CHAPTER 1

PROLOGUE TO AN AFRICAN RESEARCH STORY –

INTRODUCTION, POSITIONING AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Once there lived a boy whose name was Magoda.

(Greaves 2004:106)

Possibly – and even hopefully –, what we have here is an introduction to an intriguing African folktale. The story starts by introducing us to the main character, Magoda. No further information is given at this stage. All we know at this moment in time is that the main character is a young boy, maybe even an adolescent. Given even just a simple sentence like this, the interested reader or listener would be wondering about Magoda. What kind of a person is he? Were does he live? What do we know about his family – his mom, his dad, does he have any brothers or sisters? Who are his friends? What makes him happy in life or drives him to tears? What does he think about in his quieter moments when he is alone?

This young boy called Magoda will join me, as I prepare to set out on this research journey. His story will form part of and inform the greater story that is this research. This research is part of a journey to meet up with ten so-called Aids orphans and other vulnerable adolescent boys and girls who have lost their parent(s) or caregiver(s). We will look at the bereavement of these adolescents left orphaned by and vulnerable to the HIV and Aids crisis that is crippling the continent of Africa. Their bereavement and the psycho-spiritual issues relating to this bereavement are examined by means of postfoundationalism as an approach to practical theology along with the narrative approach to research and therapy. This is done by integrating these approaches with the art of storytelling within the unique African context.

We have all read a book and later found ourselves confused regarding the story and the plot of the story, all because our minds wandered earlier on. This is the part of the research story that if you lose concentration or interest now, you will need to continually turn back later in the research story (report) to better understand the research story as a whole. Chapter 1 is the metaphorical jungle of the journey. Like Livingstone and other early explorers to remote, untamed parts of the world including Africa, we need to tackle and clear this jungle as we proceed ahead on our way to finding the unique African stories awaiting us. Anne Lamott (1995:Backcover) tells the story behind the title of her bestseller *Bird by Bird* as follows:

> Thirty years ago my older brother, who was ten years old at the time, was trying to get a report on birds written that he'd had three months to write. [It] was due the next day. We were out at our family cabin in Bolinas, and he was at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by binder paper and pencils and unopened books on birds, immobilized by the hugeness of the task ahead. Then my father sat down beside him, put his arm around my brother's shoulder, and said, 'Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird.'

As a PhD student attempting to write a thesis on the psycho-spiritual bereavement needs of HIV and Aids orphans and other vulnerable adolescents, I can most certainly identify with the predicament Anne's brother found himself in. At the onset of starting out and beginning to put my research to paper, I also felt "… immobilized by the hugeness of the task ahead …" (Lamott 1995:Backcover). However, I needed to remind myself often to take the process 'bird by bird', or in reference to the jungle metaphor above 'bush by bush'. Chapter 1 represents the denser vegetation of the jungle, and therefore some time needs to be spent to come to an understanding of my positioning before we can continue.

Journey with me…

In this first chapter, I will spend some time on positioning myself in postfoundationalism as an approach to narrative practical theology. Furthermore, I will look at how the narrative approach informs therapy as well as research.

Introducing myself – the researcher – and my interest in the research field

I am a white South African female in my thirties. I am Afrikaans speaking and come from what would probable be referred to as a typical Afrikaans upbringing. I was brought up in a strict and God-fearing household and my extended family also formed part of my upbringing. I have been working at the University of Pretoria, while I have been studying for the past 12 years in various positions and various departments. I have studied and worked in the Departments of Psychology, Biblical and Religious Studies as well as Practical Theology. My academic influences are interdisciplinary and therefore to a certain extent diverse, yet complimentary at the same time. This has helped me immensely with looking at the same phenomena from different perspectives. Currently, I form part of a research team within the Department of Practical Theology that focuses on HIV and Aids orphans and their lived experiences. I was appointed as the research coordinator for this research project and my thesis forms part of the greater research endeavour. I therefore see myself primarily as a practical theologian, working within a post-modern context within the greater context of Africa.

If someone were to tell me in my pre-graduate studies that I would one day be working within and researching the HIV and Aids field, I probably would not have believed them. Nothing was further from my own lived experiences at that stage than HIV and Aids. The story of my involvement with the discourse of HIV and Aids emerges in 2004 during my Masters studies in Practical Theology. Professor Julian Müller planted the seed that I should maybe think about not only looking at the bereavement needs of children, a subject I am passionate about, but to focus more specifically on the bereavement needs of HIV and Aids orphans.

Challenges of the research

Starting out on this research journey, I faced a three-fold language barrier, which had to be overcome to do justice to this research.

Firstly, there was the issue of the literal language barrier. As an Afrikaans speaking South African, I was worried that the chosen co-researchers might have trouble communicating their feelings in English, as I am well aware that it is easier for most people to express that which they hold dear to them, in their mother tongue. During the initial planning stage of the first *Tree of Life* (TOL) camp, Juanita Meyer and I contemplated the need for a PEN facilitator, who could speak a relevant indigenous language, to accompany us on the camp. Juanita Meyer is a fellow PhD student also working in the research field of HIV and Aids. This idea, did not pan out as PEN, the NGO with whom we collaborated, had a function during the specific weekend we planned to use for the camp. Luckily for us, as our co-researchers were adolescents and attended English medium high schools, they all had a good grasp of English and whenever one had difficulty in conveying their emotions in English, the group would help with the translation thereof into English.

Secondly, there was the issue of a cultural language barrier. Being a white female from a middle-class background, my circumstances were worlds apart from the circumstances of my African co-researchers and their life experiences. These mostly poor, urban African adolescents live in the inner city of Pretoria, some stay in the Houses of Safety under the guidance of PEN. Being more urbanised youth, in regular contact with Western ideas and ways of doing things, they were not as influenced by their African traditions as one might expect, yet to a certain degree, it did play a role. As urban youth, some of them were also very into the sub-culture of hip-hop. This was evident in their attire as well as in the manner they chose to speak. This searching for an identity to hold onto brings us to the third possible barrier regarding the research – the emotional barrier.

Thirdly, there was an emotional barrier as mentioned above. Adults often experience difficulty understanding the lived experiences of children and especially that of adolescents trying to find their place in this world. Throughout the research, I tried to incorporate the adolescents' perspectives by means of using their own language, as far as possible, to describe their experiences. This was done deliberately, as I am of the opinion that one can gain some insight in the individual's personality, by paying attention to their specific language use and style.

Scope of the research

As was also mentioned earlier in the introduction, the aim of this research was to look at the psycho-spiritual bereavement needs of HIV and Aids orphans as well as that of other vulnerable adolescents who lost a parent or caregiver to a cause other than HIV and Aids. This was done mainly because within the HIV and Aids field and especially within the South African context, people sometimes do not know or acknowledge – due to various reasons – HIV and Aids as the true cause of their loved one's passing.

These needs were looked at from a postfoundational approach to practical theology as it is informed by a narrative pastoral approach.

Limitations of the research

Some limitations of this research include the following –

- A specific group of adolescents from a contextualised NGO partook in the research process. The results can therefore not blindly be applied to the lives of other bereft adolescents or used within the contexts of other NGOs without first understanding my ten specific 'co-researchers' stories and contexts.

- As I had ten 'co-researchers' on this research journey, it was an impossible task to include all of their stories in this research report with its limited pages. As far as I could, I did try to include as much of their research data as possible where relevant.

- Chapter 5 therefore also only focuses on the interdisciplinary conversations regarding two of these research stories – that of the two self-acknowledged HIV and Aids orphans, the girls Dee and Zee. There were two main reasons other than the lack of space I chose to approach it in this manner. Firstly, they were acknowledging the fact that they were indeed HIV and Aids orphans. Secondly, Zee was what the literature calls a 'double' orphan by first losing her mother to suicide as a toddler and later as an adolescent her father due to HIV and Aids infection. Dee was a 'single' orphan having lost her mother also due to HIV and Aids infection, yet for all practical reasons she could also have been a 'double' orphan as her father was never involved in her life, and his whereabouts are unknown. Their stories are to a great extent typical and representative of HIV and Aids orphans in South Africa. Yet, at the same time, both their life stories are very unique.

- This research journey plays off against the HIV and Aids discourse in South Africa. Attention therefore needs to be given to this discourse. As this research process is narrative in nature I have however decided against getting bogged down by all the technical concepts and statistics related to this phenomenon and have decided to only focus the discussion on concepts and other information relevant to this specific research study.

- Much literature exists about the narrative approach, postfoundationalism, practical theology and the phenomenon of HIV and Aids orphans, this study therefore does not claim to be comprehensive regarding these subjects.

Our research journey starts by situating the research within the epistemological and theoretical paradigm that forms the backdrop to the whole research process.

I will therefore spend some time in this first chapter on positioning myself in postfoundationalism as an approach to practical theology.

Furthermore, I will look at how a narrative pastoral approach informs therapy as well as research. To be able to do this, we need to start by looking at epistemology. What is epistemology and how does it inform our research?

1.2 THE ENIGMA OF EPISTEMOLOGY AND POSITIONING

1.2.1 Trying to grasp the concept of epistemology

Alcoff (1998:Preface) describes epistemology as "… a philosophical inquiry into the nature of knowledge, what justifies a belief, and what we mean when we say that a claim is true". Elgin (1998:26) agrees and states in reference to epistemological theories that "…epistemological theories share an abstract characterisation of their enterprise. They agree, for example, that epistemology is the study of nature, scope and utility of knowledge". Audi (2002:1) takes this description of epistemology further and proposes that epistemology is not only known as "… the theory of knowledge but also as the theory of justification". He (Audi 2002:1) continues by saying that "…knowledge is constituted by a belief (of a certain kind), which is a central psychological concept…" also that "… knowledge and justification are both closely connected with the perception, inference, memory, and other elements in human life".

Within the context of western philosophy, epistemology is frequently ascribed to have begun with the philosopher Plato, especially in the *Theaetetus*, where "… knowledge is first formulated as justified true belief; but as a self-conscious area of inquiry and as a coherent, developing conversation, it is usually dated from René Descartes' *Meditations*, .." (Alcoff 1998:Preface).

1.2.2 Some important thinkers' thoughts on epistemology

Greco (2002) refers in his discussion of epistemology to the following great thinkers of their times: Westphal, Heidegger, Gadamer as well as Derrida.

Westphal tried to equate hermeneutics and epistemology to each other. Westphal was of the opinion that epistemology in general must be understood and defined by its traditional task: "… an investigation into the nature and scope of human knowledge.   But since hermeneutics addresses exactly these concerns, hermeneutics is epistemology" (Greco 2002:29).

According to Greco (2002:30), hermeneutics and more specifically the hermeneutical circle was of great importance for Heidegger's understanding of epistemology. He (Greco 2002:30) explains Heidegger's ideas as follows:

> The relationship between understanding the whole and understanding the specifics is circular in that each is a function of the other. … Heidegger turns such themes into a general epistemological position: all human understanding is interpretation, and all interpretation involves such hermeneutical circles.

Consequently, Heidegger chose to reject the modernistic tendency of the Enlightenment era to privilege theory over practice along with understanding over passion. Instead Heidegger proposes that theoretical understanding is subject to the practical understanding of the issue at hand, which in turn depends on the affective understanding thereof (Greco 2002:31). Gadamer also attacked what he called modernity's 'prejudice against prejudices.'   According to Gadamer, prejudices or 'pre-judgements' do not distort the truth as many modernistic approaches would claim, but rather make understanding possible in the light of the tradition it comes from (Greco 2002:31).

Greco (2002:31) says that for Gadamer these "… prejudices constitute the contingent and corrigible foundations of knowledge".

Greco (2002:31) takes Derrida's claim that "(t)here is nothing outside the text" as his starting point to describe Derrida's understanding of epistemology. According to Derrida's ideas, "…all knowledge is already interpretation". In this line of thought, there is also no distinction between "…signs that signify and things that are signified..." as Derrida believed that "…all reality points beyond itself as a sign for something else" (Greco 2002:31).

From the discussion above, one can explain the concept of epistemology in layman's terms in stating that epistemology refers to how a person came to know that which he or she claims to know and regards as truthful. In the following section, I will attempt to explain my own epistemology as it is informed by others and the world around me and how my epistemological stance influences my research positioning regarding this research process.

1.2.3 How do I as researcher know that which I claim to know?

In order for us to position ourselves in the story of this study, it is important to realise and acknowledge certain perceptions we hold about our world we live in, as well as how these presuppositions we have, influences the way we see this world around us. As my German rooted surname 'Richter' (English translation – 'judge') implies, my paternal ancestors were from Europe. My maternal ancestors also originated in Europe – the Netherlands to be exact. However, my family on both sides have been calling the African soil home for at least 250 years. Where does this leave me in terms of my identity – am I a European as the government and some white South Africans referred to themselves during the era of Apartheid, or am I a Euro-African similar to the African-Americans in the United States of America?

Why, you might ask, do I address the issue with my identity here? I agree with Gadamer's statement above (Greco 2002:31) that acknowledging 'pre-judgements' or our prejudices, presuppositions if you will, and the tradition within which it took shape, helps with the better understanding of one's own point of paradigmatic departure – in life as well as in research.

As a white South African female, I am living in Africa, I am doing research in Africa and my co-researchers are African youths. Where does this leave me – am I an African or not? The fact that my passport classifies me as a South African national presupposes I live in South Africa. And, South Africa is on the African continent. But does that make me an African?

Shortly after I was appointed as the research coordinator for the Department of Practical Theology's research project entitled SMALL SURVIVORS OF HIV/AIDS, I had the opportunity to travel to Nigeria to attend and present a paper at the 5th African Association for Pastoral Studies and Counselling (AAPSC) Congress in July of 2006. A fellow theology student and assistant to Professor Müller, Pieter Visser, accompanied me. There we met up with a fellow South African practical theologian from the University of Stellenbosch, Llewellyn MacMaster. During this Congress and the time spent in Nigeria, I came to the realisation that we as white South Africans are sometimes the one's who do not want to acknowledge that we too are African. Race was never an issue with my fellow Congress delegates, and I, as a white woman from South Africa, was even elected to serve as the Association's project study secretary. I think it was during this time that I started to question my 'African-ness' and my place in Africa as a practical theologian. I also came to the realisation that our identities are indeed socially constructed. We as humans do not exist in a vacuum. We are what we became through our interactions with others and the world around us. Former president Thabo Mbeki's famous speech, "I am an African" puts it beautifully:

I am an African.

I owe my being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land.

My body has frozen in our frosts and in our latter day snows. It has thawed in the warmth of our sunshine and melted in the heat of the midday sun. The crack and the rumble of the summer thunders, lashed by startling lightening, have been a cause both of trembling and of hope.

A human presence among all these, a feature on the face of our native land thus defined, I know that none dare challenge me when I say – I am an African!

My fellow South African delegate to the 2006 AAPSC Congress, Llewellyn MacMaster, has also written a poem about being in and being of Africa as a so-called Coloured South African entitled "I am". In this poem, he also relates his struggle to find his identity as an African:

I am from Africa,
Without doubt, undeniable –
No matter what people say!
Those who try to deny it
Dispute against themselves, in vain

I am Khoi-San, Brown, Coloured,
It does not matter any more what you call me
Fact of the matter is, I am here
South African, African,
Part of this country, this continent

Always have been here –
No matter what people say!

At the 6th AAPSC Congress in Stellenbosch, South Africa in 2009 a fellow delegate, Terence Cook, read a poem from a white male South African, Wayne Visser, who currently resides overseas, also entitled "I am an African":

I am an African
Not because I was born there
But because my heart beats with Africa's
I am an African
Not because my skin is black
But because my mind is engaged by Africa
I am an African
Not because I live on its soil
But because my soul is at home in Africa

Three different people, three different races, three different claims to being an African are represented in these poems. I have included the full versions of the three poems as Addendum A for the interested reader. If they can all see themselves and claim themselves to be African, I believe I can too!

So, what is my epistemology that guides my research as a white African theologian and researcher? This research is embedded in what is referred to in this study as postfoundational practical theology. The local and the concrete context are the starting blocks for the research, but it also acknowledges the different discourses within tradition that have an influence on this context. Furthermore, how other disciplines view this local context is also of importance to postfoundational practical theology, therefore much emphasis is placed on relevant interdisciplinary conversation (Müller 2004:7). During the next few chapters, I will position myself; listen to the narratives find time to better the understanding of the effects of HIV and AIDS on the lives of young teenagers affected by it. Furthermore, I will try and develop some suggestions that can make a contribution to contexts beyond this particular context.

1.3　PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH:　PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Our examples are like seeds on a windy day, they spread far and wide
- African Proverb -

During the Practical Theology of South Africa's (PTSA) 2010 Conference at the University of Pretoria 21-22 January 2010, Dr Christo Thessnaar posed the question of how other theologians can be convinced that practical theology is on the same level as other theological disciplines.　Müller (2005:2) says that practical theology is forever struggling to be taken seriously as a scientific discipline equal to other theological disciplines.　This might be because in all its efforts to obtain scientific status, it has lost its foothold with practice – it seems like there is an imbalance between theory and practice (Müller 2005:2).

Müller (2004:296) sees practical theology as always "… local, concrete and specific".　In light of this viewpoint of practical theology, Müller (2004:300) states:

> … the moment that we realise and accept the fact that identity, and therefore rationality, is socially constructed as part of a continuing process, we are liberated from the urge to defend theological rationality over and against other so-called scientific rationalities…

Lartey (2000:74) describes practical theology as a "… way of being and doing …".　It therefore reflects an awareness of the socio-cultural forces on individuals, groups as well as on the Christian faith itself.　Bons-Storm (1998:15) describes practical theology as "… faith lived in context …".

Browning (1987:9) suggests that this way of being and doing, as lived in the context, should aim to move from practice to theory, back to practice.　According to him, theory does not, and cannot stand on its own, but it emanates from practice.

Academic theological thinking and writing and practical issues at grass root level are brought closer to each other. Practical theology not only brings theological thinking and practice closer together, but Gerkin postulates that it should also connect the "… varied stories of life and the grounding story of the Christian community,.." (Gerkin 1997:111).   Ray Anderson said during the PTSA Conference, January 2010 that practical theology has a responsibility towards both the church and the world.

Demasure and Müller (2006:416) concur with the viewpoint above and state that "(p)ractical theology happens whenever and wherever there is reflection of practice, from the perspective of the experience of the presence of God".

According to Cilliers' (2009:625) understanding of practical theology, it

> … hinges on a hermeneutics of significance, which should not be seen as a new form of clerical or ecclesiological power or control, but rather as a collaborative and reciprocal way of serving and increasingly live as it is expressed and experienced in society. While practical theology has traditionally operated within a clerical and ecclesiological paradigms, this article proposes that the space within which practical theology comes to fruition, should be society in the broadest sense of the word. It is within the space of the contributions of the abovementioned eight paradigms are made operational through Practical Theology of significance, in other words Practical Theology that signifiers but also generates meaning. Significance forms the centre of the wheel of Practical Theology, which turns within the realms of society.

Cilliers (2009:624) postulates that:

> Practical theology will by nature always be in the process of reconstruction; will remain provisional and experimental; and exists in the creative tensions of empirical research and theological conceptualisation; confession and society, core identity and interdisciplinary approaches, induction and deduction, contextualisation and tradition, the Scriptures and communication, calling (*vocatio*) and denomination, spirituality and academic accountability, university and denominational partners, and so forth.

Cilliers (2009:624-625) consequently summarises eight paradigms within which practical theology could be understood:

- *Fides quaerens intellectum* (faith in search of understanding): Here the intention is to understand, interpret and proclaim the revelation of God in a logical and cognitive manner, especially with in an ecclesiological context. The emphasis is on teaching.
- *Fides quaerens verbum* (faith in search of words): This entails a narrative and non-directive approach, complemented by 15 modes of connotation and discourse. The emphasis is on the act of expression.
- *Fides quaerens actum* (faith in search of acts): The emphasis is on stronger integration of theory and practice, liberation, transformation, and ways of effecting practical theology. The focus is on the development of skills.
- *Fides quaerens spem* (faith in search of hope): Here the emphasis is on the understanding and experience of meaning, as well as the means to foster and facilitate such understanding through the liturgy, pastoral care and preaching. The significance of eschatology plays an important role in this regard.

