

## Chapter 4

We create our own reality “but what is reality”?

### 4.1 Introduction

In our world, knowledge is generally highly rated. Gergen (Hermans, 2002:3) stated that in the modernist world, knowledge is defined as a condition of the individual mind, the focus has gradually shifted from the internal to the “external”, or material world, objective as opposed to subjective. How we as humans understand knowledge and what type of knowledge we accept as “highly rated” can differ vastly between different people, between different professions and between different cultures.

### 4.2 Discourse

There are specific discourses and traditions in certain communities, which inform and influence our perceptions and behaviours. According to Burr (2004:64) a discourse: “Refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events”. This means that different discourses can exist around the same topic or experience, depending on the perspective of the beholder.

A discourse is not intrinsically good or bad. Usually those meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories and statements are very seldom questioned, thus leading to the same conclusions previously accepted in terms of a particular version of events. It can be explained as a blue print which is an unknowing, unquestioning and willing acceptance of what predetermines our thought patterns, behaviour and responses without having to consider why we accept them as right or wrong.

These discourses, as a rule, feel very comfortable and “right” for the person responding to them without knowing or really caring why they accept them, for example, some men who wear ties without thinking about it. Thus, it is possible to have different versions of understanding of what a “tie” is and what the meaning and purpose of a “tie” is. Referring back to Paulo Coelho’s book (2000:78) *Veronika decides to die*, as he describes his understanding of ties at the beginning of chapter three:

“You say they create their own reality,!” said Veronica,

“But what is reality?”

“You see this thing I’ve got around my neck?”

“You mean your tie?”

“It’s not even purely decorative, since nowadays it’s become the symbol of slavery, power and aloofness.

The only real useful function a tie serves is the sense of relief when you get home and take it off; you feel as if you’ve freed yourself from something, though from quite what, you don’t even know.

Through these words of Paulo Coelho, different pictures and ideas are created in our minds by just listening to and thinking of how we understand ties. For some people, ties are highly decorative, for others simply a fashion to be accepted when working in a specific environment, but not acceptable in a different setting, for instance when swimming or jogging. Still, for others it may remain a symbol of slavery, power and aloofness. How one instinctively responds towards a “tie” is predetermined by our often-unquestioned discourses.

To complicate the matter even further regarding discourses and what we base them on, Isabel Santos and Andrew Young (2005:213-247) from the University of York researched the perception of social characteristics in people’s faces by using the isolation effect. They started their reasoning by referring to the attention human faces attract during social interactions due to the amount of information transmitted by the individual through his/her face. It seems as if we are unable to prevent ourselves from noticing those attributes. Santos and Young (2005:214) confirm that humans cannot help but notice certain features. For example, just by looking at a face, it is possible to tell whether the person is male or female, young or old, sad or happy or even what that person’s reaction towards our presence seems to be.

Although, according to Bruce (Bruce et al,1993:131-152) humans are quite accurate in determining gender and age based on facial appearance, judgements of other social traits and characteristics such as intelligence, personality traits, occupation or political affiliation are considerably less accurate than determining gender or age. Humans use these facial stereotypes to unquestioningly guide our perceptions of people and thus influence our daily social interaction.

Hassin and Trope (2000:837) point out that physiognomic information appear to have a considerable influence when we interpret ambiguous or confusing information about other people. Consequently, it can easily effect our interpretation of the person’s intent; it, therefore, affects our decision-making ability in all spheres of our social life. It is obvious that our discourses are deeply embedded in how we look at the world and those in it and how we interpret what we see in order to form our own understanding of the world. It is, therefore, important to ask where does the “blue print” come from which predetermines our thought patterns, our behaviour and responses, without us even having to consider why we accept them.

The question therefore returns, who determined and who decided to allocate a certain value to any object or thought?

Questions that must be asked are: Are we aware of our own discourses? Are we able to identify them clinically and logically? Are we really honest enough to go through a process to re-determine if we actually want to accept these ‘discourses’ in our lives? Or, whether it is simply too difficult and unsettling to go into a process to determine and question for ourselves what is “right” and

what is “wrong”, without just accepting our discourses to predetermine our thinking of what is right and wrong?

In other words, do we want a discourse to determine for us what is acceptable and what is unacceptable? Because that is exactly what discourse will do, a discourse will determine what the truth is and what is not. Discourses make it very easy for humans to decide without having to think about it, or to question why we jump to certain conclusions.

The reality is that discourses affect our views of all things. It is impossible to escape discourses in life. The problem is that we are often not even aware of their existence. Even those who actively try to find and identify their discourses, may be so close to the situation that they are unable to focus on it - similar to when an object is too close to your eyes, the eyes are unable to focus effectively. Spectacles are then needed to bring the ‘picture’ into focus. For example, two notably distinct discourses are applicable to different guerrilla movements describing them either as “freedom fighters” or as “terrorists”.

In other words, the chosen discourse determines if they are wonderful heroic figures battling evil, or whether they are themselves evil incarnated. Both parties would be equally adamant about the ‘truth’ and insist that they are in fact correct. In the social science, a discourse is considered to be an institutionalised way of thinking, a social boundary defining what can be said, and what can be thought about a specific topic. In the same way, it will determine what could not be said and which thought patterns are not acceptable.

In South Africa, a very strong discourse about race led apartheid to become government policy. It took years before the white minority gradually questioned and eventually challenged (some with great reluctance), the right and wrong of treating people differently simply because of the colour of their skin. Eventually, it took more than forty years before the majority of white voters changed the political dispensation, allowing a transition towards a new political landscape. However, the political changes have not yet managed to change the racial discourse of many South Africans.

The legacy of the racial thought patterns are still visible in many interactions. Although the political dispensation changed, numerous other changes have also occurred, either gradually or sometimes by force. These new, and sometimes artificial, changes are not necessarily present in the discourses many still accept unquestionably as the truth. To change an organisational structure is relatively easy, but to change the way the employees think and feel about that structure is a totally different ball game.

The underlying racial discourse is also prevalent and noticeable during the conversations held with all Co-researchers. More specific attention was given in Chapter Three on how the Co-researcher felt about the topic. It is interesting to note that we can identify the discourses relatively easily in our fellow man but experience great difficulty in identifying it in our own.

One of the interesting comments made by a fellow chaplain was that only white people could be racist, feeling very strongly about the “fact” that racism is white against black and that blacks cannot be racist. Most were not only willing to consider their own discourses, but also willing to think about how it may unknowingly affect other people. But being human, it is often initially not

so easy to admit these discourses. The moment one acknowledges even the possibility of the existence of these discourses, it immediately becomes easier to recognise them, and then to admit that they are in fact present in our lives.

Demasure (2006:414) points out that what people write or say, is part of a deeper discourse and it is conducive of that specific discourse, or particular version of events, as they understand it. Demasure mentioned as an example that one can participate in either a religious, political or gender discourse on poverty. What that particular discourse means, will depend on the context in which it is to be found and it may manipulate the meaning of a story.

It is important to understand that the spectacles we use to look at the world have different lenses. Looking at the world through a religious, political, economical, gender or cultural lens may produce vastly different pictures to the beholder. That we all use different lenses cannot be debated, what is important is to be aware of the existence of those lenses and understand how our lenses may distort our picture of the world around us.

Hoffman (1981:16-17) recalls an old Chinese proverb: “Only the fish do not know that it is water in which they swim. Humans also have an inability to see the relationship systems that sustain them”. Similar to the fish, we are often not even aware of the ‘environment’ that sustains us.

When listening to the experiences of the Co-researchers, it is, therefore, also important to determine if hidden or open discourses are not influencing their stories of coping. Demasure (2006:414) stated that people’s identity is co-constructed out of the discourses available to them in a certain culture, such as discourses on age, sexuality and education. Müller (2000:6) made a very important comment; he referred to the risk we run when listening to conversations. According to him the risk is to understand too quickly, to jump towards own conclusions “and, therefore, not to understand at all”.

By “understanding” too quickly, we start interpreting the stories before we allow the storyteller to interpret their own story of coping. The age and particular time frame in which one grows up also have a big influence on our accepted truths. Those coming to age during the depression and those growing up during more affluent times, will not have the same outlook on numerous issues.

The different generations’ perceptions on something like saving money, or which brand name clothes are important to wear, will differ considerably. These differences in understanding contribute to a large extent in explaining the so called “generation gap”. It is therefore important to be aware of our own position regarding accepted beliefs and truths.

Using the same argument, it will not be very surprising if the soldiers who formed part of the ANC military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (1961-1994) and soldiers who came from the former South African Defence Force (pre 1994), may have vastly different opinions and perspectives on how things are supposed to “work”. This, without considering for one moment why they are so absolutely convinced that their opinion is the only possible correct option. Our discourses are therefore part of our thought patterns and seldom questioned.

Some of the current discourses in South Africa which are prominent in the media and noticeable in the patterns of society are gender equity, transformation, racial tension, racial discrimination, representivity, affirmative

action - and its consequences, as well as the impact of crime and moral disintegration. Interestingly enough, people from different backgrounds can often agree heartily on the topics, but their understanding and interpretation of the very same topic might be vastly different from one another.

Demasure (2006:414) uses a metaphor of a rope with many different threads in order to explain a discourse. Another similar metaphor that could be used is a piece of cloth that is woven from many separate threads into one product. Similarly, a person's 'identity' can be compared with the final product woven together by many different ideas and discourses.

Just consider the variety of Persian carpets and indigenous woollen carpets. Some colours and patterns are more noticeable than others. Similarly, all our ingrained discourses are not equally noticeable. For Demasure (2006:414) "every thread represents a choice from a limited number of available discourses, and a person is capable of making a choice from these discourses". Thus we can understand the different building blocks. Discourses are often the underlying basic structure of the 'carpet' that the weaver uses to attach the thread to but which is not noticeable unless a considerable effort is poured into identifying the underlying structure.

