

# CHAPTER 1

## RESEARCH BACKGROUND

### 1. THE CONTEXT OF THIS RESEARCH

This research studies the problems of the children of Korean missionaries and the educational difficulties they face on the mission field.

According to Kim (in Park 1999:55), most of the missionaries involved in countries abroad experience many difficulties, such as cultural differences, language and communication problems, and various different responsibilities of the ministries. However, a proper investigation established that the most important issue missionary parents are faced with concerns the educational needs of their children on the mission field. Hale (2003:13) avers that many missionary agencies have discovered that the dilemma of the education of missionary children almost always tops the list of problems incurred on the mission field. Directors of mission agencies find themselves faced with resignations and requests for reassignment, all too often due to this issue. It is accordingly important for the mission agencies and churches to take note of the reasons why the education of missionary children has become a central issue and seriously consider options available to solve it (Park 1999:56). There is a need for support of the education of missionary children in order to assist missionaries to the various mission fields (Hale 2003:14).

Some of the essential reasons why the churches and mission agencies need to be concerned with the educational issues of missionary children are the following: According to Pollock (1998:31) and Lim (2004:9), missionary work and the education of missionary children are inseparable. Between 9% and 35% of missionaries attrition worldwide was related to issues involving their children, especially educational issues. Problems and tensions in schools attended by children of missionaries<sup>1</sup> affect the entire mission community and the parents' work is influenced (Bowers 1998:31). In future, many mission fields will be situated amongst

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<sup>1</sup> Given prevailing conventions this study will refer to 'MK schools', rather than (but implying) schools attended by children of missionaries.

“Unreached People<sup>2</sup> groups”, without proper education facilities for missionary children. Thus, effective provision for the educational needs of missionary children is one of the key issues to be addressed before dispatching missionaries (Park 1999:56). It is important that the churches and mission agencies regularly provide education materials for their missionary children. The experience of missionaries’ children abroad will enhance their potential<sup>3</sup> in various ways (Bowers 1998:31). All educational enterprises worldwide are influenced by globalization and internationalization with worldwide perspectives developing. Pollock (1998:31) says that every country in the world has made at least some effort in this regard. Multilingualism is an asset in many cities of the world and there is a growing interest in developing the leadership potential of young adult missionary children, growing up in the “third culture” of an expatriate community (Park 1999:39). The solution of the situation missionary children face is part of the larger task of the church. Ward (1998:17) quotes Hill (1998:245) in saying that “missionary children are a potential resource” for the church. Hill emphasized that the mission needs internationalists who have grasped the larger vision of a world for God, and discovered that there is no group of people which has more potential of becoming internationalists than missionary children and third culture kids (Bowers 1998:244,245). In reality, Pollock and his co-workers (1998:31) discovered that 25% of missionary children went back as missionaries, and 17% became career missionaries. Therefore mission agencies and churches need to care for missionary children with a view to their future impact on the world for the Lord (Bowers 1998:110).

### **1.1 The history of education for Korean missionary children**

The history of Korean missionaries abroad is not a long one (Oh 2008:21). Korean missionaries, having little previous experience, often have difficulty in deciding how to raise their children. They also have difficulty to know the educational options

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<sup>2</sup> Unreached People is a group of people among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate members and resources to evangelize them. <http://www.joshuaproject.net/definitions.hp#unreached>.

<sup>3</sup> Eidse and Sichel (2004), Pollock and Van Reken (2001), and Bowers (1998) determined that missionary children have various advantages such as cultural exposure, ability to adapt and linguistic skills which is sought after in many cities in this world.

available and which to choose. Up till now, there are only few examples of Korean missionary children who have grown up on the mission field until adulthood. In general, before going to the mission field, many Korean missionaries are often unprepared to make decisions concerning how they will educate their children (Park 1999:35). According to Jung (1999:35), Korean missionary parents are often not seriously concerned with the educational system and options for their children. Rather, they send their children to MK/International schools without first considering the impact of these institutions on their children (Back 2007:2). Chan (1998:331) discovered that all MK/International schools are mainly based on the Western education system and are mostly English speaking. This causes several problems for the Korean missionary children regarding their education (Park 1999:35).

## **1.2 The rapid increase of Korean missionary children**

“Since 1980 the missionary movement in Korea continues to grow faster than any other national missionary movement in the world” (Oh 2008:21). In 1979 there were 93 Korean missionaries abroad; by 2006 there were 14,905 Korean missionaries abroad<sup>4</sup> and 174 mission agencies serving in 168 countries (Kidok Shinmun 2007.10.8). According to KWMA (Korea World Missions Association), there were 16,616 Korean missionaries in 2007 (Cha 2007). This number is conservative, for it includes only missionaries belonging to mission agencies, not independent missionaries sent directly by a local church. Nor does it include workers who have committed themselves to missionary service for less than two years (Moon 2007). As the number of Korean missionaries rapidly increased from 1980<sup>5</sup>, the number of Korean missionary children naturally increased (Park 1999:34). Today, there are up to 12,000 Korean missionary children around the world (Kidok Shinmun 2008.8.13). Of these, approximately 60% are in schools on the mission fields and 40-50% are at MK/International schools (Back 2007). Comparing this number to the number of children from other nationalities who live on mission fields around the world, it

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<sup>4</sup> There were approximately 5,000 Korean missionaries in 1999 (Korean MK Handbook 1999: 34), over 10,000 Korean missionaries in 2004 (Mission Journal 2004:31).

<sup>5</sup> The turning point of the Mission Movement of the Korean Church occurred during the 1980s (Oh 2008:43).

becomes clear that Korean missionary children constitute quite a large percentage of the number of missionary children living in foreign countries. In Middle Asia and China, Korean children including Korean missionary children constitute up to 50% of the foreign children at MK/International schools (Haile 2007). For example, there are 42 Korean missionary children out of 90 international students at Davao Faith Academy in the Philippines (Lee 2007).

### **1.3 Reasons for providing for the educational needs of Korean missionary children**

Apart from the above reasons why mission agencies and churches need to support education of missionary children which was mentioned in 1, there are other reasons why Korean missionary children need special care with education on the field.

Due to the fact that the number of Korean missionary children has rapidly increased since 1980, the need to reassess the educational requirements of Korean missionary children becomes imminent (Kwon 2006:4). Korean missionary parents experience more and more tension regarding their children's education. Jung (1999:28) states that Korean missionary children face problems concerning their education, such as the influence of western culture, difficult cultural adjustment on the part of both the MK/International schools and the Korean students. Other problems encountered are poor preparation for Korean higher education<sup>6</sup>, learning disabilities due to the lack of proper Korean language skills, and effective communication of Korean values and perspectives to Korean students.

For these reasons, Phil Billing, the director of the Murree Christian School in Pakistan, travelled to Korea to gain firsthand knowledge of the Korean educational system and Christian family life. He discussed the educational and care needs of Korean missionary families with Korean mission leaders. During Billing's visiting to Korea, Billing investigated the possibility of recruiting Korean staff for the Murree Christian School (Bowers 1998:488).

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<sup>6</sup> For higher education most Korean missionary children go to the America and other western countries where English is spoken as main language (Jung 1999:35).

The principal at the Faith Academy (MK school) in the Philippines visited Korea several times to challenge the churches and mission agencies regarding the needs of Korean missionary children who are studying at MK/International schools with the intension of discussing the education plan for Korean missionary children. He brought up the issues of language problems and cultural adjustment of the Korean children, and the lack of Korean teachers at MK/International schools (Kidok shinmun 2009.12.9). He has critically questioned what the exact needs of Korean missionary children are; where they will stay in future; which educational system should be best for them.

It is essential for Korean missionary parents, churches and mission agencies to cooperate with the schools in order to effectively support the Korean missionary children. Due to the influx of a large number of Korean students since 2004, the Faith Academy in the Philippines introduced some Korean subjects such as Korean language, history and culture. MK/International schools with many Korean and Asian missionary children and third culture kids have to scrutinize their curriculum for its sensitivity to its multinational student body, and they must work closely with mission leaders and parents to address issues of education for missionary children (Bowers 1998:489).

## **2. MOTIVATION FOR AND DELIMITATION OF THIS STUDY**

### **2.1 My story**

As a missionary for the past eleven years, involved in the ministry in South Africa for the past eight years, I have realized that for various reasons many Korean missionary children are struggling with their education on the mission field. I attended an education consultation<sup>7</sup> held by SIM<sup>8</sup> in 2007. At this consultation, the

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<sup>7</sup> 'Education Consultation for SIM Missionary Children' was held in Chiangmai in Thailand from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> of November in 2007. The participators were the MK coordinators of SIM sending offices, and principals and MK care-givers of MK/International schools on the mission field.

<sup>8</sup> SIM is an international, interdenominational Christian mission agency, founded in 1889, working in over 40 countries around the world. There are about 1,800 missionaries working in these countries.

education issues and care of Korean missionary children were an important issue as they constitute quite a large percentage of the students at the MK/International schools throughout the world. On the other hand, it was also realized that the cultural differences and non-English speaking background of the Korean missionary children pose a tough challenge for the teachers and coordinators at the MK/International schools to understand Korean missionary children as well as they understand other missionary children from a Western culture. From this consultation, the present researcher gained a greater understanding of the educational issues that missionary children experience, and a new insight into the educational support available to Korean missionary children. Missionary children have much potential (Bowers 1998:61) and need good advice and support for their education.

## **2.2 The story of my children**

Since we became a missionary family in 1997, we have moved several times from one country to another, and from one area to another, experiencing difficulties with language and education every time we moved. My children have changed schools several times, and with these moves, experienced educational difficulties, as well as emotional difficulties. As “language is a central influence on the development of children’s sense of identity” (Kay 2001:55) my children struggled to adjust to new places and ended up with a low-self esteem. They have become very sensitive and are afraid to be separated from, their parents. They feel a deep sorrow at being separated from their friends when they leave a school.

Coming the children struggled with English for the first few years, from a non-English speaking background, struggled to get high marks in English, in spite of their fluency in English. English teachers at schools were prejudiced against their non-English speaking background. They have also struggled with the other local languages, such as Sepedi and Afrikaans, which they are obliged to learn at school as second and third languages. While they perform excellently with high marks in other subjects, their grade average is negatively affected because of Afrikaans. Accordingly they

have a lot of stress in this regard. Schools are not concerned with Korean students' problem with Afrikaans. The children often ask why they have to study those languages, which are not that valuable in the world and have questioned why they have to study South African history instead of Korean history. They became frustrated with all the stress they have to deal with, in spite of parental support and encouragement.

Sometimes they are marginalized at school being a minority among their South African peers, only 8 Koreans among approximately 550 in one instance. This resulted in a lower self-esteem than their South African peers, even though they are among the top performing academic students in their schools. Teachers pay no particular attention to the Korean minority. According to Kay (2001:51), "the children of minority cultures often do not get the same level of attention and responses from workers as other children do." Swadener and Lubeck (1995:188) maintain, "Minority culture groups are often seen by teachers to be dysfunctional or deficient, and are not recognized as useful even when they are potentially functional in existing classrooms."

Because schools expect scholars to be involved in many activities, such as group sports, music and other activities which leaves no time to study Korean subjects. There should be time for school work, Korean studies, family relationships, and some involvement in mission work.

As a result of the wide difference between the education system of South Africa and that of South Korea children also struggle with learning the Korean language, history and social sciences at home, together with their school work. In Korea, academic study is a priority for all age groups, and education fervor arise from observable phenomena such as competitive college entrance exams (Kim 2005:13). To fall short of the mark will affect their higher education and work opportunities in Korea.

### **2.3 The case studies of two Korean missionary families**

The one Korean family lives in one of the Southern parts of Africa as missionaries. Their son and daughter attended and stayed at a boarding school in other countries,

away from their parents, from the ages of six to eight. Their son enjoyed being with his peers and adjusted well to the school, but their daughter really struggled with the separation from her parents. She is now a young adult and still struggles emotionally. Both struggled with cultural and language differences.

The other Korean family has been living in Botswana as missionaries and have been separated from their children for several years for their children's education. This family has two children, who live in different countries, one in South Africa and the other in America, for educational purposes. The parents are struggling financially to support their children's study. Emotionally the parents struggle by being separated from their children, and the children struggle by being far away from their parents.

The boy, aged 21, moved from the mission field to Korea for his high school education and was staying at a boarding school. During the first few years at the boarding school it was excessively difficult for him to settle down without his parents. He found that even though Korea was his home country, everything was strange since he had not grown-up there and he was extremely lonely without his parents. As well as coping with these difficulties, he struggled with finances since his parents did not have sufficient finances. After he graduated from high school he entered a university in Korea. However he was disappointed at the university and decided to complete his studies in North America. His parents worried about his adjustment and finances. These children are incorporated in this research.

## **2.4 The motivation for this research**

This study is intended to help Korean missionary children, especially those who have difficulties with education on the mission field.

Korean missionary children have a different background from Western and other Asian children, specifically in terms of language, culture, society, race and the educational systems they are used to. Considering the struggle with education that

some Korean missionary children experience on the mission field this study aims to contribute towards the understanding of their situation and thus to help them through their research process.