- *Fides quaerens imaginem* (faith in search of images; symbolic expression): Although not meant to oppose the abovementioned emphases, it brings a new dimension into play, namely what has been called aesthetic reason or aesthetic hermeneutics. The emphasis falls on the art of imagination and creative expression.

- *Fides quaerens visum* (faith in search of concrete visualisation): This is linked to the notion of aesthetics. The intention is to aid people to discern traces of God's presence by means of visual and virtual realities. In this regard, the role of modern technology (Internet, mass media, and so forth) is considered.

- *Fides quaerens corporalitatem* (faith in search of embodiment): This is a holistic approach, with emphasis on the embodiment of humans, among others also as the "address" of revelation. Our bodies are central to what we perceive and experience, also in terms of our relationship with God. It is the prime locus of God's presence with us. This understanding of embodiment is of specific importance in practical theology, as it entails the notions of contextualisation, immediacy, encountering, embracement, communality, radicalisation and concreteness.

- *Fides quaerens societatem* (faith in search of social embodiment): This is a bridge-crossing approach, taking practical theology beyond its exclusively ecclesiological boundaries, striving to interact with a variety of communities (including faith communities) in order to serve and enrich these communities, but also to be served and enriched by them in a collaborative and reciprocal way.

Rick Osmer stated during the PTSA Conference, January 2010 that it is important to talk and think about the relationship between practical theology and other fields.

This eight paradigm described above, namely 'faith in search of social embodiment', also refers to practical theology's need to interact with other communities, which by implication could also mean other disciplines outside of practical theology and other theological disciplines.

This interdisciplinary conversation that is proposed by the above described paradigm, reminds of transversality (1.7) in postfoundationalism (1.6) as an approach to doing practical theology. It sees practical theology in relationship with the local and concrete context. While at the same time not losing sight of God and the Christian narrative, and does not only have an influence on the specific context and understanding of the Christian narrative, but is also in turn influenced and shaped by the context itself and the local understanding of the Christian narrative.

As my research focuses on the psycho-spiritual bereavement needs of HIV and Aids orphans and other vulnerable adolescents, please allow me the opportunity to end this section by relating the following adapted anecdote of an interaction between Hiltner, the pastoral theologian and Tillich, the systematic theologian, to illustrate the position of practical theology in working with children:

> Tillich: Let us say that there was a certain man **(child)** ….
> Hiltner (interrupting): What was his **(the child's)** name?
> Tillich: Oh, … err … let us say John**(ny)**. So, there was this man **(boy)** named John**(ny)** and ….
> Hiltner (interrupting): Was he married? **(How old is he?)**
> Tillich: Let us say he was. **(16 years old)**. So. There was this married **(16 year old)** man, **(boy)** John**(ny)**, who ….
> Hiltner (interrupting again): What was his wife's name? **(Who are his parents?)** Did they both work?
> Tillich (with exasperation): Professor Hiltner, won't you please let me finish? What is the meaning of all your questions?
> Hiltner: To speak of just *any* man **(child)** is to speak of no man **(child)** at all.

(Childs 1998:193)

1.4 AND SO THE STORY GOES: NARRATIVE APPROACH

We all have stories, we just lack listeners
- Reverend Jackie Sullivan -

Regarding the stories we tell, Burns (2005:3) states that: "(f)rom time immemorial, stories, legends, and parables have been effective and preferred methods for communicating information, teaching values, and sharing the important lessons of life. Tobin (2006:3-1) agrees and says that: "(s)tories and the telling of stories have probably been with us since the beginning of human existence – in one sense stories and storytelling help to define the nature of humanity". Tobin (2006:3-2) states that "(t)he word 'story' has its origins in the 13th century, with roots in both French and Latin, and literally means an account of incidents or events". Burns (2005:5) describes stories as:

> Stories are an integral part of life. Through the ages, they have been an inseparable part of human culture, learning, and values. Regardless of our language, religion, race, sex, or age, stories have been, and will remain, a crucial element in our lives. It is because of stories that our language, religion, science, and culture exists. … They accompany us throughout our existence, from cradle to cremation.

Burns (2005:4) goes on to say that as a species, we have stories that explain the world around us and its origins:

> We, as a species, have stories to explain our world and its origins. These stories help us to define and understand much of what otherwise might be unexplained. In doing so, they also enable us to *create* our world.

Stories also invite "…participation in a relationship in which teller and listener share an interactive bond" (Burns 2005:3). Tobin (2006:3-22) concurs saying that "(s)torytelling is certainly a collaborative activity, in the sense that at least two parties must be involved (the teller and the listener)".

Burns (2005:4) says that:

> While we may or may not notice it, the sharing of stories can build relationships, challenge ideas, provide models for future behaviour, and enhance understanding. In the characters and teller we may see some of ourselves and be influenced, little by little, by the attitudes, values and skills. It has been said before that once we have heard a story we can never unhear it, that something may have changed forever.

Burns (2005:4) also states that stories have many important characteristics of effective communication and lists it as follows:

1. They are interactive.
2. They teach by attraction.
3. They bypass resistance.
4. They engage and nurture imagination.
5. They develop problem-solving skills.
6. They create outcome possibilities.
7. They invite independent decision-making.

White (1993:36) proposes in his discussion of the narrative metaphor that all people, adults and children alike, live their lives by stories. These stories are what he calls "… shaping of life, and they have real, not imagined, effects – and these stories provide the structure for life".

Freedman and Combs (1996:9) describe the narrative approach as " … an approach which permits people seeking help to use the thinking, knowledge, understanding, power and emotions in a way that best fits their scheme of life".

Since the narrative approach focuses on the personal meanings that people assign to specific events in their lives and how they tell the story of these meanings, reality is furthermore defined by the stories people live and therefore tell one another (Mills et al., 1995:373). Freedman and Combs (1996:268) concur by stating that the 'self' is socially constructed in relationship with other people.

This socially constructed view about the self is subject to "… many possible experiential realities…" (Erickson in Freedman and Combs 1996:11). These experiential realities – those the person chooses to accept and even not to accept, are constituted through language (Freedman and Combs 1996:12). To be able to tell these stories, one needs to remember it first.

Michael White (Morgan 2000:77) introduced the concept of 'remembering' to the narrative approach. In the sense White uses the concept 'remembering', it refers to the process whereby people have the option to choose whom they want to include and exclude from their so-called 'club of life' – who the 'audience' to their life stories would be. In doing so, people choose to use 'remembering' as a deliberate action to reconstruct their own reality after constructing and reconstructing their life stories (Morgan 2000:77). Regarding construction and reconstruction of stories, Tobin (2006:3-3) proposes that "(i)f a 'story' is the content then 'storytelling' is the method in which way the story is told".

Tobin (2006:3-22) further explains that the nature of one's audience is critical "… in terms of their ability to understand and interpret the story, to identify with the characters portrayed, to in a sense find the story credible".

Payne in Morgan (2000:10) describes narrative therapy as follows:

> … narrative therapy, like all therapies, begins with the counsellor giving the person respectful, interested attention in a safe and uninterrupted place. The person is invited to talk about her concerns, and the therapist listens.

Morgan (2000:2) agrees and states that narrative therapy is different from other approaches or therapies in that it aims to be respectful and non-blaming. It therefore seeks to empower people coming for therapy. This is done by allowing and inviting the conversation partner to become part of the whole process of therapy.

My adolescent co-researchers therefore became the storytellers of their own life stories, because they are the experts on their own lives (Müller 2000:56) and we, the researchers, formed part of an interested and involved audience to these stories as they evolved and took shape.

In other – one could say more modernistic – approaches the researcher tries to be an observer and to be objective about what he/she is observing, while the narrative researcher has subjective integrity in mind and sees the action as participatory (Müller et al., 2002:2). The researchers are therefore neither complete outsiders by being observers, nor are they insiders who are fully involved in the process.

Instead, the researchers are interested participants in a part of the process, who want to "… be faithful to the story as told by the research participants giving voice to their lived experience" (Freedman & Combs 1996:21). In order to maintain subjective integrity, it is important to remember that the researcher's aim is not to bring about change (Müller et al., 2002:2).

Müller (2000:1) states that: "… people find themselves to be in a crisis when their stories do not want to take any shape. The rock which is behind it is too far, and the one in front is unreachable". Sometimes all that's needed to get the courage to jump to the rock in front, is someone to listen to your story.

In this regard, Freedman and Combs (1996:44) say that "… as simple as it may seem, in the face of permanent discourses and dominant knowledge, simply listening to the story someone tells us, constitutes a revolutionary act".

Freedman and Combs (1996:xiii)make the bold statement that "… people are people and problems are problems ... problems never define the person's entire being". They go on to say that "… problems develop when people internalise conversations that strain them to a narrow description of self. These stories are experienced as oppressive because they limit the perception of available choices" (Freedman and Combs 1996:48).

Also speaking about these problems and how it starts to dominate one's story, Morgan (2000:14) says that "... as the problem story gets bigger and bigger and it becomes more powerful and will affect future events. Thin conclusions often lead to more thin conclusions as people's skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies become more hidden by the problem story".

In more specific reference to the narrative approach to research, as it influences a research process such as the one documented in this thesis, Müller et al., (2002:3) state that in narrative research the stories that our co-researchers tell us and reconstruct, become the focus of the research. We as researchers can and must assist our co-researchers to tell their specific story of need in as much detail as possible, because the narrative approach emphasises *storytelling*.

My research, or I should rather say – our research – that of my co-researchers and I, focused on the psycho-spiritual bereavement needs of orphans, some of whom are HIV and Aids orphans, but all of whom are vulnerable in the ugly face of the current HIV and Aids crisis in South Africa.

White and Epston (1992:16), like I, have also listened to and helped develop some of their conversation partners' stories regarding loss and bereavement. They describe how they have helped people to "… publicise and circulate …" their newly constructed stories as an alternative to the problem stories of loss and grief they initially told (Epston and White 1992:16). Like they proposed in their therapy with bereft people, our research challenged my co-researchers to talk about their grief and give voice to it and find an audience (the TOL group sessions) for the construction of alternative stories to their debilitating problem stories.

In reference to helping children in therapy, Burns (2005:16-24) lists ten guidelines for effective storytelling that is not only important when one tells stories for pure recreational value, but also in a narrative approach to therapy as well as to research:

1.   We are all storytellers
2.   Use your own enthusiasm rather than techniques
3.   Use your intelligence, integrity and ethics
4.   Make the story fit
5.   Make the story real
6.   Make an outline of the story
7.   Rehearse the story
8.   Tell it to someone else
9.   Observe your listener
10.   Be flexible

1.5   PARADIGMS AT WAR: FROM PREMODERNITY TO MODERNITY TO POSTMODERNITY

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world;
The unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself.
Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.
- George Bernard Shaw -

To adapt means to change. Whether it be yourself, as with the reasonable man, or the world around you, like the unreasonable man – change is inevitable. Sometimes these changes are met with resistance, other times it is welcomed with open arms.

Thus after the reasonable man has adapted himself to his situation, he would start to feel at ease with how he now views the world surrounding him. He and those who share his viewpoint will be able to give meaning to their existence in light of their particular thought system. This is known as what Thomas Kuhn referred to as a "paradigm" (Du Toit 2000:44). Moss (2007:243) describes a paradigm as "… an overarching system of ideas and beliefs by which people see and organise the world in a coherent way, a mindset for making sense of the world and our place in it".

Reasoning will take place within the broader context of the specific thought system. Questions will be answered and phenomena explained in light of how a person views himself, the people around him, life and the world. It is therefore important in this research process to realise and acknowledge certain perceptions about our world we live in, as these presuppositions we have, influence the way we see the world around us and how I as the researcher positioned myself in the storying of this research process.

As a narrative researcher, I need to place myself within a scientific paradigm in which to operate as a practical theologian. Through my years of training, I have journeyed through a modern and postmodern paradigm and now find myself in a postfoundationalist worldview. This section will describe the paradigms of premodernity, modernity and postmodernity and the effect it had on me as a researcher, and in some instances still do. The next section (1.6) will focus on social-constructionism and postfoundationalism.

Hoffman (2005) states that to be able to understand premodernism, modernism and postmodernism, we first need to understand how these concepts can be understood. He says:

> Each of these can be talked about as periods of time and as philosophical systems. When discussing them as philosophies, it is probably best to view them as "isms" in the sense that within each epoch there were many different approaches.

> (http://www.postmodernpsychology.com)

1.5.1 Alive and well in Africa: Premodernism

Describing premodernism as a time period in history, Hoffman (2005) states that premodernism can be dated from the beginning of history, up to about 1650. This does not mean that there did not exist modern and postmodern ideas during this time frame, merely that premodernism was the dominant paradigm of the time and that it was through this lens that the world was viewed (http://www.postmodernpsychology.com).

Erickson (2001:52) explains premodernism as follows:
- There is an overall explanation of things, in terms of inclusiveness with respect to the reality and of the whole of history.

- Reality has a rational character. History is going somewhere, fulfilling some discernable pattern, whether linear or circular in nature. It is therefore possible to make sense of reality. Humans are capable of understanding reality, at least to some degree, whether that knowledge results from personal discovery or from acceptance of special revelation from a divine being.

- Observable nature does not exhaust all reality. There are real and important entities lying beyond nature. Indeed, these entities, whether personal or impersonal, are considered to have strong and perhaps even decisive influence on what transpires within the observable world.

- The happiness and fulfilment of humans is believed to require correct adjustment to these unseen realities. Because they are the source of meaning or of life, they must be understood and followed. Thus, full human existence requires an element of faith, as it were.

- Time, as we know it, is not the whole of reality. An additional dimension of life, and in many ways its most important aspect, lies beyond time.

- The unchanging and permanent are most important. Without these, the flux of experience would have no real meaning.

Hoffman (2005) compliments this discussion about premodernism by Erickson above, by describing the epistemology of the premodern period as being based upon revealed knowledge from authoritative sources. It was believed that the so-called Ultimate Truth could be known, and that the way to this kind of knowledge is attainable through direct revelation from God or a god. The primary sources of authority was therefore seen as the church as interpreters of this knowledge (http://www.postmodernpsychology.com).

Therefore, if one looks at the current situation in Africa, the traditional African to this day have a mostly premodernistic view on the world through their involvement with nature and beliefs in spirits and ancestors. Since this research is set against the African context, it is also important to take note of premodernism as a mindset.

However, tension will be created when new knowledge – due to new discoveries, a life-altering event or changing situations – comes to the fore, for which there seems to be no satisfactory answer. For the time being those who support a specific worldview will hold on to their beliefs and try to ignore what is happening (Du Toit 2000:44). This is when the unreasonable man, in the quote above by George Bernard Shaw, steps forward and demands a change. The literature calls this a "paradigm switch" (Du Toit 2000:45).

1.5.2 Modern minds: Modernism

The first paradigm switch took place at around 1650 when modernism came to the foreground and overtook premodernism as the dominant perspective of the time. Hoffmann (2005) states that modernism was subsequently dominant in the Western culture for about 300 years until the 1950s (http://www.postmodernpsychology.com).

Modernism developed as a result of the scientific and technological revolution (Müller et al., 2002:18,19). Modernism believes reality to be restricted to the observable system of nature and that the laws of nature are the cause of all that occurs. Emphasis is also placed on the scientific method. Knowledge can be attained through observation and experimentation. Furthermore knowledge is seen as objective and therefore certain. What happened in the universe followed from fixed causes and by applying the scientific method these laws could be discovered and applied even to human behaviour (Erickson 1998:16,17).

Erickson (2001:73-74) describes modernism as follows:

- Knowledge is considered to be a good that is to be sought without restriction. Knowledge will provide the solution to humanity's problems. This confidence in knowledge therefore contributes to a belief in progress.

- Objectivity is both desirable and possible.

  It is believed that any personal or subjective factors can be eliminated from the knowing process, thus rendering the conclusions certain.

- Foundationalism is the model for knowledge. All beliefs are justified by their derivation from certain bedrock starting points or foundational beliefs.

- The individual knower is the model of the knowing process. Each person must access the truth for himself or herself, even though the truth is the same truth for everyone.

- The structure of reality is rational. It follows an orderly pattern. The same logical structure of the external world is also found in the human mind, thus enabling the human to know and organize that world. In most cases, this order or pattern is believed to be immanent within the world, rather than deriving from some transcendent source.

Wentzel van Huyssteen (1999:29) concurs with most of what has been said above, and describes modernism (also known as foundationalism) when he says that modernism:

> … is the belief that scientific progress and true discoveries are the result of adhering to a universally accepted, value-free, and objective methodology. This not only implies that truth results from an adherence to objectivity, but also reveals the foundationalist assumption that all true knowledge rests on a few unquestionable beliefs.

According to Hoffman (1995) two new approaches to the process of knowing became dominant during the modern period – empiricism and reason or logic. He describes it as follows:

> Two new approaches to knowing became dominant in the modern period. The first was empiricism (knowing through the senses) which gradually evolved into scientific empiricism or modern science with the development of modernist methodology.

The second epistemological approach of this period was reason or logic. Often, science and reason were collaboratively or in conjunction with each other (http://www.postmodernpsychology.com).

O'Donnell (2003:22) states that along with the triumph of reason came the repression of all that is imaginative, the poetic, the symbolic and even the ethical at times. The world as a place of wonder as it was seen in ancient times was no more. Materialism changed all of that – everything was now seen as a commodity and subsequently pollution and global warming became the order of the day.

As sources of authority during modernism, Hoffman (2005) mentions that the church and also politics (governments and kings) were losing the power it enjoyed during premodernism, and this role was taken over by universities represented by scholars and professors. Although not as dominant as before, a religious perspective was sometimes integrated into the modern sources of authority (http://www.postmodernpsychology.com).

1.5.3 Past the era of modernism: Postmodernism

The 1950s are commonly considered as the time when the transition from modernism to postmodernism started to occur according to Hoffman (2005) (http://www.postmodernpsychology.com). Another paradigm shift has occurred, this time from modernism to postmodernism. Müller et al., (2002:18) states that we are still experiencing such a paradigm shift. More and more people became disillusioned with man and his capabilities (Müller et al., 2002:19), thus opening the door of change and stepping into the so-called "postmodern era" (Mills & Sprenkle 1995:368). Yet, as a result of this ongoing paradigm shift, we are experiencing great uncertainty and instability (Du Toit 2000:56).

The only certainty is probably that of uncertainty itself. Characteristic of this postmodern era is "… shifting values and an increasing respect for personal meaning." (Mills et al., 1995:368). Postmodernism has its roots in the French school of literary criticism known as "deconstruction" (Erickson 1998:18), and influences all spheres of life – as can be seen in new architectural designs and even in literature. When we deconstruct certain discourses, we listen to what is not said (Drewery & Winslade 1997:43).

Burr (1995:12) describes postmodernism as follows:

> Postmodernism as an intellectual movement has its centre of gravity not in the social sciences but in art and architecture, literature and cultural studies. It represents a questioning of and rejection of the fundamental assumptions of modernism, the intellectual movement which preceded it (and exists alongside it, generating much argument and debate) and which in many ways embodies the assumptions underlying intellectual and artistic life that have been around since the Enlightenment, ..

O'Donnell (2003:6) is adamant that postmodernism must be seen against the background of modernism. Janse van Rensburg (2002:39-44) concurs by saying to understand modernism means that one will be able to understand postmodernism's reaction against it. Pieterse (2002:79) prefers to refer to 'reflexive mordernity'.

He (Pieterse 2002:78-79) is also in agreement with O'Donnell (2003) and Janse van Rensburg (2002) in that he makes it pertinent that modernism still has an active influence on our natural science research as well as on our Western way of doing things, and even on our economic systems. Modernism is therefore also represented in the perspectives many developed people of our time still choose to adhere to.

Hoffman (2005) states that postmodernism brought along a questioning of previous approaches to knowing, namely premodernism and modernism. Postmodernism also advocates epistemological pluralism which utilises multiple ways of knowing. These multiple ways of knowing can even include premodern ways, such as revelation, and also modern ways, such as science and reason, along with other ways of knowing such as intuition, relational, and spiritual. Pieterse (2002:83) adds that truth can be discovered in communication, relational, in relationships and in the interaction between insight, knowledge and the experience of people in relation to each other.

