in modernism were trying to explain the world and knowledge in a rational, empirical and objective way. Modernism challenged the church as the only way people can find the truth.

Modernism is a worldview in which people believe that it is possible to find essential objective facts (Freedman & Comb 1996:20). Modernism is known by its positivistic search for truth, reality and knowledge which can be clearly discovered through scientific methods.

Followers of Modernism believe that truth can be found through scientific methods. After those methods have been put in place they start to generalize that scientific methods are the only means to obtain objective truth. "Objectivity of the modernist world view, with its on facts, replicable procedure and generally applicable rules, easily ignores the specific, localized meaning of individual people" (Freedom & Comb 1996:21).

1.7.2.2. Postmodernist epistemology

Postmodernism is a way of thinking that rejects the modernistic way of thinking. “It represents a questioning of and rejection of fundamental assumptions of modernism...” (Burr 1995:12). Especially the assumption of the possibility of finding an absolute truth as mentioned on previous section.

Kuhn writes about absolute truth, “There can be no brute facts and unitary truth because facts and truth depending on ‘ways of seeing the world’” (Durrheim 1996:177). (Freedman & Combo 1996:33) say “since we cannot objectively know reality, all we can do is to interpret experience.

Every truth or reality discovery will be localized in a particular context. (Chan 2007:307), put it this way, “all we have is truth that is essentially an social construct made up of raw materials supplied by historical and social conditions” The truth that people embrace today will be seen differently or interpreted differently by people living in another context, or it will be interpreted differently by the next generation.

Postmodernism acknowledges contextuality and the crucial interpretation of experiences. “Knowledge is local and contextual” (Hodge & Deregotes 2008:107

Postmodernism rejects the idea that the individual has access to the truth out there Chan (2007:307). Instead of objective truth, postmodernism prefers truths, depending on where one stands, culturally and historically, the truth will always be perspectival. “In literary criticism, it also led us to the idea that there could be no ‘true’ reading of a poem or

novel, that each person's interpretation was necessarily as good as the next" (Burr, 1995:13).

Postmodernism believes in pluralism, they say that scientific methods cannot be the only way knowledge is shaped. As Gergen, (1994:3) put it, "what is needed is an alternative conception of knowledge". What we see here is that knowledge cannot be produced by scientific means and it is not something that is in the individuals mind. "Knowledge is not something people possess somewhere in their heads, but rather, something people do together. Language is essentially shared activities" Gergen (1985:270).

Language plays an important role in the social construction of knowledge; the post modern discourse looks carefully into this process. "It (postmodernism) focuses instead on the contextuality of human knowledge and probes epistemological claims in the light of human limits" Chan (2007:306-319).

Postmodernists believe that there are limits to the ability of human beings to measure and describe the universe in any precise, absolute, and universally applicable way (Freedman & Comb 1996:21). Postmodernists strive for specific, localized meanings of individual people. They are not interested in universal ways of defining things but the meaning that is found within a context.

Postmodernism also rejects the idea that there can be an ultimate truth and reality. "Since we cannot objectively know reality, what we can do is interpret experience" (Freedman and Comb 1996:33).

Burr (1995:13) says that “postmodernism is a rejection of both the idea that there can be an ultimate truth and of structuralism, the idea that the world as we see it is the result of hidden structure”. People must be allowed to interpreting life as they live it. Every interpretation will depend on the context one lives in.

So, postmodernism is not striving for a single method of getting objective truths but likes to celebrate diversity. Art and literature for instance, for most of the time cannot be interpreted the same way. Every person will look at it from a different perspective and discover something that nobody else has been able to locate in a piece of art or literature. All of these different interpretations could not be considered to be neither right nor wrong; they all depend on the perspective of the interpreter. “One of the central tenets of postmodernism is the decentering of human rationality in favour of the plurality of ways of knowing” (Hodge & Deregotes 2008:106)

Modernism believes that “it is the individual who acquires knowledge, and thus we invest in educational institutions to train and expand the individual mind” (Gergen, 1994:4). The impact of culture on the individual must be considered. Who a person is today could be because of the impact from his/her socialization process.

Modernism believes in individual mind power. In rejection of the issue of individual mind power, the postmodern temper promotes a holistic understanding of the human person that takes into account the physical, affective aesthetic, social-interactive, and spiritual dimensions Chan (2007:306-319).

The section will be looking into the importance of the language in postmodernism, social construction, and narrative research. Language has the power to create.

1.7.3. Language

Postmodernism believes that knowledge is socially constructed. It happens through the interaction of individuals. This interaction becomes possible through language (Anderson and Goolishian 1988:378) says: "Language does not mirror nature; language creates the nature we know". Through language, we create our reality and that reality will guide us how to think or act or how to interpret the world around us. "This movement accepts the fact that language has a constructive power, but considers this power to be dependent on, or the result of social and material constructions, social relations and institutionalized practices"(Demasure, & Muller, 2006:413).

Gergen (1999:33) explains language in this way, "the alternative is the language itself provides us with a way of structuring our experience of ourselves and the world, and that the concepts we use do not pre-date language but are made possible by it". It is true that human relations cannot be possible outside the use of language.

Erickson in Freedman and combs, (1996:12) is aware of the constitutive power of language. Language has the power to create human beings and concepts such as poverty and identity. This creative power shall be impossible without language.

Berger & Luckmann, (1966:37-39) have the following to say concerning language:

Everyday life is, above all, life with and by means of the language I share with [other people]. An understanding of language is thus essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life....Language is capable of becoming an objective repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience, which it can then preserve in time and transcends and transmit to following generations... Because of its capacity to transcend the "here and now," language bridges different zones within the reality of everyday life and integrates them into a meaningful whole... Language is capable of "making present" a variety of objects that are spatially, temporally, and socially absent from the "here and now"....Through language an entire world can be actualized at any moment.

Language has such a power to share with other people and enables us to understand each other. It connects the past and the present.

Freedman and Combs (1996:28) say it in this way, "To postmodernists, the only worlds that people can know are the worlds we share in language, and language is an interactive process, not a passive receiving of preexisting truths"

In social constructionism, language plays an important role. We listen to the meaning that comes through the language.

The next section is to look into the word deconstruction; the meaning, usage and how can it be used in postmodernist epistemology.

1.7.4. Discourse definition

Gergen (1999:48) describes a discourse as follows: "A discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce particular version events. Social constructionism focuses more on discourses in research. How people give meanings to the events will depend on the understanding of the discourse that is dominating in a particular locality."

According to Foucault's analysis: "discourses may be defined as sets of statements that construct objects and array of subject position" (Willig 2001:107).

Burr 1995:51 puts it this way about a discourse

These constructions, in turn, make available certain ways- of-seeing the world and certain ways-of-being in the world. Here, we see the power of discourses, they are like lenses depending which colour I have put on, if it is green, and then I will see greenish objects. Again, they position the individual. I become to see the world through these discourses and also I become what they emphasize or say who I am. ...our identity arises out of interactions with other people and is based on language.

1.7.5. Deconstruction

Post-modern is deconstructing patriarchal, gender, and cultural discourses that oppresses other voices. (Sampson, 1989:7) describes deconstruction as to undo, not to destroy. In deconstruction, we look at words and the meanings that had never been said or the hidden meanings of these words (Anderson & Goolishian (1988:380).

This new interpretation of words is welcomed. It likes to question and looks for an ultimate outcome that might bring another understanding and meaning into the context (Sampson 1989:8)

Chang and Phillips (1993:100) quotes Anderson and Goolishian's definition:

Deconstruction...is to... 'take apart the interpretive assumptions of system of meaning that you are examining...that reveals the assumption on which the model is based.' As these are revealed, you open space for an alternative understanding.

Caputo (1997:31) defined deconstruction in this way;

The meaning and mission of deconstruction is to show that things, texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs, and practices of whatever size and variety you require and does not have definable meanings and determinable mission that they are always more than any mission would impose, that they exceed the boundaries they currently occupy.

Any text has a hidden meaning that has not yet been revealed. To deconstruct a text is to find that hidden meaning. So, I can say that text does not say the same thing throughout generations.

What makes me feel encouraged about Derrida when he speaks about “the experience of the impossible” (Caputo 1997:32). We must never be trapped when we experience the impossible, but we should look, and there will be a way out. In the bible we read the following words, “...and nothing will be impossible for you” (Mt. 17:20).

Since deconstruction means unpacking, in this research we want to unpack through discourses relating to poverty, identity and cultural discourses poor people lived or live under.

1.7.6. Transversal rationality

In postmodern epistemology, our strength knowing that plurality is the way to go, not like modern epistemology that stresses singularity in knowledge. In transversal rationality, different disciplines can manage to have conversations in order to share their understanding. As Donald Capps put it in (Van Huyssteen, 2000:429), “transversality identifies different but equally legitimate ways of looking at issues or disciplines”. Here our different voices and strategies cannot stop us in working together for common good. Transversality looks for commonalities.

Shrag (1992:148) describes transversality in this way about transversal; “transversality has appeared on the scene as a recurring figuration of thought across the disciplines for some time”

Shrag (1992:148) is using different metaphors to explain the transversal rationality. These are the metaphors, he uses:

Mathematicians define transversality as a generalization of orthogonality, enabling a line to intersect two or more lines or surfaces without achieving coincidence.

Physiology employs the grammar of transversality in describing the networking of bands of fibres.

In anatomy the term is used to define the lateral movements of vertebra.

Physicists make use of the concept of transvers mass in working out the ratio of accelerating forces.

In philosophy the concept of transversality has been used to describe the dynamics of consciousness and the interplay of social practices.

In all the metaphors above, we see the following: interrelated senses of lying across, extending over, intersecting, meeting and converging without achieving coincidence (Shrag 1992:149).

Felix Guattari (in Shrag 1992:152) uses psychiatric practice where different people join forces in helping in healing the patient. There are doctors, assistant doctors, Nurses, administration, patients, parents, pharmacies. All of these people represent different disciplines but they manage to network together.

Van Huyssteen (2007:23), has stated that “a postfoundationalist notion of rationality thus creates a safe space where our different discourses and actions are seen at times to link up with one another...”. The postfoundationalist notion of rationality is to allow communication amongst different rationalities. It can be seen as an interdisciplinary

reflection thus claims to be a viable third epistemological option beyond the extremes of absolutism and the relativism of extreme forms of pluralism (Van Huyssteen 2007:24).

I think, what make this possible is the value that different disciplines give to each other. There is a realization that the solution depends on interrelations with one another. No discipline can claim to be the only rationality that brings answers.

1.8. Social constructionism

It is very hard, to describe the concept of social constructionism because it can mean different things to different people, even for those who work within the paradigm.

