

**Mission work and pastoral care in the port of Durban: A narrative
hermeneutical adventure**

by

Christoffel Johannes Viljoen

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Philosophiae Doctor

in

Practical Theology

at the

University of Pretoria

Promoter: Professor Julian Müller

August 2011

Abstract

This research was an attempt at a social construction of an understanding that came into being through the collaboration between the researcher and the co-researchers concerning the life and circumstances of seafarers. The purpose of this construction was to participate, together with the co-researchers, in developing a research narrative that can be beneficial to seafarers. The aim is for it to lead to their emancipation and empowerment. The title of this research indicates that this is a hermeneutical adventure. It is hermeneutical because it is about a construction of meaning and about coming to an understanding. It is an adventure because whatever meaning and understanding was constructed in the end was unknown at the beginning. New knowledge was constructed in which all who participated had a say.

The development of this research narrative was guided by the ABDCE formula which uses the metaphor of research as story writing. The researcher's epistemology was informed by the notions of social constructionism, the narrative approach based on social constructionism and postfoundationalism. Theological issues in this research had to do with postfoundationalist practical theology, with its emphasis on embeddedness, contextuality and particularity while also trying to move beyond the local. In addition to this there was also a focus on missiology and the concept of *Missio Dei* was emphasised.

Seafaring is still a dangerous profession where the seafarers many times find themselves being powerless in situations of injustice. On ships there is a lot of diversity. Men and women from many different religions and cultures have to sail together. Occasionally this causes tension between seafarers, but mostly they are working and living together in harmony. A bigger concern than conflict is that diversity might cause social isolation. Seafarers are willing to endure a lot of hardship and especially seafarers from developing countries are making this sacrifice in order to provide a better future for their families. The relationship between seafaring and the family is an ironic one because the seafarers sail in order to provide for the family, but at the same time sailing takes them away from their loved ones. From the perspective of the researcher three general weaknesses were found as far as the ministry to seafarers is concerned: At times there is lack of a

spiritual dimension to the ministry, secondly there is a need for a stronger presence among the seafarers and thirdly more emphasis should be put on involvement with fishers especially as far as justice issues are concerned.



Key terms

Hermeneutical adventure

Social constructionism

Narrative approach

Postfoundationalism

Missio Dei

Seafarersqmission

Seafarer

Co-researcher

Contextuality

Understanding



Declaration

I declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree of PhD (narrative and family counselling) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank and acknowledge the following persons who made this hermeneutical adventure a colourful and exiting one:

- My wife Anneke I would like to thank for all that she has done to help me in this project. Thanks for your encouragement. It was priceless. Thank you also for all your ideas and thoughts that you shared, you were my most important co-researcher.
- My mother and father who taught me that Jesus Christ is not only a social construction, but that He is near and that He is an active participant in the narratives that shapes our lives.
- To the official co-researchers who shared in this adventure: Thank you to John, Jonathan, Mohammed, Ivan, Noel, Eric, Paddy, Paul, David, Johan, Hennie, Surita and Doug. Thank you for your time and for co-constructing the understandings and meanings that can hopefully lead to something better.
- To all the unofficial co-researchers, the seafarers who I visited daily and who allowed me onto their ships and into their lives. May this research, somehow, in a small way be to your benefit. Thank you for receiving me as a guest on your ships, which is not only your work space but also your homes.
- Thank you to the chaplains of Richards Bay, where this adventure started and those in Durban, where this adventured developed and took shape. Thank you for being colleagues and friends.
- I also want to acknowledge Professor Julian Müller, my promoter. Thank you for your input and guidance throughout this process. Thank you for your patience and for many times being more enthusiastic and optimistic than I was about this. Your positive attitude really helped me to not get stuck at the A stage. Thank you also for being comfortable with our theological differences.
- Thank you to the Christian Seaman's Organisation who provides the space for me to live out my calling to spread the gospel to many nations. I would especially like to thank Dr Wimpie Van Schoor, the chairperson of the CSO, for allowing me the time I needed to finish this research.
- Paddy Percival: Thank you for proof reading with speed and for increasing this document's quality.



- And lastly I want to thank God for being with me every step of this research. May this construction of an understanding serve your mission to spread the good news of your love shown to us in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

CONTENT

Chapter 1: The research as an embedded narrative

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Research as story writing: The ABDCE formula	5
1.3	The Action: problems that are being researched and the research problem	13

Chapter 2: Thickening the background

2.1	Background about seafarers and the seafarersqmission	17
2.1.1	Introduction	17
2.1.2	Existing literature	17
2.1.3	Seafarers and seafarersqministry	19
2.2	The way in which this research story might enrich and thicken existing narratives about seafarers	31

Chapter 3: The researcher, the research approach and methodology

3.1	Introduction	34
3.2	Epistemological position	34
3.3	Theological position	49
3.3.1	Introduction	49
3.3.2	Interdisciplinary concerns	52
	- Van Huyssteens postfoundationalist approach	52
	- Evaluation of Van Huyssteens postfoundationalist approach	69
3.3.3	Missiological considerations	71
3.4	Methodology	91
	- The ABDCE formula and the different roles of the researcher and co-researchers	91
	- Three movements	99