Therefore, according to this paradigm, reality is seen as "… a product of individually unique human processing." (Mills et al., 1995:369). The objectivity of knowledge is denied and knowledge is seen as uncertain, thus calling into question the scientific method as objective method of inquiry (Erickson 1998:19). On this journey I am about to undertake, it is especially this respect for personal meaning I would like to take with me. In doing so I hope to enable myself to listen to my co-researchers' (Müller, van Deventer & Human 2002:2) stories, focussing on what they make of their own stories and not meanings I might infer on their stories.

According to O'Donnell (2003:29), postmodernism is furthermore concerned with discourses that "… have been marginalised and atrophied under the influence of the Enlightenment. To explore the postmodern is to explore ourselves again and to link up with a partially forgotten past".

O'Donnell (2003:29) further refers to the belief that all human knowledge is limited and what he calls 'culturally conditioned', meaning that each age or generation thinks a certain way, it is part of humanity. As a result of this, O'Donnell (2003:29) proposes that there is no way to escape language or to stand outside the discourses of one's age in an attempt to get at a pure, raw truth. Moss (2007:243) describes discourses referred to by O'Donnell (2003) in the following manner:

By discourse I refer to ways of naming things and talking about them. Dominant discourses – what Foucault refers to as 'regimes of truth' – exercise a decisive influence on specific practices by determining some things to be self-evident and realistic and rendering subjective perspectives into apparently objective truths. In doing so, they exclude other ways of understanding and interpreting the world. Discourses are constituted within paradigms, and share the ideas and beliefs of the paradigm.

A concept closely related to that of discourses, is 'deconstruction'. Derrida coined the concept (O'Donnell 2003:58) to refer to the critical analysis of discourses as it is found in society. It is a way of looking at a discourse in the hope of finding that which had an influence on it, contradictions and other elements within the particular discourse that might point the way of looking at the discourse in a different light. O'Donnell (2003:58) discusses deconstruction and the misconception that sometimes accompanies it as follows:

> Deconstruction is often misconstrued as sceptical and destructive, like tearing down an edifice for the sheer fun of it. Derrida toyed with the little used French verb '*deconstruire*', meaning 'to dissemble a machine' (with the corollary that it can be reassembled).

> The noun 'deconstruction' is used for rearranging the grammar of words. Hence for Derrida, deconstruction is positive. It shakes, subverts, dismays, but it only pulls apart to allow new things to be built, new meaning to be reached. It is a remedy for closed thinking.

Erickson (2001:132) however notes that deconstruction has its limitations as well. He states that:

There are limits to deconstruction. Although all other views are proper targets of deconstruction, deconstruction itself is not. Nor is justice, which is the basis of and driving force behind Derrida's deconstructive endeavour.

In relation to discourses and the deconstruction thereof, Erickson (2001:133-149) says that Foucault was of the opinion that reality cannot be described by discourse, but rather that reality is construed by discourse. According to Foucault, power is employed to control communities.

This power is not created by knowledge, but rather power creates knowledge by explaining what can be viewed as the truth. To change this accepted truth, it is of no use to try and do so through the use of intellectual arguments. In order to do so, rather try to change the political situation, which puts the truth forward (Erickson 2001:133-149).

Apartheid in South Africa and the power it had over the discourses in society (different races are not equal) is a good example of how changing the political situation in the country helped to change people's perceptions and 'truths' about themselves and about others.

Discourses such as HIV and Aids and poverty played an important role in this research process. These discourses are deconstructed in chapter 3 in an attempt to give meaning to the life stories of my 'co-researchers', and empower them.

1.6 SOCIAL ARCHITECTS AT WORK: SOCIAL-CONSTRUCTIONISM AND POSTFOUNDATIONALISM

1.6.1 Constructing the world socially

> Every stream has its source
>
> - Zulu Proverb -

Social-constructionism was used as a vehicle on this journey. The post-modern paradigm is also sometimes referred to as the social-constructionist paradigm (Müller et al., 2002:2). Characteristic of the post-modern era is its "… shifting values and an increasing respect for personal meaning" (Mills et al., 1995:368).

In light of this, reality is thus seen as "… a product of individually unique human processing." (Mills et al., 1995:396). Knowledge therefore, "… cannot be a reflection of a given reality, but is the construction of a world." (Popp-Baier 2002:41). Social-constructionism consequently questions the idea of the 'objective fact' and chooses rather to put the focus on the different meanings with which our world becomes invested (Burr 1998:13). Mills et al., (1995:370) go further by describing reality as a product of relationships with other people, a description which coincides with the view in post-modern philosophy that knowledge is dependant on language, social practices and social relationships (Popp-Baier 2002:42). This links up with the Zulu concept of *ubuntu*, which means that a person is only a person through other people (Landman 2002:270).

In this way – as Mills et al., (1995:370) refer to it – social-constructionism is grounded in a "philosophy of community." In doing so the researcher now forms part of the community and as such "… participates in the social construction of new realities …" (Mills et al., 1995:370) for their co-researchers.

This opens up as Gergen (1999:vi) says "… unparalleled opportunities for creative deliberation and action … invite us into new spaces of understanding from which a more promising world can emerge".

The theoretical or paradigmatic point of departure of this research has been broadened, to not only situate the research within social-constructionism, and the narrative approach, as was indicated in the research proposal, but also within postfoundationalism as proposed by Van Huyssteen (1997).

1.6.2 Knowing what we know now: Looking back at foundationalism

With this epistemological option grounded in theology, Van Huyssteen (1997) tries to balance the scale between foundationalism on the one side and nonfoundationalism (or anti-foundationalism) on the other side. Müller (2009a:202) describes the foundationalism related to the modernistic paradigm as follows:

> The foundationalist approach takes it for granted that absolute truth is available to all of us. This would be a perspective faithful to the true foundation and which therefore would provide us with the "God's eye view". A theory built on such a presumption could be referred to as a "universal rationality". This is a rationality that is based on the idea of a universe of knowledge that functions as an overarching frame of reference. Accordingly there is only one theoretical truth and that must be pursued.
>
> Such an epistemological position can easily lead to an overestimation of one's own discipline and its possibilities. Scholars tend to take the rationalities of their own disciplines for granted. It seems to be quite natural to use your own expert knowledge as the unquestioned starting point and then to engage the other rationalities from there.

Seen from an epistemological viewpoint, the foundationalist approach proposes that a certain position would be held in an inflexible and infallible manner, thus ultimate foundations are constructed on which convictional beliefs are based (Van Huyssteen 1997:3). In light of this, Müller (2009a:202) says that interdisciplinary work by means of foundationalism is made difficult, because "… it leads to a process of assimilation, through which the other's point of view is integrated into one's own domain of knowledge". A unified perspective becomes the ideal of this approach, aiming at a universal rationality (Müller 2009a:202).

1.6.3 Like Lot's wife: Glancing back at nonfoundationalism

Ultimately, foundationalism and its aim of a universal rationality became rejected in favour of nonfoundationalism (Van Huyssteen 1997:3) on the other end of the spectrum. Nonfoundationalism (or anti-foundationalism) stems from the postmodern paradigm. This paradigm (at least some versions thereof) holds true that there is no absolute or universal truth. All truths are claimed to be relative. Nonfoundationalism therefore denies allegations that belief systems might be grounded by strong foundations (Van Huyssteen 1997:3). Müller (2009a:203) describes the interplay between foundationalism and nonfoundationalism or the diverse perspective as follows:

> Where the previous approach works with the idea of a universal position that provides the answer to all problems, this approach takes it for granted that foundations or fundamentals don't exist and that we only have a diversity of opinions.

> The non- or anti-foundational position makes the interdisciplinary discussion even more difficult, because there is scepticism about any effort to create mutual understanding.

Understanding or knowledge according to this approach is always diverse. More tolerance with interdisciplinary differences can be expected here, but constructive discussions are difficult in a situation where everything is relative and subjected.

The context and community are emphasised in nonfoundationalism in such a way as to propose that every context and every community has its own rationality. In doing so, the possibility for interdisciplinary conversation is denied (Van Huyssteen 1997:3). Interdisciplinary conversation therefore becomes increasingly difficult to achieve in both foundationalism and nonfoundationalism.

1.6.4   Third time lucky: Postfoundationalism as a third way

Müller (2004:4) describes postfoundationalism as a 'third way' in response to the so-called objectivity of foundationalism and also in response to the extreme relativism of nonfoundationalism. It is seen as a way out of the 'stuckness' of modernism, as well as moving away from the fatalism of some postmodern approaches.

Van Huyssteen (1997:228) brings postfoundationalism and theology together and describes the relationship between the two and the subsequent relationship between theology and other sciences as follows:

> In a postfoundationalist theology the epistemological link between theology and the other sciences can be left open because the project of theological methodology and 'prolegomena' now becomes part of theological reflection as such, that is, as part of an ongoing interdisciplinary inquiry within the practice of theology itself.

In an article on early childhood education, Moss (2007) speaks about discourses that fall within different paradigms such as modernity and postfoundationalism and how this creates what he coins a 'paradigmatic divide' between the discourses in early childhood education. With reference to postfoundationalism and its relationship with modernity or foundationalism, Moss (2007:231) states that:

> This paradigm challenges the basic tenets, or foundations, after paradigms of regulatory modernity: the stable and coherent self, the transparency of language, the rationality of humans, the ability of reason to overcome conflicts between truth, power and knowledge and that freedom involves obeying rational laws.

Describing the positive aspects of postfoundationalism, Moss (2007:237) goes on to say that it does not only lead to abstract concepts and theories and criticism of what already exists, more importantly it can also be applied. In both policy and practice it therefore becomes worthy of serious attention. Regarding postfoundationalism's attitude towards science, Moss (2007:240) also states that:

> Postfoundationalism does not reject scientific attitudes and methods, instrumental reason and value neutral objectivity – no more than it rejects the opus of child development – but rather treats them as claims, not truth; partial and specific to particular discourses.

Regarding the relationship between postfoundationalism and modernistic science, St Pierre & Pillow (2000:3) in Moss (2007:240) concur with the statement above:

> … for instance, to question foundationalism does not mean giving way to disappear, paralysis, nihilism, apoliticism or irresponsibility, but instead opens up to possibilities for different worlds that might, perhaps, not be so cruel to so many people…

Comparing postfoundationalism with nonfoundationalism, St Pierre & Pillow 2000:5 in Moss (2007:240) come to the following conclusion:

> … postfoundationalism (does not) mean surrendering to an 'anything goes' relativism. Quite the contrary, discussions of what might be termed postfoundational ethics – … – place much greater ethical responsibility on each of us to make contextualised judgements and not to fall back on blanket moral codes. For if there is no absolute truth to which every instance can be compared for its truth-value, if truth is in the multiple and contextual, then the call for ethical practice shifts from grand, sweeping statements about truth and justice to engagement with specific, complex problems that do not have generalizable solutions.

Although from the discussion above, postfoundationalism seems like an ideal paradigm to depart from, Moss (2007:238) however cautions that postfoundational work tends to be difficult to comprehend. Another critique against postfoundationalism comes from Mark Bevir also a postfoundationalist. In an interview with Mark Bevir regarding his take on postfoundationalism, Stow (2005:194) quotes Bevir as saying:

> … well, I think that postfoundationalism entails, more than anything else, a rejection of epistemic foundations. That is, it entails a rejection of the belief that there are pure experiences or a pure reason that could provide our knowledge with a guarantee of truth or certainty. I'm exactly that sort of epistemological postfoundationalist…

> However, while I am an epistemological postfoundationalist, I don't see this postfoundationalism as leading to the views about human subjectivity and the nature of mind that are associated with poststructuralists.

Continuing his critique, Bevir talks about the relationship between the individual and discourse, as he understands and believes it to be (Stow 2005:194):

> In particular I am not at all convinced that being an epistemological postfoundationalist requires you to see the individual – the human subject – as wholly constructed by discourse. I accept that postfoundationalism implies the self is not autonomous, where the autonomous view of the self is that the self can reach beliefs or perform actions wholly owned influenced by society or context.

Without referring to it as such, Bevir uses the idea of social-constructionism, that reality is socially constructed, as he further explores the role of the individual and discourse in creating meaning:

> Epistemological postfoundationalism asserts that we cannot have pure reason or pure experiences, which surely means we cannot reach beliefs solely by ourselves, which, in turn, undercuts this concept of autonomy. However, to reject the autonomous view of the self is not necessary to see the self simply as the construct of discourse. There is a middle position available to us. We can take the self to be an agent. Agencies should be understood, in this context, in terms of the ability to modify or transform those believes that we inherit from society – the discourses we find in society – and to do so for reasons of our own. To ascribe to the self this ability to transform an inheritance – a social discourse, if you like – is not in any way to presuppose autonomy.

This section dealt with the interplay between social-constructionism, as a way of making sense of the world around us, and postfoundationalism as a possible 'third way' of making sense of the world. In order to understand postfoundationalism as a third way it was compared to foundationalism as well as nonfoundationalism.

1.7 CUTTING EDGE: TRANSVERSAL RATIONALITY

Schrag, Van Huyssteen and others propose the notion of 'transversal rationality" as part of postfoundationalism. To better understand what is meant by transversal rationality, we shall start by looking at and explaining the concept itself before moving on to the application thereof.

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary) the word 'transversal' refers to "a line that intersects a system of lines". The origin of the word stems from the Latin word *transversus*. It can either be used as a noun or as an adjective (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary). This modernistic dictionary definition of the word 'transversal', also explains the use of the concept in mathematics, as a line that "…intersect two or more lines or surfaces without achieving coincidence" (Schrag 1992:148).

Different disciplines or approaches, like mathematics, make use of the concept of transversality. Schrag (1992:149) explains transversality as follows:

> The use of the concept/metaphor of transversality in all of these approaches exhibits interrelated senses of lying across, extending over, intersecting, meeting and converging, without achieving coincidence. By way of complex manoeuvres of borrowing and conjugation, metaphorical play and reconfiguration, the various disciplines make use of these interrelated senses ensconced with transversality.

The word 'rationality' refers to "the quality or state of being rational". Stated differently this refers to "the quality or state of being agreeable to reason: reasonableness (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary).

If used as an adjective in conjunction with the word 'rationality', 'transversal' would then refer to a specific type of rationality or reasonableness. This type of rationality refers to the interdisciplinary discourse that is currently gaining momentum in the academics. Van Huyssteen (2006:9) explains this interdisciplinary discourse as follows:

> Interdisciplinary discourse, then, is the attempt to bring together disciplines or reasoning strategies that may have widely differing points of reference, different epistemological foci, and different experiential resources.

In doing so and bringing together different disciplines, sometimes even representing different reasoning strategies, "…different but equally legitimate ways of looking at issues of disciplines" are identified (Van Huyssteen 2000:429).

Transversality or interdisciplinary discourse proposes that different disciplines converse with each other in a respectful manner, in an attempt to learn from each other, and in the process gain a better understanding of the issue under discussion. By engaging in interdisciplinary conversation it becomes possible to identify "…possible points of consonance, but also possible points of difference between widely divergent reasoning strategies" (Van Huyssteen 1999:7).

Transversality is therefore not aimed at substantiating the claims of one's own discipline but rather to bring in more than just your own and your discipline's voice, by inviting other disciplines to converse as well. At times, these other disciplines might voice concerns regarding the issue at hand similar to your own concerns, but sometimes these concerns aired by other disciplines will differ from that of yourself. It is an attempt to bring together all the different disciplines' perspectives and listen and learn from them all. This is important in postfoundationalism if any form of interdisciplinary rationality is to be credibly achieved (Van Huyssteen 1999:3).

Bringing this in context with theology, Van Huyssteen (2000:236) states that the "… wide reflective equilibrium between science and theology is the shared rationality between us all". As "… a postfoundationalist theology … fully acknowledges contextuality, the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience..." (Van Huyssteen 1997:4), our context plays a crucial role in our understanding of the world. Van Huyssteen (2006:24) explains it as "… our irrevocable contextuality and the indebtedness of all belief and action in networks of social and cultural traditions, belief, meaning, and action arise out of our embedded life worlds". We as "… embodied persons, and not abstract beliefs..." (Van Huyssteen 2006:10) is therefore central to the construction of this rationality. This is because as humans, "… as rational agents, (we) are thus always socially and contextually embedded" (Van Huyssteen 2006:10).

Important characteristics or features of transversality, are "… the dynamics of consciousness, the interweaving of many voices, the interplay of social practices …". (Van Huyssteen 2006:19). These characteristics are expressed in a metaphor, and as also noted by Schrag (1992:149), refer to "… a sense of transition, lying across, extending over, intersecting, meeting and conveying without becoming identical" (Van Huyssteen 2006:19). In his argument for transversal rationality, Van Huyssteen (2006:21) refers to the work of Schrag and states that consciousness and self-awareness that form part of transversality become unified in the experience of self-presence; wherein different past experiences becomes transversally integrated as we reach out to others in an attempt to better understand. Van Huyssteen (2006:21) says that:

> Talk about the human subject is now revisioned by resituating the human subject in the space of communicative praxis. Thus the notion of transversal rationality opens up the possibility to focus on patterns of discourse and action as they happen in our communicative practices, rather than focusing only on the structure of the self, ego, all subject.

Interdisciplinary conversations between different disciplines therefore become justified and transversal rationality urges for the acknowledgement of many patterns of interpretation, one's sense of knowing moves across disciplinary and different reasoning strategies' borders (Van Huyssteen 2000:430).

Along with acknowledging of contextuality, postfoudational theology also "… claims to point creatively beyond the confines of the local community, group or culture …" (Van Huyssteen 1997:4). Epistemological postfoundationalism helps us, despite the strong beliefs, and maybe even prejudices we are bound to tag along to any interdisciplinary conversation, to

> … identify the shared resources of human rationality in different modes of knowledge and then to reach beyond the boundaries of our own traditional communities in cross-disciplinary conversation (Van Huyssteen 2000:430).

In doing so, it becomes possible to develop alternative interpretations that point beyond the local community (Müller 2005:82) and even beyond the specific contextualised issue under discussion.

In chapter 5 of this thesis, transversal rationality will be employed by engaging different people from different disciplines to bring together their understanding of the issue of HIV and Aids orphans' bereavement as it is embedded in the field of their specific discipline. The two co-researchers that are self acknowledged HIV and Aids orphans – Dee and Zee's – stories will be used as the point of discussion. Different disciplines took part in this interdisciplinary conversations in an attempt to identify and discuss these two co-researchers' concerns regarding their life stories. Disciplines that partook in this conversation or indaba, include – theology itself, represented by three theologians other than myself, psychology, social work, anthropology, information science as well as the perspective of a life coach.

1.8   THE COLOUR OF RESEARCH: WHAT IS RESEARCH?

In preceding sections of chapter 1, we have looked at factors that influence a research journey like this. We have looked at how we as postfoundational practical theologians see and approach knowledge, especially in a narrative way.   I attempted to ground this view within social-constructionism as an overarching paradigm to the research, and we have looked at the growing interest and importance of transversal rationality within the research process.

In this section, we need to address the issue of research itself as it is situated within these paradigms and how and where we get our data. It is important to state it here at this stage of the research in order to put the research process in context for the reader. We begin by looking at the broad discourse of social science within which this research process is situated, before turning our attention to a short comparison between quantitative and qualitative research and finally addressing narrative research as it is applied in this research.

1.8.1   What is social research?

In the process of describing the discourse of research, let us follow the example of Leedy and Ormrod (2005) and divert from the expected way of describing research – albeit just for a short while – to start by looking at what research is not. Even in doing so, one gets an idea of what research is, by simply getting to know what research is not. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:1-7) says regarding this that:

1.   Research is not mere information gathering
2.   Research is not mere transportation of facts from one location to another
3.   Research is not merely rummaging for information
4.   Research is not a catchword used to get attention

However, they also go on to describe research as:

"Research is a systematic process of collecting, analyzing and interpretation of information (data) in order to increase our understanding of the phenomenon about which we are interested or concerned". (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:2).

They (Leedy & Ormrod (2005:2) go on to state that:

1. Research originates
2. Research requires clear articulation of a goal
3. Research requires a specific plan for proceeding
4. Research usually divides the principal problem into more manageable sub-problems
5. Research is guided by the specific research problem, question or hypothesis
6. Research accepts certain critical assumptions
7. Research requires the collection and interpretation of data in an attempt to resolve the problem that initiated the research
8. Research is by nature, cyclinical or, more exactly, helical

The last point, that of research being cyclinical or helical, is an interesting statement. They ground this statement further by saying that:

"Research is rarely conclusive. In a truer sense, the research cycle might be more accurately conceived of as a *helix*, or spiral, of research. In exploring an area, one comes across additional problems that need resolving, and so the process must begin anew. Research begets more research". (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:6).