Our conception and understanding of the world are socially constructed and before we can really understand how this process came about, we need it to be deconstructed. According to Gergen (Hermans, 2002:12), Constructionists have been predominantly occupied with the study of discourses, the ways in which meaning is produced and sustained or interrupted in relationships.

Without identifying and then understanding our own and other peoples' discourses, we may simply stare at different carpets (people) without having the faintest idea of how they came about to be. The difference is that human living 'carpets' are constantly changing and do not remain in a set, unchanging mould.

Humans are not mass produced in a factory from a single exact mould, but woven over time through a combination of many different threads. Some of the threads are: experiences, education, culture, environment, society, family and genetics. Sadly, some humans are extremely rigid in their approach to life and are upset because all carpets are not alike. They may claim to accept others and even consider themselves to be very objective, but refuse to allow or accept a carpet with different patterns and style.

Researchers from a non-narrative background will feel uncomfortable with this reasoning and most probably will reject the idea outright. The rhetorical power of the Constructionist research on discourses is predominantly derived from its colourings of objectivity.

Gergen stresses (Hermans, 2002:12) that, from the outset, one is asked to remove the mantle of "truth beyond perspective" from the conclusion of such work. Gergen propose to rather invite the research into a reflective posture on traditional empirical enquiry. Therefore, one must consider the basic assumptions that ultimately shape the concepts, observations and especially the conclusions that are reached. The researcher and his Co-researchers are acutely aware of how basic our own assumptions are. Throughout the process they became intensely aware of how easy it is to see things from one's own preferred perspective. Likewise, readers interested in this

research, may equally utilise their own intrinsic preference to decide whether or not they will even consider any new thought or opinion expressed.

### 4.3 Womens' Voices Are Often Unheard

During a research process, questions regarding the researcher's own standpoint and position need to be asked continuously. An example of such a question could be: "What voices are silenced by that particular standpoint and what values are at stake?" For instance, in this specific research no male voices are heard; how does that influence the research? The researcher must be able to explain that a deliberate decision was made to focus on the voices of women. Why was that decision made?

In trying to be true to the narrative approach, I wanted to listen to unheard voices. My experience is that many see caregivers within the military only to be called during a moment of crisis or when all other options and solutions have proven ineffective. The chaplain must be called when they are suddenly confronted with death and dying, the medical personnel are called when people suddenly collapse, and social workers are called when children are neglected. Obviously, this is a broad generalisation, but the fact of the matter remains that some strong preconceived ideas exist regarding the utilisation of these "caregivers".

Although prevention is better than cure, people will very seldom seek assistance and help in time. The consequences thereof are that caregivers are more sought after during a crisis than prior to the crisis. Therefore, caregivers in all arms of service are often unheard voices.

I decided to focus on the SAMHS and the Air Force because of the way in which the SANDF is structured; it is often the perception that the Army is in a dominant position due to their bigger personnel numbers. At some levels that makes the Air Force and SAMHS unheard voices. Traditionally, the army was the dominant role player and on some levels it retained that advantage until this very moment.

Another strong tradition within the military has been in effect since the first time that men have organised military campaigns, is the link between soldiers and men. War is predominantly associated with men. There are some exceptions throughout history such as Deborah and Jael (NIV: 1999, Judges 4&5). Deborah was a prophetess and the only female Judge of pre-monarchic Israel. She recounted the victory of the Israelite forces led by General Barak. Jael killed the Canaanite general Sisera by driving a tent peg through his head while he slept.

Kennedy (2007:4) refers to Joan of Arc (1412-1431) who made a huge impact in history as a young woman. She led the French army to several important victories and notwithstanding her short life span and tragic end, she remains a heroine and Saint in France till this day.

The fact remains that soldiers were predominantly men. Female soldiers in the history of the world are the exception and not the rule. This trend was broken during the Second World War due to the shortages in manpower where it became necessary to utilise women in supporting roles. From that moment onward, utilising women has gradually increased. More and more

defence forces are using women, not only in supporting roles, but as combatants as well. In spite of this, the utilisation of women is still debated by many countries up to this very moment, especially the use of women as fighting forces. In more patriarchal dominated countries, the issue of women in combat roles is not even debateable.

Florence Nightingale changed history and especially the official role caregivers play during war and peace. In 1845, she announced her decision to enter nursing in those days when nursing was a career with a poor reputation, filled mostly by poorer women, "hangers-on" who followed the armies. Her decision brought intense distress to her well-to-do family.

According to Cook (1913:237), during the Crimean campaign, Florence Nightingale gained the nickname "The Lady with the Lamp". It was derived from the following phrase Cook cited (1913: 237) in an article in *The Times*:

"She is a 'ministering angel' without any exaggeration in these hospitals, and as her slender form glides quietly along each corridor, every poor fellow's face softens with gratitude at the sight of her. When all the medical officers have retired for the night and silence and darkness have settled down upon those miles of prostrate sick, she may be observed alone, with a little lamp in her hand, making her solitary rounds."

The phrase "The Lady with the Lamp" was further popularised by the American poet Henry Longfellow's 1857 poem:

*Santa Filomena*

*Lo! In that hour of misery*

*A lady with a lamp I see*

*Pass through the glimmering gloom,*

*And flit from room to room.*

The way Florence Nightingale changed numerous (up to then unchallenged) discourses during her lifetime, still inspires many people. Discourses she struggled with were women working, class differentiations, reaching out to different countries not to conquer but to serve, choosing a different life than the one expected of her by society and her family. Her example not only to the nursing profession and caregivers, but to mankind itself, will be remembered and treasured.

In the South African context the name of Emily Hobhouse is prominent. She continued the work started by Florence Nightingale. Pretorius (1991:328) makes reference to Emily Hobhouse who, as a caregiver during the Second Anglo Boer War 1899-1901, made a very special impact in South Africa with her support given to "The Boers". Spies pointed out (1970:43-48) that considering the way the enemy was treated in 1899, and specifically how women and children prisoners were treated, Hobhouse contributed towards creating new standards on treating prisoners of war in international rules of engagement.

All of these remarkable women from Deborah, Jael, Joan of Arc, Florence Nightingale and Emily Hobhouse were initially unheard voices. All contributed in changing the world and the ideas (predominant discourses) of their times, sometimes with incredible personal sacrifice. My Co-researchers may not be

this well remembered by history, but each one in her own way by contributing towards this study made her voice heard.

## 4.4 Choosing Women

At the outset of this research, before I made the decision only to focus on women, I interviewed a male chaplain from the Air Force. Due to the natural development in the research process, strengthened by suggestions from the Co-researchers, it was an easy step forward to focus solely on women. I explained my reasoning to my male colleague and he offered his assistance as a sort of control group. Similar interviews were conducted with him.

Choosing to work with women within the military is also in line with the narrative approach that strives to listen to the “unheard voice”. Women are the voices in society and in the military institutions that are often unheard. It was also important for me to try to listen to the unheard voice amongst other louder more dominant voices within the individual itself.

Currently there is a definite focus on empowering women in South Africa and that same sentiment is noticeable in the military. To the best of my knowledge, no previous studies were done in this particular way or with a similar focus group as Co-researchers. Some men could even argue that women are not an unheard voice in the light of the current focus on women. It may be true up to a point, and within the caregivers’ broader domain, women are well represented, especially amongst the social workers and health care workers, but in the military they are not the first voice to be listened to.

A general suggested that I must include a female Officer Commanding in my Co-researchers’ group to substantiate the research. I was forced to make a decision in that regard. My personal opinion is that an Officer Commanding does not fall under the definition of a “caregiver”. Although, a Commanding Officer does “take care” of the soldiers under their command which is a responsibility that becomes more intensified during deployment (incomplete sentence). The command and training task of an Officer Commanding creates a very clear distinction between them and professional caregivers. All the active Co-researchers supported this conclusion. In fact, they pointed out that some of the Officers Commanding are creating an extra inconvenience or even intensifying current problems by their insistence to solve the “problem” themselves. The result is often that only the severe problems are referred to the caregivers and then usually too late to prevent collateral damage.

My point of view was disputed by the specific general. He remained convinced that if this research were not to include a woman who serves as an Officer Commanding in a deployed area, it would lack an essential component. In his opinion the research would lose credibility. Therefore, by taking the position that an Officer Commanding is not a “caregiver” - at least not for the purpose of this research, I must be aware that some voices are silenced in the process.

In line with the unheard voices, the Officer Commanding who I decided to exclude, is a woman and also an Air Force member. It is still my intention if possible at all, to share some of the Co-researcher’s opinions with this Officer Commanding and the Air Force male chaplain as soundboards. Although the



female Officer Commanding expressed an interest to comment on the topic, she was not keen on becoming completely involved due to time constraints and the intensity of the conversations required.

To be a Co-researcher is considerably more demanding on a person than to merely complete a quick questionnaire. As researcher, I also have certain expectations of the Co-researchers' role. It is therefore very important to consider the implications of one's personal perspectives, and not only to admit one's own presumptions, but also to constantly question them throughout the process. This standpoint would be repeated throughout the research to ensure that subjective integrity is maintained and monitored.

Ibarra (1993:56) refers to the tendency of humans preferring to interact with people similar to themselves for the sake of easier communication, predictability, acceptance and trust. Janice Witt Smith (2005:309) stated that in most organisations, women, racial and ethnic minorities enjoy fewer of these contacts because they remain numerical minorities. Due to their lesser numbers, they may well be isolated from sources of assistance and support that may be to their benefit. Smith and Markham (1998:51-66) indicate that preliminary evidence suggests that this isolation is experienced on an institutional as well as on a social level.

