

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EXPLICATION OF THE METHOD

#### 4.1 RATIONALE AND AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of phenomenological psychology is to understand the meaningfulness of human experience as it is actually lived. It is my aim in this study therefore to understand and convey the meaningfulness of the victims' experience of being subjected to political violence. According to Aanstoos (1984:2):

"For phenomenological psychology, the fundamental psychological reality is human being-the-world, a term indicative of an essential relation of person and world".

It is my task to make this structure of relation of person and world explicit hence the data generating questions were open ended to allow subjects to tell their own story about the situation in which they experienced victimization.

The arguments posited in Chapter One of this study gave rise to the present investigation. Rabinowitz (1988) states that although political violence is only one form along the broad spectrum of violence to which children and adults alike are exposed to in South Africa, criminal and domestic violence must also be considered. This exposure results in people being victims who are killed, injured or whose property is damaged .

In the South African context, literature about political violence has been described in detail (McKendrick and Hoffman, 1990), with specific reference to a militarized society, agencies of violence and forms of violence. During the height of the freedom struggle, the former head of the South African Defence Force, General C.J. Viljoen reiterated that, "South Africans must be prepared to accept certain levels of discomfort, disruption and even violence in their every day lives" (in Hough, 1984).

Even in the context of this statement, there is very little information that has been documented about the experiences of this disruption or violence on the life world of the family. Although the South African media is available to depict in detail the horrendous forms of violence that victims

of political violence have endured, these detailed narrative events remain pure descriptions related by journalists as observers rather than descriptions of experiences from the families themselves.

Therefore the purpose of the present study is to describe how the family's world has changed in different moments and different contexts. The different contexts during the political strife in South Africa are torture, harassment, death in detention, a long wait for liberation and post apartheid South Africa. Also in post apartheid South Africa, reconciliation processes are in place through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This process is aimed at achieving reconciliation between the perpetrators of the State-sanctioned violence and their victims. It was believed that through the revelation of the truth of what really took place, the deep divisions of the past in this society would be healed. This would then create a moral climate in which reconciliation and peace would flourish (Boraine, 1995). In fact through this process South Africa has attempted to lift the blanket of shame from the well of our common grief.

It would appear that South Africa's truth and reconciliation process is modelled on the post war process similar to that of other countries such as Chile, El Salvador, Argentina and Germany. In Germany fifty years ago, at the end of the war, effective structures to establish truth and promote reconciliation were erected, younger generations were told about what happened in the past through history books and monuments in the museums were put in place as memoirs of that history (Frescura, 1996, personal communication). For the purpose of the present study, only the events that included disappearances or abductions, exposure to torture in detention followed by deaths in detention were investigated. It is understandable that the different events referred to in this study symbolize traumatic moments for the families that were subjected to political violence.

The rationale behind this investigation is to examine whether the family's life world has in any way been changed by victimization. It is my belief that since human beings are self interpreting beings, these experiences would be better articulated by the families themselves rather than being attributed by the researcher in gaining knowledge at a distance as an observer. This belief is supported by Aanstoos's (1984:4) reference to phenomenological research:

“Furthermore in phenomenological research I remain faithful to experience by proceeding descriptively. I begin by obtaining naive descriptions from subjects. Moreover this descriptive emphasis is not compromised by the later imposition of hypothetical constructs. My aim as researcher is rather to reflectively determine and explicate the essential structure of the experience. I achieve this by making explicit the meaningful coherence that may have been lived only problematically and hence described only implicitly by the subjects. In this way, phenomenological research is not caught by the same dilemmas that plagued introspectionism. It does not require that the subject grasp the essential structure of their experience, only that they describe their experience as they lived it”.

It has to be understood that this study is an investigation of the experiences of the families as victims in the state of political upheaval in South Africa and encompasses a broad definition of victimization. The aim is to understand and describe the meaning of this particular type of victimization. This suggests that the description of experiences of families who have been subjected to political violence will be documented. It is hoped that the study of this type of victimization will also add to the understanding of victimization in general.

According to Aanstoots (1984:2)

“For phenomenological psychology, the fundamental psychological reality is human being-in-the-world, a term indicative of an essential relation of person and world”.

Many of the processes which psychology studies, for example, thinking, emotion, perception, memory, learning and motivation are specific modes by which people relate to the world.

Aanstoots (1984:2-3) refers:

“Phenomenology’s most basic discovery is that this relation is lived as an intentional unity, a correlation of experiencer-experienced. Thus, psychologically speaking, a person is always in relation “to” or directed “toward” or “intending” something. Furthermore, by virtue of this intentional unity, that toward which the person is directed coheres, that is, it presents itself to experience as always already meaningful in some way”.

Accordingly, the research task at hand is to study the meaningful coherence of experience of victimization as it is lived. In the present study the forms of political violence which these families lived through are disappearances, abductions and torture in detention followed by death in detention (McKendrick & Hoffmann, 1990).

## 4.2 METHOD

A psychometric approach was not considered as appropriate. Firstly, a questionnaire forces a subject into a particular mode, and secondly, such a questionnaire can only be constructed after the researcher has particularized the structure of the experience of the participant. The procedure used here enabled the researcher to study the data as it emerged and not according to particular pre-selected aspects. According to Giorgi (1983:137), “the phenomenologist seeks to understand behaviour within the context of experience”, and therefore a phenomenological approach seemed appropriate. This approach does not assume that we understand psychological reality, it seeks to describe the life-world of the participant. The question of the validity of this method of research has been dealt with by Kvale, (1996), Kruger (1979) and Wertz (1984). The reliability of this method of research can be, and has in this case been dealt with by presenting the analysis to a colleague and the promoter for verification.

In the present study a form of qualitative analysis, the empirical phenomenological method (de Koning, 1979, Giorgi, 1975 and Stones, 1988) was employed. One of the principles of this method is to suspend one’s assumptions and theoretical presuppositions in order to obtain comprehensive subjective descriptions.

According to Moustakas (1994:13), these descriptions provide the basis for “a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essence of the experience”. Essence refers to those constituent meanings which define the experience, and which cannot be sacrificed without compromising the integrity of the experience (Kvale, 1983). The researcher not only interprets what is said but how it is said, as observations of facial expressions, vocalization and other bodily gestures give meaning to the experience. For example in Sally’s family, during the interview with Alex about his son who disappeared, I observed how painful it was to talk about his disappearance and death as he sobbed bitterly (see protocol two: example of the text).

The objective of phenomenological research is to uncover and accurately describe the essential meanings implicit in the participants’ naive description of their experience. Such explication yields a condensed specific description or situated structure which illuminates the essence of each individual’s unique experience. By identifying essential themes common to all or most participants a general description or structure of the experience in question is derived.

In the present study the data which would identify these themes was obtained by using a qualitative interview as a research tool (Kvale, 1996). Using the interview as a research tool met the criteria of the aim of the study as families understanding of the meanings of victimization in their lived world were described (Kvale, 1996). Some of the criteria, to mention a few, are that the families have had an experience relating to victimization, they are fluent in communicating their feelings, thoughts and perceptions in relation to this victimization, have the same home language as the researcher and expressed willingness to be open to the researcher (Kruger, 1988).

### 4.3 COLLECTION OF DATA

The data was collected by means of unstructured interviews. The interviews were recorded on an audio tape. The present writer acted as an interviewer. The interviewer conducted meetings with the participants which lasted for about an hour to an hour and a half a week prior to the session scheduled for the interview. This conversation was held to explain the steps of what was to happen and was crucial to establish rapport with the participants. This was important in this study as explanation of all the procedures and steps also allayed participants' anxieties. For instance they were anxious about the use of an audio tape as they wanted to know who would have access to this data. The participants were told that the information given would be used to analyse their experiences and that their identities would remain anonymous. They were told that what they experienced was important and not their political views.

As an interviewer *my bona fides* were accepted by the subjects who obviously placed a great store on the confidence they gained from the present writer who acted as a counsellor to the families before and after they testified at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Although this is so, it would not be uncommon for the victims to refuse to participate in a study of this nature due to association with people who are perceived as powerful or authority figures. Another fact is that previous research on political imprisonment and torture (Foster, Davis & Sandler, 1987) had no significant impact on the legal process. No court accepted the psychological claim that South African versions of solitary confinement were harmful, thus subjecting victims to a more helpless situation. These perceptions have been inherited from the authoritarian political system. When the data gathering interview phase began, the tape recorder was switched on and the subjects were asked the following:

“I would like you to tell me what your experience was of being detained and tortured in prison. Tell me what happened, how it affected you and what you felt during and after the incident. Take your time, you can start whenever you like”.

To those participants whose family members disappeared and subsequently died while detained the following question was asked:

“I would like you to tell me about the experience of having your (father or mother your boyfriend or girlfriend or spouse, your husband or wife, your son or daughter or your brother or sister) disappear and his/her subsequent death in prison. Tell me what happened, how it affected you and what you felt during and after the incident. Take your time, you can start whenever you like”.

The last question was conveyed according to the interviewee’s status relation to the family. In other words the relationship of the interviewee with the person who had either disappeared, tortured or died in detention. During the interview, the interviewer used phrases such as, “Could you tell me more about that”, or “Could you explain that to me?” in order to encourage the subjects. Although the duration of the interview is determined by the participants, in the present study, it differed from participant to participant but was on average ninety minutes with the longest interviews not more than two hours. According to Giorgi (1970) an interview can last any length of time.

#### **4.4 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

Participants were selected on the basis of an experience of being subjected to political violence. The families were sampled from the present writers’ direct contact with them while providing counselling during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission sessions. This led to the present writer being a facilitator at a group meeting of all those who had testified, where families themselves were afforded a supportive role for each other, to share their experiences of the past and to explore meaningful ways of healing their souls. This sample then, was a sample of convenience.

Using the guidelines of Van Kaam (1969) the participants met the following criteria:

- the ability to express themselves linguistically with ease;
- the ability to sense and to express inner feelings and emotions without shame and inhibitions;

- the ability to sense and to express organic experiences that accompany these feelings;
- the experience of the situation under investigation;
- a spontaneous interest in their experience;
- the ability to report orally or write what was going on with themselves (in Valle and Halling, 1989).

This procedure meant that the researcher studied the data as it emerged as opposed to a procedure which involves particular pre-selected aspects.

For the present study twenty two members from ten families were selected and included the family members of the household ranging from high school age level to adults who were not older than seventy years. They were subjected to political violence which occurred from 1980-1990.

I explained the nature of the investigation to each family. The interviewing of the families continued until the present writer became satisfied that the question under investigation was answered.

#### **4.5 CONSTITUTING THE INTERVIEW**

A formal consent form was provided for all participants before the interview. All the persons interviewed were asked to sign a consent form. Since the families are from a Xhosa-speaking ethnic group, the interviews were conducted in IsiXhosa.

According to Kvale (1983) the status accorded to the interview is that ordinary people are able to describe their own life world, their opinions and acts in their own words. It is hoped that this method made it possible for the subjects to organize their own descriptions emphasizing what they themselves found important.