My understanding of social constructionism is that, it deals with how a perceived reality is developed in a particular context. The reality is form when there is interaction of people within society. This suggests that reality will differ from one society to another, because reality is formed within the context. “Social constructionist view of reality as subjective (i.e., created and understood within the context of individuals’ personal experiences with their world)” O’Connor, Thomas St. James, et. Al (2004:17, 23). The universal truth has not been promoted in social constructionism.

A major focus of social constructionism is to uncover the ways in which individuals and groups participate in the creation of their perceived social reality. (Demasure & Muller 2006:413) they stress the power of interaction.

Berger and Luckmann (1966:3) argues that all knowledge, including the most basic taken-for-granted common sense knowledge of everyday, is derived from and maintained by social interactions. Reality is not divinely given, but has been created as people talk. Reality is socially constructed by people living together in particular cultural context.

Freedman and Combs speaks about the “community of knowers” (Freedman & Combs 1996:20). The realities that we perceive as objective reality is being created in the community, therefore there is no objective reality because every community will see and understand the dynamics of another community differently from the understanding shared by that other community of itself. As the knowers come together, they create a perceived reality and truth. “In other words, people, together, construct their realities as they live them” (Freedman & Combs, 1996:23)

Kuhn says, in Durrhein (1996:177) “there can be no brute facts and no unitary truth because facts and truth depend on ‘ways of seeing the world’. According Kuhn, there are many truths, depending where you are standing or where you are looking from. One’s worldview will tell you what the truth is. Modernists strive for objective reality and truth but postmodernists celebrate diversity, which are many truths according to our cultural contexts.

Language plays an important role in the social constructionism process. The perceived reality in order to be formed needs more than one person to interact. The interaction without language would be impossible. “Micro social constructionism focuses on the role of microstructures and the use of language in interaction” (Demasure & Muller,

2006:413). Language has a constructive and transformative power.

Social constructionists have a deconstruction agenda. They like to unpack things both negative and positive. They like to see the possible alternative story (Muller 2001:79). In the coming section I would like to show the difference between social constructionism and cognitive constructivism.

1. 9. Theological positioning

My theological positioning is within postfoundationalist theology. This is in the same line of thought with a social constructionist worldview. It is saying that knowledge is socially constructed.

The reason for my theological positioning is that it is not based on foundationalist epistemology or on a non-foundationalist approach to ministry. It will be a theology that develops in practice. Come with me as I explore my theological positioning

1.9.1. Theology

What is the meaning of theology? It means a scientific study of people's faith in and religious statement about God. "Teaching concerning God or the study concerning God" (Grenz 1994:3) Human beings cannot study God, but they can study the language people use to describe God. As, we study people's knowledge about God, we come to the point

where we will ask ourselves the question how do human beings know?

Heyns and Pieterse (1990:3) stated that “theology is combination of two Greek words-theo, meaning God and logos, meaning word”. The question is can man study God and understand God? (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:3) continued to say, since it is impossible to study God, so theology must be “defined as a scientific study of people’s faith in and their religious statements about God”. This argument made it possible to study theology scientifically.

Theology is about God as the God of human beings, and as a God who cares about all living people (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:4). Therefore, theology deals with all human relationships with one another and with God, the creator of the universe.

According to Barth’s model of theology is God’s disclosure to men in order to apply revelation of God completely and directly to their concrete situations of life (Browning, 199:5; Barth 1936:47-70). In this model theologians move from the revelation to humanity being theory to become practice. This is a modernistic way of doing theology. The focus is not on the context but on the bible, which is the foundation for universal discourse.

According to the post-modernist epistemology, knowledge can be described into two ways, constructivism regards knowledge as a human construct; social construction discourse describe knowledge as social construct. It means that the way people claim to know God, it would depend on the kind of knowledge, where is the epistemology that they

follow. In this research, I will follow the social constructionism discourse.

1.9.2. Post-modern theology

Since I work within a post-modern epistemology, even my theology will be post-modern in nature. This kind of theology will be more interested in the lived experiences that are taking place in society rather than abstract definitions. This style of theology will enable theologians to achieve their goals by following qualitative methods and narrative research.

Postmodern theology is to a greater extent into deconstruction. It likes to search for the hidden meanings in language. The text cannot give one fixed meaning. The reader can interpret a different meaning from the sense the writer has aimed at. The interpretation always will depend on the context. “According to Kant, space and time are two basic conditions for human experience, the environment for thinking, feeling and doing” (Van hoozer 2003:14).

Postmodernism theologians, have a role in deconstructing the modernistic discourses such as culture, patriarchy, and religion.

Postmodern theology rejects the notion of objective truth; it rather believes that there are many perceptions to a particular issue. Doing this research, it was essential that we listened to the people with whom we worked in our research project. Postmodern theology has the ability to help marginalized voices to be heard.

As a gospel minister, it sets me free to do ministry in a powerful way and assist in the transformation of the community. I approached these people whom I have been called to serve with an open mind, knowing that those people have the answers for their lives. I am in the situation to listen to the language and can discern the meaning that has been given through meaning that has been given through these interacting within the context.

I will also bring in the story of God into the community, and the story of God must never impose on the people we are researching with. The story of God is always an open-ended story. The story of the community that I serve as a minister combined with the story of God can convey a new story that could be transformational and be the story of hope.

The bible has been advanced as the only truth which cannot be opposed or interpreted differently. This kind of theology causes people to be intolerant towards those who understand and interpret theology differently.

In this research I and my co-researchers will take a closer look at a theology that will be able to take the context into consideration. How other people interpret their society and where does God come into being in their context.

1.9.3. Postfoundationalism: Beyond conflict and consonance

I have chosen to work from a postfoundationalist epistemology because of the following reasons that have been stated.

Van Huyssteen 2000:430 has stated that foundationalist epistemology follows the transversality which justifies and urges an acknowledgement of multiple patterns of interpretation as one moves across the borders and boundaries of different disciplines. He continues saying the postfoundationalist epistemology claims to point beyond those boundaries of the local community, group, tradition, or culture toward a plausible form of interdisciplinary conversation.

In addition, a postfoundationalist model of rationality thus enables us to communicate across boundaries, from context to context, from one form of life to another, from one discipline to another (Van Huyssteen 2000:436).

According to my understanding, a postfoundationalist epistemology removes conflict amongst different disciplines and empowers the different rationalities of community to network for the common good of the humanity. Also, it sets people free from having to give a universal truth.

It is necessary for me to give a definition for foundation before I describe postfoundationalism. According to the description given by (Grenz and Franke, 2001:30), they are using the metaphor of a building. To build a house one needs a foundation that can carry the whole building.

Using the same pattern of thought, it is said knowledge needs a foundation that can be built on. The epistemological foundation must be based on basic beliefs or principles which cannot be questioned. The foundations of our faith are based on the universal truth. So, these principles will be followed in

the pursued of knowledge. This is the way knowledge can be acquired.

Some thinkers discarded foundational epistemology and in its place offered a nonfoundational approach claiming that, there cannot be a foundational approach because they say truth is relative (Grenz and Franke 2001:30). They mean that there are many truths out there.

Van Huyssteen (2000:430) describes postfoundationalism in the following manner: “Postfoundationalism in theological reflection thus claims to be a viable third epistemological option beyond the extremes of absolutism and the relativism of extremes forms of pluralism”.

Postfoundationalism avoids extremes in theological reflection. It gives a third epistemological approach to theology. It believes in an interdisciplinary approach for theological reflection. It cannot be defined by metaphors of foundationalism or nonfoundationalism (Van Huyssteen 1999:128).

What I like about postfoundationalism is that it allows us to come to our cross-disciplinary conversations with our strong beliefs, commitments, and even prejudices (Van Huyssteen, 2000:430). Postfoundationalist theology encourages multi-voices. Theology cannot be allowed to be isolated from a pluralist world. Modes of knowing cannot be found in one way.

Postfoundationalism is striving for different rationalities to dialoguing without competing with one another. Foundational epistemology made it so impossible for science and theology to have a dialogue because theology considered itself to be

holding onto the absolute truth and science is holding the same view. In this view, (Van Huyssteen 1998:34) put it in this way “postfoundationalist model rationality thus preserves the idea of progress and the idea that rational beliefs are based on good evidence, although there are now different sources of evidence for different claims”.

These sources of evidence must be in a healthy dialogue in order to find a common good in each source of evidence. There will be some differences but here for the most part it is better to concentrate in commonalities, which are the things that joined us together rather than the things that separate us.

In order to move beyond the epistemologies of foundationalism and nonfoundationalism, I will list the three dimensions of rationality that are crucially relevant for modes of knowledge: the cognitive, the evaluative, and the pragmatic (Van Huyssteen 1999:128). Theologians must give good reasons for their beliefs, good reason for their theoretical and moral choices, and good reasons for acting in a particular way.

Postfoundationalist theology believes in an interdisciplinary approach in our theological reflection.

Van Huyssteen, 2000:428-429 continues explaining about postfoundationalism:

First, it acknowledges contextuality and embeddedness of all our reflection in human culture and, therefore, in specific or confessional traditions.

Second, it takes seriously the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience or experiential understanding and the way that tradition shapes the epistemic as well as nonepistemic values that inform our reflection, our thoughts about God, and what some of us believe to be God's presence in the world.

Third, it allows us to explore freely and critically the experiential and interpretative roots of our beliefs from our deep commitments and to discover patterns in our lives and thought that might be consonant with the biblical paradigm. The persuasiveness of these patterns will be taken up in critical theological reflection, where their problem-solving ability will be evaluated and judged in an interpersonal and cross-contextual conversation.

Fourth, rationality itself can now be seen as a skill that enables us to gather and bind together the patterns of our interpreted experience through rhetoric, articulation, and discernment. Also, Van Huyssteen (1998: 24) stated that “finding a good reasons for hanging on to certain beliefs, good reasons for making certain moral choices, and good reasons for acting in certain ways”

1.9.4. Practical theology

Browning (1996:8) says that human nature is practical in thinking. Human beings never start their thinking from abstract and technical thinking but from a practical position.

Theory is an abstraction from practice. Practical theology must start with practice, it means that we begin with reflecting on concrete situation and we move to God's story. In doing practical theology, we move from practice to theory and back to practice. "Practice-theory-practice" (Browning 1996:9).

Practical theology is more than applying word over context and is more on reflecting on a concrete situation and how the context thinks about God and His presence. I believe that God has been working in the context before I came. There will be more meaning created as I work with people.