Interestingly, against general expectations and literature predictions, Co-researcher A did not mention any discrimination against her due to her sexual preference. It may be that she simply ignores any such behaviour, or it may be an indication that society, at least within the military, has changed. It must however be noted that she remained faithful towards her life partner and was not involved in any sexual activity whatsoever. Some of the people deployed with her may, therefore, not even be aware of her sexual preference. The fact that she was not singled out, may be due to her discretion and not due to society's changed perceptions on sexual discourses. In my opinion her sexual preference played no role in her ability to cope. The reason I mention it here is to indicate that discourses and perceptions can change over time.

Janice Witt Smith (2005:310) points out that in situations where women, racial and/or ethnical minorities remain a "token", or a numerical rarity, others monitor them more closely. Their worth is judged in the light of their gender, race and/or ethnicity and not by their performance. Janice Witt Smith (2005:311) states that racial and ethnical minority group members, as well as women, feel as if they have less access to organisational and social support, information, influence and prestige. They often feel that they do not fit into the organisation to the same extent as their male counterparts.

It is interesting to study how these women's personal experiences constructed their own stories of social and institutional isolation. According to Jan van der Lans (Hermans, 2002:24), Social Constructionists are primarily interested in dynamic interpersonal processes of construction, especially discursive interaction. In search of a psychological explanation of behaviour, scholars who form part of the Social-Constructionist movement, focus on the processes of cultural intercession or mediation as well as on social interaction.

Aisha (Aboagye, 2005:148) wrote that many of the experiences of girls and women in armed conflict, similar to those of men and boys. Both genders suffer the same kind of trauma. Both are forcibly displaced, killed or injured and experience difficulty in making a living during and after the conflict.

Unfortunately, women and girls have become prime targets in armed conflict as sexual violence became a weapon of war. Aisha (Aboagye, 2005:148) correctly stated that armed conflicts aggravate inequities between women and men, and discriminate against women and girls.

When women do not participate in decision-making, they are equally unlikely to become involved in decision-making regarding either the armed conflict or the peace process. Girls face particular difficulties that could range from forced marriages, prostitution to dropping out of school. When girls are forced to become head of the household at a very young age due to circumstances, they are often marginalised, suffering severe social stigma. These girls are at increased risk of becoming targets for sexual violence and abuse. Internally, displaced women, whether refugees or returnees, experience human-rights abuses. Aisha (Aboagye, 2005:149) continues that the impact of the conflict on women must be specifically addressed through holistic policies and planning. These must then be implemented in all peace-keeping operations, humanitarian activities, including NGO's, as well as by local leadership within the reconstruction process.

Gergen (1999:115) made the following statement: "If we create our worlds largely through discourse, then we should be ever attentive to our ways of speaking and writing". When we listen carefully we realise that our words expose our thoughts. These comments made me think back to my experience in Antarctica when I was lying on my back in the snow, enjoying the pristine environment in complete silence when suddenly I was hearing my own heartbeat. I remember lying on the snow thinking that the narrative approach has a lot in common with that experience. *The opening of a mouth and the privilege to hear the sounds of the emotions and the stories of the heart inside!* When one is truly utilising the narrative-research approach, it includes our own hidden discourses, dreams and stories.

## 4.5 Social Construction

According to both Demasure and Müller (2006:4), trying to describe social construction is very difficult because the term includes a number of different viewpoints. Burr (2004:2) uses the metaphor of a family in his efforts to try and explain the different viewpoints. Just as in a family where members of that family share numerous things with each other in absolute agreement, the same family will also differ on a number of points.

Berger (1966:13) recalled that amongst the most ancient questions of man, especially philosophers, was "what is *real*?" The average person "on the street" lives in a world that is "real" to him, although in various degrees. He "knows", with different degrees of confidence that "this" world contains certain characteristics. The world of a person born and bred in New York and one born and bred in the Australian outback will contain different characteristics.

Berger (1966:13) describes "reality as a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition (we cannot wish them away) and to define 'knowledge' as the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics." If one lives in New York, one cannot wish traffic and people away; similarly, living in the Australian outback, a lower population density is a reality and cannot

simply be wished away, but the day-to-day “reality” of the people living in these respective places will differ vastly.

In this simplistic sense the term “reality” has relevance to both the average person on the street and to the philosopher or academic. What is real to a Tibetan monk may not be real to a Burundian priest. The person on the street takes his/her “reality” - knowledge - for granted.

Berger (1966:14) rightly stated that because of their systematic awareness, sociologists couldn’t take it for granted due to the fact that people in different societies accept quite different realities for “granted”. Sociological curiosity in questions of what is “reality” and what is “knowledge” is originally justified by their social relativity.

Admitting that more than one accepted answer exist for the same question, the differences in answers depend on the person’s age, culture, gender and social reality. Berger (1966:15) concludes that the particular agglomeration of “reality” and knowledge relates to a specific context, and that these associations must be incorporated in an adequate sociological study of such contexts.

As Berger (1966:15) said: “The sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality”. This is a continuous process and is repeated by every generation asking their own questions regarding reality and forming a reality that is acceptable for them. Although Berger wrote this more than forty years ago, we are still asking questions regarding reality and the generations coming after us will never reach a point to declare that now they know everything.

Likewise, we sometimes ask the same questions which are debated in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. As Aristotle struggled with questions of wisdom, our, and coming generations, will also continue to do the same. We will construct our reality and then deconstruct it in order to try and understand it. To understand how and why we understand is vital.

It must be remembered that social construction is an approach which have risen and developed from a *post-modern perspective*. As the name suggests, it is generally accepted to have emerged beyond modernism. It may include some concepts of modernism, but totally contradicts it on others. Post-modernism developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the two world wars and during the following cold war amidst the disillusionment with modernist theories.

The post-modern movement pushed against all predictable conventional boundaries regarding “old” or previously accepted ideas and knowledge. It allows the context and individual realities to influence the process of how knowledge comes to be. This implies that more than one reality can exist, depending on the point of view of who is looking at it. Thus, it encourages variety, diversity and different perspectives, depending on things like culture, time and specific circumstances. All previous knowledge is not discarded, but accepted as one way of looking at reality. This explains why post-modernism is not usually seen as a specific approach or a unified theory, but as a way of thinking, a way of looking at the world, a way of trying to understand that world. The researcher working within this framework is more interpretive and reflexive, more becoming part of a subjective process than “scientifically objective” as some other approaches claim to be. The building blocks can be

traced by looking back at the development of the social-constructionist approach over time.

Ulrike Popp-Baier (Hermans, 2002:44) mentions that the “construction” metaphor retains one element of its original literal meaning, namely that of building, or assembling of different parts. According to Hacking (1999:50) “anything worth calling a construction has a history. Not just any history. It has to be a history of building.” Popp-Baier (Hermans, 2002:44) continues that if one claims that the “research object” was socially constructed, we also need to examine how “it was historically constructed in the context of social relationships”.

Hacking (1999: 49) formulates the aim of social constructionism as follows: “Displaying or analysing actual, historically situated, social interactions or casual routes that led to, or were involved in, the coming into being or establishing of some present entity or fact.” Van der Lans (Hermans, 2002:24) points out that for social constructionists, the world of cognitive representations and their developments, the intra-mental world is no longer their main point of focus. They contemplate discursive processes in which a shared world of experience is constructed.

The same experiences can be constructed totally differently, due to the individuals’ differences in personality, background as well as their mental and emotional capacity during the experience. Van der Lans (Hermans, 2002:24) states that social constructionists criticise the mainstream psychology for its aspiration to uncover the universal essentials of mental functioning. While arguing that only through investigating the dynamics of social practices and how these were constructed, can the door be opened in order to try and understand how the individual was “socially constructed”.

Hermans (2002:xiv) points out that historical and social-cultural processes have generated things, which appear obvious to us, but are not so obvious to somebody from a different socio-cultural background. Their self-evident nature is less obvious than it seems; it could very easily be a different reality. This led to the fundamental criticism of social constructionism. Hermans asked (2002:xiv): “Whither social constructionism does not run the risk of sliding into total relativism?” It is an important question to ask. Referring to Ken Gergen’s (1999:47-49) four working hypotheses to illustrate the question, these hypotheses are central within social constructionism according to Gergen.

Gergen (1999:47) points out that everything that is, can be described differently! His first hypothesis says that, *that which exists does not stipulate the way in which we understand our world and ourselves*. The fact that the world is round did not affect the beliefs or superstitions of ancient seamen. Similarly today, the “reality” may not stipulate our final decisions, but our accepted belief systems and unquestioned superstitions may determine our thoughts and behaviour.

Gergen (1999:47) feels that no world can exist independent of language. If we cannot describe something in words, how can you build any concept of its existence or share it with someone else? Words could be used to construct a different world without pain and disease or gravity and laws of nature. A fictional world could be created by words. Therefore, from a constructionist perspective, our understanding of the world is a linguistic convention. According to Gergen this convention is not self-evident.

The second hypothesis is that *the way in which we clarify and describe the world is embedded in the relationships between people*. The meaning of the world forms part of the coordination of actions amongst individuals and is not something uncharacteristic to divide individuals. Hermans (2002:xv) made the comment that “language and all other forms of representing the world are rooted in relationships.”

Gergen’s (1999:48) third hypothesis is that *by our explanation or representation, by our description we simultaneously determine the future of reality*. Gergen (1999:48) continues: “As our practices of language are bound within relationships, so are relationships bound within broader patterns of practice – rituals, traditions, forms of life”.

Without the shared language in which establishments are described and clarified, these establishments or institutions would not exist in their present form. Language contributed to the development of institutions. Therefore, it can be claimed that through describing reality differently, we are able to transform our world. This is applicable to the socially constructed world of human behaviour in terms of rituals, habits, institutions and traditions. It is not applicable to natural phenomena like gigantic super-nova’ or minute viruses that exist whether we are aware of them or not. Whether our words can describe their existence or not, they still exist. The viruses and the supernovas are still out there whether we describe them in detail or not.