To be effective, this study will focus on a small number, specifically five Korean young adult missionary children, currently living in South Africa, South Korea and North America. Information in this regard will be provided in chapter four.

### **3 GENERAL ASPECTS ABOUT MISSIONARY CHILDREN**

Missionary children are defined in 3.1 and to understand their characteristics are described in 3.2. Educational issues which they have personally encountered will be investigated in more detail in Chapter three.

#### **3.1 A definition of missionary children**

Missionary children are the children of missionary parents. The majority of them were born and/or raised abroad. They are known as Third Culture Kids (TCKs), who Useem (1993:1) defined as “children who accompany their parents into another society”. Corresponding to this definition, the home culture from which the adults came, is considered to be their first culture. The culture amongst whom the missionary family currently resides, may be referred to as the second culture. They then identify the shared lifestyle of the expatriate community as an interstitial culture, or “culture between cultures,” and named it the third culture. Useem (1993:1) called the children who had grown up in that interstitial culture, third culture kids. Pollock and Van Reken (2001:19) define Third Culture Kids more broadly:

A Third Culture Kid is a person who has spent a significant part of his/her developmental years outside the parents' culture. TCK build relationships with all the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of a similar background.

While the benefits of cross-cultural living may be rich in the contemporary world, many missionary children have feelings of rootlessness and restlessness. This may result in the children's moving back and forth between two worlds – the world they become apart of and the world of brief visits to relatives and friends back home (Kephart 2000). Pollock and Van Reken (2001:39) discovered that, unlike immigrants, Third Culture Kids are expected at some point to be repatriated along with their parents back to their home country, where they are expected to settle down and live permanently. However, unlike their parents, who already have an established cultural identity with the homeland, Third Culture Kids are still expected to contend with changing cultural values and practices to achieve cultural balance, since they have not yet “completed the critical development task of forming a sense of their own personal or cultural identity” (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:39). The matter of how to fundamentally relate with the surrounding dominant culture remains, therefore, whether this is the host or the home culture (Kwon 2006:3). Pollock and Van Reken (2001:39) discovered that the problem for Third Culture Kids is not only to deal with cultural differences in a particular location, but with the entire cultural world in which they live that can change fast and often. Relationships are subject to equally dramatic changes as they or others around them constantly come and go. When people first go to another culture, they experience a culture shock and need a period of adjustment. For example, children have no idea of what people are saying in foreign languages when they go to foreign countries. They also state that the child's age, personality and participation in the local culture have an important effect on their life. A child's experience may be affected differently between the ages of one and four and between the ages of eleven and fourteen (Pollock and Van Reken (2001:27). It is therefore very important for parents to grant specific attention and intentional care at the very beginning of their time in a country abroad, in order for the children to feel safe and stable in the new country from the time of settlement (Hale 2003:1).

## **3.2 The characteristics of missionary children**

Missionary children are raised in a cross-cultural and highly mobile world, which is an area of great potential for growth in vision and ministry. There are specific advantages of being missionary children because of the privileged lifestyle and variety of things that they experience. On the other hand, missionary children sometimes experience great pain, while struggling with various issues (Bowers 1998:29). In the following section the advantages and disadvantages relating to the lives of missionary children will be explained and compared.

### **3.2.1 The advantages of missionary children**

#### **3.2.1.1 Cross cultural experience**

Eidse and Sichel (2004:3) describe how Third Culture Kids and missionary children absorb fragments of the many cultures they are exposed to and develop kaleidoscopic identities. Pollock and Van Reken (2001:79) also explain that “missionary children are growing up in a multiplicity of countries and cultures and they also learn how people view life from different philosophical and political perspectives”. Transferred from one place to another, they collect and absorb experiences. Their personalities are formed through a certain compilation of the mixture of those cultures they internalize and claim as their own. In a new environment, they experience each move as an occasion for growth, a chance to blossom in new ways. Iyer (2004:11) discovered that some never feel estrangement. Rather, they see the world in all its richness and variety. “They live in various cultures, they experience the world in a real way as they have lived in many places, smelled many smells, heard so many strange sounds and have been in many strange situations, throughout their lives”. This is a “privileged life, filled with opportunities to extend and enhance their knowledge of the earth and its people” (2004:21). Bilingual or even multilingual at an early age, immersed in an interrelated, interdependent world community, they are able to enjoy a broader and more mature perspective than their more rooted peers. There is a global education and wide range of the intercultural experience. Bowers (1998:61) says it carries with it the kind of flexibility

that allows well-balanced young adult missionary children to get a head start in coping with interpersonal relationships. They have friends from different countries and build a rich international network with them. They are grateful for the variety of experiences to which they have been exposed. If the entire world is alien to them, the entire world is their home. They realize themselves to be “citizens of the world”, “feeling at home anywhere” (Eidse & Sichel 2004:12). In any place they visit, they enjoy the privileges of an outsider: they are an object of interest and even fascination; they are a person set apart, able to enjoy the benefits of the place. They are open to adventure, secure in close family relationships, understanding the benefits of living a new life. Their perspectives are broadened, their childish souls opened to the wisdom new experience brings (Eidse & Sichel 2004:9-15).

### **3.2.1.2 Ability to adapt**

Pollock (1998:49) explains that most missionary children develop significant flexibility and adaptability through their cross-cultural experience. “Seeing, hearing, tasting and smelling new things is a way of life for most and contributes to their ability to accept and adjust to what is new and different”. This cross-cultural experience of missionary children broadens their world perspective, brings rich memories and a confidence in change. Pollock and Van Reken (2001:87) found that missionary children have a great ability to adapt to any new place. They pick up the new culture and situation more easily and quickly than others and consider these aspects of their lifestyle to be part of the wealth of their heritage. “Their experience of being in foreign countries and places long enough to learn to appreciate the reasons and understanding behind some of the behavioral differences, rather than simply being frustrated by them being visitors, tend to be a challenge, as well as a privilege” (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:87). Most of the missionary children learn to value relationships and adapt more easily, because they have lived in many places. This is a gift they carry with them wherever they may go later. The missionary children develop feelings of confidence in many areas of life; however, they feel fearful of making mistakes in some situations (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:87,113). “Cultural adaptability may begin as a survival tool, but it also has immensely practical benefits” (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:92). Through their experience of adaptability and

flexibility (Bowers 1998:61) the missionary children have a solid foundation for life in an increasingly interdependent, multicultural world. They continue to relocate and to relate to many cultures (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:107-110).

### **3.2.1.3 Linguistic skills**

According to Pollock (1998:53), most of the missionary children speak more than one language fluently, which is potentially for them, one of their most useful life skills. Pollock and Van Reken (2001:114) expressly states, “Children who learn two or more languages early in life, and use these languages on a day-to-day basis, develop a facility and ease with language unlike those who learn a second language for the first time as teenagers or adults”. To speak many languages as well as their mobility allows them to sample experiences around the globe and to move confidently among other cultures, and to be enriched by them, while they are young, pliant and still forming their personalities (Eidse & Sichel 2004:3). Bilingualism and multilingualism have advantages in addition to the obvious one of communicating with different groups of people. Heny (1994:186) believes that learning different languages early in life can sharpen thinking skills in general and can actually help children achieve academically above their grade level. Strong linguistic skills also have practical advantages as the missionary children become adults. For example, some careers are available only to people fluent in two or more languages. When children learn languages, they instinctively pick up the differing nuances of how people in that culture think and relate to one another (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:114-115).

### **3.2.1.4 Potential resources**

According to Pollock (1998:53), missionary children, as adaptable and flexible observers, are sensitive to prejudice, tend to be compliant, and suspend judgment of others. They can build “cultural bridges”. Awareness of what the world is really like, international experience and multilingual capability are more valuable than degrees in today’s marketplace. Missionary children have this benefit that their skills and insights make them extremely important in today’s world (Bowers 1998:53). Pollock and Van Reken (2001:108) provide examples of adult missionary children who have

gone into international or intercultural careers and have developed new abilities, which may be useful in becoming a bridge between different groups of people in helping their company or organization with the sensitive and stressful situations in the work environment. Because of cross-cultural experiences, adult missionary children often find themselves particularly qualified when it comes to jobs or situations such as teaching or mentoring (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:108-109) and a particular type of occupation such as diplomatic work, NGO<sup>9</sup> work and international business (Park 1999:66).

### **3.2.2 The disadvantages of missionary children**

While the missionary children have many advantages, there are also many disadvantages of being missionary children. Ann (2004:31) expresses as a fact that while the missionary children have advantages through cross-cultural experiences, they are struggling with disadvantages. In many cases, a negative experience and the effect of pain that missionary children have experienced in their childhood emerged during their adult stage (Andrews 1995:418). This causes them to have a lower self esteem than children generally do. Thus, the missionary children are in need of being properly understood with reference to their experiences. A necessity that needs to be considered by both their parents and mission agencies (Park 1999:95).

#### **3.2.2.1 Transition**

A missionary family often moves around, from one place to another, from one country to another, and many missionary children struggle with moving around and coping with the consequent changing circumstances (Park 2004:30). Powell (1998:115) states that for missionary families transition from a field may occur due to a variety of reasons: illness, break-ins, kidnapping, threats of death, conflict with home leadership, conflict with home church, conflict with field leadership, conflict with nationals. Another reason is children's higher education in their home country. In

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<sup>9</sup> NGO: Non-Governmental Organization. Many mission organizations are registered as NGOs for effective ministries.

general, transition is difficult amidst a sensitivity to the specific demands and opportunities each one may be involved (Bond & Wagner 1988:69). Many different events can result from a sudden removal from the field, and it affects many missionary children (Bowers 1998:115). Powell (1998:115) argues that “mobility is not wrong, but being victimized by it may be destructive to individuals and those around them”.

The children have settled-in to establish a place of significance for themselves. They know where they belong in their current scene, and are recognized for who they are and what they can contribute. Pollock and Van Reken (2001:159) say that “All at once, their place is gone. All the patterns of daily living are gone.” The children realize that they have no choice in these matters that have affect their lives, such as when and where their parents move, where they can go to school, how they can cope with a new/foreign language, how to behave in new circumstances, or how they can express their inner passions (2001:168). At the time of transfer, the children usually do not have enough time to visit places where they have been and people with whom they have built relationships with, whom they now love. This transition is rather sudden and disruptive, such as the unexpected loss of a loved one, or on account of a serious accident (Park 2004:35-37). Pollock and Van Reken (2001:61) state, “A highly mobile lifestyle makes children fear loss, and have no confidence in relationships with friends”. Books (1998:67) says, “Children are under pressure to grasp the complexities of the new language and culture, they are reeling from a combination of losses that leave them feeling diminished and inadequate to meet the challenge”. Hence, if children are not allowed to express their feelings, they can turn inward, becoming morbid fearing and feeling helpless and hopeless (Books 1998:69). Moving around during their educational years may in the end be deeply disruptive for missionary children. Career paths can be frustrated by moving too soon and often, and the family may be stressed by the lack of stability and of proximity (Bowers 1998:50). Entering new cultures leave children open to exploitations and they remain vulnerable to risks and danger. “To leave the security of one’s home culture is to risk physical exposure in new places and psychological exposure among strangers. They have intense pain in severing with the familiar, and in the physical and emotional distancing of loved ones. They question both their centrality and importance, because their parents are dedicated to their missionary work” (Pollock & Van Reken

2001:62-63). Swadener and Lubeck (1995:188) emphasize that children may be harmed, because of the different environments they enter. For example that of the school environment which require different cultural patterns and values than those that they have learned. Life after transition is different from what it was before. They change cultures, as well as locations, which is also considered under the culture shock of transition. Some children refuse to get involved in a new culture (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:72). Therefore, parents and mission agencies need to give intentional care to their children, in order to move around in a way that is not too disruptive. During this research, it was discovered that most co-researchers changed schools from between 7 to 10 times. Children raised abroad who cannot form permanent roots in the foreign country, possibly causing them to feel isolated. They are sometimes sadly ignorant of national, local, and even family history. Mobile children may lack long-term relationships or a strong national identity (Eidse & Sichel 2004:3).

### **3.2.2.2 Rootlessness and restlessness**

“Where is home?”, “Where are you from?” are the hardest questions for all of the missionary children to answer. Too many of them there is no answer to these questions. For them, home is not a place where they physically stay, rather, it is an emotional place somewhere they truly belong (Eidse & Sichel 2004:81). They seem to find their rootedness in relationships and in memories, rather than in geography (Bowers 1998:50, Eidse & Sichel 2004:11). “Missionary children are raised to conform to a group identity forged by their parents”, “They are expected by the churches, mission agencies and supporters to be committed and dedicated” (Eidse & Sichel 2004:82). Some of the missionary children moved so often, lived in so many different countries and attended so many different schools that they never had time to become attached to any. Some say, Home is “Everywhere and nowhere” (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:124). Others say, “Feeling at home anywhere” (Eidse & Sichel 2004:12). Others establish semi-permanent lodgings on foreign soil, returning to the place their parents call home for furlough or family events. The children shuttle back and forth between nations, languages, cultures, and loyalties.