Heyns and Pieterse (1990:7) practical theology as follows, "practical theology interprets the interaction between gospel and people". (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:7) continued saying the "practical theologian wants to know whether the preacher understands the audience and its context properly"

Ballard, (1992:29) described the work of practical theology this way, "The special task of practical theology is to start with the concrete, historical, immediate reality critically evaluating and enabling the practical life of the church in all its forms, drawing on the findings of fundamental, historical, and systematic theology".

Practical theology should start with real life experiences. (Ballard 1992:31) continues saying that practical theology goes beyond theory and practice, but it concerns itself with constant dialogue between conceptual frameworks that interpret experience and the evidence that has to be

accounted for. Also, it is about interpreting those experiences to find meaning.

Heyns and Pieterse (1990:9) argues that practical theology is a science just like other fields, they say, “practical theology is a science because it has its own field of study, develops its own practical theological theories and applies its own of scientific methods”. The practical theologian will identify the problem in a specific context (in praxis). And will go and search the theory (theorise) about the problem and to come up with applicable methods to find the solution of the concern.

Heyns and Pieterse 1990:11 have summarised theology as follows:

- Scientific work is a human business. It is performed by human beings and consists of human reflection on subjects accessible to the human mind.
- The theology is a science in the ordinary human sense. To describe it as the queen of the sciences is arrogant.
- Theology is a scientific study of people's faith in God and human statements about God.
- Practical theology is a variegated spectrum. Each colour and shade represents a field of study.
- Practical theology is a field of theological study which investigates theology from a specific point of view.
- Practical theology studies people's religious actions. More particularly, it is concerned with communicative actions in the service of the gospel.
- Practical theology focuses on the religious praxis of church and society.

- Practical theology is critical theory of praxis.
- Practical theology is a science

Van der Ven (1993:34) quoted Luther saying “real theology was practical”. Theology must start in a concrete situation, meaning that theology that is only theoretical is not enough or cannot bring transformation into the lives of people

1.9.5. Exploring Practical wisdom and understanding

Browning (1996:39) is using Gadamer’s hermeneutical theory which breaks the theory-practical model of humanistic learning. The understanding start within our current situation, such as facing a crisis in life and to be able to understand that crises we should reflect about the past and present in order to understand what is happening.

To understand we must follow the hermeneutic theory of Gadamer of moving from practice-to theory and back to practical. It means that theory must start from practice. The specific context must guide us in how to find the right theory and the methods to be used in that specific locality

1.9.6. Postfoundationalist Practical theology

In the previous section, I have looked into theology, postmodern theology and postfoundationalism. In this section I would like to look into postfoundationalist practical theology. It is a practical theology developed by Prof. Muller using the postfoundational theology taken from Van Huyssteen. Muller

(2005:73) argues that this kind of practical theology happens whenever and wherever there is a reflection on practice, from the perspective of God's presence".

Muller (2005:3) continues by saying "it can be very spontaneous, informal, and local". Postfoundationalist practical theology is always happening in that moment of practice. It is not imposed on the context but is born in the context. It is always local and situated. The reason that I have chosen postfoundationalist practical theology is that it is taking place in a specific location and context and not imposed.

Muller (2005:77) put it this way, "this way of thinking is always concrete, local, and contextual, but at the same time reaches beyond local contexts to transdisciplinary concerns".

Muller (2005:78) formulated the minimum requirements for postfoundationalist practical theology as follows:

Locally contextual

Socially constructed

Directed by tradition

Pointing beyond the local

Muller (2005:81) gives us example of practical theology research processes by creating seven movements. My research will follow this process.

1.10. Narrative theory, Ricoeur, and hermeneutics

In this section, I would like to look into narrative theory which has been constructed by Ricoeur and as a way of interpreting life (hermeneutics)

Ricoeur (1991:20) says that he is starting by saying “stories are recounted and lived; life is lived not recounted”. As he continues, he will clarify the relation between living and narrating.

Ricoeur uses a concept called emplotment, this concept has been taken from Aristotle. In Greek it is *muthos* which signifies both fable (in the sense of an imaginary story) and plot (in the sense of a well constructed story) (Ricoeur 1991:21). He mentions that plot is not a static structure but an operation, an integrating process, which shall be completed only by the reader, that is to say, in the living receiver of the narrated story.

Ricoeur (1991:21) continues to explain the operation of emplotment as a “synthesis of heterogeneous elements”. Ricoeur speaks of a synthesis between the events or incidents which are multiple and the story which is unified and complete. All of the different events become one story, this means to understand the story we must understand all of the events and contexts of the narrator and the reader.

Also, Ricoeur (1991:21) brings in the issue of time. He says there are two sorts of time; on one hand, a discrete succession that is open and theoretically indefinite, a series of incidents; on the other hand, the story told presents another temporal aspect characterized by the integration, culmination and closure owing when there is a new interpretation, he calls that a configuration.

Ricoeur (1991:26) stresses the world of the reader and the world of the text. He is stating that the significance of a narrative stems from the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader. He is saying also that in this intersection is where the narrative's capacity to transfigure the experience of the reader rests. The intersection will usher us into the new world of experience.

Ricoeur (1991:27) explains his hermeneutics as a process that happens in three stages. The first is called prefiguration or pre-narrative. Prefiguration is the world of the reader before she/he reads the story. The intersection bring forth the configuration, this is place of the construction of a different story. The configuration will birth a new story that is refiguration.

Gadamer put it this way in (Ricoeur 1991:27) "the horizon of expectation and the horizon of experience continually confront one another and fuse together". In understanding the text Gadamer speaks about 'fusion of horizons'.

1.10.1. Narrative research

The narrative research mode has been informed by postmodernism and rejects modernist conceptions of truth, certainty, and objectivity (da Costa, Nelson, Rudes, & Guterman 2007:70; Müller et al 2001:67).

The narrative approach has been influenced by social constructionism, which maintains that knowledge is constitutive, intersubjective, and language-based (da Costa, Nelson, & Guterman 2007:70).

Also, narrative research is situated within the qualitative or interpretive research method (Moen 2006:5). A qualitative approach means that researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Leedy and Ormrod, 2004:147). The goal of qualitative approach is to ‘describe and understand’ (Müller, & Schoeman 2004:8).

In the narrative research process, one of the main characteristic is collaboration (participation) between the researcher and his/her research subjects (Moen 2006:6). It does not consider research subjects as informant. Research subjects are important participants.

Babbie (2007:301) states that participation between the researcher and the people being researched is participatory action research, he defines it as “an approach to social research in which the people being studied are given control over the purpose and procedures of the research: intended as counter to the implicit view that researchers are superior to those they study”. This kind of research approach, gives equal power to researcher and those who are been researched, they are not just the object of the research but they must own the process of the research.

Actually, the people who are been researched must define the problem, methods of dealing with the problem and to come up with the solutions to their problem (Babbie 2007:301). In this regard the outcome of the research is not only beneficial to the researcher but is beneficial to the people who are been researched. In this way, the people become co-researchers

In narrative research both the stories of the researcher and co-researchers or participants are important. They should be well considered when it comes to interpretation. (Moen 2006:6) put it this way, “multivoiced of narrative would appear clearer than it would if the researcher and the research subject have joint understanding of the narratives that occur during the inquiry process”. Müller put in this way “...the narrative researcher has subjective integrity in mind and strives for participatory interaction” (Müller et. al 2001:78).

Ricoeur (1981) has provided a useful theory that helps us to understand this process, as has been quoted by (Moen 2006:6), here is the collaboration process between the researcher and collaborator.

First, in the dialogic collaboration process between the researcher and the research subject, one or more stories are written down and become fixed in the text. This means that the narrative in question is no longer tied to the moment in which it occurs.

Second, by fixing the narrative into a text it becomes “autonomized”: It has been detached from the moment it occurred and has assumed consequences of its own.

Third, the narrative can, in this way, assume an importance that goes beyond the initial situation and becomes relevant in other contexts.

Fourth, the narrative that is fixed in a text is thus considered an “open work” where the meaning is addressed to those who read and hear about it.

Narrative means telling a story of a sequence of events that is significant for the narrator or his/her audience (Moen 2006:4). According to sociocultural theory, there is an interlink between the individual and his/her context.

According to Moen 2006:4, 5, three basic claims about
narrative research

First claim is that human beings organize their experiences of the world into narratives.

Second claim, narrative researchers maintain that the stories that are told depend on the individual's past and present experiences, her/his values, the people stories are being told to, the addressees, when and where they are being told

Third claim, closely connected to the second, concerns the multivoicedness that occurs in the narratives.

A narrative researcher wants to listen to the story of culture, context, and individual story. In this sense, the researcher will be able to understand stories of those we are researching well because; the stories will come from the culture and the context which we lived in. In this research project, I will listen to the stories of people living in the poverty stricken community of Nellmapius.

Narrative researchers believe that human beings are interpretive in nature. They are able to interpret their experiences, when the researcher works with participants; they listen to their narratives very well. "Narrative research is, consequently, focused on individuals' assigned meaning to their experiences through story telling" (Moen 2006:5).

Narrative research is an ongoing hermeneutic or interpretive process.

The story telling cannot be possible without the use of language. The narrative research process places a high value on language, which without it, participation between the researcher and the participant will be totally impossible.

Narrative research rejects the notion that there is a single, dominant, or static reality but rather, a number of realities that are constructed in the process of interactions and dialogue (Moen 2006:5).

Narrative research affirms that knowledge is social construction, it takes place during the interaction which is language based.

1.11. Social constructionism and postfoundationalism

Both of these two concepts share the same thoughts, even though they are from a different context. This is three of socially constructed interpretations and meaning. They listen to the stories of people who live in a specific locality and context (Demasure and Muller 2006:417).

1.12. Ethical positioning

In this research process, I and my co-researchers will work together as partners with an equal position. “We want to be researchers who do not “pathologize” or “victimize” their narrators” (Muller Van Deventer and Human 2001:77). We do not call those who do research with a “research

population” but we call them co-researchers. I will value them and respect them.

The research outcome must serve those whom we work with. Even though I will receive my degree, these people will also be helped from their participation. The narrator outlook must prevail. “Researcher lose nothing in sharing the process reaffirming the narrator’s authority of self which naturally is interactive and collaboration rather than autocratic” (Smythe & Murray 2005:5).

I must explain the process to my co-researchers because without understanding the process it will be hard for them to take ownership of the process. I want also to hear from them what they feel about the process, they will have the freedom to stop being my co-researchers at any time.

The consent form will be explained to them before they can be my co-researchers. I will strive for honesty and transparency. My thesis will also be available to them at any time, they wish to read it and comment on it.