In my opinion, this idea of the research cycle as being cyclinical or helical, links very well with the seven movements in postfoundational practical theology (PFPT), as specific to this research process that will be explained below in section 1.9. As Leedy & Ormrod (2005:6) explain further:

"To view research in this way is to invest it with a dynamic quality that is its true nature – a far cry from the conventional view, which sees research as a one-time act that is static, self-contained, an end in itself".

Regarding social research specifically, Neuman (1997) who is seen as authoritative in the field of social research, and still widely used in various social science courses in research, states that:

… research is a way of going about finding answers to questions. Social research is a type of research conducted by sociologists, social scientists, and others to seek answers to questions about the social world (Neuman 1997:1).

In looking for answers concerning questions about the social world, Holliday (2007:2) cautions that social research is a complex area and attempts to divide it in categories will lead to oversimplification thereof and this reminds of a modernistic approach to research, which we as postmodern social researchers should aim to avoid at all costs. Holliday (2007:4) continues to describe research in terms of:

… human relationships and invokes the need to discover as much about how research subjects feel about the information they provide as about the information itself. Indeed, the people about whom the research is carried out are less 'subjects' than just people who happen to be in the research setting.

If it is true that research begets more research, (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:6) it is understandable that "… genuine research yields as many problems as it resolves". (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:7). True, probably more so for social research than any other kind of research, because in social research we aim to measure insubstantial phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:22) by looking into human relationships, whether we use deductive or inductive reasoning and logic to achieve this.

Deductive logic can be described as:

> **Deductive logic** begins with one or more *premises*. These premises are statements or assumptions that are self-evident and widely accepted 'truths'. Reasoning then proceeds logically from these premises toward conclusions that must also be true (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:31).

Whereas inductive logic which will be applied in this research process:

> … begins, not with a pre-established truth or assumption, but with an observation. …In **inductive reasoning**, people use specific instances or occurrences to draw conclusions about entire classes of objects or events (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:32).

Research and in our case, social research is therefore seen as a collection of methods people systematically use in order to produce knowledge. This in itself is a process of discovery and requires persistence, personal integrity, tolerance for ambiguity, interaction with others, and pride in doing quality work (Neuman 1997:2). I sincerely hope that these important characteristics of a good researcher mentioned above come to the fore regarding myself as a postmodern social researcher working in the field of practical theology in this research process.

1.8.2 Quantitative versus qualitative research

Holliday (2007:5) refers to quantitative and qualitative research as: "… two paradigms of research", where 'paradigms' refer to the whole way of thinking about something. He further suggests that quantitative and qualitative research represent very different ways of thinking about the world (Holliday 2007:5).

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:95) agree with the proposition above by Holliday in saying that "... quantitative and qualitative research designs are appropriate for answering different kinds of questions".

Holliday (2007:1-2) therefore states that:

> It is fairly standard to introduce qualitative research by distinguishing it from quantitative research. This is an unadventurous way to begin, but necessary because when asked 'What is research?' most people refer to the more familiar, traditional quantitative research. Also, it is often argued that a major binding feature of qualitative research is its opposition to positivism, the philosophical basis for quantitative research.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:94) agree with Holliday in that positivism forms the philosophical basis for quantitative research, sometimes also refer to as traditional research, because as he puts it:

> In general, **quantitative research** is used to answer questions about relationships' measured variables with the purpose of explaining, predicting, and controlling phenomena. This approach is sometimes called the *traditional*, *experimental*, or *positivistic* approach.

In line with their positivistic approach to research, quantitative researchers mostly begin with a specific hypothesis to be tested. They do this by isolating the variables they want to study, while at the same time controlling for extraneous variables and using a standardized procedure to collect some form of numerical data. To analyse and draw conclusions from the data they use statistical procedures. Therefore, a quantitative study usually ends with confirmation or disconfirmation of the hypothesis that was tested (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:94).

On the other side of the research fence, on the side of qualitative research however, researchers often start with general research questions rather than specific hypotheses. They set out to collect an extensive amount of verbal data from a small number of participants and then organise this data into some coherent form and use verbal descriptions to describe and explain these situations they have researched. Therefore, qualitative research is typically attempting to answer questions related to the complex nature of phenomena, more often than not aiming at describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants' point of view. In light of this, the qualitative approach is sometimes also referred to as the interpretative, constructivist or post-positivist approach (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:94).

Different qualitative approaches all focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings or in other words the real world. Furthermore, they study these phenomena in all its complexity. Qualitative researchers rarely aim to simplify the phenomena they are observing. They recognise and acknowledge that the phenomena are multi-layered and attempt to portray it in all its dimensions (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:133). Therefore, a good qualitative researcher, needs to be able to interpret and make sense of what he or she observes during the research process as this is seen as critical for understanding any social phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:133). Leedy and Ormrod (2005:133) go on to say that in this sense "… the researcher is an instrument in much the same way that a sociogram, rating scale, or intelligence test is an instrument".

Holliday (2007:5) agrees with Leedy and Ormrod's (2005:133) notion that qualitative research tends to focus on phenomena as it occurs in the real world in stating:

> It is these qualitative areas in social life – the backgrounds, interests and broader social perceptions that defy quantitative research – that qualitative research addresses. Qualitative research does not pretend to solve the problems of quantitative research, but does not see them as constraints.

These studies concerned with real life phenomena, are open ended and "… set up research opportunities designed to lead the researcher into unforeseen areas of discovery in the lives of the people she is investigating" (Holliday 2007:5). The behaviour in specific social settings, as opposed to broad populations therefore warrants the researcher's attention (Holliday 2007:5). Working in specific 'local' social settings (see section 1.9) with specific individuals or groups of individuals, moves some qualitative researchers to believe that

> … there isn't necessarily a single, ultimate truth to be discovered. Instead, there may be multiple perspectives held by different individuals, where each of these perspectives has an equal validity, or truth. One goal of a quality study, then, might be to reveal the nature of these multiple perspectives (Leedy and Ormrod 2005:133).

By entertaining the notion of multiple perspectives, qualitative research invites the unexpected according to Holliday (2007:8). Every research design will ultimately be different as decisions about research instruments are made in response to the nature of the specific social setting being researched (Holliday 2007:8).

Agreeing with Leedy and Ormrod (2005:133) that there isn't necessarily a single, ultimate truth to be discovered, Holliday (2007:19) says that:

> So, whereas naturalists believe that a meaningful social worlds can be discovered by 'being there', postmodernists 'argue that there is no "there" until it has been constructed'. Every act of "seeing" or "saying" is unavoidably conditioned by cultural, institutional, and interactional contingencies.

Therefore, '(t)he postmodern break from naturalism does enable a greater variety in procedure and scope, .." (Holliday 2007:20) that simply means that the researcher has the opportunity to present the data in a more creative, colourful way, while at the same time being more open about who the researcher is and how she "… spins validity through argument". (Holliday 2007:20).

To acknowledge and be open about the researcher herself as part of the research, addresses the fact that postmodern qualitative researchers "… portray people as constructing the social world…" and as a person, a researcher also contributes to the construction of the social world through their interpretation thereof (Holliday 2007:19). Qualitative researchers do not stand on the periphery of the real world and that which occurs in it, but form part of it, through not only their interpretation thereof, but also their participation therein. Therefore, and with this we end this section, Holliday (20057:20) reminds us that:

> … qualitative researchers must never forget to approach their own actions as strangers, holding up everything for scrutiny, accounting for every action – and seeing how they speak and write what they have done is integral to the whole.

1.8.3 Tell me the (research) story: Narrative research

Everywhere you look and listen, there is a story or more to be found. For the interested narrative researcher, research stories are also in abundance. Narrative research constitutes the gathering of these research stories, the exploration (re-telling) thereof and the re-envisioning of it. The marginalised psycho-spiritual bereavement needs of HIV and Aids orphans and other vulnerable adolescents, is one such research story that warrants a narrative investigation.

According to Patton (2002:115-116)

> … people's stories as data can stand on their own as pure description of experience, worthy as narrative documentary *experience* (the core of phenomenology) or analysed for connections between the psychological, social logical, cultural, political, and dramatic lamingtons of human experience.

As Kotzé & Kotzé (2001:9) state it in reference to participatory action research which also forms the basis of this research process, research should "…primarily be to the advantage of the participants". Patton (2002:115) states that a narrative analysis of research should therefore seek to find what the research narrative reveals about the person as well as of the world in which it exists, because "(n)arrative studies are also influenced by phenomenology's emphasis on understanding lived experience and perceptions of this experience". (Patton 2002:115).

In addition, the researcher's own story becomes part of the enquiry into a specific phenomenon of interest because, as Patton (2002:116) states "… stories and narratives offer especially translucent windows into cultural and social meanings".

Bringing in one's own story as researcher into the narrative research process, brings about a certain relationship between the researcher herself, the research and the research participants. Therefore, Müller, van Deventer & Human (2002:2) prefer to refer to the research participants as 'co-researchers', as they are also actively involved in the research process by not only reconstructing their own narratives relevant to the research, but also helping to construct the research narrative itself as it will be presented in the dissemination thereof.

This research therefore attempted to reflect this "… participatory interaction …" among all the people involved, where the researcher embodied the dialectics between the perspectives of the "insider" and "outsider" (Müller et al., 2002:2). The adolescents become the storytellers of their own life stories, because they are the experts on their own lives (Müller 2000:56) and we, the researchers, formed part of an interested and involved audience to these stories as they evolved and took shape.

In other – one could say more modernistic – approaches the researcher tries to be an observer and to be objective about what he/she is observing, while the narrative researcher has subjective integrity in mind and sees the action as participatory (Müller et al., 2002:2). The researcher herself is therefore neither completely an outsider by being an observer, nor is she an insider who is fully involved in the process.

Instead, researchers are interested participants in a part of the process, who want to "be faithful to the story as told by the research participants giving voice to their lived experience" (Freedman & Combs 1996:21). Becoming involved in the co-researchers lives and contexts wherein they live out their stories, means that the research data obtained is more localised as it pertains more to a specific situation, and context (Müller & Schoeman 2004:12).

In order to maintain subjective integrity, it is important to remember that the researcher's aim is not to bring about change (Müller et al., 2002:2). For some this could be a shocking revelation, since we as humans are constantly bombarded with change. Instead, as researchers we have to be involved listeners and let the research story speak for itself as it develops through the research process, since social-constructionism forms the basis of all narrative research. As researchers we take on a not-knowing position (Müller 2002:2), by listening to what is told to us and asking questions to better understand, without presuming we know what is important elements to the stories, but rather relying on the co-researchers and the research story itself to give us an indication.

To enable and promote this emancipation of not only the life stories of the co-researchers, but also of the greater research story itself, it is important to aim at asking deconstructive questions about the discourses that emerge as these stories unfold. According to social-constructionism as described by Freedman and Combs (1996:1-41), the community plays a pivotal role in the construction of knowledge as experienced by the group members.

The knowledge of importance that this research aims to study is the knowledge of the ten adolescent co-researchers chosen from the NGO PEN in the inner city of Pretoria. They are all bereaved adolescents. Some have experienced multiple losses in their short lives. Some have lost family members acting as care givers to them. Others lost a parent – either a mother or father or both. Some might have even lost their parent or care giver due to HIV and Aids infection. These ten bereft adolescents participated in two consecutive *Tree of Life* (TOL) camps (refer to section 2.4) and consequently they formed a new community in the small. What they shared was the experience of losing someone close to them and that experience having an impact on the rest of their lives, yet each individual adolescent's story of loss is unique and with different nuances. In doing narrative research, the focus falls on these lived experiences of these ten adolescents.

1.9   STRUCTURING THE RESEARCH STORY: RESEARCH DESIGN

Marshall and Rossman (2006:58) are of the opinion that "(o)ne purpose of the research design section is to demonstrate that the researcher is capable of conducting qualitative research". The paradigm that informs the research, in this case postfoundational practical theology, affects the researcher's role and position in the research (Marshall & Rossman 2006:72).

Postmodern paradigms also postfoundational practical theology "…assumes that all knowledge is political and that researchers are not neutral since their ultimate purposes include advocacy and action". (Marshall & Rossman 2006:72). Reflecting on one's identity and one's sense of voice and perspectives as a researcher as well as considering assumptions and sensitivities are therefore important to understand the researcher's choice of questions and of the researcher's role (Marshall & Rossman 2006:58).

Together with postfoundational practical theology, the narrative approach works from the perspective of qualitative research and a social-constructionist methodology. This approach has been explored in an article by Müller, Van Deventer and Human (2001) and forms the basis for this research. This article also forms part of a growing international school of thought on research methodology.

Also referring to the narrative approach, White and Epston (1990:35) state that:

> it has been demonstrated that independent knowledge can exist in a community and be passed on by other means, (than writing) including through the art of storytelling and through the medium of song and dance.

The main aim of this research and research report therefore is to employ this independent knowledge and the adolescents' unique stories to come a holistic understanding of the stories of these adolescent AIDS orphans as well as other vulnerable adolescents in the HIV and Aids minefield about their parental bereavement and psycho-spiritual needs in light of this bereavement.

As for the research design of this study, a practical theological research process consisting of seven movements as developed and refined by Müller (cf 2004, 2005, 2009) strengthened the basis of the research. These seven movements are based on the concepts of postfoundationalist theology of Wentzel van Huyssteen (1997:4).

Müller (2004:300) uses van Huyssteen's (1997:4) description and summary of Postfoundational Theology and re-phrases it in order to develop a practical theological research process, consisting of seven movements. The table below, reproduced from Müller's (2004:300) article, explains how he achieved this:

POSTFOUNDATIONALIST THEOLOGY	POSTFOUNDATIONALIST PRACTICAL THEOLOGY
… **a postfoundationalist theology** wants to make **two moves**. First, it fully acknowledges **contextuality**, the epistemically crucial role of **interpreted experience**, and the way that **tradition** shapes the epistemic and nonepistemic **values** that inform our reflection about God and what some of us believe to be **God's presence** in this world. At the same time, however, a postfoundationalist notion of rationality in theological reflection claims to **point creatively beyond the confines of the local** community, group, or culture towards a plausible form of **interdisciplinary conversation**. (van Huyssteen 1997:4) (Phrases in bold J Müller's emphasis)	**The context & interpreted experience** 1. A specific context is described. 2. In-context experiences are listened to and described. 3. Interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with 'co-researchers'. **Traditions of interpretation** 4. A description of experiences as it is continually informed by traditions of interpretation. **God's presence** 5. A reflection on God's presence, as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation. **Thickened through interdisciplinary investigation** 6. A description of experience, thickened through interdisciplinary investigation. **Point beyond the local community** 7. The development of alternative interpretations that point beyond the local community.

The research took place in two phases. The greater Departmental research project was launched during the first phase. Three different NGOs (Heartbeat, Hospivision and PEN) collaborated with the Department in the research. Field workers from the different organisations were used to collect data through one-to-one interviewing (Greeff 2005:286-299) with selected adolescents involved with these organisations. Since this study involved human participants, ethical clearance for the research was applied for and received by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria before the study commenced.

The inclusion criteria for participation in this first phase of the research was that the interviewees had to be adolescents (12-19 years), identified as an AIDS orphan (maternal or paternal) and who lost their parent(s) in the two years preceding the research project. This first phase of the research formed a backdrop to my own research for my PhD thesis. The scope of my own research and the *Tree of Life* (TOL) camps that were held as part of my research has been broadened to not only focus specifically on adolescents orphaned by HIV and Aids but also on the stories of otherwise orphaned as well as vulnerable adolescents.

This was done due to the fact that although care workers from the NGOs would sometimes suspects that the parent(s) died due to HIV and Aids infections and related illnesses, this could not always be verified. Bereavement was also not only limited to parent(s) dying, but also to care givers such as other family members dying.

Therefore, the discussion on the seven movements as part of the method of research would be limited for the purpose of this thesis to the second phase of data collection. This second phase made use of focus group discussions (Greeff 2005:299) during the TOL camps held in October 2008 and February 2010 at Sikelele Adventure Village, Magaliesburg, South Africa. A fellow PhD student – Juanita Meyer – and I (Amanda Richter) conducted these camps.

1.9.1 A specific context is described

In narrative research the focus falls on the stories that our co-researchers tell us about the action (Müller et al., 2002:3). As researchers we must help our co-researchers to tell the story of need in as much detail as possible, thus putting the emphasis here on *storytelling* (Müller 2000:72,74). The context or action field of this research is in the first instance the orphaned and vulnerable children living within the HIV and Aids environment of South Africa. The context expands to include the level of involvement and the discourses which determine NGOs' involvement in these children's lives.

Methods used:

- o Facilitators from the NGO Pretoria Evangelism and Nurture (PEN) identified 10 adolescents (5 boys and 5 girls) who fit the inclusion criteria for the second phase of data collection.
- o The data from the two TOL camps were interpreted on a social-constructionist basis, in other words the interpretations are made together with the interviewees ('co-researchers') and not afterwards without them.
- o A literature study which will form the basis of parts of chapter 3 and the whole of chapter 4 of the thesis have been conducted in order to gain more insight in the problem of listening to children's narratives and understanding the world of children.

1.9.2 In-context experiences are listened to and described

When a child's parent(s) dies, the child's whole life is suddenly overturned. In regards to this, Kelly (2001:51) says that "(d)eath, illness and divorce (leave) children with a terrific sense of loss…".

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Perry (2001:22) uses a beautiful metaphor in relation to this, by asserting that "(t)he loss of a loved one is like an earthquake that fractures our emotional landscape". He goes on to say that children are more vulnerable to loss than adults (Perry 2001:22). Juanita Meyer and I did empirical research on these adolescents' experiences of loss and how it influenced their psycho-spiritual needs. We listened to the stories of the bereaved adolescents in order to gain understanding of their in-context experiences.

Method used:

- o During the second round of data collection the *Tree of Life* programme was used to elicit stories from the children attending the camps relating to the experiences these children face in the context they live in.

1.9.3 Interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with 'co-researchers'

Moules et al., (1997:378) asserts that "… grief is not a problem per se...". Kelly (2001:51) says that grief is a process that must be worked through. Central to this grieving process are two challenges – processing the events and handling the loss of a loved one (Perry 2001:23). The co-researchers are invited to tell us not only about the now, but also about their past, in order to put the action against a certain background (Müller et al., 2002:6). In doing so, the emphasis is placed on *storymaking* (Müller 2000:74). According to this research approach, the researchers are not only interested in *descriptions* of experiences of loss as experienced by the adolescents, but also and foremost in their research participants' (co-researchers') own *interpretations* of how this loss has influenced their life stories. The researcher in this phase does not, in the first instance; look for data, but for meaning / interpretation given by the co-researchers.

Method used:

- o Interpretation of the second round of data collection during the first *Tree of Life* camp (October 2008) was done as part of feedback looping, whereby the "co-researchers" – the adolescents attending the TOL camp – was brought together again during the second TOL camp (February 2010). Another round of focus groups was held during the second camp to get their evaluation of information gathered thus far.

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

There are specific discourses/traditions in certain communities and in faith-based organisations (such as PEN), which inform perceptions and behaviour. These discourses/traditions influenced the co-researchers experiences and how they came to view their own life stories. Listening to their stories as well as by using deconstruction of discourses that play a role in the action field, and by listening for what has not been said (Drewery & Winslade 1997:43), an idea is gained of how traditions of interpretations have an influence on the co-researchers' experiences. This was done by listening to the co-researchers, but also by listening to the literature, the art, and the culture of a certain context. The informative theological traditions were also listened to.

Methods used:

- o Discourses identified during the above-mentioned workshops that formed part of the first phase of data collection process, were integrated in the TOL programme and camp workbooks.
- o The adolescents' impressions of identified discourses like poverty, crime and HIV and Aids were discussed during the group sessions as well as in the camp workbooks.