The fourth hypothesis points at the value of *taking into account the ways in which we understand and explain reality*. There is no universal answer to the question: “which is the right one?” Good reasons, good values and good explanations always depend on some tradition, which accepts certain constructions as being correct, real or true. Gergen (1999:48) concludes that a constructionist attempts to place one’s own premises into question, to “suspend” the “obvious”, and to listen to alternative possibilities of understanding and “framing” the world. This approach forces one to come to grips with, and coping with, alternative and different standpoints.

Hermans (2002:xv) rightly asks whether Gergen does not slide into a universal constructionism with these hypotheses. The premise is that no reality exists independently of our linguistic representations of reality: “Only that which is talked about exists”. Hermans (2002:xvi) rightly points out that although language is an important medium through which we understand and represent reality, it does not mean that we can reduce reality to words. The existence of numerous natural phenomena like the expanse of outer space or the microscopic world, quickly proves that numerous natural phenomena and marvels exist without our knowledge or words to describe them. But our human customs, traditions and institutions are predominantly socially constructed.

To further illustrate “reality” Hermans (2001:xvi) uses the example of a tree in front of a house, it is pointless to try and ignore the existence of the tree and walk through it because it was not described by words, or one might decide that the tree does not exist. This clarifies Gergen’s (1999:47) comment that no world can exist independent of language.

Describing the tree or not, it will definitely remain a painful experience to collide with the tree. However, at the same time, one can argue on the description of the tree. Why does one person mention a “tree” while the neighbour refers to the same plant as a “shrub”? What does this tree or shrub

really look like? Is it big or small, what shape are the leaves of the tree/shrub? Does it bear fruit or flowers? Does it look the same during all seasons of the year? Does it add value to the community? The origin of the tree/shrub and its genetic composition could be questioned. What type of tree/shrub could it be?

These questions regarding the tree and its possible meaning can even be expanded to include symbolism, or monetary gain, longevity or fertility. Although the physical existence of either a tree or a shrub could not be questioned and exists independently from our words; language is able to socially construct numerous alternative meanings and understanding. Symbolism adds a new dimension of understanding and interpretation. It is quite possible that the more thought given to 'the tree', the more questions, options and different possibilities will emerge.

Hermans (2001:xvi) points out that we cannot deny that objective facts exist independent of our statements. By trying to deny it, will lead to radical relativism. Although it is true that there is a major difference between natural facts and social facts, we attach meaning and value to socially constructed concepts. A piece of paper has value either as a property deed, a marriage certificate, money or is simply as a used tissue. Hermans states that no *social reality* exists unless it is given a linguistic meaning, this does not mean that all social reality is reduced to language.

People need to exist before they can speak of marriage, you cannot get married with an "imaginary" partner. If people neglect to pay their debt, they can talk about money and debt and interest rates as much as they like and reconstruct meaning of monetary policy, but a bailiff will eventually drop by to collect on the outstanding debt. Philosophising about money and its symbolism can only take one up to a certain point!

The following story was e-mailed to me from a friend in Hong Kong. I was unable to refer to the original source, but it explains a social constructionist reality very clearly.

*My wife and I were sitting at a table at my high school reunion, and I kept staring at a drunken woman swigging her drink, as she sat alone at a nearby table.*

*My wife asks, 'Do you know her?'*

*'Yes,' I sighed. 'She's my old girlfriend. I understand she started drinking right after we split up those many years ago, and I hear she hasn't been sober since.'*

*'My goodness!' says my wife. 'Who would think a person could go on celebrating that long?'*

Therefore, there really are not only two ways to look at everything. Infinite different angles and options are available to look at the same thing, person, situation or story! Humor and wit will often use these very differences in understanding between people to play with words and create double meanings.

Van der Lans (Hermans et al, 2002:33) points out: "Social Constructionism puts great weight on the idea that the investigator is not a distant observer." They should realise that the research situation is relational in the sense that the researcher is also a participant in the research process, as are the Co-

researchers. Social Constructionism refers to the construction of concepts, ideas or knowledge; these concepts are culturally determined and created in the course of history.

## 4.6 Institutionalisation

Any action that is repeated frequently becomes a pattern, a habit. Humans are subject to habitualisation. According to Berger (1966:70) habitualisation implies that the specific action can be repeated in the future with the same manner and the same economy of effort. This is applicable to social and non-social activities. Every human being tries to habitualise their world, whether living on a deserted island, in an urban dwelling or in a tent city in Mid Africa as part of a peace keeping operation.

Berger (1966:70) continues that habitualised action retains its meaning for the individual although the actions become routine and thus imbedded in his/her accepted 'knowledge' to be taken for granted in the future. Habits carry a natural spin-off that these actions are seldom questioned and that choices are limited. For example, there might be several hundred ways to complete a specific task but due to habit, only one will be considered as the obvious way. This led to the 'instinctual' action with which humans often respond without thinking about their actions.

These processes of habitualisation precede institutionalisation. Berger (1966:72) feels that institutionalisation occurs when there is a reciprocal typification of habitual actions, not only actions, but also actors, somebody doing the action! Institutions always have a history, of which the institutions are the products. It is impossible to understand an institution sufficiently without an understanding of the historical process in which it was produced.

Berger (1966:72) made a very important comment: "An institution by the very fact of their existence, controls human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many other directions that would be theoretically possible". Berger stresses that this controlling nature is intrinsic to an institution, prior to, or separate from any systems or mechanism of measures purposely set up to sustain an institution.

This controlling nature is apparent in military institutions as well. People's conduct is directed into a definite direction and that is why military men from different nations and cultures are able to work together. They find common ground linked by their military institutions and a common approach towards things perceived and accepted to be "military". The good rapport between our Co-researchers and members from different military backgrounds and countries is testimony of this.

The universal practice of saluting as a form of greeting and respect, is institutionalised practice amongst all military institutions. The social-constructed development of saluting will be addressed later in chapter six under the heading Military Belief Systems. The reality is that institutions consist mostly of a collection of a substantial group of people but the moment two people start to interact, the theoretical process of institutions could occur.

Berger (1966:77) states that an institutional world is experienced as an objective reality, it has a history that was there before he was born and will

still be there after his death. Dave Becker (Becker, 1996:9) referred to the fact that the South African Air Force is the second oldest Air Force in the world with a history full of traditions and customs coming from over 80 years.

The Air Force was officially launched on 1 February 1920 at “Zwartkop” in Pretoria. Some of the Air Force’s original traditions have fallen by the wayside and new traditions and customs have taken their place. An institution eventually develops a culture of its own. This specific cultural difference between the various arms of service in their approach of commanding their members may well be part of the Co-researcher’s stories of coping.

The Air Force, like the rest of the Government Departments in South Africa, has undergone the same immense changes on different levels since 1994. Although these changes create their own set of challenges, these institutions have an uncanny way of adapting. It could be that ‘real’ soldiers share basic values and can draw on their shared principles to manage these changes. These changes might not be to the liking of all members and the end result may be very different than what it used to be. But, it is still the South African Air Force, irrespective of the number of planes in the air!

Eventually, the SAAF, as an organisation, will most probably survive all its current members! It is different from what it was eighty years ago and in eighty year’s time from now, it will again be different. Life is an ever-changing process and in the same way humans can only stop their own progress of time and aging through dying. Constant change is part of life, similarly institutions cannot remain stagnant or they will die as well.

Barry Hancock (1986:34) wrote that the rapid and constantly changing technology means that more and more work is being done by machines. This change has led towards urbanisation, rationalisation, secularisation, bureaucratisation and increased mobility. Industrialisation was supposedly to become rational, but the process has affected not only work and public places, but it also affected relationships between, families, friends, neighbours and between marriage partners. Major social institutions also felt the impact of the change. For instance, in religion, industry, education, government and family, there was a dramatic change in the interrelationships.

Hancock (1998:34) explained that the family was originally primarily focused on its role for survival, government and industry was initially created as tools to ensure the survival of the family. Institutions used to be organised and controlled by families, the co-operation and the consensus by the group was thus critical for survival. Arguments and disagreements were managed through a socially dynamic process. Currently that social dynamic in our society is replaced by a legal-rational system of static order. All the major institutions have an asocial character by suggesting chains of rational commands based on persuasion, command, or coercion. It is only the family that retains its social character to a certain extent, but even the family is breaking down due to the rigid structured inability of persons to maintain mutual social relations.

The question Hancock (1998:34) asks is how can a person maintain authentic social relations when the society they live in has stripped them of input and all other areas of life have been rationalised, quantified and bureaucratised? It seems as if the secondary institutions have become the primary concern,



while the “normal” social interaction between people has become of secondary importance. This resulted in a huge emphasis on material needs while emotional and interpersonal needs were neglected by the broader society.

Barry Hancock (1986:35) correctly stated: “Industrial society, by focusing on quantity of production, quantity of labour and output, and the quantification of humans has overlooked the quality of the product, quality of work conditions, and the quality of morale.” He feels that people are out of balance when only their external needs are fulfilled; we are unbalanced when we only seek to fulfil external wants. Hancock (1986:34) feels that our internal needs are not only lacking, they are almost depleted.

Slater (1970:13) wrote the following as far back as 1970 to express his concern over what was happening within the American society. Today the same phenomenon has spread as far as it can economically be implemented:

“We seek a private house, a private means of transportation, a private garden, a private laundry, self-service stores and do-it-yourself skills of every kind. An enormous technology seems to have set itself the task of making it unnecessary for human beings ever to ask anything of another in the course of going about his or her daily business. Even within the family Americans are unique in their feeling that each member should have a separate room, and even a separate telephone, television, and car when economically possible. We feel more and more alienated and lonely when we get it.”