3.5	Methods	102
-----	---------	-----

Chapter 4: The development of a thick research narrative

4.1	Introducing the main research characters	108
	a. John from Nigeria	108
	b. Jonathan from Kenya	109
	c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa	110
	d. Ivan from Bulgaria	111
	e. Noel from the Philippines	111
	f. Eric from the Philippines	112
4.2	Understanding the climax	113
4.3	The themes: Developed by local and beyond the local movements	115

A. Stories about a shipmate called Danger

-	Introduction	115
-	The research characters	
	a. John from Nigeria	132
	b. Jonathan from Kenya	134
	c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa	142
	d. Ivan from Bulgaria	143
	e. Noel from the Philippines	145
	f. Eric from the Philippines	146
-	Alternative perspective	149

B. Stories about God and faith in a multi-religious environment

-	Introduction	155
-	The research characters	158
	a. John from Nigeria	158
	b. Jonathan from Kenya	164
	c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa	165
	d. Ivan from Bulgaria	170



e. Noel from the Philippines	172
- Alternative perspective	174
<u>C. Injustices on board: Floating prisons</u>	
- Introduction	185
- The research characters	
a. John from Nigeria	194
b. Jonathan from Kenya	198
c. Douglas Stevenson: A transversal interdisciplinary conversation with maritime law	216
- Alternative perspective	223
<u>D. The social dynamics of women on board</u>	
- Introduction and the research characters	235
- Alternative perspective	240
<u>E. Coping with and appreciating diversity: Stories of many cultures living under the same roof</u>	
- Introduction	243
- The research characters	247
a. Jonathan from Kenya	247
b. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa	249
c. Ivan from Bulgaria	249
d. Noel from the Philippines	252
e. Eric from the Philippines	254
- Alternative perspective	256
<u>F. Seafarers and the stories of their families: An ironic relationship</u>	
- Introduction	261
- The research characters	268

a. John from Nigeria	268
b. Jonathan from Kenya	274
c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa	279
d. Ivan from Bulgaria	280
e. Noel from the Philippines	286
f. Eric from the Philippines	293
g. Surita Stipp: A transversal interdisciplinary conversation with systemic family therapy	307
- Alternative perspective	314

G. Seafarers and seafarersmission: Shaving things, a little drinking and even a spiritual dimension

- Introduction	329
- The research characters	330
a. John from Nigeria	330
b. Jonathan from Kenya	331
c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa	331
d. Ivan from Bulgaria	332
e. Noel from the Philippines	332
f. Eric from the Philippines	334
- Alternative perspective	337

H. Positive narratives about being a seafarer: A profession of hope

- Introduction	345
. The research characters	346
a. John from Nigeria	346
b. Jonathan from Kenya	346
c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa	347
d. Ivan from Bulgaria	347
e. Noel from the Philippines	348
f. Eric from the Philippines	348
- Alternative perspective	352

I. Relationships between seafarers: Friendships and fistfights

- Introduction	355
- The research characters	356
a. John from Nigeria	356
b. Jonathan from Kenya	357
c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa	357
d. Ivan from Bulgaria	359
e. Noel from the Philippines	360
f. Eric from the Philippines	360
- Alternative perspective	364

Chapter 5: The Ending

6.1	Introduction	369
6.2	The E in the ABDCE formula	369
6.3	The four main objectives of this research	372
6.4	Critical evaluation and summary of the ABDC stages	374
6.4.1	Chapter 1: Introduction	374
6.4.2	Chapter 2: Thickening the background	377
6.4.3	Chapter 3: The researcher, the research approach and methodology	381
6.4.3.1	Epistemology	381
6.4.3.2	Theology	384
6.4.3.3	Methodology	393
6.4.3.4	Methods	396
6.4.4	Chapter 4: The development of a thick understanding	399
6.5	The E of the different themes: some thoughts on be beyond the local+	400
6.5.1	Introduction	400
6.5.2	Sharing some ideas of possible implications beyond the local	
a.	Stories about a shipmate called Danger	401
b.	Stories about God and faith in a multi-religious environment	403
c.	Injustices on board: Floating prisons	404
d.	The social dynamics of women on board	404
e.	Coping with and appreciating diversity: Stories of many cultures living	

under the same roof	406
f. Seafarers and the stories of their families: An ironic relationship	407
g. Seafarers and seafarersqmission: Shaving things, a little drinking and even a spiritual dimension	408
h. Positive narratives about being a seafarer: A profession of hope	409
I. Relationships between seafarers: Friendships and fistfights	409
6.6 Possible new research narratives	410
6.7 A weakness?	414
6.8 The End	415
Works consulted	420
Addenda	
Addendum A: Understanding the world seafarers are living in	431
Addendum B: Interdisciplinary conversation concerning seafarers and justice issues	438
Addendum C: Interdisciplinary conversation concerning seafarers and their families	446
Addendum D: Works consulted by Surita Stipp in the interdisciplinary conversation	455