1.13. Research design

My practical theology research process will follow the seven movements developed by Julian Muller; they were developed out of postfoundationalist practical theology (Muller 2005:83). The seven movements fit well with my epistemology and my theological positioning.

1.13.1. Specific context is defined

The research process starts with a specific context. My context in this research will be co-researchers drawn from the Nellmapius community. These are the people who live in this community. I will listen to the co-researchers about living in a poverty stricken community and the discourses that are found in this context.

1.13.2. In-context experiences are listened to and described

I will listen to the stories of my co-researchers. My main aim here is to hear the experiences of those who dwell in this context. I would love to know what they think about poverty and how poverty affects their identity formation. A narrative research process will be followed.

1.13.3. Interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with “co-researchers”.

In this research process, my aim is not only to listen to the description of the experiences, but it is more on interpretation/meaning realized by my co-researchers. My co-researchers must give meaning to their own situation of poverty and how that shaped the lives of those who have grown in the context saturated with poverty. I will read literature, culture of the context and art. Discourses must be looked into.

1.13.4. A description of experiences as it is continually informed by traditions of interpretation.

We strive to know the discourses that are in Nellmapius the informed perceptions and behaviour. It will make us understand why people act the way they have been acting. Interpretation of the discourses will be essential, and also theological discourses will be listened too.

1.13.5. A reflection on religious and spiritual aspects, especially on God's presence, as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation.

The aim is to listen to the co-researchers understanding of God's presence. It should never be the researchers forced effort on co-researchers. I will listen to any mention of God and follow it up in order to understand. I must hear what they think about God in their situation of poverty.

1.13.6. A description of experience, thickened through interdisciplinary investigation.

Postfoundationalist practical theology strives to have a conversation with other theological disciplines and other disciplines. It listens to other stories from these disciplines and thickens our ministry in the community. Interdisciplinary research will achieve the following: literature study, conversation with colleagues from different disciplines.

1.13.7. The development of alternative interpretations, that point beyond the local community

This method of doing theology is not only describing and interpreting experiences, but is also about alternative interpretation. It means that even though working in a specific context, our alternative story can be used beyond that particular context. The usage should follow a narrative approach and social constructionist way of doing things. It will not be about imposing our findings on other communities.

1.14. Profiles of my co-researchers

I have chosen nine people to be my co-researchers. I have 3 youths and 3 couples and one disabled person in my co-researchers group. All of them live in Nellmapius. They all have the same experiences. I believe that we will understand a lot about Nellmapius and also how we can discover the preferred story for our community.

1.14.1. Miss J

Miss JM is young lady in her early twenties, raised by her mum who works in the Indian supermarket. Parents separated while she was very young. Miss JM completed her diploma in production management and she got a job with ABSA bank and also she is one of my competent leaders in the church.

1.14.2. Mr. S and Mrs Z

Are a young couple in their twenties. Mr. S found a job as a financial analyst with one of successful company and Mrs. Z

remains at home, bringing up their baby boy. They are the youth leaders in the church.

1.14.3. T's family

Mrs T. works in old age home and Mr. T after long a time being unemployed, is now employed with SAPS as a clerk. He has one hand; he got injured while he was a small boy.

1.14.4. Mr. P

Mr P is young man in his twenties. He has done engineering and is working with one of the successful companies in South Africa as one of their directors. He is also helpful in church.

1.14.5. Mr. TN

He is in his twenties, and brother to Miss JM. He is working for a pharmaceutical company. He is also studying computer science with UNISA.

1.14.6. MR.JR

He is in his forties married with three children, and one of his children is disabled. He is a deputy principal in a school. He is one of the leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church.

1.14.7. Mrs J

Mrs J is the wife of Mr JR. She is at 40yrs. She works as a teacher in one of the Primary Schools in Nellmapius. I have known her for a long time

1.15. Journey of my life-story

As a narrative researcher, it is important to share my own personal story so that my co-researchers will be able to share their stories with me. Prof. Muller says he cannot be truthful to the narrative approach, if he is not willing to share his story (Muller, 2001:1). Therefore, as I share my story of the past, it will also help with the creation of a new story which it might become a better story of hope or with a better outcome.

The question of bias in the sharing of a story is very serious. Some researchers, avoid this by what is called “self-extricate” and some researchers especially those who work in a narrative research approach speak about “self-insertion” or projection in a good sense (Josselson, Lieblich, and McAdams 2003: 29). Good projection will assist me in not being biased regarding my own story. I will treat all stories equally. I was born in the poorest of the poor family. I felt bad about being for been born in my family. We slept without good food and we did not have proper housing or property because of the apartheid rule of the day.

My parents sent me to school up to standard 4. My life seemed hopeless as regards the future. I did not think I was an important person. In January 1979 I accepted the Lord as my personal saviour. He changed my perception about who am I. I started to read the bible. I have learned that God made me in His image and likeness. I regained my importance and began to see the good that was in me. The new identity of my life was reconstructed through allowing God’s story to come into my life.

There was a family in our congregation who was without children, they adopted me and they sent me back to school. They helped me for two years. I remember that after those two years, I was supposed to go to standard 6. I had no uniform and books. God touched other people in the congregation and they helped me with all of that.

Even though I lived in that hopeless story, today I am telling a new story of success and victory. I am completing my PhD in practical theology. The new preferred story gives me the power to face every challenge and to make more free choices that come in to my life. The preferred identity makes me feel happy with my life.

Now, I feel freedom, self-worth and self-acceptance. I now sense that nothing is impossible for all the people who believe (Mark 9:23). Today, I am glad that I'm able to face every mountain.

1.15.1. Why share the journey of my life story?

As I have already mentioned it is important for me to share my story because, it gives me the courage to go on in life. According to Muller, story telling shapes our identity (Muller 1999). The sharing of my story builds me a narrative research identity. It will empower my co-researchers to share their own stories without any fear. It will help me not to be biased towards my own story.

The story telling has the following; a past, a present and the future. Development of the story is very important. As I share my story, I believe that my story will develop. In my research,

since I use the narrative approach, I will ask my co-researchers to tell their story I must first tell my story, and I believe that this will help them (co-researchers) to feel free to share their stories.

1.16. The context of Nellmapius

1.16.1. Population

This is a township that is situated on the east side of Pretoria. It started around 1994; originally it was for coloured people. Nellmapius is dominantly African with a few coloureds and whites.

The population of Nellmapius is about 37 000 and there are about 10 000 houses and many houses still coming (Statistic SA). There are about 1735 bond houses in Nellmapius and there is still a need for more. Reconstruction and Development project (RDP) houses are in the majority and there will be more of them being built. People who live in RDP houses are busy developing their RDP houses, some of them are bigger than others and those are in the bond houses section (Nellmapius proper).

Development is very slow in this community. There are three primary schools in Nellmapius and a high school still under construction. The community has only one clinic which is too small.

Nellmapius consists of mainly RDP houses these are the houses that the government has rented to poor people and the loan houses for those who qualify to get a loan of money

from the banks. There are many people living in the backyards around the RDP houses, especially foreigners.

Unemployment is a reality in the community of Nellmapius. I have observed that many people have different skills yet unemployed. In this research we aim to understand why some people are still living in poverty even though they have skill e.g. sewing.

1.16.2. Economic aspects

In Nellmapius economic development is very slow. So far, we do not have any big businesses in the area. The only business that can be seen is informal business, operating in an area that has not been zoned for business.

1.16.3. Educational aspect

Nellmapius has three high primary schools only and a high school still under construction. All early learning centres are being run from homes which do not fit the criteria set out by the city council of Tshwane.

1.16.4. Health aspect

Nellmapius being the fastest growing township has only one clinic servicing the whole area. The clinic work is only available during office hours and is not equipped to serve adults. The clinic is too small.

1.16.5. Early Childhood Development centres

Most of the preschools are been run from private houses. Some of them came out of poverty alleviation and was not intended to provide proper child education. They cannot be registered with the city council. In my church, we are busy trying to build a world-class development centre.

1.16.6. Taverns

They are many taverns in Nellmapius. Drunkenness is one of the problems that is destroying our community. Young and old suffer from alcohol abuse.

1.17. Outlines of chapters

Chapter 1: Positioning

In this chapter I spoke about the reason why I am writing this research process. It came out of great concern for the people to whom I am ministering who are facing the issue of poverty daily. It appeared that poverty formed their identity. How can the chain of poverty be broken in their lives.

Also, the chapter speaks more about my theological and philosophical position which will be on postmodern, postfoundationalism, social constructionism, narrative approach, and postfoundationalist practical theology.

Chapter 2: Describing the problem

In chapter 2 I have written more on poverty, the effects of poverty, identity formation, and how poverty affects identity formation.

Chapter 3: Community transformation

This chapter, is about how we can eradicate poverty? Looking more at development, transformation, participation, empowerment and how can we feel good about ourselves

Chapter 4: Experiences are listened to and described

In this chapter, I concentrate on the narratives of my co-researchers. How they tell them and give meaning to their experiences.

Chapter 5: Interdisciplinary conversation

In this chapter I had conversation with people from other disciplines especially those who are involved in Nellmapius. Also, I go beyond the context.

Chapter 6: Pointing beyond the context and preferred stories

In postfoundationalist practical theology, what matters most is the narratives from a specific context, but we have discovered they can be used in other contexts

Chapter 7: My reflection on my research

In this chapter I reflect on my work and self.



CHAPTER 2:

DESCRIBING THE PROBLEM - POVERTY

2.1. Introduction

Poverty is a crime against humanity. (Smith 2005:3) says it is “the systematic exploitation, theft, and abuse not only by the rich but by the government officials ostensibly there to help: the poor must pay larger bribes, as a share of their income, than the rich just to survive”. Because of poverty people have to live a life that they do not want. It puts them at the mercy of abuse, violence and oppression. It leads to a life of fear and anxiety (Pieterse 2001:45). Every nation of the world should fight against poverty and its causes.

Erasmus (2005:143) stated that “in pre -democratic South Africa the ideology of apartheid protected the interests of the minority white Afrikaner people of the national party”. The majority of the people of South Africa were forced to live in poverty.

After the first democratic election people were politically free but economically still living in slavery (Nieman 2006:597) stated that “Martin Luther King promoted the concept that freedom without economic empowerment and access to socio-economic opportunity and a resource was not freedom”.

Pick et al. (2008:165), “The millennium Declaration pledges to free men, women, and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty”. This is one of the goals set by the United Nations to be fulfilled in 2015. Poverty is a crime because it causes so many social ills in

the world. “Poverty is still the gravest insult to human dignity” (Kane & Kirby 2003:42).

In Luke 4: 18, it is written “the spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor...” Jesus declared that His ministry was to focus on poor people. He came to set them free from the shackles of poverty. Jesus valued those people who were not valued by the systems of the time.