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

Wolfelt (1996:43) rightly mentions that "(t)here are spiritual dimensions to every life crisis, particularly death". This is not a forced effort by the researcher to bring God into the present situation. It is rather an honest undertaking in order to really hear and understand the co-researchers' religious and spiritual understanding and experiences of God's presence. This is done because children often undergo major changes – especially on an emotional and spiritual level of functioning (Wolfelt 1996:65) – after losing someone significant to death.

Method used:

- o In the second phase of data collection (TOL camps), the researcher and the fellow PhD student who conducted the camp, listened for clues in children's narratives about experiences of God, and interacted with those clues by means of the camp workbooks and subsequent group sessions. Since the adolescents attending the camp were under the care of an NGO openly declaring itself as a faith-based organisation, it was not surprising that they were all very open and forthcoming in discussing their experiences of God and the impact it had on their lives – especially after losing someone close.

1.9.6 A description of experience thickened by interdisciplinary investigation

Müller (2004:303) states that interdisciplinary work is complicated and difficult. He further states by referring to Midali (2000:262) that language, reasoning strategies, contexts, and ways of accounting for human experience differ between the different disciplines.

It is therefore challenging and because of this, no one-size-fits-all methodology can be applied. Yet, the interdisciplinary movement is an important part of practical theology. Not only does it include the conversation with other theological disciplines but also with other relevant disciplines. The researcher has to listen to different stories of understanding from these disciplines and try and make an honest effort to integrate them into one bigger story of understanding.

Method used:

- o The researcher requested and received feedback from colleagues from different disciplines regarding their understanding of the concerns of two of the co-researchers, in keeping the research in line with the postfoundationalism epistemology as supported by the research.

1.9.7 The development of alternative interpretations that point beyond the local community

The research process is not a mere reflection on different stories collected during this journey, but it constitutes something new and exciting every time. Therefore, narrative practical theological research does not end with a conclusion, but with an open ending (Müller et al., 2002:10). An open ending not only for the life stories of the researcher and the co-researchers, but also for the greater research story as it evolved through the research process. It is also important to remember that narrative practical theological research is not only about description and interpretation of the experiences of the co-researchers as this informs their life stories. To look at "alternative interpretations" means that in this way of doing (practising) theology, deconstruction and emancipation is of utmost importance. The different stories of the research should be allowed to develop into a new open story of understanding that points beyond the local community.

The greatest pitfall here is if the researcher is not patient, and comes to an 'understanding' too quickly in trying to maintain control over the research (Müller et al., 2002:9). This is not what it is about – forcing the story to fit a presupposed agenda. Rather the researcher should be encouraged to wait for the understanding to form in a natural way (Müller 2000:73).

It is important not to confuse this process of looking at alternative interpretations with generalisation of the research story. Rather it is a case of doing contextual research with such integrity that it will have possibilities for broader application beyond the local researched context.

According to the narrative approach as applied within practical theology this cannot happen on the basis of structured and rigid methods through which stories are analyzed and interpreted. It rather happens on the basis of a holistic understanding of the research story and as part of a social-constructionist process in which all the co-researchers are invited and engaged in the creation of new meaning as informed by their own life stories and relevant experiences.

Methods used:

These methods are on the level of dissemination, and have been done in various ways, for instance:

- o An Aids Indaba presented by the Centre for the Study of Aids (CSA), University of Pretoria has been attended in February 2009 and a presentation made on the *TREE OF LIFE* camp.
- o A website (www.hivorphans.co.za)[1] relating to the research has been developed.

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[1] Website due to go offline May 2011.

1.10   WRITING FOR RESEARCH: THE RESEARCH REPORT

1.10.1 Set in stone (almost): The written word

Language and words make communication between humans possible and more effective. No longer do we need to – like the Neanderthals of old – rely on grunts, sighs and hand gestures to make ourselves understandable. With the help of technology and even the internet, we can have a document in almost any foreign language translated in the blink of an eye in a language that we are able to understand. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:34) say that "(o)ne of humankind's greatest achievements is language. Not only does it allow us to communicate with one another, but it also enables us to think more effectively."

Words form the building blocks of any language, and as such represent certain concepts as it is socially constructed. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:35) go on to say that our thinking is enhanced by words and the concepts it represent. Our thinking is enhanced in several ways by words:

1.   They reduce the world's complexity
2.   They facilitate generalization and inference drawing in a new situation
3.   They allow abstraction of the environment
4.   They enhance the power of thought

We use language and words when we want to communicate – with friends, family, possibly even with a specific audience. We do not only communicate our thoughts by talking, we also communicate by writing. Thinking naturally forms part of this whole communication process. According to Bolton et al., (2004:xviv) "(t)hinking onto the page is part of life". Bolton et al., (2004:xviv) therefore describes the act of writing down one's thought processes as follows:

Writing is different from talking; it is a power all of its own, .. it can allow an exploration of cognitive, emotional and spiritual areas otherwise not accessible, and an expression of elements otherwise inexpressible. The very act of creativity – of making something on the page which wasn't there before – tends to increase self-confidence, feelings of self-worth and motivation for life.

To write is to be creative. Clough (2002:183) says that "(w)riting is not merely the means by which we record and report our thinking, but a means by which we discover it". Leedy and Ormrod (2005:36) agree by stating:

Although the conventional wisdom is that clear thinking precedes clear writing, we have learned through both our own work and that of others that writing can be a productive form of thinking in and of itself. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that writing about a topic actually enhances the writer's understanding of that topic…

Clough (2002:183) therefore suggests that an important purpose of writing is thinking, as "… many of us do indeed *think* as we *write*. We used writing as a tool and process by which we decide what it is – precisely – that we *are* thinking". Writing down what we are thinking, actually makes it possible for us – and others – to, in essence view our thinking, "… for *discovering* what it is we want to say" (Clough 2002:183).

To harness this power of the written word, to make clear our thought processes, to enhance our own understanding of the specific topic under discussion, to be able to feel confidant about what we claim to know, we need to think. We need to think to be able to discover the message we want to convey to our audience – the readers of our text.

1.10.2 Penning it down: The story of the narrative research report

The result of any research is some sort of dissemination. For the purpose of obtaining a PhD, part of this dissemination is the writing up and presentation of the research report or thesis. Clough (2002:182) states that the focus of writing the research report falls on "… telling the story of the research".

Holliday (2007:15) states that this telling of the story of the research, the "… writing of qualitative research is not going to be an easy task". Qualitative research and in particular narrative research, encompasses a lot of raw data that needs to be truthfully represented in the analyses and dissemination thereof, as it was constructed and presented by the co-researchers.

This can complicate matters, as articulating and disseminating these socially constructed realities can indeed prove to be challenging. It is therefore of utmost importance that "… the qualitative researcher as writer should see every part of what she has done in the field as a fresh phenomenon" (Holliday 2007:20).

In penning down the research story, Clough (2002:183) mentions that it is important to remember the following:

> Writing as *process* must not be confused with writing as *product*. The task of committing our ideas to paper forces a permanence of articulation which the spoken word can sometimes evade.

We as researchers are thus required to write down and tell the story of the whole research process as it happened, this writing up process resulting in a research report as a product of the research process. Difficult as this might be, one must aim at clearly articulating that which became evident during and important to the research report.

This research report or thesis will ultimately be read and evaluated by representatives of the specific scientific community the researcher forms part of. Keeping these specific readers – or audience if you will – in mind from the very start of the research process is very important. Therefore, Flick (2007:43) states that "(i)n constructing the research design, you should reflect whom you intend to address as audience with this research and its results". Hunt (2004:36) agrees with this statement, by saying that "… a sense of the readership or audience (is) in the mind of the writer when a piece of writing was in progress". Hunt (2004:36) goes further my stating that "…a reader or audience is always present in the utterance and contributes to its shaping".

As a PhD candidate and researcher therefore writing about one's research project knowing very well that it will be evaluated, one tends to anticipate the reaction of these readers of one's work. In this regard, Hunt (2004:35) states that "… writers were not so much anticipating the reaction of real people in the outside world as that of an imaginary reader or audience implicit in the writing process itself…". Imagining these readers implicit in the writing process, the so-called 'implicit reader', has a definite impact on not only ourselves, but also on how we view ourselves as writers (Hunt 2004:35). Consequently, this 'implicit reader's' presence in the writing process "… will affect what is written and the way writers represent themselves through their writing" (Hunt 2004:36). The research report's aim is therefore to introduce the 'implicit reader', the examiner, to the research design, the research process, the paradigm from which the research evolved and to try and persuade the reader and examiner with grounded arguments that the research report indeed represents valid research. Hunt (2004:35) states that the role of any piece of writing is for the 'implied reader' to "… understand the intentions of the implied author and shares his or her facts and values". Important for the research report is for it not to aim to have the reader share the researcher's facts and values, but to come to an understanding of the intentions of the researcher.

1.10.3 Reflection-in-Progress: On the process of self-reflection

As we have seen in the previous section, the research report documents the story of the research process. Not only is it important – from the perspective of narrative practical theological research – to document this process, but also to reflect on it, on how one has experienced the whole research journey.

Regarding reflection Bolton, Allan and Drucquer (2004:197) state that: "(r)eflection is a natural process; it needs to be carefully facilitated and supported". Reflection according to them (Bolton et al., 2004:209) is important, because as they state it:

> A purely critical, rational, analytic approach will only access some of the experiences which need to be examined, and will only examine part of them. This is because the more tricky areas of our experience, those which are perhaps the most troubling, or the most difficult for us to sort out, are hidden from our immediate critical, rational analytic processes.

With reference to reflection by specifically counsellors, they (Bolton et al., 2004:196) believe that "(r)eflection upon action…: a process of deeply considering events afterwards in order effectively to enhance practice" is important. According to Griffith and Frieden (2000:82) writing about the experience gives the researcher "… an outlet for his or her reflections …".

For Kennedy (1998:107) it is not only important to 'reflect upon action', but the researcher must be "… able to reflect in action…" in order to become aware of the impact the action had and is still having on the researcher, the profession of research and counselling, as well as on the persons the researcher is in contact with (Kennedy 1998:113). Reflection by the researcher can therefore be seen as an ongoing process, not just limited to a few comments at the end of the research report but, rather integrated in the whole report.

Thus, whereas research and counselling according to the narrative approach acknowledges and favours "… the marginalised voices …" (Freedman & Combs 1996:21), reflection on the process can be seen as "… bringing one's own voice to the particular context …" (Kennedy 1998:110). Also referring to counsellors, Daniels and Feltham (2004:181) state that "(i)t is a long-standing tradition in counsellor training that trainees are required to write a personal journal as part of their personal development". The keeping of such a personal reflective journal by counsellors or even the keeping of a research journal by the narrative researcher, involves creativity. Bolton et al., (2004:198) state that employing creativity effectively means that areas of experience, otherwise difficult to access, are more accessible to the writer or researcher in this scenario.

According to Bolton et al., (2004:198) the "(r)eflective practice of writers needs to ensure they've covered what they *did*, what they *thought*, and what they *felt*". Since I concur with Kennedy's (1998:107) notion that reflection in action is important to the integrity of the research process, I have chosen not only to reflect at the very end of the research report, but instead to reflect throughout the whole research process as it is documented in this research report.

This is done through what I coined 'Reflection-in-Progress' alluding to the concept of 'work-in-progress' as seen especially with reference to ongoing road works. In focussing on the content of the research, as well as the thoughts and feelings experienced during this process, reflection thus not only contributes to the researcher's personal development, in a context of openness and transparency about the process and the researcher's own assumptions, but it can also enhance the analysis of the qualitative data. This 'Reflection-in-Progress' sections can be found throughout the rest of this research report at what I deem to be pivotal points in the research process, focussing on content and the analysis thereof as well as my thoughts and feelings with regards to the contents and the research process up to that specific point in time.

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Reflection-in-Progress: Positioning myself with caution

Chapter 1 certainly was the most difficult section of this research report to approach. At times, it felt like I had no idea what I was doing. Although I understood the need to position myself within the specific paradigms I was working in, it sometimes felt like these philosophical discussions got the better of me. Philosophy was a discipline I intentionally steered clear of during my pre-graduate studies. Most friends of mine – with the exception of one who went on to major in philosophy – who took the subject did not like it very much, especially those who were more religiously inclined, as some of them thought philosophy and religion were made out to be incompatible. These philosophical discussions felt far removed from the in-context experiences of my co-researchers and I had great difficulty in maintaining to link these concepts to the research stories of my co-researchers as presented and developed throughout the research report. But, as Professor Müller and his research associate Dr Lourens Bosman pointed out on more than one occasion during our PhD meetings, our studies towards a PhD in actual fact demanded a good knowledge of philosophy and application of this acquired knowledge to our subject field and research topic. Yet, I had some pre-graduate exposure to some philosophical notions especially the postmodern paradigm through my studies in Afrikaans, and although I resented it at the time, that knowledge later proved to be invaluable to my understanding of paradigms and paradigm shifts. Wentzel van Huyssteen's incorporation of philosophical notions with that of theology also helped to demystify philosophy as a discipline in direct opposition of religious thought and belief systems. When it came to the research design and methodology section, I felt more at home. The seven movements of postfoundational practical pheology was an interesting branching off from the ABDCE model of narrative research I was exposed to during my Masters studies. Movements 5 and 6 of looking for God's presence in the research stories and of interdisciplinary investigation definitely enhanced my own research story.

1.11   RESEARCH OUTLINE

Chapter 1 focused on introducing the scope, limitations and challenges of the research. It also looked at the epistemology underlying the research, how the researcher positioned herself in the field of postfoundational practical theology. This positioning was supported by the narrative approach to therapy and research, social-constructionism, postfoundationalism and transversal rationality as an outcome of postfoundationalism. Furthermore, the research methodology was introduced. In order to do this in an effective and understandable manner, attention was given to social research, the difference between qualitative and quantitative research as well as narrative research before discussing the research design. Lastly, the research report itself came under the spotlight – why it is important to write up and reflect on the whole research process.

Chapter 2 introduces all the co-researchers and how and why we all came together as storytellers – to tell the story of the action. It furthermore contextualises the research story and the co-researchers' experiences. It begins by looking at the context of the NGO PEN and bringing in the idea of ethics-in-practice as it influences the research process and the context of the *Tree of Life* camps. To conclude this chapter, the importance of integrating my own context and story as researcher receives some attention.

Chapter 3 looks at HIV and Aids and related discourses and how these discourses have been interpreted. The situation of HIV and Aids orphans in South Africa is also discussed, before looking at how Aids and the impact thereof on the HIV and Aids orphans and other vulnerable children, are viewed and interpreted by the religious and theological communities. African storytelling as a tradition of interpretation within the context of Africa as well as within the context of this research, are also described. Lastly, the arts as a tradition of interpretation are also employed by making use of the co-researchers' own creativity.

Chapter 4 reflects on the interplay between the religious and spiritual aspects of the co-researchers' stories as they experienced it in the specific context and the other issues they are faced with after losing their parent(s) or caregivers. This is done because this research approaches the co-researchers' needs holistically and focuses on their psychological as well as spiritual needs. A breakdown of this psycho-spiritual bereavement needs into material needs, need for others, religious and spiritual needs and emotional needs are used to illustrate how all these stories of need are socially constructed and relevant to the co-researchers' stories and experiences of God.

Chapter 5 aims at thickening the description of the co-researchers' experiences through interdisciplinary investigation and transversal rationality. The chapter starts out by inviting interdisciplinary team members to the discussion and introducing them to the selected stories of the two acknowledged HIV and Aids orphans amongst the co-researchers. Disciplines that formed part of this interdisciplinary investigation were theology itself, psychology, social work, anthropology, information science as well as life coaching.

Chapter 6 forms the climax of the research story and brings together the different storylines. The 'sense of community' or *Ubuntu* as the unique outcome of the *Tree of Life* camps are discussed. In an attempt to develop alternative interpretations that point beyond the local community, a suggestion for a pastoral care approach unique to the African context and by incorporating the art of African storytelling is made, before more suggestions for further research are discussed.

Chapter 7 concludes our research journey together. This chapter is socially constructed and reflective in nature. It tells of the hopes and fears the co-researchers described about the research as well as reflecting on how I as the researcher experienced the process. Some possible questions by religious communities and the academic community are mentioned and addressed before acknowledging the people who formed an audience to my life and research story.

1.12 CLOSING REMARKS ON CHAPTER 1

In this first chapter, which I called the prologue to an African research story, we were introduced to the character of Magoda as representing the art of African storytelling. The scope of the research as well as the limitations thereof was set out. Certain challenges faced during this research process also receive some attention.

Subsequently, I positioned myself within postfoundational practical theology by introducing and explaining the concepts of the narrative approach to therapy and research, social-constructionism, postfoundationalism and transversal rationality.

In the last section of this chapter, the practicalities of the research itself and how it fits into the postfoundational practical theology paradigm were addressed. The research design and research methodology came under discussion, as well as the writing of the research report and the necessity of reflection in the research process.

The next chapter will focus on the context and the interpreted experiences of my co-researchers. This constitutes the first three movements of postfoundational practical theology, namely the description of the specific contexts of the NGO PEN and the *Tree of Life* camps, the in-context experiences of my co-researchers as bereaved adolescents are listened to and described and these experiences are started to be interpreted in collaboration with the co-researchers.

CHAPTER 2

IN PERSPECTIVE –

CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE RESEARCH

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Magoda was an orphan. His only possession was an ox that his father had left him before he died. The women of his village gave him food to keep him from starving, and in return for the food they expected him to run errands and work for them morning, noon and night.

The poor boy never had a moment to himself and, for all his labours, seldom did he get a decent meal. Sometimes he was too tired even to sleep.

(Adapted from Greaves 2004:106-107)

Here we learn a bit more about Magoda. We now know that he, like my ten co-researchers, is also an orphan. He lives in a village and his only possession is an ox that his deceased father left him. However, in order for him to survive day to day he needs to – maybe even unlike the other children in the village – work hard. While we know more about Magoda himself, it is time to meet the adolescents who will also journey with me on this research process in the role of co-researchers.

The first chapter not only introduced Magoda, but also identified my epistemological positioning as that of a postfoundational practical theologian approaching this research in a narrative way, following the 7 movements to Postfoundational Practical Theology (PFPT) as proposed by Müller (2004). Chapter 1 subsequently paved the way for the individual stories that form the storyline of the research.

The focus in this chapter falls on the first three PFPT movements namely:

1) Describing a specific context, 2) Listening to and describing the in-context experiences and lastly 3) Interpreting these experiences as it comes alive in the specific context, with the help and collaboration of the co-researchers, in order to develop these interpretations to the fullest. In doing so, I am in effect contextualising the research process here as well as referring to the methods by which the stories as research data were collected and analysed.

The chapter starts with an introduction to the story of PEN – the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) we worked with in the inner city of Pretoria – the context in which the research took place. We look at how the organisation grew from a small weekly Bible club to an organisation assisting hundreds of vulnerable families and children in the inner city of Pretoria.

Conducting research within the greater context of HIV and Aids with adolescents – bereaved adolescents nonetheless – was a great challenge. It is therefore of the utmost importance to look at how this research and its dissemination can be approached in an ethical and responsible manner.

The *Tree of Life* (TOL) program that was successfully implemented during the two respective camps and that was used as a research tool concerning the data collection and data analysis is briefly discussed before introducing my ten co-researchers. To be true to the narrative nature of this research, I give the ten adolescents that acted as my co-researchers the opportunity to introduce themselves and their specific contexts. I focus firstly on their in-context experiences by listening to it and allowing the adolescents to describe their own experiences using their own voices and words, in an attempt to emancipate them as active co-researchers and not just passive participants in the research process, before integrating some of my own story and context with the greater research story.

2.2 SPEAKING OUT: THE STORY OF THE CONTEXT OF PEN

Some people might ask why I would include a section in this thesis, in this chapter, on the background of PEN. The reason being – as an NGO as well as a faith-based organisation, (FBO), their story as an inner city organisation, and that of their director, Marinda van Niekerk, as the director of PEN and as former student of Professor Julian Müller, overlaps with that of especially the teen ministry of PEN. My ten co-researchers are (or were at the time of the research) involved with the activities of PEN, especially the teen ministry, and as such PEN as an organisation and context has had a formative influence in their lives and on their life stories. Dr Marinda van Niekerk (2006:25-26) summarises the establishment of PEN as follows:

> During 1990-1991 Pretoria's inner city Dutch Reformed congregation started working with children living in small flats in 25 to 30 floor high-rise buildings. Two young people started the project. They soon realised that these children's needs were too vast to be addressed by a Bible club (an hourly session held for ten to twenty children). During Bible club the word of God was taught in a playful manner and combined with story telling, songs and games.

