CHAPTER ONE

POSITIONING AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. MY INTEREST IN THIS FIELD OF RESEARCH

The previous 12 years I have spent in relationships with many teenagers.   The effect that HIV/AIDS has on these children with real faces and real stories has touched my life in many ways. It inspired awareness in me to understand the ways their lives are currently affected and will be affected in future. I would like to be able to respond to these needs and not only be a spectator in their life-long journey.

My personal story influenced the choice of this action field through intensive ministry to adolescents living in the inner city. Their families, education and personal relationships have become important issues to me. The church in the inner city (where I am a minister in the local church) is being confronted by urgent issues like morality, health and effective sex education for adolescents.

During my working years in the inner city, I have become aware of the imbalances of formal structures in regard to the availability of medical, social, legal and other facilities to some people living in the inner city. The need for transforming political structures which are having a big influence on people's lives is imperative. Having seen the influence of HIV/AIDS on the people close to me, have urged me to gain more knowledge in this field.

My "own story" is used and reported in the research through exposing prejudices, assumptions and values and through sharing these stories of my own and trying to understand the difference between them and other stories. I aim at sharing the experiences I have gained through interacting with young people infected or

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affected by HIV\AIDS are shared. These experiences have transformed and will continue to transform my own beliefs and the interaction between myself and these young people. Through this research I hope to understand my own responsibility to facilitate the process of transformation of the care and/or lack of care towards young people who were infected and affected by HIV/AIDS more effectively.

I often had the experience of sitting in a long queue in a state hospital next to a person living in the inner city, who can't afford the luxury of being treated as a person with dignity because she/he could simply not afford to go to a private hospital. Patients receive a number and are treated according to the prognoses which often deprive them their dignity.

In January 2002, I had to take someone to hospital who had tried to commit suicide. She received a number, her stomach was pumped out and she was treated according to the number. I persisted in emphasizing that her name was Nina and she lived on her own with no one to take care of her. After a long period of discussion with one of the doctors, he insisted on releasing her immediately. I desperately went off in search of someone to help this woman. I found a doctor who came to Nina's side, touched her and spoke to her in a kind manner. This second doctor treated Nina with dignity and took care of her by placing her in a care facility.

This short story has a happy ending. So often I could not find a caring doctor but only someone who treated patients as one of the endless queue of numbers with illnesses. Fortunately, I can be assertive because of my upbringing, my education and maybe my personality. Many people I know would not have dared to disagree with the first doctor. They would have merely accepted his decision and the patient would have suffered the consequences.

Experiences like these have convinced me that tender health care is a luxury that poor people, living in the inner city, cannot afford. Being an adolescent, these teenagers have even less power than some adults who are labeled as poor.

My initial response to this field of research was one of not wanting to get involved at all, because of the overwhelming impact of the issues, as well as the threat it might pose to towards people close to me.

I had the responsibility of taking care of a little girl of three years old.   She was playing outside in the area where my office is situated. She came running in with a used condom in her mouth. I panicked! After assessing the situation and being aware of the dangers of HIV, I realized the chance of infecting someone through the mouth is very unlikely. But still I was confronted by my own lack of knowledge about HIV/AIDS and my inability or unwillingness to act in any way towards people who live with this reality every day.

I was threatened by the overwhelming statistics often published by the media. A feeling of fear, ignorance and reluctance to get involved in this pandemic filled me.

All of these "ad hoc" experiences motivated me to learn about HIV/AIDS and to make a deliberate effort to involve myself in the world of the young people I get to meet in the inner city every day. I committed to learn with them, getting to know how they experience the challenges brought on by HIV/AIDS and the possible effect it has on their lives, as well as the possibility of getting infected.

2. POSITIONING

This research will be done, firstly from my position as a Practical Theologian. I use a narrative-based research approach and I further choose to do this research within the post-modern, social-constructionist paradigm.

The Narrative metaphor and Social Constructionism forms part of the postmodern world-view. Concepts, with which it is described, are post-structuralism, deconstructionism, an interpretive turn and new hermeneutics (Feedman and Combs 1996:14). This research also falls within the Qualitative Research paradigm.

I will consequently try to position myself within some of these concepts.

2.1 Practical Theology

During my years of study at the University of Pretoria, I was confronted with different schools of thinking, coming from different disciplines of theology. Often I felt lost between all the major streams of theological thinking. When I started my ministry as a young woman in an inner city congregation, a lot of the theological confusion was pushed backwards and I was confronted with real-life prejudice, old school thinking, patriarchy, discourses of rich and poor, discrimination with many faces, church politics, etc.