Furthermore, it can be put it this way, “Poverty was seen as denying people adequate food, housing, education, and health care, and being responsible for forcing people to lead an undesirable lifestyle, such as child prostitute”(Delton et al. 2008:498). Poverty removes dignity from the human being created in the image of God. There should be a multi approach in the fight against poverty. I do not think it could a uni-approach in a battle against poverty and its causes.

The ANC-led government inherited poverty and inequality in 1994. (Nieman 2006:597) says almost half (48%) of South Africans live in conditions of extreme poverty. The chances and opportunities do not exist to lead a long and healthy life with the freedom to enjoy a decent standard of living with dignity, self-respect and respect for others.

A major concern for the African National Congress led government was how to deal with the main issues though there have been many interventions through creating policies and programs of action not enough has been done.

How can a church community get involved in helping the poor people and assist in working for equality for all people.

2.2. Definition of poverty

The question is what do we mean when we speak about poverty? Poverty remains a difficult phenomenon to be defined because it could be defined in many ways depending on the context people live in. “However, poverty with its complexities has remained a major challenge both to the church and the governments of the world” (Christian 1999:1). Poverty is a complex phenomenon and it is not easy to define but I will look into different meanings from literature and from my co-researchers Understanding the meaning of poverty can help us to declare a war against poverty.

Poverty could mean the following: “the inability of individuals, households, or entire communities, to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living” (Pieterse 2001:30; cf. May 2000:5). Here the poverty has been defined as an economical challenge. People cannot eat, dress, have a house, and go on holiday, as they wish.

People who live in poverty lack sufficient resources to satisfy the minimum standard of living. The World Bank describes poverty “in terms of income and consumption levels”(Mubangizi 2008:175; Alcock 2006:64). One cannot afford to buy food and clothing. Children go to school without proper breakfast, which will make it difficult for a child to concentrate in class. I remember, going to school without breakfast and during the break I used to drink only water. “A logical starting point for any analysis of poverty is that essentially it is a lack of resources” (Christian 1999:19).

Poverty can also be divided into two categories: extreme poverty this is where the income falls below the threshold and less extreme or moderate is where the income falls between the extreme or moderate poverty and the upper poverty threshold. People in extreme poverty are always hungry and the people in less extreme poverty can only afford an unbalanced diet (Saha 200:268).

From my own experience, I have learned that there is nothing more stressful than as a father you more than fail to provide for your own children. Every time they needed something, as a father to have to say I do not have the money. On their birthdays, you cannot buy them a present or to take them out to lunch or dinner. You feel like crying, it is so stressing.

One of my co-researchers put it this way:

“Failing to provide for my family as a parent causes stress and sometimes you feel pains on your body” (Mr. T.)

According to the Oxford advanced learner's dictionary seventh edition poor means “having a small amount of something”. Poverty means a “state of being poor”. Poverty is a condition in which people find themselves. Most of the time poverty is beyond your own choice.

Kane & Kirby 2003:44 put it this way about poverty, absolute poverty is a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. The poorest people have been deprived of their life necessities.

Again, poverty is a complex amalgam of physical and spiritual pain, which robs the person and the community of dignity and meaning as much as the body of nourishment, shelter and beauty" (William, 1998:3; Hall 1982:92).

Also, poverty causes a spiritual pain. One does not accept himself/her. Poverty crushes who we are in our inner being. That is why we want to explore the relationship between identity formation and poverty.

The description of poverty goes beyond the income and consumption level that is being described in the following quote, "Poverty is about exclusion and power, about relationships and loss of self-respect, it is about lack of choice and limitation of freedom" (Forrester & Skene 1988: ix). Poor people are marginalized; it means that they cannot live in dominion life. By dominion life, I mean a fulfilled life and where one has the power of choice.

They have been excluded by those who have power. They are not able to make the choices that they have been given the power to choose by God. "Poverty as a lack of freedom to grow" (Jayakaran 1996:14). People who live in a poverty stricken community have no freedom to choose the life they wish to live, instead the rich make all the choices for the poor.

People who live in poverty have no power to choose the life they wish to live. So, poverty is about power relation, Paulo Freire (in Burkey 1993:30) said:

One must go beyond criteria based on indices
of per capita income as well as those which
concentrate on the study of gross income. The

basic elementary criterion is whether or not the society is ‘being for itself’, that is, ‘its political, economic and cultural decision-making power is located within’

Because of the more recent description of poverty the World Bank has expanded its definition of poverty to include the language of voiceless, powerlessness, risks and vulnerability (Mubangisi 2008:175).

Also, human poverty can be described as a lack of opportunities and capabilities (Saha 2008:269). The doors of changing their lives are closed. Even though, they wish to do something about their lives, they found themselves chained.

2.2.1. Poor people’s definitions of poverty

People who are living in poverty feel that they are not consulted when major decisions are made about them. (Christian 1999:3).

The authorities have sold the land; they have lived and farmed on all their lives. There was no consultation with them before the land was sold they were never considered. “the landless do not have a say in the sale of their land, even though it is their work at stake” (Christian 1999:3). This agricultural land belonged to the government. The poor people were using the land for farming on it. It was like owning the land. Every decision that would have been made, they should have been consulted, But the land was sold without them being consulted.

Being poor means that one has no power because we can see the land been taken by those who are in power without talking to the poor. “They are gradually being alienated from the land they belonged to. Today, their agricultural tools lies silent in the dark corners of their houses, reminding them that they have become tools in the hands of the urban elite” (Christian 1999:3).

Poor people have a perception that those who come to assist them, treat them as people who are lazy people and ultimately choose to leave things as they are (Meadows 2003:50). Again deprived people accuse those who say that they are there to help them, that they say that come with a attitude that poor people are not capable off bringing about change themselves (Meadows 2003:50).

Impoverished people feel that their voice must be heard by the governments and development agencies. Governments sometime only do things to get votes and agencies only do things to please donors (Meadows 2003:51).

The poor say ‘listen to us’-say the poor. ‘Please slow down’ (Meadows 1999:49).

My co-researchers says:

“*Poverty is a choice*” (Mr.TN).

Meaning that the power to change is inside you. Let us stop blame-shifting. Let us stop blaming apartheid. He continues by saying, there are doctors, lawyers, and politicians who have lived during the apartheid era, and they managed to receive education.

2.2.2. Definition of poverty by non poor

Non poor people called the poor by many names which labels or marginalize people in different ways. Non poor people name the poor as follows; uneducated, dirty, superstitious, homeless, destitute, indigenous, working poor, and so on (Myers 1999:58).

These labels encourage those who have money to decide what poor people need. I remember, in South Africa before the transition to a democracy Blacks in the country had no names. They were given the names that were suitable for their bosses. Literatures continue describing Blacks as follows:

As indigenous people, Blacks are behind in their thinking and they cannot plan properly.

As uneducated people, means that Blacks cannot work with metatheories because the undeveloped mind cannot think properly.

Most of the time, when poverty is under discussion, it is discussed as a phenomenon and no real attention is given to those who live in poverty (Muller 2009:20). There is no value given to those people who are poor.

The narrative approach is very much important in this regard because it chooses to listen to the stories of the same people who live in poverty. The narrative approach does not only listen to stories but it pays attention to the development of these stories. The development of the story can possibly bring alternative narratives (Muller 2009:20).

The narrative approach, if followed by the policymakers, would mean that they would include the poor in their decision making on how poverty can be eradicated. The narrative approach respects those people who are affected in the process of the research (Muller 2009:21).

Poverty has a dehumanising effect on people. As I listened to the narratives of poor people, one can hear that poverty removes the sense of being important. Also, poverty has no power to dehumanise if we move from phenomenon to the narratives of the poor (Muller 2009:22)

Whatever the negative effect poverty has on people, it can not take away the dignity of the poor person. The poor person is still a human being capable of reciprocating in relationships (Muller 2009:22). In this regard I would like to share my story, as a researcher because I grew up in poverty. The people who have been helping me are the poor themselves. I think the saying that says "*Motho ke motho ka batho*" meaning that a person is a person because of other people. I have seen that in my life.

The poor people not the rich bought me shoes, trousers, etc. I have learned that the poor people have the ability to assist, e.g. when my car stuck on the road the people who assisted me were the poor. According to my understanding poverty gives someone a sense of being a person.

The voices of the of the poor people have been silenced in Sub-Saharan African countries where poverty is analysed from beginning to end by civil servants whom are not affected by poverty, so the poor people fail to contribute to the debate on poverty(Saha 2008:269). Governments in Sub-Saharan

African countries are excluding or marginalizing the voices of the people who have been affected by poverty when making policies.

Understanding poverty will help the faith based organizations to respond positively when helping people to fight poverty. I believe co-operation between the church and the community will improve the standard of living of poor people.

The narrative approach in this regard can possibly make the voices of the poor heard. Poverty as a discourse is more than just the lack of money. In this research process the voices of poor people are very important.

2.2.3. Poverty as a discourse

There are some poverty discourses that were drawn from the definition of poverty. They are as follows:

- Poverty as exclusion. People who are poor have been excluded from the decision-making processes, excluded from political involvement, and excluded from economical participation.
- Poverty as voicelessness. People who live in poverty they do not have a say in policy-making.
- Lack of opportunities and capabilities. They do not have opportunities to use their capabilities as human beings.
- Limitation of freedom. They cannot exercise their freedom to improve themselves.

- Poverty as an unhealthy relationship. Poor people have a bad relationship with one another, with those who are in power, and with God.

My co-researcher said:

"I did not have a proper relationship with my father. There was a time when I had no one to listen to" (Mr. TN).

2.3. Global poverty

Alcock (2006:48) describes poverty as a global issue. Most of the time poverty has been discussed at national level, while poverty in itself is an international issue. There are a lot of inequalities in the world at large. In order to win the battle against poverty, the battle must be also global.

Smith (2005:1) has stated that “global poverty is immense”. He continues saying that about 2.25 billion people subsist on less than a dollar per day, and 2.8 billion-nearly half the population of the world live on less than two dollar per day. Half of the population of the world lives in poverty.

This is amazing statistics in a world where technology reigns. It is possible to move your money from one stock exchange to another in a second. We see other parts of the world where children are dying because of the lack of food. Some of them die because of preventable diseases (Simmons 1995:14). What an unfair world we are living in.

Simmons 1995:14 continued by saying in reality, the rich are becoming richer, while huge numbers of the poor become

poorer. One –fifth of the world’s population are living in the poorest fifty countries and now receive between them less than 2 per cent of the total global income.