Some of them visit places to find their roots. They wonder who they are and where

they can settle permanently. Somehow the settling down never quite takes place. The present is never enough. When a tree is transplanted too often, its roots can never grow deep. Missionary children tend to be open-minded and tolerant of many diverse cultures. They often feel more at home in culturally rich environments and can become “homesick”, as they may long for their mission field (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missionary-Kids>). In many cases, missionary children know much more about their host country, its history, geography and politics than those of their home country (<http://www.tckid.com/group/17-ways-to-help-third-culture-kids/>). Other missionary children who have lived in one place during each leave or furlough may have a strong sense of that place being their home (Eldse & Sichel 2004:11). Some of them who have moved often cannot stay at one job long enough to build any sort of career. In some cases, they even change schools or universities without any specific reasons (Eldse & Sichel 2004:13).

The children who have been separated from their family for a long time, may almost feel an obligation to be far from their parents, siblings, or even their own children. They have spent so much time separated from their family that they do not know how to live in physical closeness. They often feel tired and restless due to their experience of separation. They may also feel certain anger towards their parents, the mission agency and God (Eldse & Sichel 2004:14). Being human, they do need strong relationships; a sense of belonging, of being nurtured and cared for, of internal unity, of significance; and a feeling of knowing themselves and being known by others. They need relationships they can share, and begin to discover many aspects about themselves. They have to receive the love and support they need as the foundation for living a life that is rich and meaningful. A sense of belonging is the second greatest need people have to live a full life (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:147). On the other hand, missionary children need to be conscious of their roots. Jung (1999:96) says the meaning of missionary children’s being conscious of their roots, is not confined to their diversity or internationalism, rather, it makes the missionary children’s sense of identity become healthy.

### 3.2.2.3 Statuslessness

Pollock and Van Reken (2001:68) found that, “a severe loss of self-esteem sets-in during this transition stage”. Particularly in cross-cultural moves, it seems that the missionary family has to learn to live again, practically from scratch. As teenagers and adults, nothing strikes at our sense of self-esteem with greater force than learning language and culture, for these are the tasks of children. People do not understand what they are trying to say and do. Their cultural and linguistic mistakes not only embarrass them, but also make them feel anxious and ashamed of being stupid. Both missionary parents and children feel that their basic position in the new community is one of statuslessness. None of their previous knowledge from the past is of any use in the new place. No one knows about their history, abilities, talents, accomplishments, or areas of expertise (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:69). Even though they are welcomed at a new school, they may discover that it is not as easy as they thought it would be to make new close friends. They may become resentful and begin to withdraw, which may result in feelings of isolation and alienation that cuts them off from any hope of making new friends. This increasing sense of loneliness may also lead to anger (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:70).

### 3.2.2.4 Identity

#### Definition

Kim (1999:77) defines the meaning of self-identity as that which is formed by connecting the past, the present, the environment one lives in and what will happen in the future to identify oneself as a ‘unique self’. According to Kim (1999:79) self-identification does not suddenly happen in one day. Rather, it is formulated by taking a fixed way of life and the requirements within one’s environment into consideration. The process of identifying oneself is affected by a variety of knowledge and experiences such as those which include both personal ones, together with that of the community. Some of these start from the moment of birth and are affected by the society’s cultural, historical, economical and educational factors and the world becomes broader in this way.

## Constitution

There are various factors playing various roles in the constitution of an identity and stated below are particular elements indicated by Kim (1999:79-83) that fulfill a very important role in the development of a personal identity: culture, history, society, language, and nationality. The following are summary of identities.

(a) Culture and identity. Cultural value may be realized and accomplished when a person enjoys the ideology, beliefs and value systems that are impressed in the culture (Park 1999:79, Kay 2001:51).

(b) History and identity. History may be formed with essential contents, which may be maintained according to one's personal roots. It is accordingly a foundational principle to express who I am (Park 1999:80).

(c) Society and identity. People find identity when they have relationships with others in the society (Park 1999:81). A certain personal identity may be formed once people realize that they are part of a society that satisfy one's needs through inter-personal relationships (Park 1999:81, Holland 2004:2).

(d) Language and identity. According to Lloyd-Sidle and Lewis (2001:42), language is the basic tool of communication among people and is a very important symbol of identity for people, and mastering it is a sign of respect. Milroy (1982:207) also states that a basic and common social function of language is "a signal of identity".

(e) Nationality and identity. It is common that people usually recognize their identity by their nationality, because they find a root through the nationality of their parents and ancestors. The meaning of nationality in this case is the history of their family line (Park 1999:83).

## Identity of missionary children

According to Pollock and Van Reken (2001:146), personal histories of missionary children may be fragmented by transfer, scripted by family mission, or silenced by the need to conform. Finding their identity can be difficult when language and location are always changing. "Adept at learning new languages and understanding new cultures, many mobile children are able to adjust quickly to changing

circumstances and often have a distinct advantage over more rooted children. Missionary children have little sense of their own personal identity, because they experienced much cultural or national confusion, while they were growing up”. They often struggle with the answering of questions like ‘who they are’, ‘where they are going’ and ‘where do I fit or belong’ (Park 1999:12-13). Travel, risks and danger cause them to mature early, yet they continue to experience confusion about identity, direction, and belonging (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:146). Some of them often feel they are “citizens of the world” (Eldse & Sichel 2004:12), and “feeling at home anywhere” (2004:12) is enough to comfort them. Pollock (1998:47) argues that belonging everywhere and nowhere has a major impact on one’s identity. Often the missionary children live with a sense of being “in the middle” (Bowers 1998:49) between home and host countries. They are touched by both and identify with both, yet without a sense of being owned or owning either one. Pollock (1998:49) explores the idea that for some, “the struggle with identity and belonging is intensified when they still have a sense of belonging overseas after having returned to their home country”. Pollock and Van Reken (2001:147) argue that “missionary children are estranged from their parents’ home culture and disconnected from their host culture, they proceed through the world identified as chronic outsiders”. While missionary children are struggling because they feel as if they do not belong to a specific person or place, they feel that they are similar to the other missionary children and therefore they usually open up their hearts and are good friends with each other. According to Lim (2004:12), growing up globally, they often enjoy an expanded worldview, but may lack a particular national identity. The identity of missionary children is a combination of all the cultural influences they make their own. Sometimes the chord is rich; sometimes it is shrill and discordant.

#### Identity of Korean missionary children

According to Jung (1999:32), in the past most of the Korean missionary children went to America and other Western countries for university training, while their life in the Western countries shaped their identity and they became westernized. Because of this, Korean missionary children found it difficult to return and settle in Korea, and this affects their relationships with their parents and relatives. In contrast to their attitude in the past, mission agencies and missionaries in Korea have become

seriously concerned about how they can educate Korean missionary children in terms of the formulation of their identities (Park 1999:9). Thus, the Korea World Missions Association (KWMA 1993) averred the purpose of education for Korean missionary children according to principles as stated bellow:

To become

- (a) citizens of God's kingdom
- (b) citizens of the world
- (c) citizens of Korea

It is very important that Korean missionary children establish their identities and understand who they are (Park 1999:92). With this knowledge they may have the power to adjust to Korea and other countries (Park 1992:93). For this, missionary parents and mission agencies need to assist Korean missionary children to obtain a degree of fluency in the Korean language, as a language is essential in the formation of an identity (Milroy 1982:207). This is essential for the purpose of reentering Korea for further education and settling down to a new life. Besides language proficiency, Korean missionary children need to have a close connection with the Korean culture, society and people who are in Korea in terms of the development of their identity as Koreans (Park 1999:81,93,94).

### **3.2.2.5 Grief**

Wickstrom (1998:164) explains that unlike anyone else, missionary children have difficulties in specific areas of vulnerability, unique to their experience. According to him, unresolved grief is mostly based on separation. Firstly, frequent moving is a central issue. It will cause a child to feel separated from their beloved ones. For example, they lose their friends and relatives, together with other significant things. The children's loss of their past is no longer available to them. These are major losses, and these problems may be carried over to their adult life, especially in marriage. The fear to lose a loved one can lead to a fear of close relations, which may lead to constant fear of losing a loved one (Bowers 1998:165). Secondly, educational choices such as boarding school or staying in the home country without their parents may create other major patterns of separation while children are still young. It may cause emotional difficulties such as unresolved grievances and

relationship difficulties with parents and brothers and sisters, because they are separated from them at an early age and for extended periods of time (Pirollo 2000:142; Pollock & Van Reken 2001:170). Thirdly, missionary children who have very busy parents may fall into another pattern of grief. They may think that they are not good enough, due to the fact that their parents do not take care of them in a way they expect. They may wonder why parents are always working and busy with other people, instead of being present with them (Bowers 1998:168). It causes a child to feel isolated. While many missionary children develop good intimacy patterns, some become very isolated (Bowers 1998:169). Bowers (1998:174) says, “Those experiences have bruised missionary children so much that they may often feel depressed or sad, fearful or anxious for seemingly no reason at all; while a low self-esteem may also sometimes occur”. Anger, depression, over-sympathizing with others in grief, and sometimes delayed grief responses triggered by what may seem insignificant losses, may be indicators of unresolved grief (Bowers 1998:175). It is important for missionary children to deal with the grief which affects them during their lives. Pollock and Van Reken (2001) present the following concepts for the resolution of grief.

1) Recognize “hidden losses”. Missionary children can acknowledge that proper mourning for losses is an affirmation of the richness of the past. By negating the present, they will continue to deny the longing for attention with the grief they have felt. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize hidden losses and to bring them to the surface to face the pain (p.167).

2) Allow oneself to grieve. Often missionary children feel that they are asked to be “brave soldiers” for God. They think that their feelings of fear and grief are not spiritual and that it is wrong to express their bad feelings. They learn that negative feelings show a lack of faith, consequently they start wearing a mask to cover those feelings (pp.172,173). Therefore, they need to know that human beings may express their fears and grief.

3) Give sufficient time to grieve for losses. A person who experiences loss needs a time to face the pain, to mourn it, and to accept the loss in order to be able to move

on. Therefore missionary parents should understand that their children are in need of sufficient time to face their personal pain and to grieve for their losses (pp.173,174).

4) Give genuine comfort. The lack of comfort is another factor that prevents grief to be assuaged. Missionary children who have negative experiences often receive simplistic encouragements from people. They need to be comforted from a genuine heart. Comfort does not change the situation itself, nor can it take away the pain, but it relays the message that someone cares and understands. Comfort gives people a feeling of acceptance and understanding. So they know that they are not alone in their sorrow (pp.174-176).

#### **4. SUMMARY**

In this chapter the educational needs of missionary children were described as the most important issue missionary parents are faced with. All too often mission agencies find themselves faced with resignations and requests for reassignment because of educational issues of missionary children. Therefore some of the essential reasons why the churches and mission agencies definitely need to support educational issues for the missionary children were investigated, with special focus on the educational needs of Korean missionary children.

The characteristics of missionary children and their advantages and disadvantages were examined. A few serious questions were asked in order to clarify important issues concerning Korean missionary children's education and life, such as: what kind of school option will be the best for them? What is a priority for their education? How can they catch up with their Korean studies? How are they able to maintain their Korean identity? KWMA (1993) determined that the purpose of education for Korean missionary children should be: to become 1) citizens of God's kingdom, 2) citizens of the World, 3) citizens of Korea.

It is very important that Korean missionary parents, churches and mission agencies need to assist the Korean missionary children to establish those identities in order to understand who they really are (Park 1999:92).

Recently, many of the Korean missionary children have returned to Korea for higher education, due to the fact that in 1995 the Korean government changed the merit system for entrance to colleges/universities in Korea (Park 1999:61). Specific high schools<sup>10</sup> have been established in Korea, where it is easier for Korean missionary children and third culture kids to adjust to the school system and to labour. This new trend make it easier for Korean missionary children to reenter Korea for further education. But, since English is the predominant universal language, the Korean government has tried to implement and activate an English education system from primary school to high school in Korea. For this, the government has recruited many English teachers who are fluent in English and graduated at a university abroad. Some of the large companies in Korea even grant employment opportunities for the third culture kids and missionary children in order to benefit from their linguistic abilities. Hence, Korean missionary children have many job opportunities in Korea. They do however, need to be supported to understand the Korean society and culture, as well as to speak the Korean language to reenter the society. If the Korean missionary children have the knowledge indicated by KWMA (1993), they will be able to adjust to Korean life (Park 1992:93).

Therefore, Korean missionary parents have to consider where their children will live permanently in the future, prior to making a decision on how to educate their children. Once this has been decided, missionary parents need to decide on the correct long-term plan and the priorities of the different citizenships their children will then have, and needs for their future. With a long-term education plan, the Korean missionary parents may prepare for the correct direction for their children's lives (Park 1999:28-30). Being caught up in their day-to-day struggles, parents may easily lose sight of these long-term goals and fail to address some of the most important areas in which children need to develop (Sharon Haag 2005). It is important for missionary families

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<sup>10</sup> Foreign language high schools have completely different educational systems to Korean schools and teach many subjects in English.

to effectively schedule and implement long-term plans for their children's education from the very beginning.