My theological journey only then really started. I discovered what Practical Theology meant to me. I discovered that I needed to know the people whom I wanted to minister to. I needed to know their culture, their "language", and their every-day life crises. Furthermore I needed to learn how to do theology in this context: the inner city of Pretoria. I needed to communicate it to the elderly, the children, the teenagers and to the person living on the street.

With these experiences, I began to understand what it means to work with a model of praxis-theory-praxis. I could not prepare a sermon without thinking about the people I would be preaching to, or translating the message into "inner city" language.

For me to start forming my own theology, I needed to sit with a mother of four children who had no other relatives, with no job, and no food to feed her children.

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Only then did I realize that the Gospel of Jesus Christ consists of far more than preaching the Word of God. It entails bringing the Word of God and breaking the bread of life with the people. It also means taking my bread and giving it to someone else; driving people to hospital in the middle of the night; confronting an aggressive drunk father in a small back street flat, (shared with six other people sitting or lying around); begging the father not to hit his child; and finally physically endangering my own life. Only then I was starting to understand what Practical Theology really meant.

People honor me through sharing their life experiences. I would internalize these stories, allowing them to change me and shape my thinking. I pray for them, love them and serve them the best I can. I would sometimes even tell them about the love of God and somewhere in this process, I "am doing" Practical Theology.

I needed to answer my own question of what Practical Theology means to me. There are many great theologians who had journeyed on this road of trying to understand Practical Theology.   My journey would briefly join theirs before I move on this – still pioneering- road of discovery.

Gerkin (1997:97-85) for example, uses three metaphors to explain the function of a pastor – which linked his metaphors to my own understanding of my role as a "doer" of Practical Theology. The first is that of a shepherd of the flock – the shepherd knows her/his sheep and the sheep, knows him/her. Secondly it entails that of a mediator and reconciler – between individual believers and the community of Christians. Finally it includes the role of a ritualistic leader –"*not all care can be expressed through the medium of conversation*" (Gerkin 1997:82).

A second road was detailed by Heyns (1990:6) says practical theology is *"that part of theology that concerns itself with this event – the encounter between God and humanity – and particularly with the role of human beings in this encounter (Firet 1974:14)".   …practical theology interprets the interaction between gospel*

and people. …The practical theologian wants to know whether the preacher understands the audience and its context properly…   Practical theology is a study that seeks to help humans to encounter God and to live in fellowship with God and other people. It is concerned with those religious actions that communicate with others so as to make room for God in this world (Heyns 1990:7)". My own experience resonates this struggle to find the words to communicate the story of God and the human encounter on a continuous basis in my own context.

Browning(1991:8) argues that theology as a whole equal's *fundamental practical theology* and has "*four sub movements: descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology and **strategic practical theology**"*. Heitink (1993:15) talks about Practical theology as *"**theologische handelings-wetenschap**"* and he explains it in term of *"**crisiswetenschap**": "De praktiche theologie beweegt zich in de hedendaagse crisis van kerk en geloof voortdurend tussen aanpassing en vernieuwing."* He describes the methodology of Practical Theology in the following terms (my own translation, 1993:161).