2.4. Poverty trap or structural poverty

Structural poverty emphasises the social circumstances and social forces. Forces such as economic growth, labour market opportunities, educational provision, social security systems and political force (Alcock 2006:35). Most of the time, it is hard for an individual to fight these forces. They need policy action. It means the government must come up with systems that could facilitate the eradication of poverty.

Smith (2005:12-17) is outlining the 16 poverty traps or structural poverty as follows:

- Family child labour trap. If parents cannot be productive due to unhealthy and being unskilled, they will send their children to work so that they can provide for the family.
- Illiteracy trap. Here parents fail to send their children to school because of lack of money for the transport.
- Working capital traps. Lack of credit also plays a role in other poverty traps.
- Uninsurable-risk traps. Most of the poor farmers cannot afford the weather insurance. If you live in poverty, future preparation is not very important but I would like to see a solution now. The issue of having insurance for the future is not important now.

- Debt bondage traps. While credit is needed, the wrong kind of debt from scrupulous money-lenders can also be a trap. I am seeing it now, most of our professional people are in poverty because of uncontrollable debts.
- Information traps. Lack of access to information keeps the poor in poverty, and conditions of poverty prevent the poor from getting information needed to escape from poverty.
- Under nutrition and illness traps. If an under nourished person is too weak to work productively, her resulting wage is too small to pay for sufficient food, so they continue to work at a low productivity rate for low wages.
- Law-skill traps. Take for instance that there is no employer in the region who is seeking skilled workers for, as an example, basic manufacturing jobs, then there is no visible incentive for individuals to invest in attaining these skills.
- High fertility traps. If everyone around you is having many children, and there are few decent jobs to go around, then you must have many children to work for you.
- Subsistence traps. The alternative is to produce for distance markets.
- Farm erosion traps. The poor are so desperate for food that they have to overuse their land even though they know the results will reduce soil fertility and productivity the next year.

- Common property mismanagement traps. Lakes are overfished, forests are not managed sustainably, and land is overgrazed. Part of the problem is that the community management system has broken down.
- Collective action traps. Most of the time the community of the poor could improve their circumstances by working together on a project. This needs a leader who will organize, most of the time this is not possible because that require time and resources. Also, because the payoff for collective action goes to the group not to the individual leader, so that makes it very difficult for the individual to take the initial steps.
- Criminality traps. Youths without access to useful education and who see little future in legitimate work are drawn to gang membership and other cultures of criminality.
- Mental health traps. Depression and anxiety are pervasive amongst the poor in developing countries.
- Powerlessness traps. The poor will remain in poverty, not because on their own wish, but due to the wish of those who benefit from their poverty.

Structural poverty removes the cause of poverty from the poor people to the structures created by the government and institutions that make it impossible for the poor to change their poverty situation. There are no opportunities created for the poor people (Kane & Kirby 2003:110).

In the coming section, I would love to speak about Africa as this is the continent where I live and how poverty affects the people of this continent.

2.5. Africa

Africa though very rich in natural resources, but is the poorest continent in the world. The conditions of poverty are desperate in Africa. Most of the regions are living in extreme poverty and it has been estimated by the World Bank to have increased from 217 million in 1987 to 291 million in 1998. The World Bank is continuing by saying that in 2001, some 48 percent of the population was so absolutely poor, they were living on less than 1 dollar per day (Smith 2005:1).

The major cause of poverty in Africa was colonization by the rich nations of the world. Africa has been robbed by the process of colonization. “Colonialism was totalitarian since it controlled both the private and public spheres” (Wa Muiu, Mueni 2008:86). Africans lost their freedom as human beings. Their dignity was taken from them by Europe.

Europe had less interest in the people of Africa; they wanted to use Africa to enrich Europe. They had never industrialized Africa, except for South Africa where a minority of whites were still in charge (Wa Muiu Mueni 2008:86). This meant that all the raw materials were exported to Europe to be refined. And that process denied Africa the opportunity to be developed and made Africa unable to use its resources to empower Africans so that Africans can have the power to determine their future.

Because of the lack of industrialisation Africa has been unable to use its raw materials to provide for the people of this continent. If Africa had the skills to process its own resources, African power would enable her to influence other nations of the world.

Even the process of independence for the majority of the countries in Africa was controlled by Europeans, to the point of drafting constitutions that were in favour of the colonial power of that nation. The leaders were chosen by Europe in order that they could continue to control Africa. "These leaders totally ignored indigenous institutions(e.g mode of economy, family, leadership) which could have been modified, to suite present conditions and incorporated into modern state institutions"(Wa Muiu Mueni 2008:89). Most of the leaders who were chosen were not capable of leading, but because they were given this power by the European power. I think colonialism has left a leadership vacuum within Africa.

Even the South African ruling elite which took over government in 1994 has failed to transform these institutions.

Other factors to be considered are that it might be a lack of leadership skills, corruptions and lack of real democracy. All of these factors are leading back to the colonization of Africa.

2.6. South Africa

South Africa as part of Africa is also affected by colonization. I would like to look more into South Africa because my research is based in Nellmapius, South Africa

2.6.1. Apartheid

The apartheid policies which were developed and implemented by the national party who came to power in 1948, caused deprivation and poverty for all black people in South Africa. The Group Areas act which was passed in 1950 by the parliament meant that black people were only allowed to live in deprived areas of the country. This was modified and strengthened by group areas act (77 of 1957), the Group Areas Amendment act (1957), and the Group Areas Amendment Act (1961). These act caused poverty in the lives of black people because they were forced to live where there was no industry or jobs and these areas were far from the cities where most industries and available jobs were (Pieterse, 2001:46-48).

The Population Registration Act (30 of 1950) compelled everyone in South Africa to be classified according to their race or colour. All black people were discriminated against.

In 1953 the Bantu Education Act was passed. Before the Act, churches were offering the best education for all races and population of the country. Because of this Act churches were no longer able to maintain their schools financially and so the government took over these schools from the churches. Black people were offered inferior education if they were able to pay for it. The churches objected to this act which provided an education so inferior that it served merely to train a black working class (Lombard 1981:129; Seekings & Nattrass 2005:133).

Presently in South Africa black people are still lacking behind in education and vocational training because of this

act. There are still poor facilities, inadequate schools and poorly trained teachers in previously Black only schools and this is a result of that act.

The Mines and industries Act was passed by parliament in 1911. This Act empowered the governor general to proclaim regulations on issues, withdrawal and suspension of certificates of competence for certain kinds of work on mines (Pieterse 2001:47). In 1926 the 1911 act was amended, giving powers to the governor general to reserve certain jobs for a particular racial group. All skilled and managerial positions were reserved for whites only.

The native Construction Workers Act (27 of 1951) and was amended by Act 38 of 1953 and Act 60 of 1955, stopped the employment of blacks in skilled jobs in the building industry in areas outside of a Bantu area.

The Black Labour Regulation Act (48 of 1953) was passed (Seekings and Nattrass 2005:138), to prohibit black people from establishing a trade union. Black people could not organize any protest against unfair labour practices. Whites' employers were able to oppress the workers as they wished.

South Africa has been rated as an upper middle class country in the world, but the wealth is unequally distributed (May 1998:1). In South Africa the wealth is enjoyed by a few people while the majority of the population still lives in poverty. The country of South Africa is known as the country of two worlds. There is the world of the rich and the world of the poor. "We are living in the midst of paradoxes" (Dickson 1983:3).

South Africa has the largest economy in Africa with 28% of Gross National Product (Roux 1999:146). This means that the economy of South Africa is leading Africa. One of South African musical group by the name of '*Sitimela*' said in one of their songs "why suffering in the land of plenty?"

2.6.2. Legacy of apartheid

There are many things that we can point out which are as a result of apartheid policies, such as the inequalities in residential places, education and poverty in South Africa.

South Africa is now 15yrs into its new democracy, but still people are suffering from inequalities. "Despite the transition from apartheid to democracy, South Africa continues to be a relentlessly unequal society" (Wale and Foster 2007:45). Black and white are not equal in life. Whites are still favoured by the past, and blacks need to work hard to close that gap.

Since 1994 when the first democratic elections took place politically Africans are in power, but the economy is still in the hands of whites.

Even though the group areas act has been abolished still the majority of black people live in shacks. They cannot build the houses they need. People are living in conditions that are not conducive.

Many black people live in squatter camps around the big cities. And there are no facilities such as running water, sanitation and electricity in most of those places. Housing is inadequate and there is overcrowding. Health is very poor if

not zero. Children have no developed parks where they can safely play with their friends.

Families in black communities are disintegrating and we see a rise in the growth of single-parent families. Many of the children grow without knowledge of their fathers, which often causes psychological problems in the life of the individual.

Most of the historical black schools are not producing good results because of their poor facilities and overcrowding and the teachers are not well skilled. All this has been the legacy from the apartheid era. It can be put this way, “social engineering of apartheid which has left a legacy of poverty and lack of education” (Mamphela 2008:158)

It was the aim of the apartheid regime to advance white people in the country at the expense of their black people. As a result white people were more privileged than their black counterparts.

1.6.2.1. Exclusion of the poor from the riches of the land

The majority of the population of South Africa was excluded from the main stream of the economy. Most of the acts that were passed by the national party were to oppress the majority South Africans.

In this section, I would like to look into the history of inequality among black and white in South Africa. In this research I am focusing on the poor as black. I am aware that there might be some poor whites. Since inequality is a legacy of apartheid, it is a very important subject to look into it

2.6.3. The history of inequality in South Africa

During the periods of colonialism and apartheid, dominant white people continued mobilizing their political, economic, military and ideological hegemony to systematically advantage white South Africans, while at the same time creating a highly exploitable black workforce (Wale & Foster 2007:46). This discourse was created to keep white above and Black down in this country and the continent. We can see today Black that the majority of Black people are still unskilled workers.

Inequality in South Africa started on 1652 when Europeans arrived in the Cape. They came and took over the land through agriculture, and property rights, which became at odds with the existing customs of the indigenous people, were imposed on the indigenous people (Kirsten et al 2006:46). South Africans were turned into cheap labour while the white people were becoming owners of all the resources.

There is an African proverb that says in Pedi, “*Sehlare sa Mosotho ke lekgowa*”. This meaning that a black man is incapable of doing anything good without a white person. When you go into government offices, if, one does not see a white person, then people thought that they cannot receive a good service delivery.

In South Africa, race will determine your future, for instance, if you are a white person, there were lots of opportunities for you. You are a privileged person because of the colour of your skin in this country. Job opportunities were reserved for only white people. Doors of better education were opened for the privileged white of this country.