The descriptive data were derived from dialogal interviews which involved the method of imaginative listening. The interviews were both unstructured and semi-structured as questions were open-ended. An interview guide was used as there were similar questions that were asked across all families (Kvale, 1983) who experienced political victimization. More specifically the interview followed the guidelines of Kvale's (1983) qualitative research interview (pp171-



196). For instance the question or interview was centered on the life world of the interviewees, it focussed on certain themes, was descriptive and it took place in an interpersonal interaction.

The interviews were taped on an audiocassette recorder. After the interviews were completed the data were analysed in IsiXhosa. After the analysis of the protocols, some aspects of the data were transcribed by an experienced transcriber from IsiXhosa into English. The transcriber and I came to an understanding about the necessity of maintaining the confidential nature of the interviews in order to maintain a relationship of trust with the participants. The rationale behind this translation was to produce an English text or some data pertaining to the analysed protocols that would be understandable to the promoter.

#### **4.6 DIALOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE INTERVIEW**

Another level of description was introduced by conducting a conversation amongst the family members and the present writer. After individual members of the families were interviewed separately, a session was organised whereby all the members participated in a conversation about their experiences. The same research questions posed when they responded as individuals were repeated here. This was more a process-orientated approach than a procedurally orientated approach. For instance, together, the family members expressed their attitudes, thoughts and feelings about victimization, thus enlarging the interpretation rather than simply being an individual's perspective. Also I was able to reflect on what was meant. This provided an opportunity for me to evaluate if I had not overlooked aspects of the family members' experience that were important.

According to Halling & Leifer (1991), genuine dialogue occurs where there is structure and freedom. The structure that provided the backbone of this conversation amongst the family members was that of experiencing victimization. It was important for the participants to experience a non-threatening milieu. This allowed an opportunity for the participants to focus on the theme of the experience of victimization rather than talking about other topics which were not related to what they experienced. Also it was important for the participants to experience this sense of freedom as it allowed them to be genuinely open and receptive to what was new and different in the others' experiences and expressions.

For instance before the research interviews began, one parent remarked that they had never discussed as family members how each member felt about victimization. It was also important



to establish a basic trust amongst all participants including myself during this dialogue. This trust was influenced by the following factors:

- a sense of acceptance that what a person says or shares is heard and valued,
- a sense of direction, that there is something specific the group is trying to understand together (in this instance if victimization did change their lives as a family),
- a sense of freedom that group members feel unrestricted in their ability to question, risk and be creative in relation to the phenomenon being studied,
- a sense of respect for the unfolding of the specific group process, an awareness and appreciation that every group or family will develop in accordance with its own dynamics and that their needs to be supported and nurtured,
- a sense of universalization, a validation or confirmation of the qualitative aspects of the group members' personal experience (Halling, Kunz & Rowe, 1994).

Various levels of dialogue postulated by Leifer (1986) emerged in this dialogue of these family members in the present study. Firstly, the preliminary dialogue was evident during the initial meetings within the group. Secondly, the transitional dialogue brought the phenomenon into the group in the sense that it was experienced in a more immediate and direct way. Thirdly, fundamental dialogue occurred where the discussion was not only of personal accounts but descriptions collected from participants as well. For instance during the preliminary dialogue, I had initial meetings or interviews with individual members of the families as they responded with individual opinions about the victimization. This was important as a starting point as it allowed for sharing of preconceptions and gradually getting to know one another fully.

It was important for me to share my own experiences with regard to the phenomenon of victimization which was experienced indirectly when burglars had broken into my own home and stolen my car. This meant that a transitional level of dialogue had emerged and was experienced in a more immediate and direct way by all the group.

The fundamental level of dialogue was characterised by discussion not only of personal accounts of victimization but of the descriptions collected from all the group members. During this dialogue, there was a building on previous themes and an interweaving of these themes

as they were illuminated by the data. Fischer & Wertz (1979) refer to the themes of victimization as the following; living routinely, being disrupted, being violated, reintegration, and going on (in Giorgi et al, 1979).

In the present study, the sequence followed in the analyses of the protocols is dealt with in the following section.

#### **4.7 METHOD OF PROTOCOL ANALYSIS**

All the interviews were analysed using the method set out by Stones (1988). According to Patton (1990) this method has its foundations in phenomenological studies which focus on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience. The transcribed interviews were broken down into spontaneously emerging natural meaning units (NMU's), statements expressing single, delimited aspects of the subjects' experiences (Kruger, 1988).

The method entails reading and re-reading the protocols, delineating natural meaning units (NMU's), reflection and reducing NMU's, a repetition of the aforementioned phases and then an analysis of the experience. Wertz's (1983) methodology was also utilized in the present study by applying a psychological structure which is composed of several moments or interrelated substructures.

Three protocols were chosen at random for the ideographic interpretation as will be shown below. Pseudonyms have been used to conceal the identity of the participants.

Example:

Dick's family

Dick - (tortured in detention)

Delia - (cousin who stayed with Dick during the period of his detention)

**PROTOCOL 1: DICK'S FAMILY**  
**VERBATIM DESCRIPTION**  
**DICK: TORTURED IN DETENTION**  
**DELIA: COUSIN WHO STAYED WITH DICK DURING THE PERIOD**  
**OF DICK'S DETENTION**

**RESEARCHER:** I would like you to tell me what your experience was of being detained and tortured in prison. Tell me what happened, how it affected you, and what you felt during and after the incident.

**DICK:** I was one of those people who talked so that government officials of that time could hear. I opposed Government, speaking publicly about the oppressive laws during the 1980's. You see, I was still a youngster then, who had just left school after passing Matric. I received this influence<sup>1</sup> of speaking publicly about apartheid laws from student activities we had in our schools. One of the forms of fighting the enemy was to use the strategies that would be effective.

**RESEARCHER:** Meaning what? Go on .....

**DICK:** Like organising school boycotts, and boycott of businesses in the city that were white-owned, and this made the police to be angry.

Look! This was like war, because one day the police caught me while I was about to distribute pamphlets to inform people in our communities not to buy from the white-owned businesses in town. They arrested me but later released me, not believing that I was the one who organised

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Dick attended political meetings where he learned to speak in public

this as I was still young. So, they warned me.

But, there's this year which we organised this consumer boycott successfully with other comrades and this really crippled the shops in town. The community supported our call and for a period of 9 months, no buying at all from the shops in town. The police hunted us and eventually arrested most of the comrades under the state of emergency. So I was also detained.

**RESEARCHER:** What happened then?

**DICK:** In prison? It was shocking. The security police used to tell us that we had no chances to live. They told us the stories of the past, how people died in prison. That on its own was threatening. The only thing that one could do was to succumb in those conditions and let things go as they were. All the time you were terrified.

They tortured me causing severe bodily pains to persuade me to talk or answer their questions. That caused severe physical and mental suffering. Sometimes they threatened me with guns. They also swung me through the window in a high building called ABC. They connected electric shocks to my toes, wrapped my head in a sock, switched off the lights in the room and slapped me. Psychologically, they would tell me that a certain 'so and so' had told them that I am an informer (impimpi). They made people to be negative about me as they used to say to them I am working for the State.

The only thing I told myself was that I am not turning back. Bitter things had happened then. I had no choice. When you're detained you don't know your release date. Sometimes when you hear the keys you think there is someone coming to release you only to find that police are just fooling you.

**RESEARCHER:** Tell me more about this .....

**DICK:** At times police would go to my home at night, wake my family, kick the doors and threaten my relatives that they should show them the guns I was harbouring as they said I was a terrorist. They would mislead my family by telling them that I would stay in jail for the rest of my life. It is so painful when people threaten your family. At times they would come in disguised cars, like private cars, and this made people very suspicious of me, wanting to believe that perhaps I was really an informer (impimpi).

My family as a result thought that I was just a silly boy who was giving white people lot of trouble but they realized what I was doing when things started happening.

**RESEARCHER:** Like what?

**DICK:** You see!, we thought that liberation would come after our deaths. In fact in 1988 I was sure to be sentenced for 25 years in jail. My life was in jeopardy, but through the change of things political leaders were released, liberation movements unbanned, so we were released when talks about these changes began.

**RESEARCHER:** Your reactions to this?

**DICK:** Well, happy that I was out but the struggle was only beginning as we would not compromise until the government was prepared to introduce new changes which we saw in 1994 in the elections. I know others are cursing the President of South Africa for not doing enough for them as they also fought for liberation.

My real concern is about those who became more victims than I am, like those who suffered paralysis on wheelchairs now, they need compensation but the TRC process is there to look at these issues.

I think the TRC was a platform to voice my experience but I tell you now, memories of what happened in detention came back when I saw who tortured me. For example, when I was tortured in Village B police cells,

one man told me that when liberation comes I'll be dented. There, I was humiliated, honestly, when I was undressed in front of women.

I can say I'm happy that I am independent, because I studied further after release from jail, so I am not expecting any support from the government. But, I surely wish as I mentioned even in my testimony with the TRC, that this government should recognise the homes and families of those who suffered fighting this struggle as some families are really in a bad situation. I think the community should also support them in some way or other but the leaders of this government should take responsibility. For instance our veterans, these are the people who forfeited their lives to die, so there has to be a way to remember them.

**RESEARCHER:** I would like you to tell me what your experience was of being detained and tortured in prison. Tell me what happened, how it affected you, and what you felt during and after the incident.

#### **NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

- 1 I was one of those people who talked so that the government officials of that time could hear. I opposed Government, speaking publicly about the oppressive laws during the 1980's.
- 2 You see, I was still a youngster then, who had just left school after passing Matric. I received this influence of speaking publicly about apartheid laws from student activities we had in our schools. One of the forms of fighting the enemy was to use the strategies that would be effective.

#### **ESSENTIAL THEMES**

- Dick voiced his opposition of the oppressive laws of the government publicly.
- Dick's protest actions were influenced by students' activities which helped him to speak publicly about activities in the struggle.

**RESEARCHER:** Meaning what? Go on .....



**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

Like organising school boycotts, boycott of business in the city that were white owned, and this made the police to be angry. Look! This was like war, because one day the police caught me while I was about to distribute pamphlets to inform people in our communities not to buy from the white owned businesses in town. They arrested me but later released me, not believing that I was the one who organised this as I was still young. So, they warned me.

- 3 But, there's this year which we organised this consumer boycott successfully with other comrades and this really crippled the shops in town. The community supported our call and for a period of 9 months, no buying at all from the shops in town. The police hunted us and eventually arrested most of the comrades under the state of emergency. So I was detained.

**RESEARCHER:** What happened then?

- 4 In prison? It was shocking. The security police used to tell us that we had no chances to live. They told us stories of the past, how people died in prison. That on its own was threatening. The only thing one could do was to succumb in those conditions and let things go as they were. All the time you were terrified.