## **4.7 Social Sciences: Inter-disciplinary Work in Practical Theology**

How we understand our world is also studied in social sciences; within the growing interdisciplinary work in practical theology one needs to look closer at social sciences. The question to be asked is “what is the nature of social science?” According to Richard Robert Osmer (Shults, 2006:331), the answer that contemporary social scientists themselves give to the question, commonly involves interdisciplinary reflection; it involves philosophy and social science while trying to answer the nature of social science. Osmer (Shults, 2006:331) points out that the different philosophical traditions have led to different approaches becoming apparent between Bent Flyvberg on the one hand and Andrew Sayer and Margaret Archer on the other hand.

The one school of thought is represented by Flyvberg (2001:60). He went back to Aristotle’s idea of phronesis to portray social science as a “phronetic discipline” to express social sciences as taking the form of value-rationality that explores particular social problems in specific circumstances and in specific context. Responding with a value-laden opinion to the public how to react to the situation, Flyvberg (2001:60) stated: “The principal objective for social science with a phronetic approach is to carry out analyses and interpretations of the status of values and interest in society aimed at social commentary and social action, i.e. praxis.

The point of departure for classical phronetic research can be summarised in the following three value-rational questions:

Where are we going?

Is this desirable?

What should be done?"

The term *Phronesis* used for *A Journal for Ancient Philosophy* (Greek: φρόνησις) is explained in the website (She-philosopher, 27/04/2009) as follows: Aristotle uses the phrase as the virtue of moral thought, usually translated as "practical wisdom", or sometimes as "prudence". Aristotle distinguishes between two intellectual virtues: *Sophia* and *Phronesis*. *Sophia*, normally translated as "wisdom", is the ability to think about the nature of the world, to be able to discern why the world is the way it is (this is sometimes equated with science). *Sophia* involves deliberation concerning universal truths.

The website *Ingentaconnect* (2009) describes *Phronêsis* (Latin *phronesis*) as the Greek term for practical wisdom — the application of good judgment to human conduct. As explained by Edgar Wind, *phronesis* "consists in a sound practical instinct for the course of events, an almost indefinable hunch that anticipates the future by remembering the past and thus judges the present correctly." It is interesting to note that *phronesis* is an ability acquired only with age. *Phronesis* can be accepted as the ability to consider the mode of action in order to deliver change, especially to enhance the quality of life.

*Phronesis* or practical wisdom today may be referred to as "common sense", this reference to practical wisdom immediately raises questions about our own unquestioned and unchallenged "wisdom", our accepted common sense and our discourses.

However, Robert Osmer (Shults, 2006:332) agreed with Flyvberg's argument that neither Aristotle nor present-day philosophical standpoints based on an Aristotelian understanding of *phronesis*, provide an adequate understanding of power. Flyvberg (2001:60-145) viewed power not only in terms of its outcomes, but also as a process, a network of unequal and movable relations and interactions that are entrenched in a community's discourses and culture. Asking not only "who is in possession of what collective resources?", "who controls whom?", but also "how is it exercised?" This implies that power is not to be seen as only focused on results, but as an ongoing process. Power is centred and controlled in a particular manner by specific individuals or groups. Flyvberg (2001:125) adds a fourth question: "Who gains and who loses and by which mechanisms of power?" Flyvberg continues that this involves reflexivity about the discourses and practices that form social science. They are caught up in the dynamics of power by which "experts" define "the ensemble of rules according to which the true and false are separated".

A brief summary of Flyvberg's position do not do justice to the complexity of his approach. He focuses on a social science that will make a difference that will contribute to the ongoing dialogue within society about where it is going, where it ought to be going, and how it might get there. Flyvberg (2001:139) stated its purpose is to "produce input to the ongoing social dialog and praxis in a society."

When looking at Andrew Sayer and Margaret Archer, one finds a very different approach. According to Robert Osmer (Shults, 2007:333), they decided to bring social science into dialogue with philosophy while drawing

strongly on the tradition of critical realism as articulated in the writings of Roy Bhaskar. Osmer (Shulst, 2007:333) pointed out that in critical realism, the defining feature is the belief that there is a world existing independently of our knowledge of it. As Sayer (2000:2) explained: "Realism is therefore necessarily a fallibilist philosophy and one which must be wary of simple correspondence concepts of truth. It must acknowledge that the world can be known under particular descriptions, in terms of available discourses, though it does not follow from this that no description or explanation is better than any other."

Osmer (Shulst, 2007:333-334) stated that scientific theories provide different accounts of the same world. If certain aspects of the world could be better explained through a specific scientific theory, it must be judged to be more suitable even if it remains imperfect. This view is based on a fundamental distinction found in Bhaskar's philosophy between intransitive and transitive dimensions of knowledge.

Intransitive dimension of science in the sense of being of natural and social process and phenomena is the 'objects' of science. Scientists' theories on such "objects" are the transitive dimension of science. Sayer (2000:11) explained it as follows: "When theories change (transitive dimension), it does not mean that they are about (intransitive dimension) necessarily changes too; there is no reason to believe that the shift from a flat earth theory to a round earth theory was accompanied by a change in the shape of the earth itself." This implies that the world could not be condensed into man's experiences in the world or account of it.

Osmer (Shulst, 2007:334) stated, "This distinction implies that the world should not be reduced either to human experience or to empirical accounts of it, the hallmark of empiricism and positivism, on the one hand, and interpretive social science on the other". Sayer (2001:11) draws on Bhaskar who made a distinction between the real, the actual, and the empirical. The "real" refers firstly to whatever exists regardless of our capacity to give an empirical account of it, and secondly to the structures, capacities of particular "objects" and powers. The term "actual" refers to what happens when the capacities of "objects" are activated and what eventuates. The "empirical" refers to the domain of the experience, which is observable and contingent.

Osmer (Shulst, 2007:334) stated that: "Different strata of natural and social 'objects' are accounted for in terms of the concepts of emergence, the process in which pre-existing elements are combined to produce qualitatively new 'objects' with properties that are irreducible to their constituents." Sayer (2001:11) uses water to explain the difference between, "emergent properties" and "constituents". The emergent properties of water are fairly different from the basic building blocks hydrogen and oxygen, its constituents or components.

A number of social theorists elaborated on Bhaskar's philosophy and other versions of critical realism such as Chris Smith and Michael Emerson in *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. Margaret Archer (1995:1) distinguished natural and transcendental reality from social reality: "Social reality is unlike any other because of its human constitution. It is different from natural reality whose defining feature is self-subsistence". Archer (1995:1) continues; "Society is more different still from

transcendental reality, where divinity is both self-subsistent and unalterable at best”.

In trying to answer the question “What is the nature of Social Science?”, I have briefly looked at Flyvberg, Sayer and Archer because they give two very different answers to the same question and they draw on very different philosophical traditions. Osmer (Shults, 2007:334-338) summarises Flyvberg’s portrayal of social science as a “phonetic discipline” which does not produce theories along the lines of “normal” science where research programs accumulate new knowledge and definite progress is made over time. This approach is qualitatively different from natural science.

Osmer (Shults, 2007:338) pointed out that Sayer and Archer describe social and natural science as sharing definite characteristics in that natural science and social science both take account of a stratified, emergent world, whose processes and “objects” exist independently of our knowledge of them. Osmer (Shults, 2007:338) concluded: “The task of science in all its forms is to develop an explanatory methodology that is appropriate to all the different ‘objects’ under investigation. In the case of social science, this means a methodology that acknowledges the irreducible strata of social structure, culture, and human agency which are constitutive of social reality”. This is but two of many possible approaches amongst contemporary social scientists today. Practical theologians are forced to face up to the reality of pluralism in social science. The diversity in approaches is partially the result of interdisciplinarity within the social science itself. Osmer (Shults, 2007:338) stated:

“In the face of this pluralism, practical theologians face the task of providing reasons for their evaluation of one approach as more adequate than others. At least in part, this obliges practical theologians to understand the issues at stake in current debates in philosophy, the philosophy of science, and social science methodology. They must be able to give reasons for evaluating one social scientific approach as more adequate than others.”

## 4.8 Truth

Deciding to use a specific approach does not mean that it is better or closer to the truth than another approach. It simply means that at a particular point in time, for reasons valid at that point, a certain approach seemed more appropriate than another one. Rubin and Rubin (1995:10) use the same argument when they state: “Qualitative researchers understand that one person’s experiences are not intrinsically truer than another’s”. They continued by saying that if four different versions are discovered, it doesn’t necessarily mean that one of interviewees is right and the other three are wrong. They may all be right and are only looking at the same situation with different perspectives. People looking at the same events may understand them differently. Just listen to the different comments when people are watching the same sports game, to them, all of them, their respective comments is the “truth”.

Almost every aspect of life results in different opinions and perspectives, from politics, sport, to the way people cope with deployment. Similarly, one must be aware that the research approach between a practical theologian asking questions of how caregivers cope with deployment, and a logistics manager asking the same question, may produce vastly different results due to the different perspectives and approaches.

Numerous people are away from home for extended periods of time due to the nature of their work. Thus, the question can be asked why the focus on Military personnel?

The reality is that routine absence of fathers and more increasingly mothers as well, is part of many families’ lives, but few families are affected as intensely as military families. For many families, routine deployments are a way of life. The South African Navy (Milmed, 1995:19) is unique in that for many of its members, routine deployments are a way of life. Formal and informal structures have been developed to assist families in adjusting to this life style. During the last few years, the frequency of Peace-Keeping deployments in Africa increased dramatically due to South Africa’s increasing role on the continent. The growing deployments have a direct impact on the members’ ability to cope with these deployments.

Lt Gen M. Motau (Military Chaplain 2007, 6:3) commented on the growing need for caregivers in the Defence Force. He emphasised that the influence of the military chaplain extends much further than merely looking after soldiers’ spiritual well-being. Chaplains provide support to operationally deployed members, by fostering mental health in soldiers, especially in circumstances in which they are under stress or likely to suddenly come under stress. In addition to their spiritual role, the chaplains also provides valuable moral and pastoral support to the families of the deployed. The chaplains’ approach is based on strengthening moral and ethical conduct amongst soldiers. The principle behind this reasoning is that if soldiers are spiritually and morally strong, they are better able to cope with the unique stress and strain that the military environment can bestow on them.