> It is under these circumstances (a poverty-stricken inner city) that PEN works to improve the lives of Pretoria's inner city population and offer a vision of what a city could be to its inhabitants were there a caring and loving community at its centre.

> PEN, Pretoria Evangelism and Nurture, was founded in 1992 and the name reflects the congregation's theology and aims. The mission was formulated as to serve people living in the inner city as total beings in and through Christ.

Four areas of ministry that PEN focuses on (van Niekerk 2006:27-28) have been identified. These are:

Voice

Amidst the noise of the inner city PEN strives to be a Voice of God bringing hope and dispensing love to our inner city communities. This is done through a number of ministries.

Servant hood

A very important part of any community-oriented approach is to render certain much needed services to the people. Food, clothing, medical care and other critical social services are provided where possible.

Community

Educational communities

Because of the initial emphasis on inner city children, their educational and general nurturing needs were identified as focal points of future involvement by PEN.

Residential communities

The second type of community that has developed caters to the enormous need for affordable housing and/or space in the inner city.

Stewardship

As is the case of many similar organisations, proof of success lies not only in the supply and demand of its product and services, but also with their management.

In traditional church language these would be *Leiturgia*, *Diakonia*, *Kerugma*, to which we added the concept of stewardship.

The vision of PEN as set out on their website (www.pen.org.za) is stated as follows:

> The vision for this ministry started ten years ago when a discipleship group from the Pretoria Dutch Reformed Church became aware of the desperate needs that people in the inner city faced and started a process that crystallised into what is today known as PEN.

> The main focus of our ministry is to build long term relationships with the people whom we serve. To minister, not only through bringing the word of God, but to see to all their needs: food, clothes, social and academic care for the children, preventing family violence through therapy, helping with job creation, taking care of HIV-positive people, improving self-esteem and eventually, creating a new wholesome community.

> PEN is a Section 21 Company (Non-profit organisation, registered 1992) that works in close relation with local churches as well as other organisations (Governmental and NGOs). Its Board of Directors consists of a variety of people from different walks of life. PEN is financially audited by an independent auditor annually as required in the Companies Act.

> PEN is a non-profitable, non-denominational Christian-based organisation and as such sees itself as God's VOICE, STEWARD, SERVANT and COMMUNITY in the inner city of Pretoria.

The people, the children and teenagers whom PEN intend on serving and looking after, live in specifically the inner city of Pretoria, South Africa. Van Niekerk (2006:25) describes the unique needs of inner city dwellers when she describes the inner city of Pretoria as follows:

The inner city of Pretoria is a fast-growing and densely populated area. Great numbers of people flock from rural areas to the city with the dream of a better life. Sadly, reality is that they end up in the inner city, most often sharing a small, one-room flat with 10 or more people; there are very few job opportunities and sometimes there is very little to eat. In circumstances like these, family structures fall apart, moral standards drop and crime and gangsterism become a way of life. Amidst all this hardship it is women and children who suffer most... Basic needs like food and clothing become luxury items and things such as quality day-care and education for children only a dream.

Right from the start of PEN, it is evident that at the heart of this organisation is the well-being of the inner city community at large. Their teen ministry focuses on the needs of the teenagers within this community, the community my co-researchers call home.

With reference to dire poverty as also experienced in urban areas of South Africa as describe above, Müller (2009b:20) voices his concern that when poverty is under discussion, it is usually discussed as a phenomenon and little or no attention is given to the people involved. He himself therefore chooses to listen to the narratives of people, persons, individuals and groups, and in this research process, I will follow suit by listening to the stories my ten co-researchers, especially regarding their psycho-spiritual bereavement needs, have to tell. From this storytelling, we will move onto story development, because as Müller (2009b:20) also states, to be true to the narrative approach, the listening of a story also and especially calls for the retelling thereof.

In working with people from poverty-stricken circumstances, like in the inner city of Pretoria, PEN, Müller (2009b:22) and myself, therefore acknowledge that a poor person is still a human being capable of being reciprocal in relationships.

2.3 VOICING CONCERNS: THE STORY OF ETHICS-IN-PRACTICE

Before moving onto introducing the reader to the specifics of the research process as well as to my ten co-researchers, we need to pause first and emphasise the importance of ethics in conducting a research project of this magnitude.

In research, as in life, I think it is important to adhere to the so-called 'golden rule' of only doing onto others as you want done unto you. In more modernistic research, research subjects are sometimes seen and treated as if they are 'guinea pigs' in a clinical laboratory experiment, removed from the real life contexts of their lives. Narrative research in general and this research in particular, aim to break away from this grossly stereotyped and outdated version of approaching research.

As was seen earlier in chapter 1, research participants are seen and approached as co-researchers – playing as an important role in the research process as the researcher herself.

2.3.1 What is research ethics?

The human mind has a capacity for moral awareness, "… an innate sense for 'right and wrong'…" (van Huyssteen 2008:493). In light of this moral awareness of humans, Renold, Holland, Ross and Hillman (2008:430) conceive ethics:

- *as situated* (i.e. locally negotiated within each individual research project and thus contextually contingent, historically specific and always in-process);
- *as dialogic* (i.e. embedded in the intersubjective (sic) relations through which the personal is acknowledged, not denied);
- *as political* (i.e. always informed by our own individual and collective political aims…)

Their definition places emphasis on the importance of the context of the research, as does the PFPT to research. The inter-subjective nature of research relationships between the researcher and the co-researchers and between the co-researchers themselves is also stressed, similar to the narrative approach to research.

In light of this, Renold et al (2008:427) therefore sees the

> … intersubjective (sic), situated and negotiated approach to research as ongoing dialogue in everyday fieldwork relations. We consider the concept of 'becoming participant' to foreground the micro-ethical moments of complex and ambivalent engagements and disengagements within the research process.

Regarding Renold et al's (2008:427) notion that people 'become participants' in particular research projects, Clark (2008:954) agrees and states that "(q)ualitative engagements are actively experienced by those who engage and they continually make decisions concerning their involvement by reflecting upon their experiences". Therefore, "… developing and sustaining research relationships is at the heart of the qualitative research enterprise" (Clark 2007:954). These so-called research relationships should be ethical in nature – from the start to the very end of the research process, including during the writing up of the research report that will be disseminated to interested parties.

Our own discourses as it plays a role in the research process are also acknowledged in the definition of ethics by Renold et al (2008:427). We – researchers and co-researchers alike – do not come to the research process as blank canvasses we become part of the research as people-in-context. Our life stories, our culture, our specific situation all affect the research relationships we are trying to establish and maintain for the duration of the research.

2.3.2 On becoming participant: Informed consent

Informed consent is not just given. People need to be informed why they have been approached to become part of a research project. Informed consent is therefore always negotiated (Renold et al 2008:427). This is also, and especially true in conducting research with children and young people such as my ten co-researchers.

In conducting participatory research with these adolescents, it was important to bear in mind that informed consent was part of a complex terrain and as such "… always in process and unfinished" (Renold et al 2008:427). This means that consent in this research process was "… iterative and uncertain ... and open to revision and questioning" (Renold et al 2008:427). In approaching informed consent in this manner, one can refer to it as "… 'ethics-in-practice' – that is, the actual ethical conduct of the research project." (Renold et al 2008:429).

In listening to the stories of adolescents and to their (mostly silent) stories of psycho-spiritual bereavement needs, I tried to recognise and respect their worth as human beings (Alderson & Morrow 2004:7). My co-researchers had the option of choosing a pseudonym for themselves, to protect their privacy. They all provided us with alternative African names for themselves, explaining the meaning thereof for them. The alternative African names and the meanings thereof for Dee and Zee can be found in their complete stories in chapter 5. I however chose not to use these names, as some adolescents actually insisted that their real names be used. Dimakatso, one of the girls, stated she wanted to recognise herself if she was to read my research report one day, and one of the twin boys in the research group actually stated he wants his real name to be used, because he 'wants to be famous'. The rest of the co-researchers in the research group also did not have a problem for me to use their real first names as used on the TOL camps in my research report.

In light of their socially constructed consent to use their real first names in my research report, I decided to use it. However, I still decided to use acknowledged nick names for the two HIV and Aids orphans in the research group, as so to still give them some sense of anonymity in the research process and to prevent them from being stigmatised should their real names be known. They both welcomed this decision of mine and supported it.

Although my co-researchers real first names are used in this research process, they were – understandably so – hesitant having photos of the two TOL camps' activities showing their faces to be published on the SMALL SURVIVORS OF HIV/AIDS website (www.hivorphans.co.za), possibly because the domain name would implicitly imply they were all HIV and Aids orphans, which they are not. In light of this hesitancy of theirs, I furthermore decided not to show their faces in the photos taken on the TOL camps by the co-researchers themselves as presented in chapter 3 of this research report. Instead, I covered their faces with smiley face stickers, using specific stickers for each adolescent. In doing so, I still identify the co-researchers present in specific photos and the interactions between them, without explicitly exposing their faces, in an attempt to acknowledge my co-researchers right to privacy.

2.3.3 Ethics and the institutional implications of the research

As far as the institutional implications of this study go, I sincerely hope that due to the human element involved – the individual children's stories – this thesis will help in humanising this social dilemma situated within the broader field of HIV and Aids in South Africa that could otherwise just be a stack of statistics.

A copy of the research findings will be made available to interested persons and I would also be available to discuss it in person.

2.4 AROUND THE CAMPFIRE: CONTEXT OF THE TREE OF LIFE CAMPS

2.4.1 The field of research: Posing the research question

During my Masters in Practical Theology, I did a seminar for a class presentation on parent-bereaved children and how their grief affected them. The impact of HIV and Aids in this regard was mentioned in the passing, without attention being giving to Aids as a social factor in the African context. In discussing the seminar presented, it was mentioned that looking from an African perspective at the plight of parent-bereaved children would be an interesting research topic. As part of my research journey for my Masters degree, I subsequently set out to listen to the story of need of HIV and Aids orphans.

Having looked into the needs of specific children left bereft by their parent(s)' death due to HIV and Aids in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa I became interested in more specifically the psycho-spiritual bereavement needs these orphans might be experiencing. The focus for my PhD research therefore turned to look at psycho-spiritual bereavement needs of adolescents left orphaned or vulnerable by HIV and Aids in South Africa.

As my research formed part of the greater Departmental research project entitled SMALL SURVIVORS OF HIV/AIDS, and also because this project was launched in collaboration with the NGO PEN, the focus for my PhD research fell on orphans in Pretoria, South Africa who were in one way or another involved with the specific NGO. Since PEN is active in the inner city of Pretoria, this also meant that my focus had to shift somewhat from my Masters research – from listening to the needs of HIV and Aids orphans in the rural area of KwaZulu-Natal, to more specifically the urban context of Pretoria's inner city.

Another pressing issue was finding adolescents who were bereft because of losing their parents to HIV and Aids in this vast maze that the inner city forms. As the facilitators at PEN could not tell us with a reasonable degree of certainty that these adolescents lost their parents to HIV and Aids, it was decided to broaden the research scope, to include other vulnerable adolescents who might have lost their parent(s) / caregivers to causes other than HIV and Aids. I decided to address this research question of the psycho-spiritual bereavement needs of HIV and Aids orphans, by once again employing the narrative approach to research. I wanted my co-researchers to be able to speak about their experiences of loss and grief and how these experiences have influenced their lives.

2.4.2   Testing the water: Launching a pilot study

As was already mentioned, my research formed part of a greater Departmental research project. In a sense, this formed a pilot study to my individual research, as it gave me the opportunity to refine my own research further before embarking on the data collection thereof. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:110) state quite clearly why the necessity for a pilot study in research exists. It is important to make clear and concise what exactly it is you want to research – the pressing phenomena in your designated field of expertise it is you want to have a closer look at.

The Department of Practical Theology's research project entitled SMALL SURVIVORS OF HIV/AIDS set out to do research on the bereavement and spiritual issues that might form part of this bereavement, of Christian HIV and Aids orphans and vulnerable children (teenagers) after losing their parent(s) or other loved ones to this dreadful disease. With generous funding from the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa, professor Müller, another PhD student in the Department – Juanita (Loubser) Meyer and myself set out to conquer the world, so to speak, of HIV and Aids as experienced by these orphans and vulnerable children.

With a good research proposal in hand and funding in our pockets we made contact with three individual Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working in and around Pretoria in the greater Tshwane area. Professor Müller had a great foothold with regards to these three organisations – both Marinda van Niekerk – the director of PEN in the inner city of Pretoria and Sunette Pienaar the director of Heartbeat on the outskirts of Pretoria were former PhD students of professor Müller. They were both involved in a previous research endeavour of the Department on HIV and Aids and have since moved on to start and manage very successful NGOs assisting and helping people in and involved with the HIV and Aids landscape in Pretoria. Andre de la Port of Hospivision and president / founder of SAAP and professor Müller also had a good working relationship. Furthermore, Simon Mailula was also employed by this organisation, which gave us further access to this organisation and the people it was assisting in their daily struggles.

Regular planning sessions with the directors of these organisations as well as training sessions with field workers identified by the specific organisations helped us in the execution of the actual field research of conducting narrative interviews with teenagers under the care of the individual organisations to look into their experiences of bereavement and possible spiritual issues arising from this bereavement.

We as a research team decided on enlisting the help of field workers in conversation with these co-researchers rather than the researchers themselves due to:

- The language barrier between the researchers and co-researchers
- The field workers and co-researchers shared to some extend the same culture and context
- The field workers were known to the teenagers through their work within the individual organisations

Inclusion criteria for this initial data collection were as follows:

- Co-researchers had to be teenagers (13 -19 years)
- Willingness to partake in the research study
- Parent(s) have succumbed to HIV and Aids in the 12 months prior to the research

Exclusion criteria extended to an unwillingness to participate in the research study.

Data collection was done by means of interviews. Interviews with the caregivers of these children were done and then with their help with the children orphaned by HIV and Aids. Established NGOs (FBO's) formed part of the research team, and their professional workers and volunteers were trained in conjunction with these organisations to conduct the interviews with the teenagers. Open-ended questions were used in these interviews to provide space for the caregivers and the teenagers to voice their experiences. The gathering of their stories was done in the following manner:

- Field workers were asked to interview three teenagers for three consecutive times.
- Field workers received a stipend for every interview conducted
- We had lengthy discussions with the directors of the organisations as well as the field workers whether or not to pay the teenagers (co-researchers) as well for their stories, but decided against it, as we were worried that it might affect the truthfulness of the stories being presented.
- Field workers used opening questions designed by myself to get the conversation going
- Second session focussed on follow-up questions derived from the answers to the opening questions

- Third session was about letter-writing – addressing the questions and issues specifically around their parent(s) death and questions with regards to their spirituality and issues with God
- Field workers were asked to make short notes on how they experienced this whole process of talking to the children

A good amount of data was collected from this initial stage of data collection; we however did face some challenges during this round of data collection:

- Most of the interviewees were girls – not good representation of how boys are experiencing this issue
- Some interviews only gave bare, unemotional facts and there weren't much flesh to the stories to thicken the plot so to speak
- One of the field workers died during this period of data collection – somebody else had to finish his interviews
- One field worker interviewed a boy of 7 – good story collected, but falls outside the perimeters of this specific study which focused on teenagers

Suggestions for further data collection from this initial experience:
- One on one contact with our co-researchers
- Focus on one organisation – different focus areas in different areas of the community albeit all three are working in Pretoria
- Need to involve more boys in the research
- Need to broaden our scope – to include not only HIV and Aids orphans, but also vulnerable teenagers – those who might not have lost a biological parent to the disease, but nonetheless someone close to them like a caregiver or close relative

- The time frame in which they lost this significant person in their live, need to be extended. During the first year of losing someone it is more difficult to talk about the issue than later on.

2.4.3 Coming into being: The *Tree of Life* (TOL) camps

Professor Müller introduced Juanita Meyer (fellow PhD student) and myself to the TOL metaphor by handing us the article entitled: "The Tree of Life project: Using narrative ideas in work with vulnerable children in South Africa" written by Ncazelo Ncube (2006) in 2008. His instructions were to develop a workbook from the article, directed at orphans who lost their parent(s) and or caregivers, as the greater Departmental research project focused up to that point on orphans left bereaved by HIV and Aids and aptly entitled SMALL SURVIVORS OF HIV/AIDS.

We thought it would be ideal to structure the workbook in such a way to help these orphans work through bereavement issues related to HIV and Aids and the role it played in their bereavement. Juanita and I actually reinvented the wheel the weekend when we came together to compile a workbook and facilitators guide according to the article. We couldn't find any reference to it on the internet at that stage, and decided to create our own based on the article. When I eventually found the workbook on the internet (http://www.repssi.net) months later, it was with a feeling of pride that I called Juanita to tell her the news. Not only did our version cover everything the original workbook covered but, our workbook was specifically orientated to our own unique research situation. Looking not only into the psychosocial wellbeing of the children who took part in the TOL exercise, as did the original version, but also incorporating the psycho-spiritual wellbeing of the children that took part in our specific TOL exercise. A copy of our TOL workbook and facilitators guide (first camp) can be accessed on the SMALL SURVIVORS OF HIV/AIDS website (http://www.hivorphans.co.za).

We narrowed the research field down to only working with one NGO previously involved in the research project, namely PEN. We contacted Dr Marinda van Niekerk, director of PEN to help us to identify teens who adhered to the criteria. She referred us to Susan van der Walt and Jasmyn van Heerden whom were involved with the Teen Ministry at PEN. We had a meeting with them and Dagmara du Plessis as well as other role players in the process. This proved to be a very difficult meeting for us, because, as I would later describe Susan – we were battling with a lioness protecting her cubs against intruders. Rather reluctantly Susan and Jasmyn agreed to find eight (later changed to ten due to good funding) teenagers who met our criteria. They however warned us that due to disclosure issues on the part of the teenagers they themselves were unsure of what the direct causes of deaths were of most of these adolescents' parent(s) and or caregivers. This issue relating to disclosure impacted on our initial inclusion criteria for the TOL camps, and we had to therefore broaden our criteria. The final inclusion criteria for the first TOL camp were as follows:

- Adolescent (13-19 years) boys and girls
- Who were recently bereft (last 24 months)
- Lost a parent / parent figure / caregiver
- Possibly from HIV and Aids
- Actively involved with the activities of PEN
- Willingness to partake in the TOL camp and research
- The same number of boys and girls in the group

And so our research journey with our TOL co-researchers commenced. We chose to use the TOL camps and group discussions in working with the adolescent co-researchers. Van Niekerk (2006:33) states that teenagers are at ease within a group. They get the opportunity in a group to compare themselves and their experiences to that of the other group members.

And as Van Niekerk (2006:33) puts it: "…find reference points for developing their norms". In a peer group they get opportunities to see how other adolescents in similar situations reacted to problems and how they coped with it.

We (Juanita and myself) made the decision early on to also share similar stories from our own lives in the group setting, as we hoped this would help the group members not to feel vulnerable and 'under the microscope', and also in an attempt to build up a trust relationship with these strangers. Thereby I think we succeeded in creating a comfortable and safe environment for the adolescents to express themselves openly and as honestly as possible.

As our group sessions formed part of a weekend camp – we had 6 sessions with our co-researchers over the weekend of the first TOL camp, and a similar number of sessions during the second TOL camp. The last session of each camp was reserved as a ceremony session whereby the children received certificates acknowledging their individual strengths and skills as it was shown through the duration of the camps. During the first TOL camp, they also divided into two smaller mixed groups to perform an item for us – about the TOL camp itself.

After the first camp, I kept in contact with most of the co-researchers via telephone and the social network mxit. One of the co-researchers, Palesa, phoned me at the end of the year (2008) to tell me she passed Matric (Grade 12) and another, Moses, let me know that he got an IT (Information Technology) bursary to further his education after Matric. They tried to keep me in the loop with what was going on in their lives, although this was sometimes difficult for them by not having enough funds on their phones or phones being lost or stolen. However, they did appreciate the concern and interest I showed between the two camps in their lives. This became evident during a group discussion during the second camp when Shaun stated that:

Amanda kept in contact, sending smses over Christmas and New Year to hear how we were doing. Although I didn't have the money to respond, she kept on sending smses and this showed me she cared for us.