- 5 They tortured me causing severe bodily pains to persuade me to talk or answer their questions. That caused severe physical and mental suffering. Sometimes they threatened me with guns. They also swung me through the window in a high building called ABC. They connected electric shocks to my toes, wrapped my head in a sock, switched off the lights in the room and slapped me. Psychologically, they would tell me that a certain 'so and so' had told them that I am an informer (impimpi). They made people to be negative about me as they used to say to them I am working for the State.

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

Dick makes it clear that from his perspective it was a war with racial prejudice and oppression as the main thrust of the struggle hence they participated in the activities they used to fight back. This culminates in his arrest by police but later release with a warning.

Dick and his comrades organize a successful consumer boycott which had an impact on businesses, leading to their arrest and detention by the police.

Dick describes life threatening experiences to which he was subjected to by the police which conveyed the impression that detainees would die in prison.

Dick describes inhumane and vicious methods of torture which were inflicted upon him. These were life threatening. They caused mental and physical suffering.

He also describes his unwillingness to give in, his determination in spite of psychological manipulation of the prospect of being released.

## NATURAL MEANING UNITS

- 6 The only thing I told myself was that I am not turning back. Bitter things had happened then. I had no choice. When you're detained you don't know your release date. Sometimes when you hear the keys you think there is someone coming to release you only to find that police are just fooling you.

**RESEARCHER:** Tell me more about this.

## NATURAL MEANING UNITS

- 7 At times police would go to my home at night, wake my family, kicked the doors and threaten my relatives that they should show them the guns I was harbouring as they said I was a terrorist. They would mislead my family by telling them that I would stay in jail for the rest of my life. It is painful when people threaten your family. At times they would come in disguised cars, like private cars and this made people very suspicious of me wanting to believe that perhaps I was really an informer (impimpi). My family as a result thought that I was just a silly boy who was giving white people lots of trouble but they realized when things started happening.

**RESEARCHER:** Like what?

- 8 You see! we thought that liberation would come after our deaths. In fact in 1988 I was sure to be sentenced for 25 years in jail. My life was in jeopardy, but through the change of things political leaders were released, liberation movements unbanned, so we were released when talks about changes began.

I'm happy I was out but the struggle was only beginning as we would not compromise until the government was prepared to introduce new changes which we saw in the 1994 elections.

## ESSENTIAL THEMES

Dick describes how even the prospect of being released was used against him as a form of psychological torture.

## ESSENTIAL THEMES

Dick explains the intensity of life threats (kicking doors at night, misleading family into believing that Dick would never come out of prison, confusing the family and community by disguising) which are painful; of having his family harassed by police and their acts which resulted in paranoia of the community while Dick's family lacked understanding of his actions as an activist.

Dick thought they would never experience the success of the liberation struggle but to their disbelief were released sooner than they had imagined.

Dick was happy to be released from jail but wouldn't give up fighting until changes occurred in the government and the society.

## NATURAL MEANING UNITS

- 9 I know others are accusing the President of South Africa of not doing enough for them as they also fought for liberation. My concern is about those who became more victims than I am, like those who suffered paralysis, on wheelchairs now, they need compensation that the TRC process is there to look at these issues.
- 10 I think the TRC was a platform to voice my experiences but I tell you now, memories of what happened in detention came back when I saw those who tortured me. For example, when I was tortured in Village B police cells, one man told me that when liberation comes I'll be dented. There, I was humiliated honestly, when I was undressed in front of women.

## ESSENTIAL THEMES

Dick feels that people expect the President to compensate them for their involvement in the struggle while his altruistic behaviour is towards those who became disabled. However, he expresses hope of the TRC to address the needs of those who were severely disabled.

Dick's thoughts of the TRC are of a platform to make public his experience as he remembers and mentions an incident of being humiliated by his captors.

**RESEARCHER:** What happens now?

- 11 Well, I can say I'm happy that I am autonomous, because I studied further after release from jail, so I am not expecting any support from the government
- 12 But, I surely wish as I mentioned even in my testimony with the TRC, that this government should recognise the homes and families of those who suffered fighting the struggle as some families are really in a bad situation. I think the community should also support them in some way or other but the leaders of this government should take responsibility. For instance our veterans, these are the people who forfeited their lives to die, so there has to be a way to remember them.

Dick takes pride in being an independent autonomous citizen.

While showing an awareness of suffering and destruction of homes and families, Dick feels very strongly that both the government and the community should make supportive resources available to heal the suffering which occurred during the struggle.

## DELIA - DICK'S COUSIN

### VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

**RESEARCHER:** I would like you to tell me about the experience of having your cousin detained and tortured in prison. Tell me what happened, how it affected you and what you felt during and after the incident.

**DELIA:**

It is a very long story sisi, (sister) but I'll tell you what I can remember as this happened a long time, like ten years or more. As far as I can remember Dick was popular amongst students at school as he spoke a lot. He appeared more upfront with student politics, and even when he had left school he was involved in community political affairs.

For instance during civic organisation activities he was amongst the group which protested against discriminatory laws against blacks. This made Dick unpopular with the police as they would come and look for him in our house. He would hide away though.

His activities became worse in 1985 when together with civic organisations, he organised a consumer boycott of all businesses in town, as a strategy to force the security authorities to release civic members who were detained. I mean the police saw red with this act as it became successful because the community heeded the call. There were posters all over and gatherings held which reinforced the slogan, 'Akuthengwa eDolophini' (no buying from city centre).

This appeared to be trouble for Dick as police came to our house, kicking doors, threatening to sjambok us if we don't tell them where he was. His parents were older, and this worried them a lot. They were concerned that Dick would be arrested if police caught up with him. Sometimes the police would bundle us in their vans pretending they were going to arrest us if we do not tell the truth. I was scared and also feared for the old parents as they didn't understand why Dick was involved in all of this.

Eventually, Dick was arrested and detained with others. As his family we were refused permission to visit him or change his clothes while in detention. This was frustrating and we were concerned about his condition in prison.

**RESEARCHER:**

And then, what happened?

**DELIA:**

It was a chaotic period even in the communities. For some reason a rumour was spread that Dick (while in jail) was an informer. Our community became hostile against us now. During these days, just to label a person with this word was enough for your house to be burnt down and also your family necklaced<sup>2</sup> (killed by a burnt tyre over the neck). We lived in fear and Dick's parents' health deteriorated. But the comrades corrected this rumour.

At times police would come during the night when we are asleep and wake us up to search for guns they alleged were in the house. So, when we slept each day we knew that once or twice a week the house would be raided by police.

Our fears worsened when one of Dick's friends died in a freak accident while detained. The police gave a report that they thought other prisoners pushed him over the high wall and he fell to his death. I thought this could be the same for Dick. After some time we were allowed to see him, relieved to see him but not happy with his physical outlook, as he was thin. He related that things were not good in detention but they were surviving.

When he was released after nine or ten months he was still determined to protest against the laws that were discriminating but was distracted from this by an offer he got to study overseas. By this time things had started happening, like unbanning of political movements that were banned a long time ago. He stayed for four years overseas and returned an independent person, who was working in a business sector.

I was happy about his progress as I had thought that he would not survive in jail, and his mother is thankful that he is alive really.

Now, we are proud of him as a relative, brother and the story of what happened to us as a family was relived when he had to testify about his

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A method that was used to kill people during political upheaval by putting a burnt tyre around the neck of the victim

torture in detention during the TRC hearings/sittings. We cried with him during that day, having mixed feelings about his survival but sad about some of his friends in the struggle who died. Oh! well, what can we do? We have to be positive that we will never experience these ordeals again in this country.

#### NATURAL MEANING UNITS

- 1 It is a very long story sisi, (sister) but I'll tell you what I can remember as this happened a long time, like ten years or more. Dick, as far as I can remember he was popular amongst students at school as he spoke a lot. He appeared more upfront with student politics and even when he had left school he was involved in community political affairs.
- 2 For instance during civic organisation activities he was amongst this group which protected against discriminatory laws against blacks. This made Dick unpopular with the police as they would come and look for him in our house. He would hide away though.
- 3 His activities became worse in 1985 when together with civic organisations organized a consumer boycott of all businesses in town, as a strategy to force the security authorities to release civic members who were detained. I mean, the police saw red with this act as it became successful because the community heeded the call, posters all over, gatherings held which reinforced the slogan, 'Akuthengwa eDolophini' (no buying from city centre).
- 4 This appeared to be trouble for Dick as police came to our house, kicking doors, threatening to sjambok us if we don't tell them where he was. His parents were older, and this worried them a lot and were concerned that Dick would be arrested if police caught up with him. Sometimes the police would bundle us in their vans pretending as if they are going to arrest us if we do not tell the truth. I was scared and also feared for the old parents as they didn't understand why Dick was involved in all of this.

#### ESSENTIAL THEMES

Delia recounts Dick's political activities as a young student. His activism expanded to community political affairs.

According to Delia, Dick protested against discriminatory laws which resulted in his unpopularity with the police.

Delia remembers that police were angered by a successful consumer boycott by Dick and others, which was a strategy to persuade police to release civic members.

Delia describes intimidating and aggressive experiences initiated by police acts, thus affecting Dick's elderly parents who did not understand Dick's activist's role.



**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

- 5 Eventually Dick was arrested and detained with others. We as his family were refused permission to visit him or change his clothes while in detention. This was frustrating and we were concerned about his condition in prison.

**RESEARCHER:** And then, what happened?

**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

- 6 It was a chaotic period, even in the communities. For some reason a rumour was spread that Dick while in jail was an informer. Our community became hostile against us now. During those days, just to label a person with this word was enough for your house to be burnt down and also your family neck-laced. We lived in fear and Dick's parents health have deteriorated over time. But the comrades corrected this rumour.

- 7 At times police would come during the night when we are asleep and wake us up to search for guns they alleged were in the house. So, when we slept each day we knew that once or twice a week the house will be raided by police.

- 8 Our fears were worsened when one of Dick's friends died in a freak accident while detained. The police gave a report that they think other prisoners pushed him over the high wall and he fell to his death. I thought that this could be the same for Dick.

- 9 After some time we were allowed to see him, relieved to see him but not happy with his physical outlook as was thin. He related that things were not good in prison but they were surviving.

- 10 When he was released after 9 or 10 months he was still determined to protest against the laws that were discriminating but was distracted from this by an offer to study overseas. By this time things had started happening, like unbanning of political movements that were banned long time ago. He stayed for four years overseas and returned an independent person who was working in the business sector.

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

During Dick's detention, his family, according to Delia, was refused permission to see him, causing frustration and concern about Dick's well-being.

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

Delia explains the negative experiences of her family from the community due to a stigma attached to Dick while in prison. This resulted in the family living in torment and fear that their home would be destroyed or family subjected to torture by community people due to aggressive acts that occurred during those unrest days.

Delia's family seemed to have adapted to their life style of police raids that occurred in their home.

Delia's family fears were intensified when Dick's friend died in detention under mysterious circumstances reported by police.

Delia and family were relieved to find Dick alive in detention but unhappy about his physical condition as he related that it was tough to survive torture in prison.

Although Dick was determined to continue his commitment to the struggle, he was diverted by his business-related studies overseas.