To keep white as the strong and better race, the government developed a strategy of helping poor whites. “To solve the poor white problem, the South African government established a project of discriminatory job protection, welfare, and public education to re-habilitate poor whites” (Kim and Foster 2007:47). Inequality, developed by the white minority of this country is still continuing today.

The creation of white people as superior is continuing; throughout South Africa’s history, an ideology of white superiority has reigned. Within this ideology, everything European is considered as good and valued, while at the same time de-valuing everything African(Kim and Foster 2007:48). Black South Africans have been conditioned to believe as people they must depend on their white counterparts. To be successful, blacks must live to adhere to system that has been placed by a white minority.

Research on this area says, “Black university students report that it is often easier to get things done when you comply with the dominant norms and language of white culture” (Walker 2005). In the same thought, this is the reason African languages are treated as inferior by blacks themselves. To be educated is to speak the European language

2.6.4. Meta-theoretical perspective

My research is based in the paradigm of post-modernism, postfoundationalism, social constructionism, and a narrative approach. In this paradigm language plays an important role. We need to give meaning through the use of language. White wealthy South Africans need to give meaning to poverty and

development. In this research, I and my co-researchers want to look at ideological discourses, defined as systems of meaning that dominant groups attempt to fix as ‘truth’ that function to constitute and maintain their dominance(Kim and Foster 2007:49).

According to Kim and Foster 2007:49, there are three ideological strategies that were made in order to continue white dominance in South Africa:

Legitimating is a strategy of presenting relations of dominance as legitimate. This strategy can be understood as a form of justification for unequal power distribution. By appealing to traditionally established, rational or charismatic grounds, dominant groups use this strategy to argue that their dominance is justified. For example, the unequal relations of colonialism were justified by appealing on the grounds that it was in the native’s interests to be dominated and civilized by a superior nation. Legitimating functions to justify relations of domination by presenting them as the way things ought to be.

Dissimulation is a strategy of concealing or denying relations of domination and presenting them as something other than they are. If relations of domination are hidden, they cannot be challenged. Therefore, by rendering unequal power relations invisible, this strategy functions to exclude the possibility that relations may be challenged.

Reification is a strategy of denying history and presenting the state of affairs as if it was permanent,

natural and existed outside of time. This strategy functions to ideologically separate the current state of affairs from the history that informs them. By removing situations from its historical context, this strategy often works hand in hand with dissimulation to gloss over the historical power dynamics that led to a current situation of inequality. In the case of South Africa, this strategy functions to remove post-apartheid South Africa from the legacy of apartheid, and enable white South Africans to argue against structural transformation.

In the following section, I would like to discuss colour in relation to poverty and how this makes people think about themselves. Whiteness how now it is perceived in South Africa.

2.6.5. Whiteness

In South Africa as in the rest of the world color speaks. “I know what it signifies when race and color are used to determine who is human and who is sub-human” (Mbeki 1998:6). Being black or white gives a certain identity in South Africa and even in the rest of the world.

To be a black someone is inferior, uneducated, uncivilized and unthinking, someone who needs to be empowered by a white counterpart; “Europe was able to construct the rest (everyone who was not European) as an inferior ‘other’ in relation to the West” (Kim and Foster 2007:50) Whiteness consists of a particular cultural content, and a particular way of viewing the world, understanding history and thinking about self (Kim and Foster 2007:50).

Kim and Foster 2007:50 put it this way

The essentialist discourse stems back to the colonial period where races were constructed as essential, biological categories. During this period of colonial expansion, various forms of traveller' tales, racial taxonomies and 'race science' functioned to constitute the racist discourse of the legitimized many institutional forms of racist domination including slavery, colonialism, segregation and apartheid.

Colour/power evasive discourse is more common than the overtly racist essentialist discourse. This discourse draws on liberal individualist discourse to argue that we should not see colour, and instead treat everyone as colour-less individuals. Within this discourse, differences that are implicated in power are evaded with euphemism in order to de-emphasize relations of domination. Through this discourse the unequal power structures are played down and denied, in order for the same treatment regardless of race.

Whites are mobilizing colour-blind individualism and non-racial to argue that affirmative action was unfair to whites (Kim and Foster 2007:51). They want to legitimize their privileges. Whites are aware that the economy is still in the hands of whites people.

In South Africa, (Mbeki 1996:7) Stated that the doors must be opened for those who were disadvantaged to assume their place in society as equals with their fellow human beings without regard to colour, race, and gender, age or geographical dispersal.

In the following section, I focus on the African mind and how it has been perceived by Africans themselves and the world.

2.7. African mind

African people (black) were known as people who do not possess systems of thought; it means they could not think like human beings. They were excluded from the category of men (Cloete 2007:393).

The idea of reason that Hegel emphasizes was something that governs the world. The world history is a rational process. In the western world they based more on mental reason this is viewed as a distinctively human characteristic, and it separates human beings from other forms of life (Cloete 2007:393).

African people were defined as mystic, meaning they were devoid of rational thinking, and without reasoning. The mind of an African was intellectually backward and inferior to the mind of a white man or European man (Cloete 2007:395)

On prelogicality and mysticity, Kebede (2004:2-4), put it this way:

The first aspect refers to the thought, that is, to the permeation of physical with mystic powers incarnating the fear, hope, and religious awe of the primitive. Second aspect concerns connection between ideas, which because they implicate occult forces, operate independently of logical laws. The social and technological retardation of native peoples is wholly due to this inability to

think physically and logically. Some such turn of mind is abundantly opposed to scientific thinking and technological orientation; it is only fit to wallow in magic, thereby perpetuating the subordination of natives to mysterious forces.

In these thoughts Africans were described as otherness from European. They were created to perpetuate a philosophical racism. Whites had created themselves as the Messiahs of African people.

2.7.1. Reflection on prelogicality and mysticism

These kinds of thoughts would mean that the African is in poverty because their minds are not developed and are more mystic. Africans (blacks) cannot reason or they cannot use their minds.

They cannot work with metatheory and they are unable to work physically and logically.

They are saying that all of these reasons cause Africa to be backward or to be in poverty. Personally, I think, it was the intention of Europeans or white people to control Africans. The systems that were put in place caused Africans to be acting and living the way they were. Europeans were thinking for Africans, they thought that they had all the answers for Africans.

On philosophical racism (Levy-Bruhl, 1995:46), puts it this way:

Primitive perception is fundamentally mystic on account of the mystic nature of the collective representations which form an integral part of every perception. Ours has ceased to be so, at any rate with regard to most of the objects which surround us. Nothing appears alike to them and to us. For people like ourselves, speaking the language familiar to us, there is insurmountable difficulty in entering into their way of thinking. The longer we live among them, the more we approximate to their mental attitude, the more do we realize how impossible it is to yield to it entirely.

South Africa as a part of Africa is also affected by colonization. I would like to look more closely at South Africa because my research is based on Nellmapius, South Africa.

2.8. Measurement of poverty

In this section, I would like to look into poverty measurement, in order to understand it and to know how to defeat poverty.

Poverty cannot be measured in one way, but it can be measured in many ways. It is not so straight forward to understand poverty. In this research, I would like to follow four approaches to poverty measurement by Ruggeri-laderchi et al. 2003:28

The four approaches are the following:

- The monetary approach,

- The capacity approach
- The social exclusion, and
- The participatory approach

The monetary approach is what is used to determine whether people are poor or not. Even the poverty line or standard has been set on monetary income of a person. In South Africa Most people live at or below poverty line because they receive less money.

The capability approach stresses that people must be capacitated in order to function in their societies. If, people have been capacitated they are able to make the right choices and have the freedom to choose the life they would like to live.

The social exclusion approach deals with groups, not the individual. People who live in rural areas they might be excluded from many from some of resources that are only found in towns or urban areas. Other groups in communities such as women, disabled people, and the minority group of the world long as one lives in one of this group you could be excluded from many opportunities.

The participatory approach includes the people who live within poverty in definition of what is poverty. I believe, this is good if people can define poverty for themselves for then they can take the necessary steps to fight against their poverty.

2.9. Describing poverty from a biblical perspective

Hebrew has many words that describe poverty. The Hebrew word haser means the following in English; to lack, to have nothing, to go down, recede, run dry, in want, to have too little and depriving (The strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance 1999). All of these words are mostly referring to material needs.

Coming to Greek the word ptochos in English, it means the lack of resources, someone who has been oppressed, despised, miserable people who do not have basic needs and do not have a voice in the government of the day (The strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance 1999).

2.9.1. God cares for the poor

In Deut. 24:19, Moses says, “when you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it, it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widows, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands”. God was commanding his people to help the poor which I believe is also encouraging us to take care of the less fortunate in our society.

Psalm 40:17, says “But I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me, you are my helper and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God”. The psalmist was aware of his poverty and that nobody will be taking care of him. He was aware that God thinks about him.

In Psalm 72:12, the psalmist says “For he will deliver the needy, when he cries, the poor also, and him who has no helper”. The poor always have God who is ready for them

2.9.2 Early church

Acts 2:44, 45 Luke says “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them all, as everyone had need”. They had shared amongst themselves.

In Romans 15:26 Paul put it this way,” For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem”. The church in Jerusalem became so poor. Other churches were making a contribution to assist their fellow brothers in Jerusalem.

In Gal. 2:10, Paul continues standing for the saints, “They desired only that we should remember the poor, the thing which I also was eager to do”.

2.9.3. Causes of poverty-biblical perspective

Reading all the scriptures quoted above, one can try to trace the causes of poverty in the bible: they as follows;

- Oppression
 - Poverty is lack of power; it could be political, cultural and economic. Like the strangers, widows, and fatherless, these people are without power.

- Disobeying the Word of God.
 - When Adam chose to disobey God, there was a separation between God and man. To be blessed people need to obey God (Deut. 28:1).
- Laziness
 - Prov. 19:24, says “a lazy man buries his hand in the bowl, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth”
 - Ecc. 10:2, the preacher says “because of laziness the building decays, and through idleness of hands the house leaks”.
- **Natural disasters**
 - Joel 1:4, “What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; what swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten”. Natural disasters cause people to experience poverty, sometimes in the short term or long term. It is something that happen beyond human control.

2.9.4. Spiritual poverty

Mtt. 5:3 says “blessed are the poor in spirit...”. The Wycliffe Bible commentary put in this way “Those who have recognized their poverty in spiritual things and have allowed Christ to meet their needs”.

I think this verse means those who feel dissatisfaction about their spiritual condition and see that they cannot make it by themselves. He/she put themselves in God's power to provide for his/her spiritual poverty. I believe that this kind of poverty is essential because it makes us to depend on God who made us. We are drawn near to God daily.