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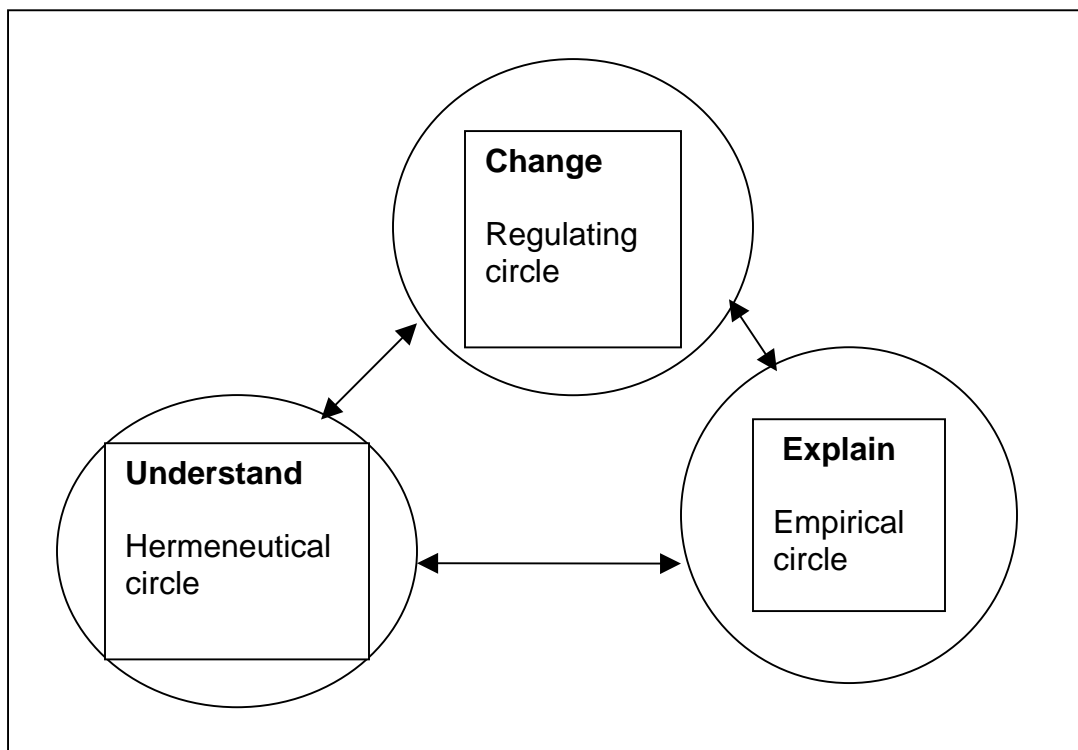
Van der Ven (1998) uses the term: **empirical theology**. Van der Ven concludes with a long chapter on explaining what is meant by empirical theology in the present and in the past with the following words (1998:32): "*Empirical theology is a product of the combination of empirical and hermeneutic-communicative methods: the hermeneutic-communicative approach functions as the frame of reference within which the meaning and significance of empirical research unfolds.*"

Lartey (2000:128) wrote a short informative article explaining the different models and methods of theological activities currently used in Practical Theology. He divides these activities into three groups. The first group constitutes the "branch approach" where practical theology is seen as a branch of theological knowledge (as described by Friedrich Schleiermacher), where *the emphasis is upon content of a discipline and the method adopted is one of applicationism* (2000:129)*.* The second is the "process approach" where the emphasis is placed on the method. Tillich, Groome, Farley, Whitehead and Browning formulate examples of this approach where *"existential questions are correlated with Christian symbols which provide the answers to the existential questions* (2000:130)*".*

In theological terms the closest description of my experience I could find was that of Lartey, describing the third group of practical theological methods as the "*way of being and doing approach".* He explains it as follows (Lartley 2000:131): "*This approach attempts to examine the content of faith and practice. It asks questions about what the contents of our faith are, realizing that tradition, context and experience shape us in such a way that there are very many different forms of equally valid Christian faith. It seeks to be reflective and thoughtful. It is concerned that faith is made manifest in practice, taking seriously the potentially transformative nature of faith and/or experience. As such it is concerned about what is being done in the name of faith. It is therefore praxis-oriented. It raises methodological questions and realizes that it is important to have and use the*

right tools for any job. In addition, it asks questions about who it is that are engaged in the theological tasks, what the social location of the persons are, who benefits form what is done, who is excluded by the way things are done and who are oppressed by it." .

He also gives his own criticism of the three approaches above, of which I will only reflect on the last one. He says "*the way of being and doing approaches may become anti-intellectual and thus cut themselves off from an important source of critical life skills. They may over-estimate the importance of context and thus end up in a kind of corporate solipsism."*

Feeling myself closer to this approach, I can see the dangers Lartey had referred to. For the sake of my own reflection, I do not regard it as serious enough critique, simply because many very strong theologians bring the balance into the broader field of Practical theology. I do not see myself as only dwelling in this approach, and will not feel alienated by choosing this position. Choosing to position myself in the social constructionist paradigm, this will also invite critique and reflection from different approaches and will help to bring balance into my own position as a Practical Theologian.

2.2 Narrative approach

The Narrative Approach to research is a comfortable way to be true to post-modern social-constructionism as described by Müller, Van Deventer and Human (2001:76): "*For us, the aim of research is not to bring about change, but to listen to the stories and to be drawn into those stories. While the structuralistic researcher has objectivity in mind by trying to be an observer from outside, and by trying to bring about change from the outside, the narrative researcher has subjective integrity in mind and strives for participatory observation*". By creating the atmosphere to allow adolescents to construct their own truths about the care and/or lack of care for themselves with regard to HIV/AIDS, these young people will be given an opportunity to make their voices heard.