## NATURAL MEANING UNITS

- 11 I was happy about his progress as I had thought that he would not survive in jail and his mother is thankful that he is alive, really!
- 12 Now, we are proud of him as a relative, brother and the story of what happened to us as a family was relived when he had to testify about his torture in detention during the TRC sittings.
- 13 We cried with him during that day, having mixed feelings about his survival but sad about some of his friends in the struggle who died. Oh! well, what can we do? We have to be positive that we will never experience these ordeals again in this country.

## ESSENTIAL THEMES

Delia is happy with the outcomes of Dick's life as the family never thought he would survive detention.

Dick's family, according to Delia, takes pride in his achievement but reminisce about this torment which Dick related during the TRC sittings.

This story evoked ambivalent feelings in Delia and Dick's family as he was alive but his comrades dead. However, Delia has a positive outlook about the future.

## SITUATED STRUCTURE

### DICK'S FAMILY

Both Dick and Delia seem to have a similar understanding in their views of the trouble that confronted the family when Dick became an opponent of apartheid laws. His activist attitude provoked anger amongst the security police who arrested and detained him especially when he organized successful protest actions in his community.

While Dick details explicitly his life-threatening situation in detention, his family was not free from this kind of experience as well. It would appear both physical and psychological effects had an impact on the family including Dick. The family members in some way:

- feared for the safety of their son in prison
- were anxious about his condition as they were refused permission to see him
- were threatened and alienated by their community due to labels attached to Dick that were damaging
- were subjected to harassment acts of the police
- were anguished by horror stories of death of other comrades in prison.

This ordeal affects the physical health of Dick's parents negatively, as it deteriorated over time. However, the family's emotional state was relieved when they saw Dick in prison though they were disheartened by his physical condition.

Although torture in detention seemed not to have discouraged Dick from his activities, his continuation with the struggle was put off when he had decided to study overseas. He relates passionately how his achievement that made him independent changed his life. However, he will be happy only if his comrades who suffered physical disabilities during the struggle can be recognised. This was Dick's greatest concern when he testified about his detention during the TRC<sup>3</sup> sittings. He feels very strongly that the present government should compensate these veterans who have become victims. Dick has thus become a voice which pleads for others. His intention tends to be altruistic as he is concerned about those severely disabled through the struggle.

Dick's family as alluded to by Delia can only reminisce about their past pain during the TRC process, but this has not prevented the family from thinking positively about future happenings.

**PROTOCOL 2 - SALLY'S FAMILY**

**SALLY: MOTHER**

**ALEX: FATHER**

**MACY: DAUGHTER (SIBLING)**

**VERBATIM DESCRIPTION: MACY (SIBLING TO THE DECEASED)**

**RESEARCHER:** I would like you to tell me about the experience of having your brother disappear and his subsequent death in detention. Tell me what happened, how it affected you and what you felt during and after the incident.

**MACY:** My brother was one of the student leaders during the political unrest of 1976 and 1977 in the township. He used to mobilize other students to protest against Bantu Education. One of their activities was to disrupt classes and encourage boycotts, so he was always clashing with the police. One day I was preparing to go to school, the police arrived to arrest my brother. They searched the whole house. That was very embarrassing as our family names were always in the forefront at school. We were seen as my brother and teachers thought I and my sisters would also disrupt schools.

When he was detained for the first six months, I missed him as he could not help me with my school work. He was also a good encourager as he used to motivate us to study while he fought against the oppressive laws of that time.

After six months he was released but continued mobilizing students. He was arrested and detained on and off. The last time he was released from jail, he didn't look well at all. He couldn't walk properly, with swollen feet and he was admitted to the hospital. While hospitalized, he became paralysed in the lower part of the body and his hair started to fall off. The doctors' tests confirmed that he was poisoned while in prison. When he was discharged from the hospital, he was in a wheel chair. This was most upsetting to me and my family as we knew my brother as an active person. When he had gone for his check up, in the hospital,

we never saw him again. He disappeared with his friend.

My parents started to search for him inside the country and in the neighbouring countries but in vain. My parents reported the matter to the police who promised to help with the search. What became funny was that police now searched for my brother in my house. They would come during the night, kicked our doors while hurling stones through our windows. This was confusing. When asked about their actions, they responded that we were actually hiding my brother whom they labelled as a terrorist. At times they would take my mother with them to interrogate her about my brothers' whereabouts. Every time the police van passed by, we became terrified as we anticipated these searches which were conducted during the night.

When others returned from exile, my brother did not return. I never thought he was killed, as I thought that maybe he had escaped into exile but didn't wish us to know. Instead we received information that he was abducted with his friend and they were both killed on the day they returned from the hospital. This was very hurting. My family was hurtful, and I became very angry towards the police.

I became demotivated at school. I could no longer be interested. I know he would never like to hear of that but I cared less as I thought of him dying while struggling for a better education for us all. This was too much to bear. I just wanted to look for work to help my father who was the breadwinner while his physical health was not good.

At home we participated in a ritual to cleanse our hands on behalf of my dear brother. This was sort of a memorial service which also gave the community a chance to grieve for him. After this ceremony friends became scarce and even the youth organizations which my brother belonged to never visited us. This was troubling as we needed the emotional support. We felt abandoned.

Even when the president of this country was released from jail, I didn't see the point of celebrating and chanting in the streets as others did. My wish was for my brother to be present as he would have loved to see the fruits of his campaigns. I became more disillusioned.

I cried a lot, my heart ached as my mother testified during the TRC hearings. My pain became worse when I listened to the Amnesty applicants' testimony. My father suffered a stroke during their testimony. He was diagnosed as having high blood pressure. He was boarded off from work from then and we all depend on his pension. It is a terrible feeling inside to look at my two brothers' children who struggle to be educated because of lack of funds. Their mothers are married. The TRC promised to look into these issues and I'll be happy if their body can investigate or bring back my brother's remains for us to bury. We can at least put this bad omen behind us to continue our lives.

**RESEARCHER:** I would like you to tell me about the experience of having your brother disappear and his subsequent death in prison/detention. Tell me what happened, how it affected you and what you felt during and after the incident.

#### **NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

- 1 Macy: My brother was one of the student leaders during the political unrest of 1976 and 1977 in the township. He used to mobilize other students to protest against Bantu Education. One of their activities was to disrupt classes and encourage boycotts, so he was always clashing with the police. One day when I was preparing to go to school, the police arrived to arrest my brother. They searched the whole house. That was very embarrassing as our family names were always in the forefront at school. We were seen as my brother, and teachers thought I and my sisters would also disrupt schools.

#### **ESSENTIAL THEMES**

Macy explains her brother's political involvement as a student leader during 1976/1977. The political activities gave rise to his clashes with the police that arrested him. This led to the police anticipating that Macy and her sisters would also be troublesome at school.



**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

- 2 When he was detained for the first six months, I missed him as he could help me with my school work. He was also a good encourager as he used to motivate us to study while he fought against the oppressive laws of that time.
- 3 After six months he was released but continued mobilizing students. He was arrested and detained on and off. The last time he was released from jail, he didn't look well at all. He couldn't walk properly, with swollen feet and he was admitted to the hospital.
- 4 While hospitalized he became paralysed in the lower part of the body and his hair started to fall off. The doctors' tests confirmed that he was poisoned while in prison. When he was discharged from the hospital, he was on a wheel chair. This was most upsetting to me and my family as we knew my brother an active person. This also de-pressed him a lot. He disappeared when he had gone for his check-up in the hospital. We never saw him again and he disappeared with his friend.
- 5 My parents started to search for him inside the country and in the neighbouring countries but in vain. My parents reported the matter to the police who promised to help with the search. What became funny was that police now searched for my brother in my house. They would come during the night, kicked our doors while hurling stones through our windows. This was confusing.
- 6 When asked about their actions, they responded that we were actually hiding my brother whom they labelled as a terrorist. At times they would take my mother with them to interrogate her about my brother's whereabouts. Everytime the police van passed by, we became terrified as we anticipated their searches which were conducted during the night.

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

According to Macy, she missed the encouragement she was used to from her brother when he was detained for the first six months.

Macy noticed that her brother was ill on his last release which necessitated him to be hospitalized due to swollen feet.

Both Macy and her family were upset by the incidence of her brother's paralysis who in turn also became depressed. According to Macy, her brother disappeared with his friend while attending follow-up visits at hospital.

Macy and her family were confused and terrified by the polices' actions of harassment while her parents were searching for her brother without success.

According to Macy police believed that her brother was a terrorist whom the family was hiding and her mother was also subjected to interrogation about his whereabouts.

**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

- 7 When others returned from exile, my brother did not return. I never thought he was killed, as I thought that may be he had escaped into exile but didn't wish us to know. Instead we received an information that he was abducted with his friend and were both killed on the day they returned from the hospital. This was very hurting. My family grieved and I became very angry towards the police.
- 8 I became demotivated at school. I could no longer be interested. I knew he would never like to hear of that but I care less as I thought of him dying while struggling for a better education for us all. This was too much to bear. I just wanted to look for work to help my father who was the breadwinner while his physical health was not good.
- 9 At home we participated in a ritual to cleanse our hands on behalf of my dead brother. This was sort of a memorial service that also gave the community a chance to grieve for him.
- 10 After this ceremony, friends became scarce and even the youth organizations which my brother belonged to never visited us. This was troubling as we needed the emotional support. We felt abandoned.
- 11 Even when the president of this country was released from jail, I didn't see the point of celebrating and chanting in the streets as others did. My wish was for my brother to be present as he would have loved to see the fruits of his campaigns. I became more disillusioned.
- 12 I cried a lot, my heart ached as my mother testified during the TRC hearings. My pain became worse when I listened to the Amnesty applicants' testimony. My father suffered a stroke during their testimony. He was diagnosed as having high blood pressure. He was boarded off from work from then, and we all depend on his pension.

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

- Macy and her family experienced grief when they received the news of her brother's death while they had thought he was in exile, resulting in Macy's feelings of anger towards the police.
- Macy loses interest in her schooling as she tries to understand her brother's death, and directs her attention towards helping her father whose health was troubling.
- Macy reveals how both her family and the community grieved for her dead brother.
- Macy confesses to the troubling experiences of feeling alienated and abandoned by political organizations while they needed emotional support.
- Macy speaks of her feelings of disillusionment at the release of the president and others while others were celebrating. She feels the absence of her brother who would be happy to see what he struggled for and thus finds no joy in celebrating.
- Macy's heartache and pain are aroused when her mother testifies about the story of her brother's abduction during the TRC sessions. This pain is worsened by Amnesty applicants' testimony during which her father suffers from stroke due to hypertension. The stroke resulted in her father being boarded off from his work thus living on pension.

**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

13 It is a terrible feeling inside to look at my two brothers' children who struggle to be educated because of lack of funds. Their mothers are married. The TRC promised to look into these issues and I'll be happy if the body can investigate or bring back my brother's remains for us to bury. We can at least put this bad omen behind us to continue our lives.