Therefore, how we understand “truth” and how the findings or interpretations of research are documented and shared, brings forward the question of language. Research findings can only be related in words. The meaning of those words must be re-interpreted in order to understand the words and to gain some understanding of what was said and consequently written down.

## 4.9 Language

Berger (1966:51) said: “The common purpose of everyday life is sustained mainly by linguistic meaning, the understanding of language is thus very important to understand everyday life”. Berger (1966:51) further said that language defined as a system of vocal signs, is the most important sight system in human society. Berger (1966:49) uses anger to explain the different ways in which humans can express themselves. As humans, we are capable of objectification that which manifests itself in products of human activity, which is accessible both to the producers and to other people as elements of a common world.

Anger can be expressed in a face-to-face situation with a wide variety of bodily manifestations. These manifestations of anger can serve beyond the face-to-face situation. Berger uses, for example, how anger can be objectified in the form of a weapon. For instance when a knife is stuck in the wall above an adversary’s bed, the knife now symbolises and expresses his opponent’s anger. Other people can come and look at the knife and arrive at the same conclusion. The knife expresses a subjective intention of violence, whether used to slice food, to be decorative or to be thrown in anger.

Berger (1966:50) continues his argument that for anyone who knows what a weapon is, the weapon continues to express an intention of committing violence. As a result, objects that proclaim the subjective intentions of our fellow man constantly surround us. We constantly try to understand those intentions, make sense of them and to organise our own behaviour in an acceptable response. To shoot a person is frowned upon in all societies, but it suddenly becomes acceptable in a combat situation. In a different situation one man will be decorated as a war hero while another person will be sentenced to jail for exactly the same behaviour.

This brings me back to the same question of *Who determines what behaviour is acceptable and what behaviour is unacceptable?* To wear a tie is either hundred percent acceptable or, despicable for some, while for others it may simply be irrelevant and useless. Similarly, some military codes and ethics are acceptable for some, but not to all, for example, the use of landmines or child soldiers.

Exactly the same principles are applicable to religion and religious practices. For some it is acceptable to slaughter an animal during their religious practises, but for others it is highly upsetting. The question is not whether the differences exist, but whether we are prepared to acknowledge the differences. Whether to accept that we need to agree to disagree if we want to love our neighbours like ourselves (NIV:1996; Mk 12:28-31; Mt 22:35-40). Without language, we will not be able to share thoughts about ties and war heroes. If we accept these thoughts to be “correct”, as an undisputed

undeniable idea not to be questioned, these thoughts and ideas eventually develop into a discourse.

Demasure (2006:414) stated that discourse is the focus of social constructionist research. He stresses the importance of language in that language provides us with structures which enable us to give form and meaning to our experiences. Gergen (1999:147) sees “the dialogue” as the most essential metaphor of the social constructionist movement.

Gergen (1999:148) continued: “Meaning originates and is transformed in relationship or communion.” He is very interested in the question of how meaning can be changed once a certain construction of meaning has taken place. He is also interested in how dialogue can be utilised as “a transformation medium”. His research is partially focused on the mechanisms of transformation. Gergen’s (1999:148) understanding of transformation is most probably quite different from the general understanding of the term amongst the majority of South Africans. This proves again the importance of clarifying what we understand with specific terminology and what meaning is attached to it.

Demasure and Müller (2006:414) pointed out that language is performative and action-orientated, implying that the language used, prescribes a certain action; small changes in a sentence, even punctuations, can alter the meaning totally. The tone of voice can have an enormous impact on the outcome and understanding of the story. This implies that language not only generates action and feelings, but lies primarily at the foundation of power relations.

Qualitative interviewing discovers the shared meanings that people developed in their work place, area of living, hospitals, churches, sport and art. It also looks at the meaning of words used amongst people in any place where they interact with one another. The researcher has to figure out the special expressions and words, the taken-for-granted understandings within the surroundings. It is important to listen for these special vocabularies that might be expressed through symbols and metaphors, or specific words that explain how people interpret their experiences and how they deal with others. Rubin and Rubin (1995:9) said that for researchers to be able to understand what people are saying, interviewers should learn to hear the taken-for-granted assumptions of the interviewees and try hard to understand the experiences that had led to these assumptions.

Language forces one into its patterns, for example one cannot use Afrikaans or Zulu syntax when speaking English. One must take into account the prevailing standards of “proper speech” for various occasions. The military environment is well known for its ability to create expressions which are either very well known or only known by those who use the specific “language”.

For example, words like “AWOL” (absent without leave), and “PT” (physical training) was very well known during compulsory National Service, but the younger generations are not as familiar with those phrases. Thus, somebody using the phrase “he is on AWOL”, might not be able to convey any meaning whatsoever to a younger person who is not familiar with the terminology. Although the official term has changed to “AWOP” (absent without permission), the original term is still in frequent use.

Berger (1966:53) continues that language also characterizes experiences, thus allowing one to subsume, or list, experiences under broad categories in terms of which they have meaning not only to oneself but also to other people. Referring back to Chapter Three, the interpretations of the interviews were led by a natural process to list the Co-researchers' experiences under broad categories.

Berger (1966:50) refers to the use of signs by humans as an example of objectification. Signs may be distinguished from other objectifications by its explicit intention to serve as an index of subjective meaning. Signs are objectifications in the sense of being objectively available beyond the expression of subjective intentions. Berger (1966:51) explains that this detachability from the immediate appearance of subjectivity furthermore pertains to signs that necessitate the attendance of the body. For example, performing in a play or a dance expressing anger, is very different from clenching a fist and shouting at somebody in anger. The former is totally devoid of any real anger, the actor is only taking part in the dance as part of the play to convey as specific message of anger.

Language may be defined as a symbol of predominantly vocal signs. It is the most significant sign system of human society.

The detachment of language lies in its capacity to communicate meanings that are not direct expressions of subjectivity. Berger (1966:51) concluded that language is capable of becoming the objective repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience. With language, I can speak about numerous matters that are not present at all in the face-to-face situation, including things that one may never experience directly. These "things" may not even exist, linking them to the questions of *What is real and what not?*

## 4.10 Language and Poverty-Discourse

Habermas (1978:310) is critical of the ability of hermeneutical inquiries to uncover systematic distortions in language. He points out that language is not only a form of communication, but also a mode of control and domination. Krogler (1985:9) felt that this means that a tradition can be oppressive and the interpretation of a tradition can be oppressive and the interpretation of a tradition can become an ideology.

Andries Baart (2001:299-301) while trying to elaborate on the discourse of poverty, also refers to the different "language" approaches in using the word "Armoede" (poverty). Baart draws from Engberson (1998:13-26) but develops his own approach as follows:

1. The Bureaucratic language suitable for public use and the distribution of resources.
2. Scientific language used predominantly in explaining the poverty phenomenon scientifically.
3. Moralistic language is used in linking poverty to the question of vitality or guilt. Who is morally responsible for the continuous existence of poverty and why is it not eradicated?



4. Dramatic language utilised in the often one-sided effort to create a melodramatic image illustrating the life of the poor. The language is utilised in such a dramatic manner in an attempt to change the attitude of those with little or no sympathy for the plight of the poverty stricken.
5. Worldliness (Leefwereldlijk) language, which is similar to the dramatic language in that it also calls on the experienced (belevingsbeeld) reality of poverty. But, its authenticity is much higher and it is focused on those who really want to be involved with the poverty issue.

The world is full of contrasts. Soldiers are motivated to deploy in order to improve their own financial situation. Almost all of them, with the exception of some senior ranks, will feel that they are in financial dire straits and see themselves as “poor”. But in the deployment area, they are seen as the rich guys! The big difference between the income of deployed soldiers in Central Africa, and the income of the local population is directly responsible for the solicitation activities. The “lucrative market” inspires the local women to motivate the soldiers to willingly share their hard earned money with them. For some of the locals, \$5.00 is a fortune. The different groups have vastly different perceptions of exactly what poverty is. Is it a lack of food and housing, or is it a lack of money? Poor people may have no debt whereas the rich may be debt riddled. It is therefore important to acknowledge our own poverty discourses as well.

In the western world, material gain is highly rated. However, if the suicide and divorce rate as well as the number of people using antidepressant medication were considered, affluence might not be the answer to all mankind’s needs. Money might not be mankind’s best friend.

## 4.11 The Social Distribution of Knowledge

Berger (1966:60) refers to the social distribution of knowledge in stating that knowledge is socially distributed and possessed. We do not share our knowledge equally with everyone. Some knowledge may not be shared at all. Some will be shared with family, some with friends and some with colleagues, depending on the social distribution of the knowledge. How people manage to cope is not information which is shared freely - often not at all.

All Co-researchers agreed that it was initially very difficult for them to share their stories. The pain of sharing was so intense that it forced Co-researcher B to withdraw from the research in hoping that by withdrawing, it will reduce her pain. I was recently informed that she is strongly considering deploying again with the aim to confront the situation anew. Apparently, she hopes that different individuals in key positions will contribute towards a more favourable deployment time and thus assist her in coping with the “emotional abuses of the past”.

A part of practical theology is focused on making sense of, and bringing sense to a world full of pain. Theologians use their understanding of God as revealed in scripture, linked with the theological traditions they accepted in order to bring a sense of understanding towards the world. But more people

are struggling with their own personal efforts to cope with the demands of life than they are struggling with the big philosophical questions of life.