Chapter three will especially focus on educational issues of the missionary children. While chapter one dealt with the general aspects of missionary children, chapter two will address the research paradigm and procedure of this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### RESEARCH PARADIGM AND PROCEDURE

#### 1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This study is a narrative research within the postfoundationalist and social constructionist paradigm which underpin the narrative approach to theology to gain a better understanding of the stories of missionary children. According to Müller (2006: 9), postfoundationalist practical theology should be seen as a way of understanding within the broad paradigm of the hermeneutical approach. It moves beyond hermeneutics as a metaphor for practical theology. While the hermeneutical approach as such does not provide a position in between the foundationalist and the nonfoundationalist approaches, postfoundationalism positions itself opposite both of these paradigms.

Within the postfoundationalist approach, this study firstly listens to the stories of missionary children to ascertain their education difficulties on the mission field. The aim is not to describe the general context, but to focus on the specific and concrete situation of missionary children.

In order to understand postfoundationalism, the history of modernism and postmodernism and their characteristic will be investigated, and then postfoundationalism will be described.

#### 1.1 Postfoundationalism as reaction

##### 1.1.1 Modernism

The Renaissance of the fourteenth to sixteenth century is generally taken as the origin of modernism. During the Renaissance the first secular humanism in human history emerged. Secular humanism designates the notion that man, not God, is the measure of all things. According to their own standard human beings are considered to understand and reshape, their destinies and the future of the world as well.

Renaissance thinkers returned to the ancient classical literature as the archetype of modernism (Burgess 2001:50).

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, modernism combined with the Enlightenment, the primary feature of which was 'seen as its assertion of the omniscience of human reason' (McGrath 1996:163). McGrath (1996:163,164) comments on this that "Reason, it was argued, was capable of telling us everything we needed to know about God and morality. The idea of some kind of supernatural revelation was dismissed as an irrelevance. Jesus Christ was just one of many religious teachers, who told us things that anyone with a degree of common sense could have told us anyway. Reason reigned supreme."

According to the Enlightenment, each individual was endowed with the following two things: first, an ability to find and reach the truth by means of observation and reasoning, and second, an inalienable right to participate in the process of governance (Gergen 1999:17,18). Herholdt (1998:215,216) argues that the Enlightenment placed emphases on both the certainty of reality guaranteed by natural sciences and the personal gratification achieved by the autonomous reason and political freedom of each individual person. The influence of the Enlightenment throughout Europe undermined and collapsed the ancient regime with its totalitarian government by a monarchy and religion.

The modernism of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment is an example of foundationalism in its comprehension of the truth. Through its universal, objective, pure, scientific and empirical sense, it attempted to determine the human cognitive ability with reason and observation as its absolutely firm and self-evident foundation. This epistemological foundationalism emerged in western society after the decline of the medieval age.

Not too long, however, did it take for modernism to come to an end. In contrast to the future prospect of late nineteenth-century thinkers that the twentieth century would be a culmination of the Enlightenment project, the past hundred years have marked the twilight of the Enlightenment representative of Western modernism (Grenz 1999:385). In the twenty-first century, however exaggerating it may be, the

modern way of thinking has become obsolete (Dockery 1995:13). Grenz (1999:385) comments on this unexpected phenomenon that the “acids of modernity” came to be turned against modernity itself. The foundation which modernism attempted to build up turned out to be a poison to it. The concepts of the universal, the objective and the pure which modernism pursued were fictitious ones, generally reflecting a set of presuppositions specific to Western society (McGrath 1996:132). In brief, modernism’s attempt to constitute a firm foundation can be acknowledged as, to borrow from the conceptualities of postmodernism, ‘at best flawed, and at worst an invitation to oppression’ (McGrath 1996:132).

The twentieth and twenty-first century postmodern era is an age of uncertainty and transition. In fact, the past hundred years mark the ‘questioning of the Enlightenment project and the increasing influence of postmodern sensitivities’ (Grenz 1999:385). Foundationalism of any kind – whether philosophical or religious – is no more welcome because it ‘is widely regarded as discredited’ (McGrath 1996:132).

Therefore, an alternative to the foundationalism of modernism, which is appropriate to the present postmodern era, should emerge. It should be, above all, a new paradigm to embrace the particularity and distinctiveness of things, including each individual community and its distinguishable story, while the Enlightenment tended to strip human beings of their particularities and distinctness (McGrath 1996:165).

### **1.1.2 Postmodernism**

Van Huyssteen (1998:26) considered postmodern thought as a part of the modern and not merely modern thought coming to its end. In this way “the modern and the postmodern are also unthinkable apart from one another, because the postmodern shows itself best in the ‘to–and–fro movement’ between the modern and the postmodern.” The concept of postmodernism is generally considered to have emerged beyond modernism as a movement that transcends modernism, sometimes in contradistinction to, and sometimes inclusive of modernism (Beyer et

al. s.a.:32). According to Freedman and Combs (2002:188), “most postmodern thinkers would see the modernist worldview as one of many possible stories, one that is quite useful in pursuing criteria of predictability and control, but no more fundamentally ‘true’ or ‘real’ than many other stories about the nature of the universe.” Postmodernist scholars are more interested in difference than in similarity, in specific, contextualized details than in grand generalizations. Also exceptions are more interesting than rules.

Postmodernism is generally not regarded as a style or unified theory, but as a way of thinking. It allows for the simultaneous presence of different features of knowledge. Therefore, it moves from the objective to the subjective, from the universal to the particular, from validity to subjective integrity, from control to participation, from the quantitative to the qualitative. Postmodernism rejects equality and universality, but promotes openness, diversity, multiplicity and different subjectivities from the transparent perspectives in terms of culture and time. In a postmodern society, knowledge becomes functional. Postmodernism themes have, in theology, alternative interpretations and constructive appropriations, now become viable options (Van Huyssteen 1997:2). All claims to knowledge of self and the world lose their authority (Gergen 1999:29). The following definition (Van Huyssteen 1997:187) makes clear the notion of postmodernism:

Typical of postmodernism is its skepticism concerning the central role assigned to reason and rational thought. Over against indubitable truth-claims, and overconfident faith in science, and a metaphysical way of reasoning, the interrelatedness of truth-perspectives, ethical pluralism, and cultural relativism is typical of the postmodern perspective.

The postmodern movement sees the stretching of conventional mainstream boundaries regarding ideas about what constitutes legitimate knowledge, and allows for contextual influences of knowledge production. Thus, it influences individual existential realities, and specific local conditions are given recognition in the acceptance of knowledge. In a postmodern attitude towards knowledge production, the scientific method is not considered the most reliable and the only source for new knowledge. However, the scientific method with its emphasis on empiricism is not totally rejected, but rather seen as one possible way out of many for producing new

knowledge (Beyer et al. s.a.:32). The words ‘narrative’, ‘history’, ‘language’, and ‘text’ appear frequently in the postmodernist thinkers’ vocabulary (Freedman & Combs 2002:189).

The postmodern movement influenced theology as well. For theology the shift from modern to postmodern thought will mean that “central theological terms like religious experience, revelation, tradition and divine action can no longer be discussed within the generalized terminology of a metanarrative that ignores the socio-historical location of the theologian as an interpreter of experience and an appropriator of tradition” (Van Huyssteen 1998:26). In the postmodern paradigm, truth is relative and is influenced by the intellectual climate and cultural categories of every period (Herholdt 1998:221). In postmodern theology, there is not a fixed body of theological truth that needs to be communicated from generation to generation; but every generation needs to discover meanings for themselves through metaphoric reference. Thus, the epistemic construction of God is local and not universal (Herholdt 1998:224,225).

Freedman and Combs (2002: 189) formulate the characteristic of postmodern reality in a therapeutic context:

1. Realities are socially constructed.
2. There are multiple possibilities for how to describe and classify the ‘reality’ of any situation.
3. Knowledge is performed, not found.
4. Knowledge is constituted through language.
5. Realities are organized and maintained through narrative.
6. There are no ‘essential’ truths.

Before discussing postfoundationalism, modernism will be revisited in the form of foundationalism and postmodernism as its important roots or resources of nonfoundationalism.

### 1.1.3 Foundationalism

Foundationalism is the “thesis that all our beliefs can be justified by appealing to some item of knowledge that is self-evident or indubitable” (Van Huyssteen 1997:2). According to Müller (2008:2), absolute truth is available in the foundationalist approach. This would be a perspective faithful to the true foundation and a theory built on such a presumption could be referred to as a “universal rationality.” This is founded on the idea of a universe of knowledge that functions as an overarching frame of reference. Hence there is only one theoretical truth and that must be pursued. The religious quest for personal transformation has been deeply embedded in the powerful truth claims of this faith (Van Huyssteen 1998:1). Epistemologically, foundationalism always implies the holding of a theological position in an inflexible and infallible manner, invoking the ultimate foundations on which to construct the evidential support system of various convictional beliefs (Van Huyssteen 1997:3). Müller (2008:3) points out that foundationalists use their own expert knowledge as the unquestioned starting point and then engage the other rationalities from there. Foundationalism refuses to justify its view and theological standing. Rather, foundationalism as a concept, proclaims truth and in a theological sense, claims to have an absolute and single interpretation of the Bible (Van Huyssteen 1997:3). Foundationalists hold that some parts of the structure which we call human knowledge, and of the structures that each of us counts as our own belief system, are more basic than others. They cannot be justified by reference to other beliefs where derived beliefs can be justified by reference to basic beliefs. Thus, interdisciplinary work is made extremely difficult through this approach (Müller 2008:3). In the natural sciences, the implication of foundationalism is a positivist empiricism or scientific materialism that, per definition, renders all religion, theology and theological reflection meaningless. In theology, foundationalism implies biblical literalism or positivism of revelation, which isolates theology, in that it denies the crucial role of interpreted religious experience in all theological reflections, thereby leaving the theologian to speak a language that may be internally coherent, but, powerless to communicate its content to a wider audience. Foundationalism is unrelated to all non-theological discourses (Van Huyssteen 1997:226,227). Therefore, in both theology and philosophy, foundationalism is rejected in favour of

nonfoundationalism (Van Huyssteen 1998:23). Bosch (1993:186) points out that in theology or the natural or social sciences, they never think in mutually exclusive categories of “absolute” and “relative”. He also insists, our theologies are partial, and they are culturally and socially biased. For this, they may never claim to be absolutes. Bosch (1993:187) further insists, contrary to the natural sciences, theology relates not only to the present and the future, but also to the past, to tradition, to God’s primary witness to humans. Theology must undoubtedly always be relevant and contextual.

#### **1.1.4 Nonfoundationalism**

According to Van Huyssteen (1997:3), nonfoundationalism is one of the most important roots or resources of postmodernism. Nonfoundationalism is negated by its negation of any alleged strong foundations for belief-systems and support of nonbasic beliefs. Nonfoundationalists believe that all of our beliefs together form part of a web of interrelated beliefs. Nonfoundationalism also emphasizes the crucial epistemic importance of community, arguing that every community and context has its own rationality. Nonfoundationalism implies a total relativism of rationalities, proves to be fatal for the interdisciplinary status of theology, and claims internal rules for different modes of reflection. This relativism of rationality in its extreme form denies interdisciplinary conversation (Van Huyssteen 1997:3). Nonfoundationalism also proclaims neither “truth” nor “reality.” Tatusko (2005:114), quoted by Müller (2008:3), argues that the concept of a universal truth is no longer accepted in the contemporary world. The non- or anti-foundational position makes the interdisciplinary discussion even more difficult, because there is scepticism about any effort to create mutual understanding which is always diverse. Constructive discussions are difficult in a situation where everything is relative and subjective (Müller 2008:3).

Fideism, which deserves our attention, is another theological and philosophical position. Van huyssteen (1997:3) criticizes fideism in that fideism is uncritical, and a blind commitment to a set of beliefs. Thus, fideism can ironically turn out to be

foundationalism. This form of fideism and foundationalism go together in theology when the boundaries between the trust or the personal faith become blurred or hazy. In theology, the fideist move occurs on specific beliefs when it is isolated in a definite protective strategy and then confused with faith in God itself.

I have been a member of the Presbyterian Church (Hap-Dong) in Korea for my entire life and was proud of my Presbyterian background. I strongly proclaimed what I believed to be the truth in my teaching and discussion of the Bible.

From time to time, however, some questions came to mind. I believe the Bible is the word of God, but I have come to question how I should interpret Biblical text in the contemporary world and in practical theology. I recognize that my interpretation of the meaning of the Bible may be too narrow and I am thus careful as to how I apply my reading of the bible to my everyday life.