Macy struggles to come to terms with financial difficulties that confront her brothers' two children who experience difficulty with their education. Her hopes lies in the TRC's investigation in helping the family to deal with this as she hopes investigation would also help in bringing the remains of her brother for burial at home.

**ALEX - (FATHER TO THE DECEASED)**

**VERBATIM DESCRIPTION**

**RESEARCHER:** I would like you to tell me about the experience of having your son disappear and his subsequent death in detention or prison. Tell me what happened, how it affected you and what you felt during and after the incident.

**ALEX:** Are you aware that he was my first and the only son?

**RESEARCHER:** No, I am not aware of that. Does that make it harder to talk about this incident?

**ALEX:** Yes. It saddens me every time I think or speak about it but I'll try.

**RESEARCHER:** This is understandable.

**ALEX:** My son was involved with other students in their politics. I don't know what others saw in him to choose him as a student leader. During 1976/77 he was studying in the rural areas and was dismissed due to his involvement in protests against authorities. The teachers saw him as a trouble-maker. When we found a school for him in the urban area he continued his activities. He would mobilize other pupils, hold meetings to discuss strategies to fight Bantu Education. As a group of students they would march into school and disrupt classes. These actions then,

resulted in his clash with the police. I together with his mother worried and discouraged him from these activities but ag!, our cautions fell into deaf ears. He was arrested and as a result his schooling was disrupted as well.

**RESEARCHER:** And then?

**ALEX:** He disappeared in 1982 when he was convalescing from the effects of severe torture in detention. When released during this time, he couldn't walk and was in a wheel chair. The doctors said his lower body was paralysed by some poison he might have ingested while in prison. I was suing the security police for his loss of functioning of his lower body. He disappeared with his friend.

We searched for him from all the contacts we knew including political and apolitical organizations. With some caring friends my wife travelled to our neighbouring countries, thinking that he might have escaped into exile. All these searches proved futile. I couldn't sleep at night. I lost weight and constantly worrying about his whereabouts. I thought more about what he had said to me the last time he was released from prison as he convinced me of the danger he was in as he spoke like this, 'Hayi tata, andigqibile amopolisa kule gem' (translated: 'you know Dad, this time the security police have destroyed me') (Alex: sobbing, sobbing).

We lived through hell. Somedays we were hopeful that he would return, other days this hope faded. My body became weak and I was diagnosed high blood pressure while working as a security guard. I became lonely inside, missing him daily. I mean he is my only son who would look after the home while I am no longer in this world. His political organizations also became withdrawn from us. It was very difficult to cope with his disappearance.

**RESEARCHER:** Why?

**ALEX:**

I think not knowing what had happened caused uncertainty. I wanted to believe that he is alive while also thinking about his possible death. It was only during 1990 that there was a clue from a policeman Mr Skeels who spoke about the manner in which they killed all the political activists who disappeared during the 1980s. My son was amongst the lot. It was unbelievable at first. I think I didn't want to face that he is dead. Mr Skeels also gave information about how they disposed of his body. His friend also suffered the same consequences. It was devastating. My family was overwhelmed with shock at this kind of atrocity.

I decided to hold a memorial service on behalf of my son. Many people supported us during this difficult time. I also thought that this was the beginning of our healing, to give up, so that we continue with our lives as the family. It was not easy as his remains were still not brought home, and this is troubling me even today.

It is so sad to see his two children he fathered as a teenager, who are to grow up without a father figure. I can't even support their education as I am boarded off work due to a mild stroke I suffered during the TRC hearings. I hope the TRC body holds up to the promises of some bursary fund to help these children otherwise they will be bitter throughout their lives. My wife, I think is stronger than me, because she was able to testify about this painful chapter of our lives. I think for me this became more stressful and I could no longer cope.

I also think that the Amnesty applicants have not told the whole truth with regards to my son's remains. How can I forgive the people that are lying? I am sorry, I won't be able to do that and my wife made that clear to the TRC body. I don't decide about how these applicants should be prosecuted, the law has to take care of that but my forgiveness is abundant if they tell the truth.

**RESEARCHER:**

I would like you to tell me about the experience of having your son disappear and his subsequent death in prison/detention. Tell me what happened, how it affected you and what you felt during and after the incident.

**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

1 Are you aware that he was my first and the only son?

**RESEARCHER:** No, I am not aware of that. Does that make it harder to talk about this incident?

2 Yes, it saddens me every time I think or speak about it, but I'll try.

**RESEARCHER:** This is understandable.

**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

3 My son was involved with other students in their politics. I don't know what others saw in him to choose him as a student leader. During 1976/77 he was studying in the rural areas and was dismissed due to his involvement in protests against authorities. The teachers saw him as a trouble-maker. When we found a school for him in the urban area he continued his activities. He would mobilize other pupils, hold meetings to discuss strategies to fight Bantu Education. As a group of students they would march into schools and disrupt classes. These actions then resulted in his clash with the police. I together with his mother warned and discouraged him from these activities but, ag!, our cautions fell into deaf ears. He was arrested on and off as a result his schooling was disrupted as well,

**RESEARCHER:** And then?

4 He disappeared in 1982 when he was convalescing from the effects of severe torture in detention. When released during this time, he couldn't walk and was on a wheelchair. The doctors said his lower body was paralysed by some poison he might have ingested while in prison. I was suing the security police for his loss of functioning of his lower body. He disappeared with his friend.

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

Alex experiences difficulty in relating the story about his son as he questions the interviewer about her knowledge of his son.

Alex, though saddened every time when he speaks about his son, will try to do so.

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

Alex describes how his son was involved in students' political activities which resulted in his arrest. As parents they were greatly concerned about his activities, did discourage and tried to move him to another school. These strategies did not help as he continued his actions which resulted in clashes with the police.

Alex describes in detail the circumstances surrounding his son's disappearance together with his friend in 1982 while convalescing from the effects of severe torture in prison

**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

- 5 We searched for him from all the contacts we knew including political and apolitical organizations. My wife with some friends travelled to our neighbouring countries, thinking that he might have escaped into exile. All these searches proved futile. I couldn't sleep at night, I lost weight and constantly worrying about his whereabouts.
- 6 I thought more about what he had said to me the last time he was released from prison as he convinced me of the danger he was in as he spoke like this, 'Hayi Tata, andigqibile amopolisa kule gem' (translated: 'you know, Dad!, this time the security police destroyed me') (Alex - sobbing, sobbing!).
- 7 We lived though hell. Somedays we were hopeful that he would return, other days this hope faded. My body became weak and I was diagnosed high blood pressure while working as a security guard. I became lonely inside, missing him daily, I mean he is my only son who would look after the home while I am no longer in this world. His political organizations also became withdrawn towards us. It was very difficult to cope with his disappearance.

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

While Alex experienced both sleepless nights and physical weight loss he worried more about the outcome of his son's disappearance. He couldn't be found in the country or neighbouring countries.

Alex became convinced of the danger his son might be subjected to as he thought about his words 'Hayi Tata, andigqibile amopolisa kule gem' (translated: 'you know, Dad!, this time the security police destroyed me') (Alex - sobbing, sobbing!).

Alex shares deeply how his physical health was affected by his son's disappearance, when he missed him terribly, feeling empty. He also felt alienated from political organizations thus making coping more difficult.

**RESEARCHER: Why?**

- 8 I think not knowing what had happened caused uncertainty. I wanted to believe that he is alive while also thinking about his possible death. It was only during 1990 that there was a clue from a policeman Mr Skeels who spoke about the manner in which they killed all the political activists who disappeared during the 1980s. My son was amongst the lot. It was unbelievable at first, I think I didn't want to face that he is dead. Mr Skeels also gave information about how they disposed off his body. His friend also suffered. It was devastating. My family was over-whelmed with shock of this kind of atrocity.

According to Alex his family lived in limbo during his son's disappearance. In 1990 when this news of Alex's son's death was disclosed this was overwhelming and shocking, causing devastation and disgusting shock amongst the family members.



**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

- 9 I decided to hold a memorial service on behalf of my son. Many people supported us during this difficult time. I also thought that this was the beginning of our healing, to give up, so that we continue our lives as the family. It was not easy as his remains were still not brought home, and this is troubling me even today.
- 10 It is so sad to see his two children he fathered as a teenager who are to grow up without a father figure. I can't even support their education as I am boarded off work due to a mild stroke I suffered during the TRC hearings.
- 11 My wife, I think, is stronger than me, because she was able to testify about this painful chapter of our lives. I think for me this became more stressful and I could no longer cope. I hope the TRC body holds up to the promises of some bursary fund to help these children other-wise they will be bitter throughout their lives.
- 12 I also think that the Amnesty applicants have not told the whole truth with regards to my son's remains. How can I forgive the people that are lying? I am sorry, I won't be able to do that and my wife made that clear to the TRC body. I don't decide about how these applicants should be prosecuted, the law has to take care of that but my forgiveness is abundant if they tell the truth.

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

Alex, though he managed to hold a memorial on behalf of his son with the support from the community, feels troubled about the missing remains of his son thus causing healing of the family to be difficult.

Alex is saddened by his inability to support the education of his two grandchildren as he cannot work due to his ill health.

Alex, while recognizing the impact of stress on him and his family, acknowledges his wife as stronger than him in coping with their loss as she was able to testify in the TRC about their son. He remains hopeful about the TRC to keep their promises of a bursary fund to educate the children fathered by his son.

Alex believes that the Amnesty applicants didn't disclose enough truth about his son's remains thus making it hard for him to forgive them, as his wife had communicated their conditions of forgiving through the TRC.

**SALLY - (MOTHER TO THE DECEASED)**

**VERBATIM DESCRIPTION**

**RESEARCHER:** I would like you to tell me about the experience of having your son disappear and his subsequent death in detention or prison. Tell me what happened, how it affected you and what you felt during and after the incident.

**SALLY:** I can say, I knew that my son was involved in students' political activities as he was a student leader. He was detained by the police several times

before his disappearance. His clash with the police stemmed from his actions of disrupting classes, encouraging school boycotts by mobilizing students to protest against inferior education systems. One time he was arrested for wearing a T-shirt that had prints of political slogans. His activities were really wild at times, as he would terrorize teachers at school. So the police saw him as a person who was always in the forefront.

His last detention was awful, as he became sick a day after his release from prison. He couldn't walk, was vomiting and I was confused about what was happening. He was admitted to hospital with severe pains all over the body. I thought that maybe this was due to electric shock he said was applied in detention while he was tortured. The doctors said their tests showed that he was poisoned. This was disturbing and we as a family took legal action to sue the police as my child was wheel chair bound. He disappeared during this process, while he had gone for one of his check-ups in the hospital. His friend was with him when he disappeared.

I looked for him all over the country and the neighbouring countries. I thought that he might have gone into exile. The police also came to search for him in my house after having reported him missing. They harassed my family, breaking my doors and my windows with allegations that my son was back in the country as a trained terrorist. These remarks angered me. At times the police would take me into their interrogating rooms to ask me about my son's whereabouts.