2.9.5. Psychological perspective

Poverty affects the whole being, most of the time we concentrate on our economical burden, but it is also affecting human beings psychologically. I think it is more serious in our psychology than with our economic situation. It is put this way "Poverty carries with it not only economic burdens but also psychological difficulties" (Mickelson & Williams 2008: 94).

Often society stigmatizes those people who live in poverty. The poor people would feel marginalized and useless human beings. Perceived stigma causes people to have a low self-esteem. Perceived stigma is combination of internalized and experienced stigma (Mickelson and Williams 2008:908). All of these increase the level of depression.

Living in poverty entails multiple stresses that have adverse effects on development from infancy through to adolescence (Phillips and Pitman 2003:117). This suggests that people who have grown up in poverty may have psychological problems. Poverty could have affected them greatly in one way or another.

2.10. Globalisation

Globalization means when cultures, businesses and people are connected to each other. It has been made easy by technology, i.e. internet, television, and etc.

People are moving from one continent to another and from one country to another. A problem in one country could affect the whole world for instance at the time of writing this research we are experiencing swine flu. This flu is spreading throughout the world because people are travelling a lot.

Developing countries are losing the skills and expertise that is needed to build the economy of their countries, because people with the skills and expertise go to the developed world to find jobs that are well paid (Akoojee, & McGrath, 2004:39). This process has been known as the brain drain.

The brain drain has disturbed the process of economical development in developing countries. The skills and the knowledge that should be helping economical development are been recruited out of Africa. People do not worry anymore about their countries they are concerned about their family survival.

Even, South Africa's economical development has depended to a significant degree on the importation of skilled white labour (Akoojee & McGrath 2004: 41). Apartheid made sure that people with marketable skills are white people.

2.1. Impact of poverty

Poverty is impacting people in many ways; here are some of the things that has impacted according (Pieterse 2001:30, 31):

- Alienation from the community. The poor become alienated from the rest of the community. The aged live in tiny rooms, often with no contact with their children and relatives. Elderly people who are not cared for by younger relatives are considered 'poor'. Not, only elderly people, but all who live in poverty experience alienation from the community. People without money nobody listens to them.
- Lack of food. When people have little food to feed their families or themselves they live in poverty. In my family, we used to eat pap alone, in the morning, noon and evening. We ate pap before going to school and we would eat pap again after school. Meat was a luxury, it would only be eaten at Christmas time and when someone who works in one of the big towns has come home to visit. Actually all foods; bread, cheese, butter peanut butter, etc. were luxuries.
- Lack of clean water basic forms of energy. We used to fetch water from faraway. We made a wood fire; even now my extended family is still living like that.
- Lack of job opportunities. Due to job reservation in South Africa many Africans are out of jobs today. Even though apartheid has gone away structural poverty continues.
- Breakup of families. In the apartheid era, men left women and children at home to go and work in the city. Children grow without seeing their father. Men would take other women in the city and stop supporting their family at home.

- Diseases caused by bad circumstances. Because a poor person cannot afford to eat properly and has no money to go and see the doctor then one can die of an illness that could have been prevented.
- Lack of proper housing has led to the emergence of huge squatter camps around cities and towns.
- Literacy and education. Parents fail to send their children to school because of poverty. Here we see the transmission of poverty to the next generation.
- Helplessness and vulnerability. Hopelessness is one of the sign of being poor. You do not know where next meal will be coming from

Poverty can be named as the major problem in our community; it has given giving birth to all that has been mentioned above. Crime, teenage pregnancies, drug abuse, and etc. they are also linked to poverty. It lowers a person's esteem or lack of self-worth. The next section is to focus on poverty and identity, and how poverty affects the human process of growing as people

2.11.1. Poverty and identity formation process

Phillips and Pittman (2003:115) have done intensive research in the relationship between socioeconomic and identity formation. According to them, they have looked into the processes of identity formation. In this project I would like to explore what they have written. These are the issues that they are following:

- Poverty and limitation to opportunity structures.
- Poverty and stress
- Stigma of Poverty

2.11.2. Poverty and limitation to opportunity structure

Other findings on poverty say, “Research shows that poverty is associated with limitations in opportunity structures and life chances” Phillips and Pittman (2003:117). People from poverty stricken communities and people from well off communities will have a different response to life.

Those who have grown up in poverty have fewer opportunities in life which will hinder them in making a long life plan. It will also hinder them in their life exploration. “Therefore, not only do poor adolescents hope for less, they also expect less out of life Phillips and Pittman” (2003:117). They would fail in long term planning because they focus only on their daily needs.

Poverty could affect exploration and commitment. One cannot engage in exploration if one is lacking the opportunity structure. He/she does not see the future being bright or seeing hope in the end of the tunnel. One limitation on opportunity structure makes one not to commit to a long life plan or he/she can commit to a goal that is not of his/her choice.

African American boys showed different patterns compared with their white counterparts in their identity formation. An African American’s view remained largely unchanged

overtime and it remained at foreclosure as Marcia has put it (Thom & Coetzee 2004:185). White counterparts have shown the identity formation characterized by a changing view of the self that became increasingly integrated and stabilised.

Young African Black Americans have shown premature identity formation because they were faced with limited and unattractive jobs opportunities in life (Thom & Coetzee 2004:185). African American grew up in a community where recreational facilities were non existent.

Black South African youth have shown similar results because of discrimination and opportunities due to apartheid policies that were placed on African people. Good jobs were reserved for white people only. Also, there was a lack of role models because of family disintegration caused by apartheid. The fathers were living far from their family (Thom & Coetzee 2004:185). Apartheid laws of forced removals, relocations and migrant labour system were imposed on African families.

Diffusion or foreclosure will be more common among poor people, whereas achievement and moratorium should be less common status among poor adolescence relative to their non poor age mates.

2.11.3. Poverty and Stress

According to the Oxford Advance learner's Dictionary, stress means "pressure or worry caused by a problem on somebody's life". Lack of food, lack of clothing, lack of money to take children to school can cause pressure in a person's

life. , I am writing from experience and how painful it is. “Poor youth experiences more undesirable life events and adverse conditions, and this excessive stress can place demands on them that exceed their coping resources” Phillips and Pittman (2003:127).

Poor people do not only feel helpless, desperate and hungry but also they feel ashamed of themselves (Bruce et al. 1996:70). Poverty is a shame. People who live in poverty will suffer from a lack of self-acceptance. Poverty is a shame because “poor man is hated even by his own neighbour” (Prov. 14:20).

Watkins (2000:13) has stated that the poorest families lack the capacity to cope with stress, and suffer acute difficulties, such as sickness, physical weakness and economic impoverishment. It is true that the poor due to living with so much stress will live a short life.

Children who live in poverty look at other children who are from wealthier families and they wish to be those children. One child had been asked what you would wish to be when you grow up, the child said I wish to be a white person. So, poverty affects the identity of people, by feeling and thinking less about themselves.

Poverty for most people is associated with inferiority, lack of self-worth, depression and frustration. Poverty crushes our humanness, and we remain with a sense of uselessness.

2.11.4. Stigma and Poverty

Being poor entails marginalization and to be treated as useless or an outcast in the community of the wealthy. No one wishes to associate with those who are less fortunate in life. I have experienced people wishing to become your friend in order to get something from you. If you have nothing to give then you may well find yourself to be marginalized.

Poor people feel humiliated when they are dependant on other people for life necessities. The issue of an inferiority complex grows (Bruce et al. 1996:71). Depending on others for a living diminishes our human freedom. Every human being must have the power of choice and freedom to do what one likes.

Most people in research view the poor as morally deficient and personally responsible for their plight. This kind of thinking, promotes image that people are poor because they are lazy and not considering poverty as a social problem which is the responsibility of the whole of society. (Alcock, 2006:32)

Most of our teachers are coming from the middle-class as; their view of children from a poverty stricken background would be biased. These teachers perceive low-income pupils less positively and have lower achievement expectations from them than they would have for children from a high-income family.

Alcock 2006:38 speaks about the “cycle of deprivation” most children who are born and have grown up in poverty stricken communities are affected by their situation of poverty. These children when they grow up to adulthood their level of

expectation and their abilities are lowered. They accept the poverty of their parents as their own; as a result many poor people would do nothing to change their situation.

Alcock 2006:29 also stated that people who are poor have been named as a threat to social stability by undermining the work ethic and threatening social order. These poor people have been named as criminals and lazy people. In America poverty has been racialized as something belonging to black people because most poor people are black.

Poverty gives people a lower expectation in life. What they do is to focus on their daily needs. They do not expect to have wealth but to live only for today.

Brantlinger 1991 in (Phillips & Pittman 2003:118) investigated social class distinctions in adolescents' reports of problems and punishment. Low-income youth reported a higher frequency of problems with teachers and peers than their high-income counter-parts, and youth from low-income families reported more penalties than their high-income counterparts. The punishment reported by low-income adolescents at school tended to be more severe, disproportionate to the offenses, and humiliating in nature than the punishment received by high-income adolescents.

2.11.5. How poverty affects identity processes

In this section, I will look at how the theories of Marcia 1980 Grotevant 1987 and Berszonsky 1987, and (Phillips and Pittman 2003:122) affect identity processes. With regard to Marcia status paradigm, stress, social stigma, and limitations

in opportunity associated with chronic poverty will affect both exploration and commitment.

Therefore, diffusion and foreclosure should be more common among poor adolescents, whereas achievement and moratorium should be a less common status among poor adolescents relative to their non poor peer group.

The stress, stigma, and limitation in opportunities create a context that is not conducive to exploring identity issues. This context can produce a negative identity, where one starts to live badly or live with drugs and crimes.

Phillips and Pittman (2003:120) using the Grotevant 1987 model, it should be expected that for many poor adolescents the orientation to engage in exploration will be suppressed. According to this model, many poor adolescents are expected to settle quickly and prematurely into roles that fail to take advantage of the entire adolescent' potential, roles, perhaps based on realistic appraisals from society.

Phillips & Pittman (2003:120) using Berzonsky 1989 identity styles, it can be hypothesized that stress, derogatory self-relevant information, and limitations in opportunity associated with poverty will result in many poor adolescents adopting either a normative style (as a result of internalizing negative messages about self and the opportunities available) or a diffuse-avoidant style (as a form of capitulation in response to stress, negative messages about the self, and perceptions that opportunities are indeed limited). Poor adolescents will have had less opportunity to develop an informational style of self-theorizing.



2.12. Conclusion

In this chapter I have seen that poverty affects identity formation. People who live in poverty face so many challenges that put pressure on them. As one of my co-researchers put it “*Failing to provide for my family as a parent causes stress and sometimes you feel pains on your body*” (Mr. T)