The camp in my opinion had a profound experience on most of the teens' lives, as those whom I kept contact with kept on asking me when we were planning a second camp. Due to budget restrictions and no funding, it was difficult for the Department to foresee the possibility of another camp. As I have already alluded to we, however, saw the necessity in holding another 'follow-up' camp or reunion camp as some of the teens referred to it nearing the end of our individual research. This took place during the weekend of 26-28 February 2010, again at Sikelele Adventure Village, Magaliesburg. This was an excellent way of concluding our research, as we had the chance to once again meet with our co-researchers, catch up on their life stories and hear how they had experienced the research process. I followed this up with a further meeting after I had the chance of going through their second TOL workbooks as well. This effort to thicken the research story is quite in line with what Alasuutari; Bickman and Brannen (2008:224) emphasise when they say that:

> With deep understanding of a case as the prime goal of case study, an attitude of openness may be the most fortuitous item in a case study researcher's dispositional toolkit. There is always more that can be learned about a case, more potential interpretations of existing data, and new events that create alterations in the case. Premature conclusions can foreclose on deeper understanding.

In light of the above, the following reflections that will guide the rest of my thesis: The process of reflection was one of continuous feedback from the group as we all shared our experiences and thickened the research story thereby. Reflections included:

- The impact of the group on everyone individually and collectively
- How the stories impacted the group as a whole
- My evaluation that the inner city, the African context and involvement with PEN influences the world and development of these adolescents

2.4.4 Selecting stories: On design, sampling and data collection

This research project situated within the TOL camps' context falls within the qualitative paradigm to research as explained in chapter 1. Furthermore, it is descriptive in nature (Neuman 1997:19-20). Neuman (1997:20) states that "(d)escriptive and exploratory research have many similarities. They blur together in practice… The outcome of a descriptive study is the detailed picture of the subject". To put it in narrative research terms, the idea is to present a thick research story at the end of the research process.

The method of sampling that was used – by asking facilitators at PEN to provide us with possible co-researchers for our research – is called purposive sampling. It uses the "(j)udgement of an expert in selecting cases or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind" (Neuman 1997:206). These facilitators know and work with these adolescents on a regular basis and therefore know at least something of their life stories.

The research made use of field research (the TOL camps) to collect the research data. The stories of the ten co-researchers, can be seen in research terms as case studies, however Müller (2005:74) warns against using the concept of case studies with reference to practical theology, because "… it carries with it the idea of a linear approach", where the case study is seen as "… the empirical confirmation and verification …" of theories (Müller 2005:74). The stories of my co-researchers presented here is therefore more than mere case studies.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:12) also describe the researcher herself as a "…tool of research…" in the research process. The TOL workbooks compiled during the two camps also yielded data to be used in the research process. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:88) describe data as: "…those pieces of information that any particular situation *gives* to an observer". Furthermore, by making observations during the research process, the qualitative researcher becomes "… a participant observer" (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:145), by entering the lives of her research participants or co-researchers (Marshall & Rossman 2006:72). Marshall and Rossman (2006:73) go on to describe these interactions as "… usually highly informative while remaining informal". All of which the TOL camps definitely were.

Not only did we as researchers observe our co-researchers and their interactions with us and each other, we also used the TOL workbooks to ask specific questions, which we then followed up in our group discussions. As part of these camps, the two groups – the boys and the girls – were issued with disposable cameras with which to also take photos. Even these photos – as seen in chapter 3 – formed part of the data we collected. In light of this, it is therefore evident that we did not limit ourselves to only one method of data collection. Concerning the various data collected during these TOL camps, the concept of triangulation comes to the fore.

Alasuutari; Bickman and Brannen (2008:224) describe triangulation as follows:

> Triangulation, a term derived from nautical procedures for locating ships at sea based on three points, does not presume three sources (or methods, observers, data collection events, or theoretical perspectives). More or fewer, as needed and as available, may be consulted.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:100) state "… that qualitative researchers frequently use triangulation – comparing multiple data sources in search of common themes – to support the validity of their findings.

Alasuutari et al (2008:222) describe triangulation (authors' emphasis) further by stating that:

> During data collection, *triangulation by data source* involves collecting data from different persons or entities.
>
> *Methodological triangulation* involves checking data collected via one method with data collected using another, for example, checking whether direct observation can confirm interview testimony.
>
> *Triangulation by time* involves repeated return to the site to track patterns of events and new trends and permutations.
>
> *Triangulation by observer* can help expand meaning-making, balance interpretations, and guard against undue researcher subjectivity.
>
> *Theoretical triangulation* in data analysis involves recourse to different abstractions that might explain the data. Various theories, models, typologies, and categorization systems may suggest different meanings.

From this description above, it becomes clear that our TOL data collection made use of triangulation by data source (ten co-researchers), triangulation by observer (Juanita and myself as camp facilitators), methodological triangulation (observations and group interviewing) and even triangulation by time (the two different TOL camps held in respectively 2008 and 2010). Furthermore, theoretical triangulation took place during the data analysis stage of the research process, as I made use of transversal rationality as explained in chapter 1. I also asked interdisciplinary team members to reflect further on two individual stories in chapter 5, as well as the one interdisciplinary team member who reflected on a song written and performed by the twins in our research group in chapter 3. These interdisciplinary team members were from various disciplines within the social sciences and adhered to different theories and paradigms within their field of interest. I therefore employed triangulation in my research study with the "…focus on promoting the quality of qualitative research" (Flick 2007:43).

2.5 SPEAKING UP: THE CO-RESEARCHERS AT WORD

Here, the adolescents introduce themselves and their own stories. The rest of their stories will unfold – like the story of Magoda – as this research develops further. Important to note is that since the aim was to be true to their individual use and style of language, I did not make many corrections as far as this was concerned.

2.5.1 Annie – 'Talking is and always has been the best medicine'

My name is Annie, I am 18 turning 19 in June 2010. I just recently finished my Matric and I am waiting to apply for tertiary education to study further. After my Matric year I had plans to study at the College of my dreams (CTT) and I could not study there because of financial issues, that was my biggest storm because as much as I wanted to go there I could not because my aunt whom I am currently staying with could not afford it.

(I lost my mom). The memory of my mom still lives in me because whenever I am in situations or doing things there are certain things that she would tell me and those things guide me into doing things according to the way she would want me to. Wow. My mom was the best mom I could ever ask (for). She was sweet, understanding and yet so loving.

The person who is most important to me at this point in time is my aunt because throughout my family she is the one person would take me in when I had nobody else to take me so she has been great towards me. The TOL camp was great I really got to take out a lot of things which were on my chest and it taught me not to battle things inside and that talking is and always has been the best medicine.

Reflection-in-Progress: On meeting and getting to know Annie

My impressions of Annie during our first TOL camp, was that she is a very shy individual. Although she replied to all questions directed at her and participated in group discussions in so far as she could not avoid being part of it, she rarely spoke up out of her own. When she spoke about her mother who died, she showed some emotion, yet she mostly kept to herself. Although she and Dimakatso seemed to get along well, she still seemed almost like an outsider to the group.

She did not hand in her first TOL workbook to be copied and although she did bring her second TOL workbook, she did not respond to several requests to lend her first TOL workbook to us. One can only speculate on the reasons for this – maybe she did not have it any more and did not want to acknowledge it, or maybe – while she did not contribute a lot to the first camp's group discussions, she poured her heart and soul into completing the workbook and felt it to be very private.

This all changed during the second TOL camp. From the get go Annie was full of energy, joking and chatting with the rest of the group. She even initiated interesting group discussions by challenging and differing from the rest of the group members at times. She spoke more openly about her mother and the impact her mother's death had on her.

Right in front of our eyes, she changed from the shy, silent outsider type of person to being part of the group and showing initiative. This, I later learned when they had to reflect on the TOL camping experiences, was due to her earnest fear that we (Juanita and myself) were abducting them on the first camp and that we were going to sell them to the human trafficking trade. Something we could all laugh about later on, but which was very real and frightening for her in that moment to the extend that it influenced her participation for the duration of the first TOL camp.

2.5.2 Dee – 'Loud and confident, but can't handle pain'

I am Dee, I live in Home of Safety, (my) mother passed away while living with aunt. (I am a) very independent person, loud and confident, but can't handle pain. (I) love poetry and writing and (am) grade 12 in 2010, turning 18 years this year.

Well I was the only child, no dad, mother was Rebecca, so was raised by many family members – Miona (grandma), John (grandpa), Rebecca (closest aunt), 2 other aunts and 2 uncles, Matebise (uncle like a father), best cousin ever (Basetsana)… and so on.

I never really liked my mom, but loved her, because we never knew each other. Rebecca my aunt, I loved her so much. She was the closest thing to me, like a mother, but she's crazy and I have (an) anger problem, emotional with her, she was my centre.   My uncle, love him like a father. My grandma love her to bits, (but) want nothing to do with her because she broke my trust.

My aunt, she taught me to be independent, stand up, was my role model, taught me about life, how to do things and how not to do it, how to treat others, taught me that family is very important and that one thing she kept reminding me of. Then Zee, she became my comfort since there was no one close to me after me and my aunt separated.

Zee (friend) is very important to me. She is my close friend, we met in grade 9 (2007), she knows me better than anyone. She started in PEN then introduced me. And in 2009 we ended (up) living together in Precious Pearls because our parents passed away in the same year. Mostly God, because he wakes me up. He said he got good plans for us. I want to see them.

I lost my mother. She died of Aids but the sad thing is that she died with lies from everyone around. We were never close, so when she died, I was stuck between I was wrong or why she died without telling me the truth. My mother, she was sick of HIV/AIDS. We never had a proper conversation but yeah I guess it's too late now, and my aunt because of the stress we became strangers to each other and I moved out.

Not really that important or it's just because I never saw the importance of them being in my life, but she was important because she was my mother (which does not mean much). She is special because she was kind to other people (but me) and very loving.

(The impact of the first TOL camp) – I started talking to my aunt, I forgave her because we were both feeling pain. And because I forgave her and opened the door for her and even if it is tough. There was a time when she was crying and confided in me like we used to. So I try not to lay judgement on her, and she can move on with her life knowing that she is not the one to blame for my problems. That they are just storms that will pass.

Reflection-in-Progress: On meeting and getting to know Dee

Dee's story is one of two stories I have chosen to form part of the interdisciplinary conversation that forms the cornerstone of the research methodology I am working with. Later on – in Chapter 5 – we will get to know Dee even better. I specifically chose her story to form part of the interdisciplinary conversation, because not unlike many in the group she also lost her mother, but because of her relationship with her mother as well as her aunt and how this has affected her life thus far. I will therefore limit my reflection at this point to a few comments and will reflect in more detail on her story in Chapter 5.

Dee was the 'braveheart' in the group, acknowledging from the start that her mother died due to HIV and Aids. The group seemed shocked at first when she told us – not in so much as they did not know, I think it was rather because they did not think she would be so open about the fact.

They nevertheless never treated her any differently than the rest of the group, and it did not seem as if they stigmatised her at all with regards to how her mother died.

She was in my opinion very open and upfront with her thoughts and feelings during both TOL camps, which helped the group discussions a lot. She became very emotional when talking about her situation leading up to her moving into a House of Safety and it was evident that her situation caused her a lot of emotional pain. She seemed very close to Zee and it was clear that she cared very much about Zee's wellbeing.

From the get go I felt very close to Dee, and had much empathy for her situation. She talked about her wish to one day become a writer, a dream I myself could still relate to. In a certain sense, she was me when I was her age.

2.5.3 Dimakatso – 'Never (to) give up in life'

I am Dimakatso. I am turning 18 in November 2010. I am in grade 12. I live with my grandmother who is my breadwinner, my favourite colours are blue and pink and I love 'Sponge Bob Square Pants'.

I was born in a village in Matjiejieleng in Limpopo. My parents are the late Mapula which is my mother and my father is Solly. I only know my grandmother who is Julia and my aunt is Christina. I love my family very much it's just that after losing my mother I felt empty in my life, but God and my grandmother Julia will always be there for me. My father abandoned me when I was still a child so I can't say anything about him.

I live with my grandmother Julia and Aunt Christina. They liked talking and having fun, I love them because they mean the world to me. My grandmother, mother and PEN (are the most important people in my life). I grew up with my grandmother. She taught me a lot of things, she told me never to give up in life. She also taught me how to talk, read and love people. PEN people have taught me to say please and thank you.

Yes (I lost) my mother. You know when a child loses a mother she thinks everything is gone. I love my mother very much she meant everything to me, she used to do things for (me), she always wanted me to be a doctor, before she died she said to me " Bye bye Dimakatso I will always love you", that is how I can summarise my story about the loved one that I have lost.

(My mother) was a wonderful (person) who loved her kid. I was the only one in her life. She was really very special to me. She used to do anything a mother would do for her child/children. (My favourite memory of my mother is) going to visit her, she lived in Limpopo while I was in Gauteng. She wanted me to get the best education ever. What I liked about her (was) she loved going shopping and (to) drama theatres.

My mother was a very humble person. She was studying to become a nurse. I never had time to talk to her about my dreams and hopes. I love my mother very much and she died at the age of 27. I don't really know what (dreams and hopes) my mom had for me. It is because I was raised by my grandmother and I lived with her in my whole life while my mother was continuing her studies in another province. So I hardly spoke to her but the communication was good.

(The first TOL camp) was there for me. It helped me to focus on the brighter side of life (not?) sour fruits. I just told them God is there. Through good and bad times He is always there.

Reflection-in-Progress: On meeting and getting to know Dimakatso

If I had to describe Dimakatso in one word it would be 'talkative'. She might even enjoy talking more than I do – which as Juanita (and others!) would put it, is almost impossible. She enjoys the company of other people and likes being part of a group. She became my mxit buddy and 'informant'. Whenever I wanted to know how the others were doing, Dimakatso would know and tell me. I think I got to know her better during these mxit conversations we had, than during the TOL camps itself.

She has a zest for life, is very honest to the extent that she wouldn't think twice to call a spade a spade and is very inquisitive in nature. During both TOL camps, she freely participated in group discussions and other activities. It seemed like she would be the one that would sometimes ask the uneasy questions – those questions that everybody wanted to ask, but was too afraid to do so. She has grown and matured a lot between the two camps and she seemed more accepted by the group during the second TOL camp.

Speaking about her mother who died, she was not too emotional. She focused more on the dream her mother had for her of becoming a doctor one day – a dream she herself has internalised – but in the same instance realising and acknowledging the fact that her marks were probably not good enough to become one, which I think pains her very much.

Her grandmother and aunt seems to be her main support system and a constant in her life, whereas her mother to a great extent, was not as she wasn't close by and present for the everyday happenings in Dimakatso's life. Yet, this did not diminish in any way the love, respect and awe that she felt towards her mother.

2.5.4 Palesa – 'Fight for my life to be better'

I am Palesa and are staying in town. My father's name is Albert Taele M and I am from a family of seven including my brothers and sisters.

I was born (in) Lesotho and I grew up there then left (for) South Africa in 2003. My parents also come from Lesotho but my mom passed away this year (2008). And my grandfather only live with my grandmother and (I) have one uncle, but I don't have aunts.

Okay. My father is a good person, he likes me to do good things always and he is giving me love, comfort and he is supportive but he does not like to do bad things. I also have supportive brothers and my sisters who are there for me always. My father (is an important person in my life) because he taught me how to fight for my life to be better and to (take) care of myself. And also my friend is also there for me whenever I need help he motivates me about my life, especially spiritual things. He taught me how to use my intelligent faith.

Yes, I lost my mom this year 4th of August (2008). It was painful but she was sick suffering so much, but it was not easy because she was the one who was in charge of my family, but any way she is gone. God is with her, and life goes on. (My mom was important to me) because (she) was my everything. She was always there for me in bad and good times, she was a good motivator and always supportive, whenever I needed something she would fight for me to get it. My mom had great dreams about my life because she wanted the best from me, and she was always guiding me all the time by making me believe in myself even today I still remember the words and I use her words in life. She was special to me, I loved her so much because she wanted the best from me in all areas of my life.

(The impact of the first TOL camp) – the first was that I learnt to forget about the past and focus on the future which means to forget about the death of my parent because she was not going to come back. It would make other people's lives better by telling them about the feelings, storms they faced during the process of their loss to tell what they feel and realise the pain and move on with life.

Reflection-in-Progress: On meeting and getting to know Palesa

Palesa was the quiet one in the group, both during the first TOL camp and the second TOL camp. However, when she spoke up her contributions to the group discussions were significant. Being the eldest of the girls, she seemed to be an outsider to the group. She seemed more introverted and reserved than some of the other girls, shy in a sense.

She is very soft-spoken and seemed very vulnerable. She became very sad during the first TOL camp when she spoke about her mother whom she lost. During this camp, she did not indicate when her mother died, but I later realised when reading through her workbook that her mother died only two months before the camp. It was therefore probably a very difficult process for her to go through at that time.

What was evident from her story was the fact that she felt very loved and supported, even after her mother's death, by not only her father, but also her brothers and sisters. She comes from a big family, which probably helped her grieving process, in that she had the emotional support that some of the other teenagers on the camp might not have had.

Even though her family emotionally supported her, she experienced the loss of her mother as a very traumatic event. She did not only experience the physical loss of her mother, but also the loss of her mother's hopes and dreams for her, and her moral support.

It was still very difficult for her during the second TOL camp to speak about her mother she lost. Yet, it seemed like she matured a lot since the first TOL camp. She was now living on her own, supported by her father and furthering her education.

2.5.5 Zee – 'Crazy, smart and beautiful'

I am Zee, – the crazy, smart and beautiful young lady. I was born in Queenstown, Port Elizabeth. I am half Mozambican and half Xhosa. I grew up most of my time in Johannesburg. I lived with my father for 14 years, he was a mother also to me. I wouldn't say I know all of my family, because I never got the chance to know them all. Getting to know new people is one of the things I enjoy doing and being around people.

From my father's side I know a few of them (my family members). I think they are lovely people, very cultural they are into much of the culture, which is a good thing. I won't say I know much from my mother's side, because she died before I even knew all my aunts and uncles.

Special person in my life is my dad, he will always be in my heart and always special to me. LOVE YOU DADDY (*drew a heart*). My father (is the most important person in my life), he has taught me to think wisely and to be strong (brave), he showed (me) reality. Also my friend Dee, she is one special friend, that means she is different from all my friends, she (is) my sister in a way. Pal groups *(a PEN activity)* is also one of the important things in my life, it guides me through life because God is the guardian in my life.

I have lost my father because he was sick. And I also lost my mother by the age of three years, my (?) also passed away early this year it was traumatising. (They were important to me) (b)ecause I love and care about them and knew them. My dad used to be one of the important people in my life, but at the moment I would say my aunt and uncle are important in my life. Because they (have) taken care of me at the time when I needed support, they loved me like their own child, which meant a lot to me. Mummy Angela was actually also one of the most important people in (my) life. My dad wanted me to be successful in everything I do from education to getting a job one day. My aunt and uncle believe in me so much that they motivate (me) is to become a chef one day. Mummy Angel made me realise that cooking, being a chef was my dream is.

(The impact of the first TOL camp) – It made me open up a little bit, expressing my feelings and thoughts to my friend Dee. When something bothered me I could tell Dee about (it) unlike before I keep quiet about everything.

Reflection-in-Progress: On meeting and getting to know Zee

What I remember of Zee is the first time I saw her at a PEN group meeting at Grootte Kerk in the inner city of Pretoria in September 2008, a couple of weeks before the first TOL camp. The PEN facilitators asked Juanita and I to attend a group meeting before we go on the camp in order for the teenagers to be introduced to us within the safety of a bigger group setting. For discussions, we were divided into smaller groups, Zee was in the group Juanita and I were divided into.

I immediately liked her. She was full of life, chatting, asking questions and wanting to get to know us better. Susan indicated at a later stage that the possibility exists that Zee might be going on the camp with us, and I wanted to make sure that she did. I think Susan found this very amusing, because every time we spoke I wanted to know if Zee was still coming.