Within the role of a pastor's wife, to whom many people come for counseling from time to time, I have struggled with the traditional approach to pastoral counseling which is better known as Biblical counseling. In this counseling, people are compelled by pastors and counselors to follow their answers to a problem. I have often questioned why the answers pastors and counselors provide always seem to fall within their own framework rather than that of the people they counsel. Some people who have been counseled in the traditional way say that this kind of counseling can lead to counseling sessions that become closed or shut off. Within my philosophical position, I have thus found that there are some difficulties with regard to counseling. As I am a practical theologian, I must avoid the arrogance of prescribing overarching for counseling.

However, since meeting and entering into a learner-mentor relationship with Prof. Julian Müller at the University of Pretoria, I have been extremely challenged by his postfoundationalist beliefs. Postfoundationalism starts with the context, not a tradition. Beyond foundationalism, postfoundationalism is negotiable, less direct and dialogues with other disciplines. Having consulted Van Huyssteen (1997:s.p.) and other books about narrative and social constructionism, I have come to realize that many of my ways of thinking and pastoral counseling have postfoundationalist

elements. And I feel comfortable in the interaction between theology and science. As I have stated above, in both foundationalism and nonfoundationalism, dialogue with other disciplines becomes more difficult. Thus, in order to respond to both paradigms, I take my position within postfoundationalism as it is a “viable third epistemological option,” which is beyond the objectivism of foundationalism and the extreme relativism of non-foundationalism (Van Huyssteen 1998:23).

### **1.1.5 Postfoundationalism**

According to Müller (2008:4), the postfoundationalist approach is “skeptical about both foundationalist and nonfoundationalist positions”, “this approach is sensitive to the danger of relativity and subjectivity in a multiverse rationality, and of the rigidity and false claims of the universal rationality.” Thus postfoundationalism consists of an effort to move beyond both foundationalist and nonfoundationalist claims. For this reason, it is called post-foundationalism and not anti- or non-foundationalism (Müller 2008:4). Van Huyssteen (1997:4) proposes a “viable third epistemological option” which he terms “postfoundationalism.” Müller (2004:4) says that this “third way” is a way out of the “stuckness” of modern or foundationalist (fundamentalist) science and theology, and on the other hand, the fatalism of some postmodern approaches. Demasure and Müller (2006:416) say further:

Postfoundationalist Practical Theology should be seen as a way of understanding within the broad paradigm of the hermeneutical approach... The hermeneutical approach as such does not provide a positioning in between the foundationalist and the non-foundationalist approaches. Hermeneutics can be abused if it tends toward either extreme. Postfoundationalism, on the other hand, positions itself firmly opposite both of these paradigms.

As postfoundationalism avoids the extremes of foundationalism, it is now important to critically question uncritical assumptions and attempt to challenge assumptions in order to explore and interpret people's experiences, which can be discovered through communication and dialogue. Thus, postfoundationalism engages in conversation with other disciplines to find new patterns that are consistent with the Christian paradigm, through critical theological reflection (Van Huyssteen 1997:4). A

postfoundationalist notion of rationality in theological reflection could open our eyes to an epistemic obligation toward plausible forms of interdisciplinary dialogue. And this claims to point beyond the confines of the local community or culture towards interdisciplinary conversation (Van Huyssteen 1997:4). Van Huyssteen argues for interdisciplinary dialogue between theology and science, although the domains of rationality of these two disciplines are different. For interdisciplinary dialogue between disciplines, paradigms, and practices to occur, transversal reason is employed. According to Van Huyssteen (2006:9):

Interdisciplinary discourse, then, is an attempt to bring together disciplines or reasoning strategies that may have widely different points of reference, different epistemological foci, and different experiential resources. This 'fitting together,' however, is a complex, multileveled transversal process that takes place not within the confines of any given discipline... but within the transversal spaces between disciplines.

We are empowered to step beyond the limitations and boundaries of our contexts, traditions, and disciplines when we engage in interdisciplinary conversation. "Here theology will share in interdisciplinary standards of rationality, which, although always contextually and socially shaped, will not be hopelessly culture- and context-bound. This will enable our theological reflection to aim for the reasoned coherence of a wide reflective equilibrium as the optimal epistemic goal of interdisciplinary dialogue" (Van Huyssteen 2006:41). In postfoundationalism, rationality is "an awareness of the shared cognitive, pragmatic, and evaluative dimensions" (Van Huyssteen 1999:239). Postfoundationalist rationality describes the dynamic interaction of interdisciplinary dialogues with one another, as a form of transversal reasoning. This rationality through transversal reasoning provides common ground for communication for people who have different beliefs and cultures. Van Huyssteen and Schrag proposed the notion of "transversal rationality." Van Huyssteen (2006:21), quoted by Müller (2008:5), refers to Schrag for transversal rationality as follows:

Transversal rationality is now fused with consciousness and self awareness, and this consciousness is then unified by an experience of self-presence, emerging over time from a remembering self-awareness/consciousness in which diverse past experiences are transversally integrated as we reach out to others to talk about the human subject that is now revisioned by resituating the human subject in the space of communicative praxis. Thus the notion of transversal rationality opens up the possibility to focus on

patterns of discourse and action as they happen in our communicative practices, rather than focusing only on the structure of the self, ego, or subject.

Postfoundational rationality is constructed on the basis of own experience, but is capable of reaching beyond. It starts with an individual and extends to community. This rationality is diverse from community to community. Thus, postfoundational rationality is context-specific and is embedded in tradition (Van Huyssteen 2006:11). Van Huyssteen, quoted by Müller (2008:5), says, “A postfoundationalist approach helps us realize...that we are not the intellectual prisoners of our contexts or traditions, but that we are epistemically empowered to cross contextual, cultural, and disciplinary borders to explore critically the theories, meanings, and beliefs through which we and others construct our worlds.” Müller (2004:6) cites Van Huyssteen in saying that a postfoundationalist notion of rationality reveals that one’s own experience is always going to be rationally compelling, even as we reach out beyond personal awareness and conviction to interpersonal (and interdisciplinary) dialogue. According to Demasure and Müller (2006:417):

The postfoundationalist approach forces us to firstly listen to the stories of people struggling in real life situations. It does not merely aim to describe a general context, but we are confronted with a specific and concrete situation. This approach to Practical Theology, although also hermeneutical in nature, is more reflexive in epistemology and methodology (Müller 2006:9). According to Van Huyssteen (2006:9) “...embodied persons, and not abstract beliefs, should be seen as the locus of rationality. We, as rational agents, are thus always socially and contextually embedded.”

Müller (2008:4) says, “This way of thinking is always concrete, local, and contextual, but at the same time reaches beyond local contexts to interdisciplinary concerns. It is contextual, but at the same time in acknowledgement of the way in which our epistemologies are shaped by tradition.” Postfoundationalism acknowledges contextuality, interprets experience and identifies human rationality in different modes of reflection (Van Huyssteen 1997:4). The shift of emphasis from individual to social, from subjective towards discourse is a part of the postfoundationalist paradigm (Demasure & Müller 2006:418). Müller (2008:5) states that the idea of socially constructed interpretations and meaning is clearly part of the postfoundationalist approach. Van Huyssteen (2006:25) says, “Because of our

irrevocable contextuality and the embeddedness of all belief and action in networks of social and cultural traditions, beliefs, meaning, and action arise out of our embedded life worlds.” In the postfoundationalist approach, contextuality is a key concept, and experience in each situation is always interpreted (Müller 2008:5).

Postfoundationalist practical theology will be discussed before social constructionsim is described as it becomes part of “doing theology” and takes the social constructions seriously. The practical theologian is not so much concerned with abstractions and generalizations, but rather with the detail of a particular person’s story (Müller 2004:3).

### **1.1.6 Postfoundationalist practical theology**

Practical theology starts its theological reflections from practices, aims at empirically analyzing practices and should be directed towards the transformation of these practices. This aims at developing a hermeneutical action-theory or a hermeneutical-empirical approach to human actions. Practical theology takes the circular movement of ‘practice-theory-practice’ seriously and brings it into operation (Müller 2004:3). Theology can be practical when practical concerns are brought to it from the beginning. Practical theology has a particular task of shaping “theories of practice” (LeRon Shults 2006:327). And this approach can be summarized as the descriptive-empirical, the interpretive, the normative, and the pragmatic. Müller (2005:2) says, “Practical theology happens whenever and wherever there is a reflection on practice, from the perspective of the experience of the presence of God.” We cannot detach any reflections on religious experience from doing practical theology. Christians usually reflect on their religious experiences and beliefs within the presence of God, and through such reflection they construct their religious identity. In practical theology, which is always connected with ‘the moment of praxis (always local, embodied, and situated)’ (Müller 2005:2), theoretical context and practical context should be situated on an equal level. The primary subject matter of practical theology is Christian praxis in specific social contexts in the contemporary world. “It investigates this praxis empirically, interprets it to better understand and explain its patterns, constructs a

theological framework, and provides models of practice and guidelines for its future conduct and reform” (LeRon Shults 2006:328). Another important part of the new approach to practical theology is extensive attention to interdisciplinary work. And this is faced with practical theologians engaging the social sciences as a dialogue partner in their empirical or interpretive work. The basic objective for social science is to carry out analyses, interpret the status of values and interest in society, aimed at social commentary and social action and praxis (LeRon Shults 2006:331,332). Power is viewed not only in terms of its outcomes, but also as a process, best viewed as a network of unequal and mobile relations and interactions that are embedded in a community’s practices and discourses. Therefore, social science will contribute to the ongoing process within society. In the contemporary world, practical theologians confront the reality of pluralism in social science, as the result of interdisciplinarity within social science, which is appropriate to empirical research. Thus, practical theologians face the task of providing reasons for their evaluation of one approach as more adequate than the others (LeRon Shults 2006:333,338). According to Van Huyssteen, quoted by LeRon Shults (2006:87), the metaphoric language of our religious experience must be transformed in some way for maximal conceptual clarity. Thus, social science must play a part in influencing the theological plan and dialogue with theology. Van Huyssteen conceived the postfoundationalist theory of practical theology, and this rests on the relationship between rationality and interpreted experience as he claims (in LeRon Shults 2006:89) as follows:

We relate to our world epistemically only through the mediation of interpreted experience, and in this sense it may be said that theology and the sciences offer alternative interpretations of our experience... the rational agent’s self-conception and self-awareness is not only intrinsically connected to rationality, it is indeed an indispensable starting point for any account of the values that shape human rationality.

In the notion of postfoundationalist theory of practical theology, it is important that each individual person interpret their experience in meaningful constructions... Understanding the meaningfulness of human existence and the investigation of how meaning is constructed by individuals, societies, cultures, texts, and historical periods are essential in postfoundationalist theory of practical theology (LeRon Shults 2006:90). The idea that interpretations and

meaning are socially constructed is a part of the postfoundationalist approach...  
“Contextuality is a key concept in the postfoundationalist approach. Experience is situated and experience is always interpreted” (Müller 2008:5).

For practical theology, it is important to reflect on the concept of social constructionism within the social sciences, as there is a strong connection between practical theology and the social sciences. Social constructionism is a growing theory within the social sciences with a rapidly growing body of publications on the term “social constructionism” (Hermans et al. 2002).

## **1.2 Social constructionism**

According to Demasure and Müller (2006:4), the narrative approach has been linked to social constructionism, which exposes the stories and character of human life. The narrative approach emphasizes the social process while constructionism emphasizes the subjective. Language is a key role in this process. Meanings are shared and allocated by means of language. Thus the “act of languaging” and the ‘act of storying” can refer to “now” (Müller 1999:41). Hence, this narrative researcher is positioned within the social constructionist paradigm. This has implications for the way in which we try to be truthful in doing research (Müller & Scholeman 2004:9). Social constructionism, which is in line with a postmodern view, is the most useful theoretical position from which to conduct this research (Gergen 2001:33). Social constructionism functions as a guiding principle in this context and requires that the researcher and co-researchers all participate in the counseling, construct new realities and learn in the process (Müller & Scholeman 2004:2). Social Constructionism focuses on a person’s sense of self that is constructed by the interaction of that person with others (Freedman & Combs 1996:27). According to Müller (1999:41), the story of self cannot be told without connecting the rest of the stories. Everyone’s own story has a boundary, but is also explained by the larger story within which it functions. Social constructionists argue that realities are socially constructed from generation to generation and from day to day and are maintained through narratives (Freedman & Combs 1996:16,22), and perceptions with the

result that people interpret their own world when they encounter the world (Gergen 1985:266). Through social processes, knowledge is also produced by the relation between one person and others, the persons and their social context. A series of ideas and shared beliefs are created in the social process, and a social context where the boundary of what one is cannot be easily separated from what others are (Stevens 1996:222). Social constructionism is not a complete theory, but through reflection, constructionists appreciate the limitations of their commitments and the potential inherent in alternatives (Gergen 1999:235). But, since realities are constructed together and alternative understanding is reached socially through group action, social constructionism is applicable to this research. Müller (2004:6) says, "In social-constructionism there is a deep-rooted belief that we, with our rationality, are socially constructed." Van Huyssteen (2006:10) supports Müller that, "...embodied persons, and not abstract beliefs, should be seen as the locus of rationality. We, as rational agents, are thus always socially and contextually embedded". The alternative is not the sense of competing or conflicting interpretations, rather, it is the sense of complementary interpretations of the manifold dimensions of our experience." Müller (2004:6) understands "received interpretations", as the concept "that puts emphasis on tradition, on culture and on cultural discourses, all of which contribute to interpretations." Within this concept, a unique understanding of reality is always received, and reality is not constructed in an individual and subjective sense, but is rather socially constructed (Müller 2004:6). These ideas can then be applied to people's stories, cultures, and societies, rather than to information, systems and patterns (Freedman & Combs 1996:18). This approach also opens the way for the narrative approach. We are together continuously constructing our world by the stories we are telling, and through this, "we test our perceptions against each other and refine the macro-stories of our families and culture" (Müller 1999:41). Knowledge is also produced by the action of certain social processes, such as the interaction of people with each other and with their social environment. These realities provide the beliefs, practices, words and experiences from which they make up their lives (Stevens 1996:222). According to Freedman and Combs (1996:16), the stories of individual lives can influence the constitution of whole cultures, and cultural stories, in turn, can influence the way people interpret their daily experiences. The stories that people experience in their

personal lives with the stories that circulate in their cultures interact (Freedman & Combs 1996:16).