2.2.1 Co-researcher

In a narrative approach the participants or **co-researchers** have a specific role to play. Their contribution consist of being co-researchers in the sense that their stories contribute to the research, their interpretations are considered valuable, their participation is honoured by them being taken seriously and listened to. The aim is that finally the research must benefit the co-researchers even more than it benefits the researcher, because they are no objects to be studied, but people to be valued and validated through the sharing of their life stories. The social constructionist process plays an integral role by extending an invitation to co-researchers to interpret the research results, rather than letting the researcher decide on the results which can make a contribution, and those and those that can not.

2.2.2 Position of the researcher

The **position of the researcher** in a narrative approach is that of acting as an initiator of the process. The position I choose to take in the research process is one of off-centeredness and of taking a "not-knowing" position with regard to the outcome of the research. People living and working in the inner city often use this statement: "local knowledge is better than imported knowledge". It eliminates the possibility of people in powerful positions thinking they know best for all other people (especially those people with less power than themselves). As researcher, I will trust the flow of the process of storying, rather than trying to manage the outcomes. Freedman and Combs (1996:332-33) see the principal of valuing local knowledge, as a trademark for post-structuralism. My position is not neutral; however I will be integrally involved in the research story.

On the issue of writing my thesis in English, which is my second language, is the following: This research is meant to benefit people living in the inner city. In the world outside more people understand English than Afrikaans. My motivation for writing in my second language simply entails making the research accessible to more people, and especially people living in the inner city.

2.2.3 Focus of the research

The **focus of the research** is not just to accomplish my aims, but to be of value to the research participants as well as to, especially the other communities where the research participants live. The aim of the research is to make unheard stories heard. This aim would include allowing these stories to transform others who encounter the same situation and to create a platform for adolescents who tell their stories, to be transformed themselves. The aim would firstly be to understand, and not to search for principles. I need to admit that knowledge is situational and conditional, coloured by my own interpretation and understanding. I will aim at transparency by being honest about this.

An important focus of narrative research is interpretation instead of analysis. My position is that of being a facilitator for interpretation, rather than an expert in analysis (Müller, unpublished).

As a narrative researcher I have an ethical responsibility towards my co-researchers. I aim at avoiding deception as far as possible. I continuously ask their permission to record their stories. Honesty about my intention of doing research is of the utmost importance and I will try not to let them ever feel exploited.

2.3 Post-modern paradigm

The post-modern paradigm links strongly to post-structural views. It is often used interchangeably.   Post-structuralism (Lowe1991:42) is typically restricted to a description of the work of French intellectuals like Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Lacan, Lyotard and Baudrillard. To understand post-structuralism and also post-modernism better, it is also relevant to look at structuralism and its meaning.

Klages (2004:1) explains that structuralism is appealing because it brings a scientific objectivity to the realm of literary studies. He continues to say that: *"In*

structuralism, the individuality of the text disappears in favour of looking at patterns, systems, and structures."

She summarizes the meaning of structuralism by constituting three principles (Klages 2004:1-2):

- *The structure of language itself produces "reality" – that we can think only through language, and therefore our perceptions of reality are all framed by and determined by the structure of language.*

- *Language speaks us; that the source of meaning is not an individual's experience or being, but the setting of oppositions and operations, the signs and grammars that govern language. Meaning doesn't come form individuals, but from the system that governs what any individual can do within it.*

- *Rather than seeing the individual as the centre of meaning, structuralism places THE STRUCTURE at the centre – it's the structure that originates or produces meaning, not the individual self. Language in particular is the centre of self and meaning; I can only say "I" because I inhabit a system of language in which the position of subject is marked by the first personal pronoun, hence my identity is the product of the linguistic system I occupy.*

Lye (1996:1) contributes the following assumptions to post-structural thought:

- Post-structuralism is marked by a reflection of totalization (to put all phenomena under one explanatory concept); essentialism (a reality which exists independent); and

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foundationalism (signifying systems are stable and unproblematic representations of a world of fact).

- Post-structuralism contests the concept of "man" as developed by enlightening thought and idealistic philosophy.

- Post-structuralism sees "reality" as being much more fragmented, diverse, tenuous and culture-specific than structuralism does.

- Post-structuralism derives in part from a sense that we live in a linguistic universe.

- Everything is textual and intertextual: no "outside of the text".

- Discourse is a material practice: the human is rooted in historicity and lives through the body.