**RESEARCHER:** And then?

**SALLY:** The search for him here at home and the neighbouring countries was in vain. I also became doubtful of his exile status and I anchored more on his possibility of being arrested. The community also became distrustful of us as rumours that he was an askari spread all over. This aggravated our pain and loss that we were experiencing. There was no direction from political organizations about what to do. It is only my church

organization that was supportive through prayers all the way. I felt alone and detached from the organizations my child belonged to until the TRC body emerged. I watched my husband's health gradually being weak as he is not a talkative person, so he kept all what he felt inside him, and I think that's what caused him to be sick.

After about nine to ten years the news from the security policeman Mr Skeels revealed what befell my son and his friend. I cried until no more. I was very bitter, thinking about this cruelty of killing my son while he couldn't even walk properly due to poison effects. Even today, I don't have a category to place these cruel police, to me they come short of being human beings. Once I think about how he might have suffered being tortured, I become outraged. As a family we conducted a memorial service to bury him. It was a fitting tribute though painful as his remains could not be traced. For me there is still something missing, as a result I feel this empty hole in my heart everyday I wake up. I think my mourning for him is still incomplete.

I think the TRC did an honourable thing by asking us as mothers, fathers, wives or children etc of those who were killed during the struggle to share our painful stories. Just to be listened to by others alleviated most of the burden I have been carrying all this time. This also was not free of hiccups as I was prevented to testify three times by the lawyers of the police who were alleged to have killed my son.

**RESEARCHER:** And then?

**SALLY:** The last time they told that I was not to testify, I collapsed in the hall. My children were all crying and the community supporters in the hall became uncontrollable, calling for my testimony. I was attended to by doctors and nurses there, and when I came round I felt humbled by that overwhelming support during that day. I was given another date to testify.

At least I came face to face with the abductors during the Amnesty hearings. I would like them to tell me what they did with my child's body. I can only forgive them if they do that. I promise you, I'll go and dig up those bones and bury them with our cultural rituals as this was the only son in the family.

I cannot look at his two children without crying. Who is going to educate them? Their lives are doomed without education these days. They came before time<sup>4</sup> which was a mistake I couldn't prevent but they are here now. The TRC has promised to look into future arrangements of bursaries. This becomes a thin hope as we are experiencing hardship now, with my husband not working, sickly, with no proper medical aid cover, it's a helpless situation really!.

I've asked during my testimony that the TRC body investigate my son's remains. I think this will be helpful but as for now we're rejecting the application for Amnesty until the whole truth is told.

**RESEARCHER:** I would like you to tell me about the experience of having your son disappear and his subsequent death in detention or prison. Tell me what happened, how it affected you and what you felt during and after the incident.

#### **NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

- 1 I can say, I knew that my son was involved in students' political activities as he was a student leader. He was detained by police several times before his disappearance. His clash with the police stemmed from his actions of disrupting classes, encouraging school boycotts by mobilizing students to protest against inferior education system. One time he was arrested for wearing a T-shirt that had prints of political slogans. His activities were really wild at times as he would terrorize teachers at school. So the police saw him as a person who was always in the forefront.

#### **ESSENTIAL THEMES**

Sally depicts in detail the political activities in which her son was engaged and which resulted in his confrontation with the police.

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He fathered the children whilst still being a teenager

## NATURAL MEANING UNITS

- 2 His last detention was awful, as he became sick a day after his release from prison. He couldn't walk, was vomiting and I was confused about what was happening. He was admitted to hospital with severe pains all over the body. I thought that maybe this was due to electric shock he said was applied in detention while he was tortured.
- 3 The doctors said their tests showed that he was poisoned. This was disturbing and we as a family took legal action to sue the police as my child was wheel chair bound with paralysis of the lower body. He disappeared during this process, while he had gone for one of his check-ups in the hospital. His friend was with him when he disappeared.
- 4 I looked for him all over the country and the neighbouring countries. I thought that he might have gone into exile. The police also came to look for him in my house after having reported him missing. They harassed my family, breaking my doors and my windows with allegations that my son was back in the country as a trained terrorist. These remarks angered me. At times the police would take me into their interrogating rooms to ask me about my son's whereabouts.

**RESEARCHER:** And then?

## NATURAL MEANING UNITS

- 5 The search for him here at home and the neighbouring countries was in vain. I also became doubtful of his exile status and I hoped more on his possibility of being arrested. The community also became mistrustful of us as rumours that he was an askari spread all over. This aggravated our pain and loss that we were experiencing.

## ESSENTIAL THEMES

Sally explains the frightening sickness of her son after his release from detention which confused her not knowing what had happened to her son. This sickness resulted in her son's hospitalization.

According to Sally the results of the tests conducted on her son disturbed the family, as he disappeared while the family was suing the police for alleged poisoning which had resulted in her son's paralysis of the lower body.

Sally's search for her son proves futile and her reports of him missing to the police resulted in police harassment of the family with allegations that he was a terrorist. These allegations provoked anger from Sally.

## ESSENTIAL THEMES

Sally's experience of loss and pain of her son is aggravated by rumours that he is a trained askari - thus working for the police which resulted in distrust of the family by the community.

## NATURAL MEANING UNITS

6 There was no direction from political organizations about what to do. It is only my church organisation that was supportive through prayers all the way. I felt alone and detached from the organizations my child belonged to until the TRC body emerged. I watched my husband's health gradually becoming weak as he is not a talkative person, so he kept all what he felt inside him and I think that what caused him to be sick.

7 After about nine to ten years the news from the security policeman Mr Skeels revealed what befell my son and his friend. I cried until no more, I was very bitter, thinking about this cruelty of killing my son while he couldn't even walk properly due to poison effects. Even today, I don't have a category to place these cruel police, to me they come short of being human beings. Once I think about how he might have suffered being tortured, I become outraged.

8 As a family we conducted a memorial service to bury him. It was a fitting tribute though painful as his remains could not be traced. For me there is still something missing, as a result I feel this empty hole in my heart everyday I wake up. I think my mourning for him is still incomplete.

9 I think the TRC did an honourable thing by asking us as mothers, fathers, wives or children etc of those who were killed during the struggle to share our painful stories. Just to be listened to by others, alleviated most of the burden I have been carrying all this time. This also was not free of setbacks as I was prevented to testify three times by the lawyers of the police who were alleged to have killed my son.

## ESSENTIAL THEMES

Sally experienced no direction and felt alienated from the political organizations

Her source of support was from the church she belonged to.

Sally expresses how she felt detached from the youth political organizations which her son belonged to.

The TRC's emergence gives hope to Sally but she also made observations of her husband's condition of health which deteriorated gradually.

Sally in her bitterness fails to understand the actions of the police who killed her son and finds it difficult to equate them with human beings. She cannot help being outraged by how her son might have suffered when tortured by the police.

Sally feels emptiness and incomplete sense of mourning since her son's remains cannot be found, though a memorial service was conducted on his behalf.

Sally believes that testifying in the TRC was an honour for all victims as sharing Sally acknowledges the TRC's role as honourable in allowing her to share the painful stories with others as this alleviated the pain though she encountered problems or setbacks before she could testify.

**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

- |    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 10 | The last time they told me I was not to testify, I collapsed in the hall. My children were all crying and the community supporters in the hall became uncontrollable demanding my testimony. I was attended by doctors and nurses present there. When I came round, I felt humbled by the overwhelming support during that day. I was given another day to testify.  | Sally's feelings of victimization by the lawyers representing the police to prevent her testimony causes her to collapse thus calling for immediate medical attention. She is humbled by the overwhelming support she receives during that emotional time from those present in the hearings. |
| 11 | At least I came face to face with the abductors during the Amnesty hearings. I would like them to tell me what they did with my child's body. I can only forgive them if they do that. I promise you. I'll go and dig up those bones and bury them with our cultural rituals as this was the only son in the family.   | Sally is willing to forgive the Amnesty applicants if they make full disclosure about the remains of her son as she is prepared to rebury them according to her cultural beliefs.   |
| 12 | I cannot look at his two children without crying. Who is going to educate them? Their lives are doomed without education these days. They came before time which was a mistake which I couldn't prevent but they are here now. The TRC has promised to look into future arrangements of bursaries. This becomes a thin hope as we are experiencing hardship now, with my husband sickly, with no proper medical aid cover, it's a helpless situation really! | Sally's hope that the TRC will find bursaries to help educate her son's children is thin. She is depressed further by the poor situation in her family.   |
| 13 | I have asked during my testimony that the TRC body investigates my son's remains. I think this will be helpful but as for now we are rejecting the application for Amnesty until the whole truth is told.  | Sally wants the TRC to investigate further about her son's remains as this will also be helpful in decisions about the fate of the Amnesty applicants as her family rejects their application until they disclose the truth.  |

**SITUATED STRUCTURE**

**SALLY'S FAMILY**

The descriptions by Sally, Alex and Macy of what occurred amongst the family with regard to the death of their son and brother seem to be consistent with each other. Though as parents both Sally and Alex had discouraged their son's political activities, this was not helpful as he continued with his activities.



The family is taken by surprise at the sudden onset of their son's illness on his immediate release from prison. This illness necessitated his admission to hospital, where the family learnt that in prison he had ingested poison which could kill him. The incident of this sickness and the effects becomes upsetting for Macy. It becomes worse when her brother is discharged from hospital, with paralysis of the lower body and his hair falling out. This incident leads to the family suing the police for damages suffered by their son.

Yet another shock, unanticipated by the family was to come as their son disappeared together with his friend while attending his medication follow-ups at hospital. This experience, according to Sally, throws the family into a state of more confusion. While they search for him inside the country and in the neighbouring countries, the police search their home for him, harassing the whole family. The community begins to be suspicious as the seeds of doubt are sown above their son's askari<sup>5</sup> activities. These events seem to be disturbing and influence more of the pain and loss in Sally's family. The family experiences more alienation from the political organizations and the community.

From Alex's point of view the disappearance of his only son kept him worried most of the time, and deprived him of sleep, contributing towards deterioration of his health. His feelings of uncertainty whether he was dead or alive precipitated his physical illness of hypertension and he experienced loneliness as he missed his son.

The only clue about what befell their son surfaces after ten years as Mr Skeels from the security police tells all about what happened to anti-apartheid activists. The family's experience of this shocking news is articulated in their expressions of feelings of bitterness, anger towards the police. The disgusting shock that he could be dead causes more devastation as they hear about how their son's body was disposed. Sally reveals more of her outraged feelings towards the police actions whom she discounts as human due to their actions.

The community support is experienced by the family when they conduct a funeral memorial service on behalf of their son whose remains are said to be not untraceable during this time. This, according to Sally, leaves her with feelings of emptiness and sense of incomplete mourning as they would have liked to bury the remains with befitting family rituals which are healing to the family.

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Askari is a political activist who turns around and now works for the police

The TRC sessions are filled with drama for Sally and her family as she is prevented from giving her testimony three times before she makes it to the stage with her full testimony. The feelings of her voice being muzzled causes her to collapse in the hall, and this incident arouses an uproar from the community supporters in the hall. The nature of this support, she says, becomes a humbling experience for her and her family.