Demasure and Müller (2006:419) say that, social constructionism and the postfoundationalist approach are all part of one family with theology. These approaches support the narrative form of pastoral care and pastoral conversation on several points, which are formulated as guiding criteria for a pastoral conversation (Demasure & Müller 2006:419):

- Preference for stories instead of concepts and arguments
- To be locally contextual
- Socially constructed stories and identities
- In dialogue with the tradition
- Exploring interdisciplinary meaning

### **1.3 Narrative Approach**

The narrative approach can be found within the framework of postfoundationalism and social constructionism, and is concerned with finding different meanings and the effects of stories on people within social interactions (Freedman & Combs 2002:191). From the theological position of postfoundationalism, the narrative approach is used to explore the context of people's experiences and personal stories. In terms of postfoundationalism, it is important to discover how people understand their own lives and behavior. According to Müller (1999:1), the "narrative approach has made the discovery that people do not tell stories only for interest's sake or for entertainment, but that life's grain is exposed through these stories." White (2000:9) assumes that narratives are peoples' expressions of life, consisting of units of meaning and experience. Thus, peoples' interpretation of their own behavior is explored along with a "scientific" interpretation of their behavior as well as the researcher's interpretation and the interpretations of others. In this sense, it is better to think of "story" instead of "pattern" or "label", and of "society" rather than of "system". According to Freedman and Combs (2002:106), narrative researchers collaborate with people to change their lives by storytelling. People are born into

stories and stories shape people's perceptions. Müller (1999:6) says, "Narrative therapy depends on the meaning-giving power of language and stories." Thus, as a narrative researcher, it is very important to understand and communicate the co-researchers' language. The co-researchers' language interprets the meaning of their life (Müller 1999:6).

### **1.3.1 Language and stories**

According to Müller (1999:5), language is used to give meaning to personal experiences. And experiences are interpreted by using the words and grammar available to the story tellers. These stories are done within a time-frame. The experiences are raw and meaningless until words and concepts give meaning to them. Language is used to reframe past events into usable experiences. If the language is limited, the story is limited. And therefore the interpretation is hamstrung and less useful. The use of language gives meaning to experiences. And the experience is interpreted into a story when language is connected to this event. It becomes a story and develops meaning which provides motivation for new behavior, and creates new stories which lead to new meanings (Müller 1999:5). This is our way of thinking, doing and decision-making. Each story told, represents a struggle in the process of thinking, doing and decision-making. Through our stories we not only discover identity, but also build identity. Experience becomes useful when it turns into a story form. Thus, we organize our experiences into stories. The story is taken seriously and accepted as people's experience. Müller (1999:3) says about story development as follows:

Every story is always dynamic and developing, and therefore the story is formulating includes a process of development from one point to the next. The story also has a time-frame. This enables us to link experiences, events and time. In this way the story's plot develops. Events... develop into an unfolding line of suspense filled with intrigue.

Stories develop meaning when people's experiences are organized into story form. The narrative approach as a unity exists between the past, the present, and the future. In a narrative approach people's stories are continuously being told, so that eventually they can be reformulated into stories that would give a new meaning to life. Stories have the power to shape our experience of reality. The dominant stories

in society have power through networks of language, beliefs, institutions, customs, and laws, and these networks are called 'discourses' (Freedman & Combs 2002:106). According to Mustin (1994:19), quoted by Freedman and Combs (1996:42), discourses sustain a particular worldview, pointing out, "The ways most people hold, talk about, and act on a common, shared viewpoint are part of and sustain the prevailing discourses." Discourses have power to shape a person's choices about what life events can be as stories and how they should be storied. Our stories have been shaped by a variety of discourses (Freedman & Combs 1996:43). Postfoundationalism values each discourse in its own right and allows for respectful dialogue and insight, in order to help people grow in their understanding of life. Thus, conversations can be seen as stories and narratives, with stories needing to be listened to and heard with their intentional meaning in mind (Müller & Schoeman 2004:8). According to Müller and Schoeman (2004:8), "the challenge is to create a situation where people's narratives can be listened to and heard in a respectful manner, a situation where it is not only possible to hear the meaning of the narrator, but where the narrator is respected and not exposed by the research itself". In the narrative research, co-researchers are recognized as a unique domain of skills and techniques that enable people to derive meaning from their perceptions of the world. Thus, they should be voiced and formulated through the research process. This kind of research creates a sense of hope and therefore consists of positive intervention. This is a powerful, but a fragile intervention (Müller & Schoeman 2004:9). Therefore, it is important that this research is not aimed at any objectives of the researcher, but is rather aimed at being of benefit and value to co-researchers. "The aim is, through this research process, to empower the powerless" (Müller & Schoeman 2004:8).

Hence, in interviews, the researcher can assist his/her co-researchers to tell their stories in their own ways, and to interpret and assess their own experiences. This researcher will thus make an effort to listen to co-researchers' interpretations and will attempt to construct particular meanings, as Freedman and Combs (2002:141) suggest, rather than rely on any generalizations or assumptions. The success of the story of their experience provides people with a sense of continuity and meaning in

their lives. So, people renew their stories, making new meanings and creating new possibilities for a new future.

### **1.3.2 The not knowing position**

A “not knowing position” has been adopted, which is an important position for narrative researchers to take (Freedman & Combs 1996:44). Anderson and Goolishian (1990a:159) see therapy as a process in which “we are always moving toward what is not yet known”. However, adopting a “not knowing position” does not mean that the researcher does not know anything, but that it is knowledge of the process of therapy, not of the content and meaning of people’s lives. The goal of therapy is to participate in a conversation (Anderson & Goolishian 1988:381). And thus, a therapist achieves a “not knowing position” when they do not see themselves as an expert taking control of the research or the research “object”, but rather as being open to the co-researchers and providing opportunities for them to share their stories (Freedman & Combs 1996:42; Müller 1999:1). The central concern of narrative therapy is to collaborate with people in developing new narratives (stories) about themselves that are more empowering and more satisfying, giving them hope for a better future (Freedman & Combs 2002:203,204).

The co-researchers in this study are aged between 20 and 23 and most of them are familiar with the researcher, which makes it easy for the researcher to want to give them advice or interpret the meaning of their stories. But making professional or “expert” assessments will be avoided as Freedman and Combs (2002:17) suggest. Adults who are involved in the ministry, especially of missionary children, tend to have prejudiced assumptions about them based on so-called ‘general knowledge’. So the voices of missionary children may easily go unheard and thus, they may be marginalized. According to Müller and Schoeman (2004:9), it is not easy to hear a ‘small story’ against the dominant stories. Therefore, one must always be truthful to the research process and also aim to concentrate on the small, marginalized and unheard stories of co-researchers. Van Huyssteen quoted by Clayton (in LeRon Shults 2006:88) emphasizes “the personal voice of the individual rational agent [must] not [be] silenced.” Thus, an effort will be made to hear the unheard stories of the co-researchers.

For this research, it is important to understand the meaning of the co-researcher's stories, rather than trying to analyse data about mission agencies, missionary parents and missionary children. Hence, the researcher will try to only participate in the interviews by listening to the co-researcher's stories and to stay in a "not knowing" position (Anderson & Goolishian 1990:s.p.) positioned as a respectful and non-judgmental interviewer. This approach tends to "centre people as the experts in their own lives" (Morgan 2002:2). For this reason, this research intends to engage in collaborative, horizontal relationships, in which co-researchers choose their preferred stories and attach their own meanings to them (Freedman & Combs 2002:205). Therefore, the "not knowing position" is of great significance to this research (Anderson & Goolishian 1990, 1992; Kotze et al. 2002).

Therefore, this narrative researcher takes a "not knowing" approach, rather than demand specific answers to questions. The focus will be on listening to people, asking them about their experiences and trying to connect with them as it is their perspective that orients us as to the specific realities that are shaped by their personal narratives (Freedman & Combs 2002:26). The researcher and the co-researchers participate in the co-development of new meaning. The focus will be on understanding the co-researcher's stories to 'under-stand' and not to 'above- or beside-stand' them. The "not knowing position" is remarkably significant (Anderson & Goolishian 1990:157). White (1995:69) emphasizes that researchers always have to put their "expert" knowledge in brackets, so that co-researchers feel less intimidated in the conversation. If a researcher has a strong opinion about what a person should or should not do, the co-researchers may feel that they have no choice but to submit to the researcher's opinion (White 1995:69). In the narrative approach people are centered as experts. Researchers are not expert. The people are the primary interpreters of their own experience. Thus, the narrative researcher should realize that everyone has all the resources they need to reach their goals. The co-researcher's interpretation of their experiences is thus highly important even though they may not have the skills necessary to explain their experiences. The researcher will thus develop her own interpretations in collaboration with the co-researchers in order for them to develop new narratives about themselves and the world in which they live (Freedman & Combs 2002:203-204).

According to Freedman and Combs (1996:45), narrative researchers are curious about peoples' unique answers and encourage people to develop them more fully. Genuine curiosity during the conversation gives rise to questions that highlight new possibilities for the group to consider (Monk et al. 1997:26). An attitude of curiosity enables the researcher to stay in a "not knowing" position and it prevents him or her from trying to achieve a "quick fix" (Monk et al. 1997:26). The "not knowing" position does not allow the co-researchers and the researcher to know where it will "end up" but it will rather allow them to know "that we are creating meaning through collaboration" (Kotze & Kotze 2002:154). Because this method is interested in people making their own evaluations, this does not mean that anything goes. The researchers are full participants in the process of research, and bring their own opinions and experience along with them... The narrative researcher seeks to examine problematic cultural stories in collaborative and multidimensional ways (Freedman & Combs 2002:16). For this reason, questions are asked not to gather information, but to generate experience (Freedman & Combs 1996:113). Questions allow the inquiring people to interpret and assess their own experience. Then the researchers describe where they come from and their intentions in asking them, so that people can evaluate their bias and decide how to relate to it. In narrative research, people are in a better position to interpret, make meaning of, and assess their own experiences than outsiders are. Thus, instead of assessment, researchers interested in hearing detailed, context-specific narratives (Freedman & Combs 2002:18). Narrative intention is to collaborate with people in living out moment-by-moment, choice-by-choice life stories that they prefer and that make their world more satisfying. Narrative researchers are interested in opening up possibilities. "The narrative metaphor biases us toward thinking about possibilities that unfold in living out a story, rather than about goals" (Freedman & Combs 2002:21). According to Müller (1999:30), true narrative research is not "result-orientated, but rather wait-orientated. It does not offer answers, but facilitates questions and wait(s)." "If we understand things too quickly, we may perhaps fail to understand them well enough" (Müller 1999:6).

### 1.3.3 Qualitative interviewing

Qualitative interviewing starts from the insider perspective, and “the goal is to describe and understand” (Müller & Schoeman 2004:7). Qualitative interviewing relates to narrative intervention which is appropriate to listening to the stories of my co-researchers and for positioning them in a subjective role in the research. According to Müller et al. (2001:67):

For us, the aim of the research is not to bring about change, but to listen to the stories and to be drawn into those stories. While the structuralist researcher has objectivity in mind by trying to be an observer from outside, and by trying to bring about change from the outside, the narrative researcher has subjective integrity in mind and strives for participatory observation.

Therefore, qualitative interviewing will be used, using a conversational style to facilitate the co-researchers' own interpretations of their experiences. Müller (1999:47) insists that, in narrative research “the conversation is a natural form of communication through which people share stories with each other. It is not technique-orientated conversations where every next question is precisely measured. This tool is simply conversational questions to enable the development of the conversation based on the appropriate significant stories.” It is applied meaningfully if it is aligned to the broad narrative approach. Everything depends on the creativity and “not-knowing” position of the therapist. “Whenever we work with stories, we work with memories” (Müller 1999:47). The stories impact our lives powerfully and it is a way to come to ourselves. This is the reason that people tell and re-tell their stories in such a way. “New stories need to be constructed on the basis of which a new future can be envisioned... A story which flows from the past to the future, possess the necessary change potential” (Müller 1999:48).