- The historical and material world we know is controlled, selected, organized and distributed through a certain number of procedures.

- Concepts of repression, displacement, condensation, substitution, etc can be deconstructed or revealed: What is "meant" is different from what appears to be meant.

- Text is marked by a surplus of meaning; the result of this is that readings differing in meaning are inevitable, indeed a condition of deriving meaning at all.

- A "text" exists as it is read.

In a workshop Feedman and Combs (2000) presented, they explained the difference in approaches between a structuralist and a post-structuralist view on identity, personality and power in the following way:

Structuralist view	Post-structuralist view
Seeks to classify individuals in terms of general classes or types	Seeks specific details of the identity of people
Expert outside knowledge is valuable	Local knowledge is valuable
Surface phenomena hold the clues to deep identity. Only expert specialists have the power to accurately decode surface clues.	Surface phenomena are all we really know. Each of us has the power to interpret surface phenomena
Individual lives are interpreted and valued according to the rules or norms	Individual lives are valued and interpreted in terms of how they embody exceptions to what might have been expected.
Experts have the power to assign meaning to people's life stories by decoding the formulae that underlie their structure.	All people have the power to construct meaningful lives through the stories they enact, tell, remember and share with one another

Contrasting these two different views helped me clearly to understand the difference in approaches clearly. This is not a deliberate effort to explain Structuralism, but rather an effort to understand post-structuralist views. In the introduction to this paragraph, I explained that post-structuralism and post-modernism are sometimes used interchangeably.

During the same workshop Freedman and Combs explained post-structuralism further by posing the question: **How can I become other than who I have been?**

To me, this constitutes the essence of my journey of research. In this planned journey of research, I will strive to become "other" than who I am at this moment. This question guides me on to a road of a post-modernistic journey to search for my own better understanding.

Hevern (2003:2) explains that post-modernism seeks micro or local narratives in the place of meta-narratives because the claim to "being the truth" is far more modest. This view is also much more open to listen to voices of the historically marginalized.

According to Burr (1995:12), *"post-modernism is a rejection of both the idea that there can be an ultimate truth and of structuralism, the idea that the world as we see it is the result of hidden structures. ……Post-modernism also rejects the idea that the world can be understood in terms of grand theories or meta-narratives, and emphasizes instead the co-existence of a multiplicity and variety of situation-dependent ways of life."*

Trying to understand the concept of Post-modernism is no easy task. Sometimes it is used to describe an artistic movement. It is also used as a form of analysis or criticism and is sometimes described as a contemporary experience.   It is also used as a radical rethinking of social and political structures, expressed through different artistic mediums (Lowe 1991:42-51).

Post-modernism *"questions (*psychology's) *scientific and empirical methodologies, reject theories of human personhood which stress the self as autonomous, consistent, and logical, and scorns a mentality which believes it can treat human mental illnesses by use of scientific techniques." (Hevern 1993:2)*.

Tyler (1991:80-84) explains the difference between modernism and post-modernism as follows: Modernism starts from something – resolved from

foundations and absolutes.   Post-modernism is not solidly rooted, but rather afloat and still developing.

Modernism claims there are rules serving as criteria for rational judgment where Post-modernism claims that these criteria are invented as we go along, or are constituted afterwards.

Tyler (1991:81) says: "*work: 'play by the rules', is modernism's great justifier. We must 'work through', 'work over', 'work in,' and 'work up' the 'over-worked', play of 'work,' of 'it works,' 'the works' ….'the works of… ', ' the dream work' of Freud and 'give the works to' Marx's labour' and the whole organismic vocabulary derived form * werg- ('work', 'energy', 'erg,' 'organ,' 'wright,' 'bulwark') which is the bull-work, the rayt/ of modernism… Post-modernism is more interested in 'playing with the rules'… Modernist works are global and transcendent discourses and solutions… Post-modern discourse turns aside... It's story-path is many-branched and labyrinthine, beginnings and ends are forgotten, misplaced, merged or interchanged. Truth in modernism, is suborned by method… For Post-modernism, truth is the minimum enabling condition for lying… Modernism's truth-and-method is a disguise for truth-as-power... Truth and method make the economy of scarcity*".

In this challenging passage a clear picture is drawn that differentiates Modernism from Post-modernism. This research will fit more comfortably in the post-modern paradigm where truth is "floating" and the researcher is in search of meaning and is on a journey to discover, together with others. Where possible, the inevitable power games are challenged and deconstructed. To come to any understanding, is not a process I to be taken on my own, but it will be co-constructed by all role-players. This constitutes my positioning within the social-constructionist paradigm.