From the first caveman asking questions about creation and wondering why it is so difficult to survive and hunt during winter, humans have contemplated life on different levels. Until today, most people are more interested in and concerned with their own well-being and survival than in the well-being of other people. It remains very difficult for Christians throughout the ages to comply with Jesus' request in Lk 6:27-28 (NIV 1996). We struggle to even get close to the golden rule - to love our neighbour like ourselves, but the following is even more difficult:

*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,  
bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you.*

When we must love our enemies, it moves the goal posts from the difficult toward the impossible. Without the guidance and assistance of the Holy Spirit, it remains an ungraspable and unattainable goal to love thy neighbour. For me personally, to love your enemies is not a socially constructed thought, simply because it remains outside the "normal" human thought processes. To tolerate your enemy, to even try to live in peace with them, might be human, but to love them is not a human concept. It makes sense to me to accept that such an idea must have been inspired through the Holy Spirit.

Maslow's (1962:1970) theories are still applicable. If one is in a war situation and fighting for survival, theoretical theological questions about a specific transcendental reality or epistemology are not high on one's agenda. Questions considering death and dying and questions regarding the existence of life after death suddenly become very important. Similarly, questions about global warming seem irrelevant to some politicians and scientists until food shortages suddenly appear globally. Every generation struggles with their own unique issues and problems that need their urgent attention. And, every generation will be adamant that their problems and issues are the most difficult ever faced by mankind!

## 4.12 Future Shock or Present Shock

In 1970 Alvin Toffler wrote the book *Future Shock*; what he was really writing about, was present shock! We are often shocked when we think about the future, and almost all grown-ups will every now and then refer to "how quickly things are changing". Balswick (1998:199) points out that a number of factors present in modern society contributed to the sense of alienation and loneliness of which so many people are victims.

The first factor Balswick (1998:199) refers to is mechanisation. Just consider how many of our "normal" workload has been taken over by machines. The impact of machines has spread to how we order, regulate and organise our life according to a mechanistic timetable. The spade of "*load-shedding*" in South Africa due to huge shortages in electricity, brutally reminded many

people how utterly dependent on electricity our lives have become and how many devices we have developed to assist us in making our lives easier.

According to Eskom (Eskom, 01/05/2008) load shedding occurs when there is insufficient power station capacity to supply the demand (load) from all the customers, in order to prevent the electricity system becoming unstable, possibly resulting in a national blackout. Eskom can either increase supply or reduce demand. During load shedding parts of the network are simply switched off.

This was no shock waiting to perhaps happen somewhere in the future, it was very real for those sitting in traffic jams or those who were stuck in lifts. Suddenly, South Africans became aware of how fragile our own systems are and how quickly life can change. Those people in a war-torn country will often comment how dreadfully quickly things can change from relative stability and peace to chaos and war!

These mechanisations and machines Balswick refers to, can vary from mobile phones and e-mail to electronic banking and touch screen interface maps, Global Positioning System (GPS) with a voice guidance providing trip information and navigation. According to the Internet Garmin (2010) the (GPS) is the only fully functional Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), utilizing a constellation of at least 24 Medium Earth Orbit satellites that transmit precise microwave signals, the system enables a GPS receiver to determine its location, speed and direction. We are truly living in the space and satellite era. Yesterday's science fiction is today's reality, things that we could only dream of a few years ago is commonplace today. Nevertheless, the growing importance of, and the dependence on these machines in our life cannot be denied. As humans, we have made giant steps into the future and gained a great deal, but we have lost our ability to function without these "machines". The satellite era is also influencing our social behaviour, from cell phones and Mix-It to Face-Book.

The importance of sufficient technological support is vital when deploying soldiers thousands of kilometres from home. Obviously their physical (military) safety must first be secured. Providing clean water, food and sanitation can be equally challenging. A number of different references have been made by the Co-researchers regarding technology or the lack thereof. The state of the art medical facilities that Co-researcher C helped to set up was to provide the necessary medical care in a constant high risk area with all the tropical diseases present in Africa. This led to the ethical and political questions regarding assisting the local population after an accident. The impact of medication is directly linked to the benefits as well as the side effects of modern medicine. We pay a price for all these technological benefits.

Co-researcher B mentioned in strong terms the frustration she experienced without the expected logistical support that she was accustomed to before her deployment. Her frustration might be linked to the fact that the Air Force is able to manage their resources differently than the Army. Co-researcher A refers to the emotional impact when waiting in anticipation for the aeroplane (Saartjie) that must provide one with the transportation back home, just to be informed that due to a technical glitch, the flight was delayed. Co-researcher D mentioned the lack of transport and how difficult it was to visit deployed soldiers in isolated positions, due to logistics and safety reasons. All of them

commented on the huge impact good telephonic communication with South Africa made. We can recall the positive impact on foreign soldiers to be able to phone a ward in 1 Military Hospital and talk directly to a patient.

The second factor Balswick (1998:199) refers to in modern society that contributes towards the sense of alienation and loneliness, is the superficial way in which we relate to one another. The anonymity and impersonal manner of our society towards fellow humans are amplified in modern society. How we treat one another contributes to our increasing experiences of loneliness.

Consider the thousands of people living in the same urban area and how many of these neighbours even know one another? Balswick also refers to the way we conduct business, even small transactions are conducted on a highly formalised and impersonal level. Often, we have not even the faintest idea of the person's name that we are doing business with, without even considering their life story, in fact - we don't want to consider it. Thus, we learn to relate on a superficial level with the various people we encounter.

During deployment this "superficial distance" between people is suddenly and dramatically, sometimes even rudely disrupted. To be suddenly confined in close quarters with a number of strange people from different cultural backgrounds, may be easy for some, but are very difficult for others. Minority groups in particular, struggle to adapt, and feelings of alienation can dramatically increase the difficulty of coping. Sharing ablutions and sleeping quarters, not to have any choice in the food you eat, nor when and how leisure time could be utilised, pose its own challenges. It must be clarified that only the bigger bases are provided with a mess which prepare the meals for the members. Soldiers deployed in smaller numbers and at places with less infrastructure prepare their own food, which brings its own set of challenges.

According to Balswick (1998:200), the third factor that contributes to loneliness is that mass society is characterised by bureaucratisation. Bureaucracies instruct the public into orderly hierarchical relationships, and according to the individuals' position in the organisational chain of command; their responsibilities and social position are defined. Balswick (1998:200) sums it up as follows: "A result of bureaucracy is that we often view each other as objects occupying a position rather than as human personalities". In fact, we are encouraged to be impersonal in order to be "objective". Even in research, we need to admit that objectivity is an illusion and accept our subjectivity with integrity.

The third factor, bureaucratisation, was definitely also extremely prominent during the Co-researchers' reflection and stories of coping. In fact, the single biggest factor they all agree on is bad management, incompetent commanders, a lack of information and proper feedback. Senior management, while pretending to follow a policy of appeasement with the junior soldiers, were in fact only trying to coax them into continuing to do their work without really trying to solve the complaints or solve the underlying problems.

This trend was especially noticeable during the episode where Co-researcher D refers to the investigation by a senior delegation after the shooting incident. According to her, almost no attention was given to her experiences of the incident and when she directly expressed her feelings, it was simply ignored.

No effort was made to address the question of why somebody with a previous violent history was deployed in the first place. If answers were found, these were all kept within management's inner circle with no downward feedback. All Co-researchers agreed that management seemed very reluctant to accept any responsibility for bad decisions and mishaps, which occurred due to their decisions or lack thereof.

Co-researcher C was adamant that the whole unpleasantness regarding managers who battled for control could all have been prevented if one proper decision had been made - "You are in command". A simple direct appointment would have solved months of strife and unnecessary turbulence. Co-researcher B mentioned how upset she was at the manner in which senior management just arrived to investigate her behaviour without any warning or without any reference to all the reports in which her side of the story were stated. She was not disputing their right to visit or to investigate the situation, or the alleged complaints, but she disputed their style of management.

Until today, none of the allegations were officially withdrawn, neither was she ever charged with any misconduct. Up to this moment she still hopes for some kind of apology from senior management. Alarming, it seems as if either they are not even aware of these strong feelings she is still experiencing, or even worse, they simply don't care to address the issue, maybe, hoping that time will be able to either cure her pain or bring healing, or that she will "toughen up" and get over it! Silent diplomacy seems to be the policy that was followed. Just ignore the problem until it gets solved or goes away seems to be the dominant management style.

Due to bureaucratisation, mechanisation and anonymity, relationships are more and more impersonal, resulting in growing loneliness and feelings of being estranged from other people. Even so, we still act surprised when countless people experience loneliness and isolation from society.

Deployment aggravates these factors and it is therefore not surprising to find them present. On the other hand, the close bonds and friendships that are created, are often so strong that some soldiers volunteer to be deployed due to the camaraderie and friendship they experience during deployment. They feel accepted and at home amongst their colleagues and fellow soldiers. These feelings of acceptance and belonging are preferable to sitting alone in a flat or room in South Africa.

Some people experiencing marital problems would volunteer to deploy as a last effort to solve their problems, especially if it is financial. It may simply be to escape an unpleasant situation at home. They may cling to the belief that absence makes the heart grow fonder, or simply hope that by deploying, they can get away from the constant bickering and fighting.

According to Balswick (1998:199) the full extent of the effect of all the factors present in modern society that contribute towards a sense of estrangement and loneliness in people, is not so easy to determine. One method was to contact medical funds and to inquire into their statistics to determine how many people use medication to assist them in coping with their normal day-to-day lives. Although this is non-narrative research, it may nevertheless provide additional proof that even in "normal circumstances" people are also experiencing problems in coping.

The Medical Fund Discovery Life provided information (Discovery, 15/11/2007) after receiving a letter requesting data regarding the usage of medication by members to assist them in coping with the stress and strain of everyday life. The reason why I chose Discovery Health was that they focus on a specific profile of the population. The caregivers in my research can easily fit into that target group. Discovery Health emphasised the fact that their target market is the better-educated and higher end of the health market.