Rubin and Rubin (1995:2) define qualitative interviewing: (a) as a principal research tool, an intentional way of learning about people's feelings, thoughts, and experiences; (b) as held between strangers or among acquaintances; (c) as guided by the researcher who intentionally introduces questions and requests the interviewee to explore these questions in depth. And this encourages the interviewees to reflect their experience in detail. Rubin and Rubin (1995:6), also

explain three pivotal characteristics of qualitative interviewing that distinguish this from other research as follows:

- (1) Qualitative interviews are modifications or extensions of ordinary conversation, but with important distinctions.
- (2) Qualitative interviewers are more interested in the understanding, knowledge, and insights of the interviewees than in categorizing people or events in terms of academic theories.
- (3) The content of the interview as well as the flow and choice of topics, changes to match what the individual interviewee knows and feels.

As mentioned above, qualitative interviewing builds the conversational skill to hear what people say and takes considerable practice. It is more a technique to offer some practical guidelines in order to help develop the technical skills for qualitative interviewing. However, it is not just skills; rather, it is also a philosophical an approach to learning. Within qualitative interviewing, understanding is achieved by encouraging people to describe their worlds in their own understanding. For this reason, qualitative interviewing requires listening carefully sentence by sentence, and word by word, enough to hear the meanings, interpretations and understandings that give shape to the worlds of the interviewees. Qualitative interviewers understand that one's own experiences are unique and may be right, reflecting different perspectives or observations of different parts of the same event.

This remains true to this researcher's postfoundationalist position and use of the narrative approach in which people's interpretation of their behavior is important. Thus, this researcher will try to listen to the co-researchers' stories, told, interpreted and assessed in their own ways. They have to concerned with meaning rather than generalizations or assumptions (Freedman & Combs 2002:141).

Qualitative interviewing also requires an understanding of culture. Culture affects what is said and how the interview is heard and understood. Rubin and Rubin (1995:3) state, "in-depth qualitative interviewing helps explain how and why culture is created, evolves and maintained. Qualitative interviews also explore specific topics, events, or happenings, and can solicit personal histories to examine social and political phenomena". Through qualitative interviews, researchers put all the information they find together to form explanations that are grounded in the detail,

evidence, and examples of the interviews. Qualitative interviewing “allows us to share the world of others to find out what is going on, why people do what they do, and how they understand their worlds. With such knowledge we can help people to solve a variety of problems” (Rubin & Rubin 1995:4).

In a qualitative interview, researchers need to be dependent on the cooperation of their conversational partners in order to obtain high quality information in interviews. The relationship between the researcher and those who are being researched becomes a partnership, in which the interviewees are not simply objects of research. “Together the researcher and conversational partner decide what issues to explore, suggest what remains to be said, and work to provide the thick description that builds toward an overall picture” (Rubin & Rubin 1995:11). To understand a partnership, represents the goal of integrating those who give us information into the research. “If the partners can direct the conversation to matters that interest them and what they think is important, interviews gain depth and reality. If you impose on them what you think is important, you may miss important insights about the subject you are investigating” (Rubin & Rubin 1995:12).

Therefore during the interviews, I will be a participant in the conversation, develop the skills needed to listen carefully to what is being said, and encourage the co-researchers to describe their experiences, instead of trying to impose on them what I think is important. Broad descriptions are rooted in this type of conversation. The sharing of my own story can also contribute to participatory interaction and make the research participants feel more at ease (Müller & Schoeman 2004:4).

Being ethical and gaining a reputation for being ethical encourages, people to be more open with researchers. In some cases, the interviewees may feel insecure and uncomfortable to be interviewed by researchers. Thus, the researchers need to encourage their interviewees in order to help them relax by showing them respect. The relationship between the researcher and those who are being researched, should grow and change, and should go through phases of openness, withdrawal, trust and secrecy in terms of the research process. As relationships become more involved, both partners develop expectations about what is going to be said (Rubin & Rubin 1995:104,110).

### 1.3.4 Externalization

Externalization following a narrative approach will facilitate externalizing conversations with the co-researchers which will help them to separate themselves from the problem. White (1988,1989) quoted by Freedman and Combs (2002:28) introduces the idea that “the person is not the problem, but the problem is the problem”, “people are separated from their problems.” “Externalization” is a practice supported by the belief that a problem is something that operates on, has an impact on, or pervades a person’s life. It is something separate and different from the person.

An externalizing conversation (White 1991:s.p.) is initiated from what the person finds problematic. Hence, a co-researchers’ feelings, problems, cultural and social practices may be externalized (Freedman & Combs 2002:28). In externalizing conversations, we can hear descriptions of the effects of problems. According to Freedman and Combs (2002:207), when listening to people’s descriptions of themselves, we ask the question, “what is the problem that causes people to behave in this way?” According to White and Epston, quoted by Gergen (2001:172), “a major step toward re-storying is taken when the person - along with family members and friends - can separate the problem from the self.” They say, “If family members separate themselves and their relationships from the problem, externalization opens up possibilities for them to describe themselves, and their relationships from a new, nonproblem-saturated perspective; it enables the development of an alternative story of family life.” When problems are externalized, people have a relationship with the problem. And in externalizing conversations, we are interested to hear descriptions of the effects of problems.

**Naming a problem** can also be a way of examining a problem and thinking differently about it. It can be poetic and compelling. As we ask people to evaluate their relationship to problems, we often hear what they would prefer. We listen for words in people’s descriptions that may serve as good names. As people name problems, we keep track of them. The explicit and direct discussion and their contrast to problems can be a vital part of therapy. Naming a problem begins the process of externalization for their problem (Freedman & Combs 2002:29). Gergen

(2001:173) says, the externalization of the problem began to reveal unique outcomes. This became the basis of creating a new story which proved successful in solving the problem.

I give some examples of externalized questions from Freedman and Combs (2002:32) below:

- What name would you give the problem?
- What is it like to have the experience of the problem?
- Have you ever been able to escape the problem for even a few minutes?
- Is the problem always with you?
- What effect does the problem have on your life?
- How does the problem alter your relationship with yourself?
- Is this what you want for yourself? Why or why not?

### **1.3.5 Deconstruction**

Müller (2004:1) says, “Practical theological research is not only about description and interpretation of experience. It is also about deconstruction and emancipation... to develop into a new story of understanding that points beyond the local community”. Deconstructive conversation moves effectively from "listening to experiences" to "describing the experiences". Morgan (2000:45) says that a narrative approach is interested in discovering, acknowledging and “taking apart” (deconstructing) the beliefs, ideas and practices of the broader culture in which a person lives and which are assisting the problem to develop.

Using deconstructive conversations makes the ideas that assist in sustaining the life of the problem become more available to questioning and challenging. Deconstruction deals with text analysis. Meaning is not inherent, but, rather emerges only as the reader converses with a text (Demasure & Müller 2006:5). One cannot enter into a dialogue with a text without having a pre-understanding or particular perspective of it first. Thus, deconstructionists try to discern the implicit and hidden meaning of a text and how the text relates to other texts and sub-texts (Freedman & Combs 2002: 26,27).

In deconstructive conversations, it is important that therapists do not try to impose their ideas or thoughts, or an outside point of view, on a person in order to “change a person’s thinking”. They must ask questions they do not know the answers to and must remain curious. They will trace the history of the problems, how the problems came into the person’s life and will ask questions to evaluate the effects of these beliefs, whether they are helpful or not. Morgan (2000:45,46) insists that narrative therapists can work with people, consulting with them in order to examine these ideas and practices, defining them, pulling them apart and tracing their history.

Deconstructive listening guides us to explore meaning and examine and illustrate how the meaning of any symbol, word or text is inextricably bound-up in its context. Deconstruction does not focus on the search for the ‘real’ meaning of any text, but rather focuses on the narrative gaps (Freedman & Combs 2002:206) and consists of a critical analysis of the text (Demasure & Müller 2006:5). Therefore, according to Demasure and Müller (2006:5), “deconstructionism is concerned with the historical and cultural production of knowledge and how a certain construction contributes to power and social action”. This work – finding meaning and its effects – can open up a space for the people, whose stories are being investigated, to think about the possibilities for a better future and for a new reality (Freedman & Combs 1996:46,47).

There are specific discourses or traditions that missionary children follow and thus, the notion of deconstructive conversation is used to assess how the in-context experiences of the co-researchers are informed by their discourses and traditions. Narrative therapy is the process of "re-authoring" or "re-storing" conversations. Humans are interpretive beings and our lives are influenced by the broader stories of the culture in which we live (Morgan 2000:45). Therefore, in this research, it is important me to understand the meaning of the co-researchers’ stories through their own interpretation of their experiences. This is because people are the primary interpreters of their own experience (Freedman & Combs 1996:46). It will be facilitated by asking questions to develop understanding of their stories and to enrich understanding with detail and meaning. Deconstructive questions will be asked in order to clarify meaning. They are used to help people unpack their life

stories so that they can see their life from different perspectives. Through deconstruction questions, problematic beliefs, practices, feelings and attitudes are revealed along with cultural and contextual influences. Asking deconstructive questions “invites people to see their stories from a different perspective, to notice how they are constructed, to note their limits, or to discover that there are other possible narratives” (Freedman & Combs 2002:209). Deconstructive listening will also be practised, as listening carefully to people’s stories and striving to understand their experience helps to develop both trust and a rapport with the co-researcher, and may also help to become aware of any particular constraints that their stories may carry (Freedman & Combs 2002:206). Thus, the co-researchers will be assisted in describing their stories, to use their language, and seek out and create new meanings.

The following are models of deconstructive questions Freedman and Combs (1996: 120,121) propose:

- What conclusions about your relationship have you drawn because of this problem?
- What behaviors have you found yourself resorting to in relationship to the situation that you have described?
- Does this situation that you describe encourage particular feelings in your life?
- What attitudes do you think must be there to justify the behaviors that you have described?
- What gets in the way of developing the kinds of relationships you would like to have?

#### **1.4 Ethical consideration**

For ethical reasons, pseudonyms will be used in the stories of the co-researchers to protect them, so that readers will not recognize who the participants are. The material will not be used to identify them as the source. For this reason, permission was obtained from the co-researchers to write down parts of their stories, but only for the purpose of this PhD thesis.

According to Müller (2004), the “narrative paradigm and conversational method do not guarantee a sound ethical relationship... The power relations in a therapeutic context (research context) can be obscure and covert, but they are nevertheless present... To be aware of the developing pastoral therapeutic relationship (research relationship), which includes the politics of power, is the greatest ethical challenge”. Ethical consideration has to do with the context in which it occurs and which can be unpredictable. When a researcher is compelled to make an ethical decision in a particular context, it is important to be aware of the unpredictability of the situation. Smythe and Murray (2000:312) argue that the traditional ethical principles governing research with human participants offer insufficient guidance in dealing with our own unique dilemmas. However, according to Gottlieb and Lasser (2001:191), “narrative research allows... new information to emerge from participants free of our assumptions and prejudices.” It is a new idea that narrative research is protecting participants within research ethics.

Smythe and Murray quoted by Gottlieb and Lasser (2001:192) emphasize the need to protect participants as follows:

Some individuals might not respond well to the exigencies of narrative inquiry that is, to the consequences of being open and reflective about their experience. Likewise, an individual ability to grasp the notion of multiple narrative meaning might be limited. Understanding this notion is essential to narrative research participation. ... As narrative researchers we much be prepared to exclude individuals who we believe might have considerable difficulty dealing with these issues.

Narrative researchers aspire to the goal of including all voices in their research. Narrative research also has the responsibility of protecting the participant from harm in this ethical consideration. Ethical obligations require researchers to avoid deception, to ask permission to record conversation or take a video, and to be honest about the intended use of the research. This also includes ensuring that interviewees are not hurt emotionally, physically, or financially because they agreed to talk with researchers. Researchers have an obligation to warn interviewees if something they are saying may get them in trouble and to give them an opportunity to retract what they said or tell you not to use the material or not to identify them as the source. Researchers should not take material from the interviewee for their own

purposes. Protecting interviewees from harm might mean leaving out exciting material from the final report so as to keep people out of trouble. If interviewees do not want you to use something they said, you should leave it out. Researchers may have to make some trade-offs between the accuracy and punch of their report and protecting their interviewees (Rubin & Rubin 1995:94). Instead of assumptions and prejudices, narrative researchers focus on people's narrative life story and try to learn to listen to their story attentively and empathetically. Narrative researchers are also very interested in people and intensely curious about people's sense of their lives (Smythe & Murray 2000:311). Thus, it is of great significance for the researcher to maintain subjective integrity and credibility throughout the research process. Both researcher and participants should learn in the process of doing research.