Sally seems to hold high regard for the TRC process for allowing her and others to share their pain with the world at large, but she is adamant that she will not forgive the Amnesty applicants, alleged to have killed her son, until they disclose the whole truth.

It appears that Sally and Alex together with their daughter Macy believe in the TRC's ability to help with the education of the two children fathered by their dead son. It is apparent that the whole family will be happier if the remains of the deceased son can be located and brought home for burial.

**PROTOCOL 3 - DOLLY'S FAMILY**

**DOLLY - MOTHER/WIFE**

**MOLLY - DAUGHTER**

**VERBATIM DESCRIPTION**

**RESEARCHER:** I want you to tell me about the experience of having your husband disappear and his subsequent death in prison. Tell me what happened, how it affected you and what you felt during and after the incident.

**DOLLY:** In 1985 my husband was involved in a civic organization in our community. This organization was fighting for just laws for township residents and this was not received well by the government of the day. My husband received a telephone message to meet a guest to the organization offices that day. So he left with two of his compatriots to fetch this guest from a destination they knew. They never came back till today.

I suspected that they might have been arrested or skipped the country. The local newspapers published their disappearance. I was hurt and feared for his life as the police used to look for him even before this incident. The comrades from his organization came to check if the news on newspapers were true. They then mandated that my house be guarded as there was also political fighting in the community during those days.

During the same day the police came into my house, hurled stones, tear gas and petrol bombs inside the house, as you see half of the house is burnt. There was exchange of fire as comrades guarding my house decided to fight back. My son lost fingers in one of his hands as he was razed by bullets. I was arrested for harbouring people who fought with the police.

On arrival at the police station, I was told that, they (the police) have killed my husband and burnt his body. I didn't show them my weakness and pain on hearing these news, as I knew that they use tactics to

demoralize a person. I told them that they were lying. Inside I was scared, thinking of how am I to cope if my husband is really dead. Ag! I dismissed these thoughts as unfounded.

At the police station, they used vulgar language accusing me of harbouring criminals in my house. They told me that my husband was a communist and I'll also die the same death as he did. Though I felt hurt and discouraged inside about the possibility of my husband's death, I became strong. In my mind the police wanted to break my spirit, so as to tell them of my husband's activities. I was detained for four days and taken to court where the case was postponed.

By this time lawyers from my husband's organization had organized a bail on my behalf. Outside the prison, now, I was confronted by other people from the community telling me of the rumours that my husband was working for the police. Others said they had seen him with his two compatriots in one police station handcuffed. This caused more confusion and I felt no vigour to do anything. I didn't know where to start.

Together with the other families whose husbands, sons, etc had disappeared with my husband we organized a search party. There's not a single police station, prison and morgue in this country that we have not visited to check for them. There was no trace of them. There was a time when I received a false letter from him, from another prison which was a false hope. I went there, but I was told nobody like that was ever jailed there. I believe these were police tactics to lead me astray. I filed a court case of a missing person after three years had gone by without trace of my husband. The case took another two years and eventually nobody could be blamed for his disappearance. I felt helpless. What caused pain was not to know whether he was dead or alive. Some days I was hopeful some days I gave up.

I didn't work, my house needed repairs from the fire destruction and my children were schooling. We literally lived on handouts from the charity organizations. Something that destroys one's pride. But what could I

do? The police kept on coming to check for my husband. They told me that they had also informed the community that I and my family were working as informers as a way of turning the community against us.

This was bad news because if people believed these stories my family could be killed. This suggested that I had to live in fear of death, not only from the police agents but the community. I suffered from nerves, I felt lonely, we closed ourselves indoors. My children stopped schooling as I didn't have money. When they looked for work, could not be employed since my husband's surname had a bad label 'terrorist'. There were days when we would sleep without food. It was difficult, I felt helpless, worse that I couldn't even feed my children.

It is only after ten years that the clue came from newspapers' article that a certain Mr Skeels from the police revealed that my husband and his two compatriots were killed the same day of his abduction.

**RESEARCHER:** And then?

**DOLLY:** I was devastated. I had thought about it but hopeful that he might come back. I cried for weeks and after that I felt calm and sorrowfulness inside me. Part of me was relieved that there was a piece of truth, but wanted to know more about his remains. I wanted to speak to Mr Skeels personally but this was not allowed by the justice system.

I was approached by the TRC body to testify about my husband's disappearance. I felt more anger and pain during this period and I asked the TRC to investigate about the remains of my husband. I was not happy at all with the amnesty applicants' testimony, who claimed that they burnt my husband and had thrown away his ashes in the river. I still believe that those bodies are dumped in one mass grave somewhere. I would like to bury them, more so because one body is that of my husband.

I am ailing as the years go by, I do not sleep well at night. I don't have money to support my kids. We've been promised by the TRC that there will be compensation but it will really come when we are six feet underground<sup>6\*</sup>. I mean that! These promises are lip service.

One of the tormentors of my husband asked to meet us as families. He spoke to us personally during the Amnesty hearings. It was very overwhelming. We prayed and cried together and ended up embracing each other. I think he was a lost sheep when he tortured people of his own kind but I have forgiven him. I think what has made me to survive now is to pose a question, 'who was more suitable to die if not my husband'? So I have accepted that he also had to die for others to live and be free.

**RESEARCHER:** I would like you to tell me about the experience of having your husband disappear and his subsequent death in prison. Tell me what happened, how it affected you and what you felt during and after the incident.

#### **NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

- 1 In 1985 my husband was involved in a civic organization in our community. This organization was fighting for just laws for township residents and this was not received well by the government of the day. My husband received a telephone message to meet a guest to their offices that day. So, he left with two of his compatriots to fetch the guest from a destination they knew. They never came back till today.
- 2 I suspected that they might have been arrested or skipped the coun-try. The local newspapers pu-blished their disappearance. I was hurt and feared for his life as the police used to look for him even before this incident. The comrades from his organization came to check if the news on the newspapers were true. They, then, mandated that my house be guarded as there was also political infighting in the community during those days.

#### **ESSENTIAL THEMES**

Dolly details her husband's involvement in civic politics fighting for just laws which led him to be lured to an unknown destination disappear and never be found.

Dolly suspected that her husband and his compatriots might be in jail or might have left the country but the story published in the newspapers about their disappearance caused her to be hurt as she feared for her husband's safety.

On learning about his disappearance the comrades decided to guard Dolly's house to protect the family from other political threats which were due to political infighting.

**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

- 3 During the same day the police came into my house, hurled stones, tear gas and petrol bombs inside the house, as you see half of the house is burnt. There was exchange of fire as comrades guarding my house decided to fight back. My son lost fingers in one of his hands as he was razed by bullets. I was arrested for harbouring people who fought with the police.
- 4 On arrival at the police station, I was told that they (the police) have killed my husband and burnt his body. I didn't show them my weakness on hearing these words as I knew that they use tactics to demoralize a person. I told them that they were lying. Inside I was scared, thinking of how am I to cope if my husband is really dead. Ag! I dismissed those thoughts as unfounded.
- 5 At the police station they used vulgar language, accusing me of harbouring criminals in my house. They told me that my husband was a terrorist, and I'll also die the same death as he did. Though I felt hurt and discouraged inside about the possibility of my husbands' death, I became strong. In my mind the police wanted to break my spirits so as to tell them of my husband's activities. I was detained for four days and taken to court where the case was postponed.
- 6 By this time lawyers from my husband's organization had organized a bail on my behalf. Outside the prison, now, I was confronted by other people from the community telling me of the rumours that my husband was working for the police. Others said they had seen him with his two compatriots in one police station handcuffed. This caused more confusion and I felt no vigour to do anything. I did not know where to start.

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

Dolly relates how violence and destructive clashes between the police and comrades in her house, ended with her arrest and detention while her son lost fingers during this clash.

Although Dolly felt terrified of the news from the police regarding her husband she was brave not to reveal her frightening thoughts and feelings of how she would cope if her husband was dead. However, she dismissed these news as lies.

Dolly experienced feelings of threat and intimidation with death from the police during her detention, which resulted in her hurt and discouragement though she acted bravely, avoiding to give in to the demoralizing effects of the police's threats.

Dolly felt confused and pathetic about what to believe from the stories told about her husband's disappearance when she came out of prison as accusations from the community spread widely about her husband's involvement with the police.



**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

- 7 Together with the other families whose husbands, sons, etc had disappeared with my husband, organized a search party. There's not a single police station, prison and morgue in this country we have not visited to check for them. There was no trace of them. There was a time when I received a false letter from him, from another prison which was a false pretense. I went there, but I was told nobody like that was ever jailed there. I believe these were police tactics to lead me astray.
- 8 I filed a court case of a missing person after 3 years had gone by without trace of my husband. The case took another two years and eventually nobody could be blamed for his disappearance. I felt hopeless. What caused pain was not to know whether he is dead or alive. Somedays I was hopeful of his home coming, some days I gave up.
- 9 I didn't work, my house needed repairs from the fire destruction and my children were schooling. We literally lived on handouts from the charity organisations, something that destroys one's pride. But, what could I do?
- 10 The police kept on coming to check for my husband. They told me that they had also informed the community that I and my family were working as informers as a way of turning the community against us. This was bad news because if people believed these stories my family could be killed. This suggested that I had to live in fear of death not only from the police but the community.
- 11 I suffered from nerves, I felt lonely, we closed ourselves indoors. My children stopped schooling as I didn't have money. When they looked for work, could not be employed since my husbands' surname had a bad label 'terrorist'. There were days when we would sleep without food. It was difficult, I felt helpless that I couldn't feed my children.

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

All attempts to locate Dolly's husband and those of her colleagues were in vain as every possible avenue at their disposal was followed up.

Dolly's sense of pain and hopelessness grew more when nobody could be found responsible for his disappearance after having filed a court case for missing persons. Her pain and double-edged fear were aggravated by not knowing whether her husband was dead or alive.

Dolly's family experienced hardship and while nervous, lonely, and helpless survived on charity funds and these circumstances were humiliating her sense of pride and self-esteem.

Dolly's family lived in fear of death not only from the police but from the community due to rumours spread by the police which would result in negative consequences if they were believed by their community.

Dolly's health seems to be affected by her bad conditions of living thus inducing a sense of helplessness.

**NATURAL MEANING UNITS**

12 It is only after ten years that the clue came from the newspapers article that a certain Mr Skeels from the police revealed that my husband and his two compatriots were killed the same day of his abduction.

**RESEARCHER:** And then?

13 I was devastated. I had thought about it but hopeful that he might come back. I cried for weeks and after that I felt calm and sorrowfulness inside me. Part of me was relieved, that there was a piece of truth, but wanting to know more about his remains. I wanted to speak to Mr Skeels personally but this was not allowed by the justice system.

14 I was approached by the TRC body to testify about my husbands' disappearance. I felt more anger and pain during this period and I asked the TRC to investigate about the remains of my husband.