### 4.13 Anti-depressant Claimants as a Percentage of the Discovery Health Population

The following data were received from Discovery Health Medical Fund. The first table indicates the specific medication that was involved in the statistics. The second table indicates the number of patients utilising the specific drug.

Table 1: Drug classes included in N06A

ATC_CLASS_NAME	WHO_CLASS_NAME
Antidepressants.	Citalopram
	Escitalopram
	Paroxetine
	Venlafaxine
Monoamine oxidase inhibitors, non-selective.	Tranlycypromine
Monoamine oxidase type A inhibitors.	Moclobemide
Other antidepressants.	Duloxetine
	Reboxetine
	Trazodone
Selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors.	Citalopram
	Fluoxetine
	Fluvoxamine
	Nefazodone
	Paroxetine
	Sertraline
	Venlafaxine
Tetracyclic derivatives.	Maprotiline
	Mianserin
	Mirtazapine
	Paroxetine
Tricyclic derivatives.	Amitriptyline
	Clomipramine
	Dosulepin
	Imipramine
	Lofepamine
	Nortriptyline
	Trimipramine

The subsequent information was deemed necessary to prevent any misinterpretation of the facts and to be able to understand exactly which statistics are being referred to. Secondly, it was deemed necessary, since sweeping statements regarding the use of medication can be made without any scientific data to support the statements, such statements can distort the true state of affairs and cause difficulty in understanding the seriousness of the situation. The unique claimants per month for WHO class code N06A were used in this analysis.

The claimants were counted irrespective of:

1. Quantity and duration of use.
2. The indication for use (e.g. Tricyclic Anti-depressants may be used for pain etc.)
3. The condition the medication was used for (will include MDD, OCD, PTSD, Etc.)
4. The benefit the medication was claimed from (Chronic medication, Medical Saving Account or part of a hospital event).
5. Plan type – Core members do not have out-of-hospital benefits and are not covered on the Chronic Illness Benefit for depression.

All Co-researchers mentioned the use of prophylaxis to prevent Malaria and the side effects of the medication that led to hallucinations. Only one of the Co-researchers mentioned making an appointment with a doctor to request medication to assist her in her coping efforts. She is currently in a process of trying to stop the continued use of medication. One of the other Co-researchers used medication but only for a short period of time.

All Co-researchers are in favour of the use of medication in collaboration with medical personnel, not as a substitute for the individual's own coping skills but rather as a short-term support system. They are aware of the difficulty some people experience to cope without medication if it was utilised over an extended period of time.

**Table 2: Unique claimants per month as % of Discovery Health population**

YYYYMM	CLAIMANTS	DH LIVES	% of DH population
200701	59719	1,852,014	3.22%
200702	57508	1,856,084	3.10%
200703	61479	1,860,383	3.30%
200704	57353	1,863,082	3.08%
200705	59528	1,869,326	3.18%
200706	56516	1,879,595	3.01%
200707	57280	1,888,034	3.03%
200708	57239	1,894,035	3.02%
200709	51512	1,899,529	2.71%
200710	55406	1,907,764	2.90%

It can be easily assumed that similar and higher statistics would be prevalent amongst soldiers, especially caregivers. The increase in stress caused by long-term separation from home, isolation from usual support systems and the ever present threat of military activity, could very easily increase this need of medical assistance.

The purpose of these statistics is to indicate that “normal” everyday people utilise medication to assist them in coping with non-physical illness. It also indicates that medication is an accepted form of assisting people to cope. But non-medication options are still by far the dominant coping option.

Unfortunately, my efforts to obtain statistics from the South African Military Health Services were unsuccessful due to the apparent classified nature of the content. Therefore, they were unable to supply me with any statistics.

## 4.14 Coping with Misery

When caring for people and living in close proximity to them during deployment, it is inevitable that caregivers could be exposed to the whole spectrum of emotions. On the one hand the emotions of those who they support and on the other hand their own emotions. Caregivers share in their joy and jokes, their tempers and irritability, their homesickness and depression and their parties and silliness.

Caregivers become part of the pattern and although they experience their own emotions, they are still expected to remain impartial, objective, and aloof of all the negative and sometimes “pleasurable” experiences shared by the rest of the deployed members. The general expectation of caregivers is that they must provide support to all the deployed members and that it is their responsibility to ensure that the “people” cope. This was the exact accusation against Co-researcher D - that it was her fault that the shooting incident occurred in the first place.

Andries Baart (2001:687) points out that caregivers are exposed to the impact of pain and sorrow. The impact of pain can be very serious, it can create long-term disruption and feelings of hopelessness. This pain and sorrow can seemingly be bottomless and going all the way through the individual’s “marrow and bone”. It may be very open and prominent, but the sorrow may just as well be deeply guarded and only briefly opened for scrutiny or discussion and if not treated correctly, it may again be hidden from view. Caregivers are at risk to try and hide these feelings due to their own as well as others’ expectations that they must be able to cope with due to their training and specialised skills.

All the Co-researchers admit that, initially, it was extremely difficult to acknowledge the fact that they experienced some strain during their deployment. Co-researcher A was by far the most open and forthcoming about her emotional struggles and anguish during her deployment, especially the turmoil she experienced just prior to her departure. I have no choice but to consider that this openness was one of the reasons why she was able to cope effectively with her emotions. She was in touch with her emotions, expressed them, but was also able and willing to accept responsibility and made a decision to cope. The deliberate choice to cope was critical in her eventual success.

Co-researcher D unsuccessfully tried to share her emotions and pain with her boyfriend. Unfortunately for her, he was unable to provide the support she needed and in fact contributed towards her feelings of isolation and loneliness. Adding to that she received no support from her superiors both in the operational theatre and from those in South Africa. It all quickly added up towards her feelings of utter isolation and despair. Co-researcher B received



no support from her direct line of command. She experienced a total lack of insight from them regarding the actual situation on the ground. Although she had strong support from colleagues, family and friends, that support was not able to fill the expectation she had and therefore, proved insufficient to prevent her trauma.

Baart (2001:687) continues that this pain may come from vastly different sources and origins, varying from physical, mental, financial, social, bureaucratic, managerial, relational or spiritual. Sometimes the individual may not even be certain what specifically the problem is, or a number of different sources or reasons may all be working together in making his or her life miserable. During deployment, without one's normal comfort zone and support systems around to sustain a person, the pain and trauma may be more intensely experienced than would normally be the case.

Baart (2001:687) points out that research has shown that individual pastors' approach towards pain and sorrow may differ. Some pastors will focus their energy on the individual and will try to support the person, while others will endeavour to coach the individual on how to cope with the pain.

An alternative approach is to focus on the community support system - to empower them to be able to assist and support the individual. Another alternative is the social-political route. Some may even try to remove the trigger that caused the incident in trying to solve the problem in that manner.

All of these approaches have their own strategies, methods and techniques. Pastors are active in all these different approaches according to their own training, interest and personal focus areas. According to Baart (2001:687), one of the shared emotions identified amongst the pastors was one of "machteloos staan" (powerlessness). Pastors and caregivers can feel dreadfully powerless if nothing can be done about the pain and misery of those they tend to. In particular, when in their field of influence, and as pastors or "caregivers", they are simply incapable of making any real difference to the pain and suffering, that makes them feel totally powerless.

Baart (2001:687-687) stated that this feeling of powerlessness also occurs in circumstances where any response or action, any intervention by the pastor, will set a domino effect into place that will definitely harm others as well. All the Co-researchers acknowledged feelings ranging from severe helplessness to mild frustration due to "powerlessness".

Co-researcher C attempted to assist an injured person after all local hospitals refused to assist him. This was against "policy" and it made her feel helpless against a wall of bureaucracy. She nevertheless accepted the responsibility to help him, due to her nature as a caregiver and not as a politician or a bureaucrat. Her decision could easily have set a whole domino effect into motion, not only harming her personally, but even creating an international incident.

Baart (2001:687-689) provides reasons for these feelings of helplessness. One of those is the feeling of 'distance' between the pastor and the person in pain. The distance is created when the pastor feels helpless to change the circumstances. Man is capable of understanding the pain of others but limited in his/her willingness or ability to actively confront the situation that caused the pain head-on. In Baart's own words "Wie veel wil waar weinig kan zal zich erg onmachtig voelen". He explained that especially people who want to do

something about a situation, but are prevented from doing so, experience strong feelings of helplessness.

Balswic (1998:136-137) stated that a personal crises develops when we are not ready and equipped for the transformation that is taking place in the world around us. Due to the rapid social and technological changes in our world, we are often struggling in just trying to keep up with our own world. When one is suddenly flung into a different “world”,it increases the difficulty to cope dramatically. Small things in a different situation become suddenly gigantic. Although for an outsider it may seem to be of almost no importance and a total over-reaction, for the individual in the situation it remains traumatic.

This may well be how the group of senior members that visited the deployed area after the shooting incident may have felt. It is quite possible that they were hundred percent aware of the absurdity in the accusations made by the soldiers against Co-researcher D. That may have been the reason way they did not even bother to discuss the event in detail with her, because to them she was not the problem. The foot soldiers were a much bigger concern to them. That will explain why they spent all their time and effort on them. Her response may have been seen as simply an emotional over-reaction after a tragic event. This will also shed some light on the general’s behaviour after he had asked her how she was doing. He may have asked a rhetorical question and was not prepared for her answer, because that did not fit into his own “story” of the events.

Habermas (1978:311) identifies another important aspect that must be considered in critical social science. In contrast to the systematic social sciences such as political sciences, sociology or economics that try to construct understanding in universally relevant laws of the human world, Habermas (1978:311) feels that self-reflection is determined by an emancipatory cognitive interest. Krogler (1985:10) stated that in critical theory, an analysis of power and ideology is taken with the aim of liberation and ideology critique.

The main objective of this chapter was to look at the questions of traditions and how traditions affect our perceptions of what is reality.