This research preferred not to speak of as 'research objects', or 'research population', but to use concepts like 'research participants' and 'co-researchers' (Müller & Schoeman 2004:9). It is important to this research not to serve the researcher's own objectives, but should benefit and be of value to the research partners, and to make it clear to the co-researchers that this researcher sees herself as being in a partnership with them. Therefore, in this research, an effort is made towards subjective integrity with the method of participatory interaction, to listen to the co-researchers' stories and to be drawn into those stories. An effort will be made to hear their stories which may have, up until now, been marginalized or even unheard (Müller & Schoeman 2004:9). The co-researchers may be worried about whether their stories will be told to their parents or others. Therefore, as a narrative researcher with integrity and credibility, the purpose of this will clearly be explained to the co-researchers at the outset of the research process and promises not to say or write anything about this research to others, and not to identify them as the source without their consent. This study should contribute to a greater understanding of their situation and needs. This narrative researcher will listen to the co-researchers' stories and try to seek a narrative approach with integrity and credibility. This research should be of benefit to the co-researchers and to the researcher.

Müller and Schoeman's (2004:11) stipulate four metaphors of the basic values of good research:

- (1) Research as action; research is action and therefore participation. The researcher is active and participatory... Research as action involves all the relevant parties.
- (2) Research as narrative; 'research-as-narrative suggests that research works by describing, exploring and changing the metaphors used in a process of finding during research'.
- (3) Research as facilitating; the researcher initiates and facilitates the research. A facilitator is not a manipulator. He/she merely directs the /band/ of researchers.
- (4) Research as responsibility; responsibility replaces 'objectivity'. By creating space for metaphors and for the development of new stories, the researcher takes responsibility. A responsible researcher is a self-reflective researcher.

## 1.5 Spiritual influence

All spiritualities are centered in relational experiences with the divine, and/or with humanity, and/or with all of creation (Carlson & Erickson 2002:216). Therefore, the researcher should be aware of the co-researchers' family's spiritual background and experience of God's presence without imposing own religious language on the co-researchers. Carlson and Erickson (2002:224) argue that it is common for therapists to purposefully share their preferences, and desires to connect with their spiritual beliefs and relationship with God using their own religious language. A therapist's job is not to share their spiritual beliefs or doctrines with their co-researchers, but, rather to consider the relational implications of their spiritual beliefs, spiritual selves and relationship with their co-researchers. The co-researchers are invited to tell and retell their experiences of God's love, compassion or mercy (Carlson & Erickson 2002:232).

Some of the co-researchers say that they are born again Christians and have been involved with their parents in some part of missionary work. They also know that the researcher is a Christian missionary too. Thus, there is common ground on which to talk about God freely and with an open mind. Knowledge of the co-researchers is of

great value, but their explanation of their experiences of God's presence has been respected, because each person's experience is unique. Some of them, however, question the meaning of faith in Christ and other questions of Christianity in their lives. They seem to ask how Christ can bring meaning to their lives and meet their deepest needs. Their versions were listened to carefully to catch 'clues' when they are talking about their experiences of God's presence. By listening carefully it was possible to interpret and respect the questions they may have and the things they say, rather than impose a personal understanding on them. The language of feeling, help, guidance, peace, delight, love, power, dreams, support, protection, or the answers to prayer have been used to talk with the co-researchers about the experiences of God's presence.

The researcher would also like to invite God to join in to help the co-researchers with their present suffering. God is invisible and the experience of God's presence is subjective. Thus, the different backgrounds of the co-researchers are taken into account. Some symbolic methods are used to facilitate the co-researchers' experience of "God-talk", for example, by introducing some Christian books and articles about meditation, and some Bible verses for their encouragement, where needed, also to pray for the co-researchers during the research period and to pray with them, if they wish, as a way of facilitating "God-talk", without imposing own religious language on the co-researchers.

Spiritual experiences have the potential to offer a wealth of hope and the ability to understand those who genuinely seek help. It is necessary for researchers to be sure of the role of spirituality in their personal lives and establish how this influences their co-researchers (Carlson & Erickson 2002:216-217). The Narrative approach is a relational effort which should be reflexive, thoughtful and critically careful about the relationships that researchers have with their co-researchers. Spirituality can be considered by some as being an ethical issue and perhaps even a way of being that is a living, day by day, effort. It invites us into communal relations of respect, mutuality, accountability, compassion and love with all humanity and creation. This researcher sees religion as a part of our spirituality and our lives involve a continual search for the spiritual, which flows from God – the source of all good. This search

is not easy and is often a very difficult and trying journey in which one may find themselves struggling with despair (Carlson & Erickson 2002:216-219).

According to Yancey (2002:242), even if it feels like God is a million miles away and has abandoned me, not answering my prayers, God is still real. My feelings are not important in the realization of God's presence and thus I trust God in spite of pain, I seek God during the trials of life, surrender myself to him when I suffer and depend upon him even when he seems distant. I believe that in times of sorrow, suffering is a gradual, progressive development in my life. I agree that it is impossible to understand God, as we are merely human beings while God is transcendental. The only way to approach Him is to realize the limitations of ourselves as human beings. We can never explain God and His existence in the world. Nouwen (1976:155) says, God calls us to tasks that may seem difficult and even impossible, but He does not ever forsake us. Hence, at this point, it is important to acknowledge the way people can think about God's presence. According to Carlson and Erickson (2002:220), our spiritual lives and our professional lives are inextricably interconnected. Carlson and Erickson (2002:220) insist that spirituality is often a tremendous source of help, strength, comfort, peace, security, serenity and hope for most people. As a narrative researcher, I realize that spiritual awareness can be a powerful source of help for people who need counseling. Thus, we need to develop our own spiritual lives, on which we can draw as a resource in our work (Carlson & Erickson 2002:220).

The co-researchers are as much God's children as I am, and thus they should be accepted as God's children. During the research, it was good to consider what God would do if He were the researcher and therapist. To think of God as "co-therapist" is to recognize that each of the co-researchers has their own specific experience and understanding of God which should be taken into account in this research.

## **2. RESEARCH PROCEDURE**

### **2.1 Language**

Language is used to give meaning to our experiences, and we interpret our experiences in terms of using the words and grammar available to us. Language allows us to reframe the past events into usable experiences. If the language is limited, the story is limited. Experience becomes useful when it turns into a story. Thus, we organize our experiences into stories (Müller 1999:5). Therefore in order to facilitate the conversation, both Korean and English are used. Since the co-researchers have grown up overseas, some of them have limited ability in Korean, especially in terms of giving meaning to their experiences in detail. Speaking in Korean is more difficult than listening in their cases. For this reason, the co-researchers and the researcher decided to speak in Korean and in English. Then the conversations were translated into English in order to write this thesis.

### **2.2 Interviews**

The interview period in this research took place between September 2007 and November 2009 with five missionary children. The interviews were carried out regularly with three of the co-researchers and were carried out irregularly with two of them. The original plan was for both group and individual meetings with the co-researchers. However, as they are scattered in different countries, there was not an opportunity for all to meet together. On the other hand, some of co-researchers felt insecure about sharing their personal experiences with other people. Therefore it was agreed that individual interviews would be facilitated for this research.

Individual face to face meetings were held in Korea and in South Africa, and networking has been used when a face-to-face relationship was impractical. In the interview an effort was made to fully understand from their way of thinking, the stories of the co-researchers as well as the meanings within those stories. For this understanding, open-ended questioning was commonly used. According to Riessman (1993:34), the open-ended question assists co-researchers to arrive at

interpretations of their experiences together with the researcher, by telling a story that often links with different points in the interview.

### **2.3 Networking**

Networking involves the use of distance technology to develop the network relationship. It can use e-mail, website, phone, or a combination of these varied means of communication. This means using e-mail or computer systems to support a network relationship when a face-to-face relationship is impractical (O'Neill, Wagner & Gomez 1996:39). Nowadays as many people use network programs, this is an effective way of achieving a wide range of counseling options. It creates a useful channel of interaction between researcher and co-researcher (Oh 2008:232).

As most of the co-researchers were distant, this tool was used to facilitate the research process. They were sometimes communicated with through networking such as by internet phone, e-mail and chatting. Internet phone is an exceedingly useful method for the research process. The researcher and the co-researchers often communicated through internet phone from a long distance, chatted via the internet and cell phone for short conversations for encouragement and to make appointments for meetings. E-mail is also useful as a convenient method for communication.

### **2.4 Notes**

During each session, notes of the interview were made in order to keep track of anything important that was said, and to help the co-researchers to remember the conversation. Important conversations are carefully written down in detail. According to Morgan (2000:96) "the notes assist people to shift from the ideas that are associated with their perceptions of the problem to ideas about their lives that fit with the commitments and preferences that have been more richly described in the conversation."

## **2.5 Writing letters**

Letters by e-mail were written between research sessions to facilitate the co-researchers' deep understanding of themselves and to give them encouragement. Sometimes a summary of an interview were written to note the important parts of the conversation during the interview. Words of encouragement were also communicated with letters. The co-researchers acknowledged the help of these letters to remind them of the important parts of a conversation, and to strengthen them with encouraging words. Writing letters has developed the relationships and opened our minds even more than talking face-to-face. The co-researchers gave willing feedback to these letters. Receiving feedback from the people to whom the letters are sent plays an important part in this process... people are more able to get free from the influence of the problem when they are more connected to the preferred stories of their lives (Morgan 2000:103).

## **2.6 Reflection**

Feedback loops were constantly used in order to make sure that the co-researchers and the researcher grow towards a better understanding and interpretation of the conversations.

### **2.6.1 Feedback from the co-researchers**

After each session, notes were interpreted and kept for future reference. The interview sessions were also discussed with the co-researchers to receive feedback about the researcher's interpretation. The co-researchers were respected as the "experts" of their own stories and experiences and thus, if the researcher's interpretations of their stories and experiences differ from theirs, it was discussed with them until both agreed upon an interpretation. This process was repeated until the co-researchers got a broader understanding and a clearer interpretation of their stories.

## **2.6.2 Feedback from the reflection group**

As a reflection group missionary parents were consulted in order to verify the research, to assess whether the interpretation is correct or not. The reflection group and the co-researchers were asked for their reflections and interpretations of the sessions, and for any corrections they would like to make.

In terms of recurring feedback loops, the co-researcher's reflections about the interpretation were first listened to, followed by a discussion with the reflection group. The merit of reflection is that it moves us closer toward communal ways of working (Cattanach 2002:211). It is hoped that this feedback will enable both the participants and the researcher more fully to understand the stories and to participate more actively in the present research.

## **2.7 Interdisciplinary conversation**

I allowed the scientific community to influence me in my decisions about the literature to study. Mostly, my supervisor, Prof. Müller helped with insight into and perspective on this research, and with guidance in the use of reliable and literature appropriate to this study. Some of the students who have been studying narrative therapy with Prof. Müller at the University of Pretoria gave advice on which literature to use concerning a narrative study.

Relevant materials from the following fields were used: (a) other disciplines (Missiology, Christian Education and Child Psychology) in order to find new patterns that are consistent with the Christian paradigm through critical theological reflection; (b) mission agencies concerned with missionary children, for example, the MK education department of SIM (Serving In Mission), ICHED (International Children's Education Department), KOMKED (Korean Missionary Kids' Education), MKNEST (Missionary Kids' Nest in Korea), who assisted in collecting relevant literature for this research; (c) some of the MK coordinators of these agencies, who helped with the collecting of various types of materials and literature that used in this study; (d) literature by specialists helped to identify some of the possible discourses operating in the lives of missionary children. All the information received were

thoroughly scrutinized and only the relevant material were chosen. Published and unpublished books, journals and articles, which are written by 'expert' authors were referred to; (e) relevant materials from Child Psychology helped to gain understanding of how childhood experiences affect the lives of the co-researchers.

Müller (2005:11) comments that 'the interdisciplinary movement is part and parcel of practical theology. It includes the conversation with other theological disciplines and with all the other sciences'. In postfoundationalist practical theology, the theological reflection can be integrated with various scientific disciplines as a cognitive scientific form. The description of experience developed through the interdisciplinary investigation.

### **3. SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the research paradigm and procedure including the theological position of a practical theologian were stated. Van Huyssteen (1997:4) proposes postfoundationalism as a "viable third epistemological option." Müller (2004:4) points out that this "third way" is a way out of the "stuckness" of modern or foundationalist (fundamentalist) science and theology, and on the other hand, the fatalism of some postmodern approaches. Van Huyssteen (1998:5) also recommends postfoundationalism as a safe space for rational interdisciplinary work between theology and science. Therefore, the position within the framework of postfoundationalist practical theology and the social constructionist narrative perspective was taken in the present research. Postfoundationalist practical theology which has been developed from postfoundationalism for more effective collaboration within the interdisciplinary conversation which is carried out between the various social science disciplines and theological reflection from a narrative perspective was adopted. With postfoundationalism as guide in interviews, the co-researchers were assisted to tell their stories in their own ways, and to interpret and assess their own experiences. The co-researcher's interpretations and attempts to construct particular meanings were listened to, as Freedman and Combs (2002:141) suggest, rather than rely on any generalizations or assumptions. The aim was always to be truthful

to the research process and also to concentrate on the small, marginalized and unheard stories of the co-researchers (Müller & Schoeman 2004:9).