I chose Zee's story to be part of the interdisciplinary conversation in Chapter 5, mainly due to the fact that she – unlike the others who mostly lost their mothers – lost her father, also due to HIV and Aids as well as her mother a couple of years before. Therefore, I am limiting my reflections about her story at this stage.

During the first TOL camp, Zee spoke very lovingly about her father whom she lost, and it was very clear that she was close to him. She became emotional when speaking about his death and his preceding illness, without indicating what kind of illness it was.

At that stage, she was taken care of by friends of her father, an arrangement it seemed he made before his death. Although she missed him, she felt loved and cared for by the people who took her in. As far as I can remember, she did not speak about her mother during the first TOL camp, only about her father, and it was clear that his death was a great source of sadness in her life.

During the second TOL camp, I think it is safe to say Zee surprised us all during one of the very first group discussions with some news about her father's death. In the meantime, she discovered that her father indeed died of HIV and Aids, something she wasn't aware of at an earlier stage. During and after this session, her sadness about losing her father gave way to intense emotions of anger directed at her stepmother, who – according to her – knowingly infected her father with the HI-virus.

Summary of deaths suffered by the girls:

NAME (BIRTH YEAR)	PERSON WHO DIED	AGE AT LOSS	WHEN	HOW
Annie (1991)	Mother	(?)	(?)	(?)
Dee (1992)	Mother	16	2008	"I lost my mother. She died of Aids …" "My mother, she was sick of HIV/AIDS"
Dimakatso (1992)	Mother ("My father abandoned me when I was still a child")	(?)	(?)	(?)
Palesa (1989?)	Mother	18/19(?)	August 2008	"She was sick suffering so much"
Zee (1992)	Mother Father	3/4 16	1995/1996 2008	Suicide HIV/AIDS

2.5.6 Michael – 'Hold on(to) God in every situation'

I am Michael, a 17-year-old boy (in 2010). I am a twin brother, I live at the place of safety, I am writing my Matric this year and I am a rapper. I was born in Carletonville(?), my parents are Matsidiso H and Tayana L, sweet people. Grannies Mmamatsemela and Mr Molondolazi. Uncles Ntsikelelo and Fombata, aunt Neliswa H. (I) don't know much about my father's side, but my mother's side (of the family) are selfish people. Heartless and they're Xhosa but speak Zulu.

The first important person in my life will be my twin. He is the person I have always had, we do things together he goes through everything with me. He taught me never to run away from my problems. And (the) second person well (that will) be my late mother because she made me what and who I am today. (Also) people from the church they taught me to hold on(to) God in every situation. Victor and Wiseman 'is always good to cry (to)', but (I) don't do it too much. Doris - she taught (me) that we become strong from our mistakes.

I firstly lost my little sister followed by my dad then my mom. I can't remember about the first two people but mother was the best humble(?) at all times. Yep! (I lost) my mother, she used to live far from me and come see me at the end of every month because of her job. She had cancer then she passed on. (She was important to me because) she was my mother. My mother had big dreams about us. I am not from a rich background so my mother always wanted us to continue where she ended so that kind of gave me a motivation / support in what ever I do. After the (first) TOL camp I could then be open to people about anything and talk to my schoolmates about the importance of school and how hard life could be without education. Thanks to the organisers of (the) TOL camp.

Reflection-in-Progress: On meeting and getting to know Michael

Michael is one of the twins. They both had the demeanour of a typical rap star when they arrived for the first TOL camp. To be honest, I must admit that at first I was very sceptical about these two brothers. This scepticism was purely based on their specific dress code – the big oversized shirts, baggy pants, big sunglasses and what one may refer to as 'bling-bling', the big dog-chain like jewellery they wore – and the kind of 'slang' language they used to introduce themselves during the first TOL camp's very first focus group meeting the Friday night.

Michael arrived on time for us to leave for the campsite during the first TOL camp. However, Shaun was not with him and it seemed like Michael was a bit irritated by the fact that Shaun has not arrived on time. Yet, when Shaun finally arrived Michael seemed very relieved to see him. From the start of the first TOL camp, it became very clear that Michael was very close to his twin brother – Shaun. All my fears about the twins (and also the other teenagers) appeared to be totally unfounded the moment we arrived at the campsite. Michael and Shaun – like the rest of the teenagers – were very kind, well-mannered and polite boys, which is evident even from Michael's answers in his workbook: "Thanks to the organisers of (the) TOL camp".

When talking about their mother whom they've lost, Michael became extremely emotional – which was very disturbing to the group and especially Shaun. Shaun at one stage of the camp even tried to calm Michael down by telling him something to the extent of: "just answer the question, don't give them anything more". From this, it seemed like Michael was more in touch with his feelings about the loss of their loved ones, than maybe Shaun was – who tried to appear to have more control over his emotions. Michael also at face value seemed to have a deeper connection with God by the way he brought God into a discussion, without necessarily any mention being made to God otherwise.

2.5.7 Moses – 'They see me as a role model'

My name is Moses. I am 20 years old (in 2010). This year (I) am doing my second year in IT (three years degree) at PC training and am also a DJ. I was born in Nylstroom somewhere in Limpopo. My parents were Christinah and David, I never knew my grandparents, they died when I was very young. My parents were separated since I was a baby. I live in a family of three, with my brother and my cousin. My cousin is in college and my brother is in the music industry. They like music (any kind). I love them because they understand me and they are very open people.

The most important people in my life are my family. This is simply because they are the ones that give me courage and hope so that I can take my life seriously. My mom is on top of my list as she gave me life and let me experience it with a different perspective, meaning growing up differently.

So far the most important person in my life is my brother. He taught (me) lots of stuff like music and he teaches me maths and science. From life itself I have learned many things from my brother.

In 1998 (1998-05-28) I lost my mother after a long illness and two years after I lost my father. It didn't hurt by that time because I was little but now for the fact that I start(ing) to experience life it is starting to hurt. In 2003 I lost my cousin after he committed suicide. Lastly it was my first brother during my Matric year in 2008 October. What is special about my mother is that she was there from day one. She was able to look after 5 boys and being a single parent. My dad is not that special because he was never there and I wished to spend more time with him.

I get most of my courage from those people who died by doing my level best because I tell myself where ever they are, they are proud of me after my each and every success.

The first camp made me realise that GOD is the most important person in my life so I should make (the) most of my life. So that is what (I) am doing right now, (I) am playing a very important role to people around me! I give them hope and courage by the way (I) am handling my life at this moment. They see me as a role model.

Reflection-in-Progress: On meeting and getting to know Moses

Juanita and I both agreed that Moses was the gentleman of the boys. With the first TOL camp, he offered to help carry our luggage and boxes containing the goods for the camp. When anybody needed help during the TOL camps Moses was always willing and close by to help, whether it was helping to carry stuff or helping the girls get out of the river during the obstacle course.

When Moses spoke about his family and the people he has lost in live, especially his mother, and after the first TOL camp his oldest brother, it was very clear that his family played a big role in his life. Since his mother's death his four brothers became his everything, and it was clear that fighting with them made him very sad.

As the eldest of the boys at the camps, it was clear that the other boys looked up to him to a certain extent. At one stage between the two TOL camps all five boys were residing at the same House of Safety. I got the feeling that this gave them all a sense of brotherhood and it was clear that although Michael and Shaun as twins, and Victor and Wiseman grouped themselves together, Moses gained the position of 'oldest brother' in this newly established 'brotherhood'.

Moses is a very honest young adult, who openly and full of shame admits to his mistakes in life, like playing the Lotto with money he did not really have. During the second TOL camp, the others (especially the boys) confronted him during a focus group session about the reason for him leaving the House of Safety when he did. It was evident from this that they did not know the true reason for him leaving. He honestly admitted to the fact that he and a girl had sexual intercourse during the Sea Camp at the end of the year. For that reason he left the House of Safety, because as he put it: 'there are a lot of small children staying in the House of Safety' and that he did not want to set a bad example to them. It clearly took a lot of courage to admit to this, and showed his growing maturity in life.

2.5.8 Shaun – 'To be positive in everything'

I am Shaun from (the House of Safety) and I do music. I would really love to study publishing after Matric. I was born somewhere in South Africa but grew up in Lesotho, my father was a soldier on until 1996. My mother was a single parent from 1996 to 2005.

I don't know much about my family because I've never spen(ded) much time with them but the only thing I know is that they (are) very supportive and that's one thing I like about them.

Important people in my life are a people who are always there when I need them, those (who) care a lot about me. This would be my late mother, my twin brother and my mother's family. One of my teachers (also) by the name of Daisy. She taught me to be faithful in God and never let my problems get to me. Mike, Michael taught me a lot in life to be positive in everything.

I lost a couple of people in my life, 1996 I lost my little sister, she was about three months and weeks old two weeks after her ceremony my dad got stabbed and he also passed away so nine years later my mom followed, this was 2005 on the 21 March. 2008 June my friend passed away, the worst thing is he was a twin, so he left his twin. Recently my grandmother died over a gunshot (wound).

They (were) important because some brought life to me and some help me go through a lot. My mother wanted / wished to see me successful one day. She wanted me to complete my school and be a doctor. It (the first TOL camp) helped me to express myself and be able to encourage other people going through similar situation and after all I was better.

Reflection-in-Progress: On meeting and getting to know Shaun

Although I had deliberated long and hard about reflecting on the twins' stories as one story, I eventually decided against it. The reason for it being, that even though they are very close and share the same basic tragic story, their reactions to it needs to be acknowledged as their own individual take on it.

Juanita jokingly referred to the twins as my favourites. I must admit I do have a very soft spot for them. In my own life, the phenomena of twins play a big role. I am very fond of two of my male cousins who are fraternal twins and close to my age. In my group of friends, I also have two sets of male twins, one fraternal and one paternal, a bit younger than me. One of my dear university friends with whom I'm still close, also have twins – a boy and a girl three years of age.

Shaun might not find it funny, that I am again mentioning it here, but he was the one who was responsible that we left later than anticipated for the first TOL camp, because he was not on time.

Although not as late as the first time, he was also the last to arrive when we were getting ready to leave for the second TOL camp. This, along with his dress code and language use, had me very worried at first. I thought he was going to be the so-called 'bad boy' of the group. I was proved so wrong.

After receiving the camping goods – duvets, pillows, T-shirts and toiletries – we bought for them and thanking us, he made the extra effort of coming to our room – with tears in his eyes – to personally thank us for the goods, when he realised that it all would be theirs to keep. That for me just goes to show that you can't judge a book by its cover, or in the metaphor of the TOL camps, the fruits by the leaves of the tree.

He seemed sceptical to partake in the focus group discussions at first, yet I was pleasantly surprised by the open and honest answers in his workbooks.

2.5.9 Victor – 'I've been able to cough out what was eating me inside'

I'm Victor, 17 years old. I was writing my Matric last year (2009), failed physical science and mathematics and currently on a supplementary. I (was) born at Springs, the town in Mpumalanga(?). And father is Elias M and my mom Catherine M, with Elizabeth and Daniel my grandparents together with only uncle Thabiso and the aunts. My family are Pedi's, Zulus, Tswanas and there are a very good family as far as I know them. They like joy and dislike fighting as a family. I love them because they love me too. The most important people in my life are (firstly) my mom, she makes (me) look forward to it every day and yet want to conquer the challenge of life itself. Secondly, my own siblings, I just want to make sure, as their big brother that I do everything best for their own sake.

(My) dad, my grandparents and also my close friends and everyone around me that loves me and support and comfort me in every situation I find myself in.

Unfortunately yes, I have lost someone very close to me which was my aunt, that always took me as her own son and I took her as my own mom, but I guess now it's too late for me to tell how much I love her and the way I appreciate everything she did for me. (Also) my two cousins which died the same year (2009), and my aunt or course in 2007.   THEY WILL ALWAYS BE IN MY MEMORIES.   (They were important) (b)ecause they always gave me what I completely needed in my life, they gave me support, they've shown true love towards me in such a way that I can't exactly show towards them. What I keep in mind is only the positive things they used to tell me, and what they always hope for me was, the great success (?) of all my true abilities.

(The first TOL camp had) (a) positive impact I guess, because I've been able to cough out what was eating me inside in black and white, and then became stronger. In other people's lives I am an inspiration I believe, in order to make the lives easier and even better.

Reflection-in-Progress: On meeting and getting to know Victor

Victor is the youngest and smallest of the boys, and although his academic performance does not necessarily reflect it, I am of the opinion that he is very intelligent. He wants to be a clinical psychologist. Since both Juanita and I come from a background in psychology, I think we both felt a certain connection with him.

During the first TOL camp, he spoke very lovingly of his aunt that died. It was evident that he felt very close to her and that her death had a great impact on him. Although he does not stay with his family, it is clear that he loves them.

Victor also stayed in the House of Safety at the time of the first TOL camp, along with the twins Michael and Shaun, and Wiseman – whom he regards as his brother. In between the two TOL camps Victor and Wiseman moved from Pretoria to Thembisa to go and stay with Wiseman's older sister, Precious. While staying together in the House of Safety, Victor, Wiseman and the twins formed a very strong bond. Victor even featured in one of the twin's songs.

He seemed to really enjoy completing his workbooks during the TOL camps. Like Dee, he also enjoys giving his feelings a voice by writing it down and he contributed a lot to the focus group sessions by voicing his feelings especially about his aunt that he lost.

Since Victor and Wiseman moved out in the time between the two TOL camps, the people at PEN did not have contact with them anymore. Luckily, I stayed in contact via sms, and although I did not know they moved out after the House of Safety, the moment I smsed them about the follow-up TOL camp they immediately responded positively. It was clear at the follow-up TOL camp that they and the rest of the group (especially the boys) missed each other's company.

2.5.10 Wiseman – 'Living life to the fullest'

My name is Wiseman, turning 18 years this year 20 July (2010), currently at home finished my Matric last year (2009) but failed two subjects and now all I do is living life to the fullest.

Well I was born at Mpumalanga, I use to stay with my grandparents, then at 2004 I came to stay with mother in Pretoria, until last year (2007) when she passed away. Well my mom was a kind person, a person who likes jokes who likes to live a peaceful life. My grandfather is the same as my mother and my grandmother is a noisy person she likes to shout for no reason.

My mom is the most important person in my life even though she passed away but she still is important and nothing will change. (S)he taught me a (a) lot of things such as to respect, to care about people who care about me and to know how to take care of myself.

My cousin Victor and Busisiwe they are also important, and my sister who is now taking a good care of me she's also important. The special person that I lost was my mother who I loved with my whole life and still do.

(She) passed away last year (2007) on 3 August, well as I've said she was a kind person she wanted something big in life but Satan was so jealous and nothing worked and until she got sick for three months and then passed away.

(She was important) (b)ecause she was my mother and everything she did was special to me. The memories that I have of my mom, was that she was a person who doesn't give up in life so that helps me now and not to give up easily in everything that I do, and she wanted to see me being successful in life.

Well (the) tree of life changed my life in a way that I look at life in a different way now in a way that I'm starting to take it seriously and starting to set goals. And have plans for the future.

Reflection-in-Progress: On meeting and getting to know Wiseman

Funny enough, I remember Wiseman sitting to my direct right during the focus group sessions of both TOL camps. He was always full of jokes during these sessions, to the extent that I sometimes referred to him as the 'Wisecrack' of the group, or sometimes when he maybe did not want to contribute to the focus group sessions, I would specifically ask him for his 'words of Wisdom'.

It was evident from the very beginning that he and Victor had a close bond with each other. I think something he said his deceased mother taught him in life, namely: 'to respect, to care about people who care about me', he took seriously to heart, because when he moved out of the House of Safety to his sister's place in Thembisa, Victor – as he calls him, his 'cousin' – also moved in with them. I met his sister briefly at her place of work, when I went to drop off some stuff for Victor and Wiseman, and she seemed like a very kind and loving lady, who clearly did not only care about her younger brother, but also about his friend Victor.

I got the idea that he thoroughly enjoyed the obstacle course and during the second TOL camp, he lost his one shoe in the river and we all joked about this when watching the photos Juanita took during the obstacle course – to see when he actually lost his shoe. He seemed to be a great sport, and I would even dare to say that he offered comic relief at times in discussing the difficult topics at hand.

As I said in my reflection on Victor's story, the boys all seemed to be very close. A certain sense of brotherhood became very evident, especially during the second TOL camp. The others seemed very happy to see Victor and Wiseman again, after not seeing their friends for a couple of months. Mention of Wiseman and the advice he gave the twins is also made in their song '*Keep pushing*' written about their mother and other loved ones they've lost (please refer to section 3.6).

Summary of deaths suffered by the boys:

NAME (BIRTH YEAR)	PERSON WHO DIED	AGE AT LOSS	WHEN	HOW
Michael & Shaun (1992)	Little sister	4	1996	"Died at 6 months"
	Father	4	1996	"My dad got stabbed"
	Mother	13	21 March 2005	"She had cancer"
	Friend	16	June 2008	(?)
	Grandmother	16/17	2009(?)	"My grandmother died over a gunshot (wound)"
Moses (1989)	Father	7	1996	(?)
	Mother	9	28 May 1998	"After a long illness"
	Cousin	14	2003	"He committed suicide"
	Brother	19	2008	(?)
Victor (1992)	Aunt	15	2007	(?)
	2 Cousins	16/17	2009	(?)
Wiseman (1992)	Mother	15	3 August 2007	"She got sick for 3 months and then passed away"

2.6   LEARNING TO LISTEN: MY STORY IN RELATION TO THE CONTEXT

How does my own story link with the context of the study and with the context of these ten adolescents' stories? For me, being introduced to the workings of the NGO PEN as well as the other NGOs who formed part of the Department of Practical Theology's greater research project entitled *SMALL SURVIVORS OF HIV/AIDS*, was an eye opening experience. I don't think I realised and really comprehended how much these people care about the welfare of these adolescents whose lives and well-being are entrusted to them. It was a humbling experience for me to hear about, see and experience the facilitators' care, love and protectiveness for and regarding these adolescents. I will never forget Susan van der Walt's initial animosity towards Juanita and myself regarding our intentions with our research, the TOL camp and the adolescents themselves.

As far as the TOL camps go – this was really my first encounter, not only with the planning and facilitating thereof, but also of camping itself, as I wasn't fond of the whole school and even church camping experience as a child. Luckily, for me Juanita was and she took to it like fish to the water. It wasn't as difficult or even as scary as I anticipated it to be, and come to think of it, I really enjoyed the whole experience thereof thoroughly.

Meeting the children and hearing their stories, as I alluded to earlier in my reflections on their stories (see section 2.5), was an amazing experience. I could not comprehend all that they have been through in their short lives, how they managed to cope and show resilience in the face of adversity. More so was my amazement that they so willingly entrusted us – total strangers at the onset of the research – with their sad and sometimes difficult stories. It is difficult for me to tell my own story here and only here and therefore my story and context as well my co-researchers' stories will rather be allowed to unfold as the research process progresses and itself unfolds.

2.7   CLOSING REMARKS ON CHAPTER 2

In this chapter, we have looked at the context of the NGO PEN who is actively engaged within the inner city of Pretoria. They are as an organisation working from a faith-based perspective with the inner city community, especially with the adolescents on whom the focus of this study falls. Furthermore, this research study was situated within the context of approaching research in an ethical manner, which is very important when doing research with human participants, or co-researchers within the social sciences. Working with adolescents, and more specifically vulnerable adolescents and Aids orphans, furthermore emphasised the need to approach this research in an ethical and sensitive manner. In light of this, situating the study within an ethical context not only seems appropriate, but indeed very important to the whole research process, as ethics does not end with getting informed consent from the adolescents' parent or guardian, but infuses the whole research process from planning through execution to dissemination thereof.

The macro levels of the context of this research, namely the research field of HIV and Aids and the bereavement of these adolescents within and bordering on this field, is discussed in chapters 3 and 4 of this study. However within the PFPT approach to narrative research, it was firstly necessary to focus on the meso levels (PEN and the TOL camps) and especially micro levels of these specific adolescents' specific in-context experiences as experienced, lived, described and interpreted by themselves.

In this chapter therefore, I gave my co-researchers the chance to introduce themselves, their specific contexts and some stories related to their contexts. As I was not the one introducing them but by letting, them take the floor and introduce themselves, the introduction was not done in my language, but in their own language and on their own terms, before I also introduced my own context as researcher in this study.