15 I was not happy at all with the amnesty applicants testimony, who claimed that they burnt my husband and had thrown away his ashes in the river. I still believe that those bodies are dumped in one mass grave somewhere. I would like to bury them, more so, because one body is that of my husband's.

16 I am ailing physically, I do not sleep well at night. I don't have money to support my kids. We've been promised by the TRC that there will be compensation but it will really come when we are six feet underground. I mean that! This is just a lip service.

17 One of the tormentors of my husband and his comrades asked to meet us as these families. He spoke to us personally during the amnesty hearings. It was very overwhelming. We prayed and cried together and ended up embracing each other. I think he was a lost sheep when he tortured people of his own kind but I have forgiven him.

**ESSENTIAL THEMES**

Dolly receives news of her husband's disappearance after ten years which resulted in her devastation and sorrow-fulness though relieved of this piece of information, though prevented from directed conversations with Mr Skeels.

Dolly is devastated when she learns about her husband's death and her sense of mourning results in calmness and sorrowfulness since there was truth at last about her husband's disappearance. Attempts to seek clarity about her husband's remains are prevented by the justice system.

Dolly's anger and pain is aroused more when she testifies during the TRC, as she asked the TRC to investigate her husband's remains.

Dolly expresses her unhappiness about the testimony of the amnesty applicants with regards to her husbands' remains as she believes that one mass grave is burying her husband with others.

Dolly seems to have lost hope of reparation measures from the TRC as she sees her health failing her thus doubting if she will live to see reparation for her family.

Dolly explains about her feelings of being overwhelmed when she had a face to face talk with one of her husband's tormentors in an emotionally charged situation which according to Dolly ended by forgiving the said tormentor as they prayed and cried together.

## NATURAL MEANING UNITS

18 I think what has made me to survive now is to pose a question; 'who was more suitable to die if not my husband?' So I have accepted that he also had to die for others to live and be free.

## ESSENTIAL THEMES

Dolly attributes her survival to her search of answers from meaning for her husband's death sacrificed his life for others to live to see the freedom.

## MOLLY: DOLLY'S DAUGHTER

### VERBATIM DESCRIPTION

**RESEARCHER:** I would like you to tell me about the experience of having your father disappear and his subsequent death in prison. Tell me what happened, how it affected you and what you felt during and after the incident.

**MOLLY:** I can say that I knew about my father's activities as I was also a young woman who was involved at school with political protests. I knew about his underground mission, so we had an understanding of each other regarding these. I didn't tell my mother as she would be worried. I later got married to one of the political activists that I met in our meetings. As you know "amaphuti ahlathinye" (birds of a feather flock together). I moved away from my local township and city to my husband's location. We kept open communication with my father, but we had a premonition about his abduction as he had mentioned that the police visited and interrogated him regularly.

When he disappeared the police also came to look for him in my house, thousands and thousands of miles from my original home. They even terrorised my family and left with a promise that if we had hidden my father, the police would make our lives hell.

My husband started to search for my father as well but in vain. He was later arrested and jailed for eight years for his political activities. Here I was, with a father who has disappeared, a husband who is in prison, pregnant without work. How much can one take really? This was the most trying time of my life.

**RESEARCHER:** What do you mean?

**MOLLY:** I was helpless, lost and less hopeful everyday. I lived in turmoil as police continued to harass me and my family. In fact one day when my mother was in one of her search parties for my father, she and her fellow women comrades came to sleep in my house. We were petrol bombed that very same day. God knows how the police knew that she was my visitor. We saw their cars moving away after the fire had started. It was chaotic, and we were saved from that terrible situation by neighbours who helped extinguish the fire.

My mothers' health, I could observe was deteriorating. I could see the worry in her face. I only cried for her, for what she was going through while she was not observing me. I had fears that she might even die, before discovering the truth about my father and I prayed to God not to let that happen.

We only received information about my fathers' death after ten years when Mr Skeels gave a story in one of the country's newspapers. This story confirmed my suspicion as I anticipated this had happened. I was angry at the police whom I believe knew all along but did not want to be implicated. I mean, we had done all appeals from the government, there was a court case filed for missing persons, which suggests they played hide and seek with us all the time.

During my mother's testimony at the TRC sessions, our experiences as a family were painfully related. It was tough. It provoked more anger and hatred on my part as I feel that there's no room in my heart to forgive these police. What they did is unforgivable. They robbed me of a happy family life, abducting and killing my father, putting my husband in jail. "Nawe zicingele ukuba umntu okule meko uva njani" (translated: just imagine how the person confronted with this situation must be feeling).

My siblings suffered a lot, their schooling interrupted as they were seen as troublemakers at school, have difficulty in finding work. The surname

they bear is a ticket to dismissal from work. So I have gone through a lot and I hope healing will come very slowly. I just hope things can become much better in this democracy for all of us, so that no other persons can experience what we went through.

**RESEARCHER:** I would like you to tell me about the experience of having your father disappear and his subsequent death in prison. Tell me what happened, how it affected you and what you felt during and after the incident.

#### NATURAL MEANING UNITS

#### ESSENTIAL THEMES

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | I can say that I knew about my fathers' activities as I was also a young woman who was involved at school and community with political protests. I knew about his under-ground mission, so we had an understanding of each other regarding these. I didn't tell my mother as she would be worried.   | Molly admits to her understanding about her father's political activities as she was also an activist but kept this information to herself for fear of worrying her mother. |
| 2 | I later got married to one of the political activists that I met in our meetings. As you know in Xhosa, 'amaphuthi ahlathi inye' (translated: birds of a feather flock together). I moved away from my local town-ship and city to my husband's location. We kept open communication with my father but we had a premonition about his abduction as he had mentioned that the police visited and interrogated him regularly. | Although Molly married a political activist she kept contact with her father and shared her presuppositions about his abduction as police interrogated him regularly.       |
| 3 | When he disappeared the police also came to look for him in my house, thousand and thousand miles from my original home. They even terrorised my family and left with a promise that if we had hidden my father, the police would make our lives hell.   | According to Molly her father's disappearance also subjected her together with her husband's family to harassment by police who would search their house.                   |
| 4 | My husband started to search for my father as well but in vain. He was also later arrested and jailed for eight years for his political activities. Here I was, with a father who has disappeared, a husband who is in prison, pregnant without work. How much can one take really? This was the most trying time of my life.  | Molly was overwhelmed by cumulative incidents that occurred as her husband was also detained, leaving her pregnant and also unemployed.                                     |

**RESEARCHER:** What do you mean?

### NATURAL MEANING UNITS

- 5 I was helpless, lost and less hopeful everyday. I lived in turmoil as police continued to harass me and my family. In fact when my mother was in one of her search parties for my father, she and her fellow women comrades came to sleep in my house. We were petrol bombed that very same day. God knows how the police knew that she was my visitor. We saw their cars moving away after the fire had started. It was chaotic, and we were saved from that terrible situation by neighbours who helped to extinguish the fire.
- 6 My mother's health, I could observe was not good. I could see the worry in her face. I only cried for her, for what she was going through while she was not observing me. I had fears that she might even die before discovering the truth about my father and I prayed to God not to let that happen.
- 7 We only received information about my father's death after 10 years when Mr Skeels gave a story in one of the country's newspapers. This story confirmed my suspicion as I anticipated this to happen. I was angry at the police system whom I believe knew all along but did not want to be implicated. I mean one had made all appeals possible to the government. We even filed a missing person complaint, which suggests they played hide and seek with us all the time.
- 8 During my mother's testimony at the TRC sessions, our experiences as a family were painfully related. It was tough. It provoked more anger and hatred on my part as I feel, that there's no room in my heart to forgive these police. What they did is unforgivable. They robbed me of a happy family life, abducting and killing my father, putting my husband in jail. 'Nawe zicingele ukuba umntu okule meko uva njani' (translated: just imagine how the person confronted with this situation must be feeling).

### ESSENTIAL THEMES

Molly's experiences of helplessness and turmoil were perpetuated more by further police acts harassing the family by subjecting them to life-threatening situations e.g. use of petrol bombs.

Molly became concerned about her mother's ailing health as she feared that her mother might die before knowing the truth about her father's disappearance. This made her to bargain with God to keep her well until they had unraveled the truth.

Molly's discovery about her father's fate caused her to be angry towards the police who had fooled the family all along, though the story confirmed her suspicions about his death which she thinks the police knew all along.

Molly's experiences of herself and the family were recounted during her mother's testimony which on her part provoked more anger and hatred which makes her unable to forgive the police whom she feels robbed her happy experiences of family life.



## NATURAL MEANING UNITS

- 9 My siblings suffered a lot, their schooling interrupted as they were seen as troublemakers at school, have difficulty in finding work, the surname they bear is a ticket to dismissal from work.
- 10 So I have gone through a lot and I hope healing will come very slowly. I just hope things can become much better in this democracy for all of us, so that no other persons can experience what we went through.

## ESSENTIAL THEMES

Molly sees her whole family as victims of what occurred, as her siblings experienced difficulty with schooling, work opportunities etc, since their fathers' family name was known to be notorious.

It is Molly's belief that she has suffered much. As such her healing will not be easy but has faith in the new order to protect the repetition of what happened to her and her family.

## SITUATED STRUCTURE

### DOLLY'S FAMILY

Dolly and her daughter seem to have had a different understanding of her husband's (to Dolly) and father (to Molly) activities which resulted in his disappearance. From the day of her husband's disappearance to an unknown destination, Dolly suspected his arrest or detention by police.

The trouble between Dolly and the police intensified during the confrontation which took place in her house resulting in one of her sons losing some of his fingers. Dolly is arrested and subjected to torture and police harassment which are attempts to demoralize, degrade and destroy her self-esteem. Molly's husband, is also arrested while she is pregnant. This throws the whole family into a state of chaos and increases their confusion and sense of hopelessness.

Dolly searches for her husband all over the country without avail. Molly is continuously harassed by the police who come to search for her missing father. This resulted in the family's anger and frustration at the police, everyone else and the justice system. They experience alienation from the community structures once embraced by the missing father and husband.

The family also live in fear of the community as rumours about the missing man surface with regard to his work for the police. All this does increase the confusion. When news about her husband's disappearance is revealed, Dolly experiences mixed emotions. She is bitter, sorrowful but relieved that there is some clue to the mystery disappearance.



The poor living conditions and hardship experienced by this family is relived during the testimony during the TRC sessions. This provokes more anger and hatred from Molly towards the police. She sees her healing as a slow process that will come with time. Dolly, on the other hand, forgives the amnesty applicants, though not trustful of their information with regards to her husband's remains.

Although Dolly continues to live under the severe poor conditions she finds meaning for her husband's death is seen as a sacrifice so that others could survive.

This chapter deals with the analysis of the data. The result is the description and understanding of the central themes the families experienced and lived through. What reverberates throughout the analysis is that before being victimized their existence proceeded in a manner which can be termed the usual or routine which was disrupted. The following chapter will focus on the psychological reflection