2.4 The social-constructionist paradigm

Hevern (2003:2) eloquently explains that social constructionism assumes that humans are born into a social world from which they attempt to make sense, especially through language. Through language and interpretation, meaning is given to their lives and to their experiences within the social realm.   In this paradigm, the underlying fundament is that the origin of knowledge is socially constructed since knowledge relies upon the tool of language.

Gergen (1994:241-245) explains three implications social Constructionism has for therapy. To me these implications are also relevant to research. Gergen says that the focus of the therapist *(researcher)* moves from the cognitive/internal processes towards the social process. There is secondly a shift from superior knowledge and an expert position, to one of equality and co-construction. Thirdly he says that there is a shift from diagnosing and healing towards cultural responsibility. These concepts fit into the paradigm with which I choose to work. The paradigm releases me from the responsibility to provide answers and to come to solutions. The research process is a process of co construction and the closing will be part of a cultural responsibility. The people amongst the research will share in acting upon the stories and the outcomes of the research.

The description of social Constructionism by Burr (1995:3-5) includes ideas shared by other social constructionist thinkers:

- *a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge (including understanding ourselves)*
- *historical and cultural specificity – all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative*
- *knowledge is sustained by social processes and constructed between people who share social interactions*
- *knowledge and social action go together; therefore we can talk of different social constructions in the world*

I place myself within this paradigm, because the interpretation of the construction process of knowledge (Gergen 1999:4-7) gives a workable understanding of describing knowledge. It describes knowledge as a social process between different people. It is not an objective truth outside the person and is not constructed by one person alone. In this paradigm the voices of the previously unheard people (more specifically of the adolescents in this research) can be taken seriously.   Their stories contribute to the understanding about the necessities of care for HIV infected and affected people.

2.5 Qualitative Research

The research falls within the broad framework of Qualitative research. It differs in the way that one is not bound to the other, but it is connected and philosophical foundations are interlinked.   Using the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin 2000:1048) as a guide, I want to explain the methodology of Qualitative research as an *"interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and sometimes counter-disciplinary field".* Qualitative researchers are sensitive to the value of using multi-methods, the naturalistic approach and the interpretive understanding of human experience.   This field is also shaped by multi-ethical and political allegiances.

The result is a moving away from grand narratives and sensitivity that political liberation start with the experiences of individuals and groups. The movement grows in time with the process of previously oppressed voices being made heard. Lastly, the cultures surrounding the research field are called to react on the results in much more active ways. (Denzin 2000:1047)

Qualitative research shares two important principles: firstly the focus on things that happen in the "real world" and secondly the attempt to research a phenomenon in all its facets. It is understood that the real world is complex and

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issues surrounding the natural world are multi-faceted (Leedy and Ormrod 2001:147).

Criteria for the assessment of Qualitative research are different to that of the Quantitative approach. There is a movement away from reliability and validity, towards credibility and accuracy of representation (Agar 1986:209-220).

If Guba's (1981:75-91) model of trustworthiness for research is taken into account, it appears as if his criteria for Qualitative Research are applicable to this specific study. These criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. I choose to let these criteria guide me to establish trustworthiness for my research. The criterion of transferability is not that important to me. Because of the narrative approach, every person's contribution is valuable and unique. The methodology of research may be transferable, but the specific research and outcomes not.

Definite goals of this study are to conduct the research in such a way that it maintains subjective integrity and credibility through:

- trying to listen to all the stories with subjective, not objective integrity
- asking open, non-judgmental questions; and
- taking into account that meaning is "radically plural, always open, and …there is politics in every account" (Bruner 1993:1)

2.6 Care

Care will play an important part in this research. It is therefore important to describe what is meant by "care" in this research project. I will start this study by describing how I understand care. When I talk about care aimed at young people, I firstly think of medical care. This includes the accessibility to information about a person's body, illnesses, about sexual preferences and about HIV/AIDS and related diseases. Secondly there is a dimension of the concept of

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care that will include personal validation – the experience that a person is recognized and listened to.

Giving meaning to the word "care", is a process of construction indicating what care means to young people in the inner city, and a deconstruction of how other role-players understand care, e.g. the church, health organizations, the government, etc. As part of this research I plan to embark on a journey of discovering what "care" means.

3. THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Living in an African city, one cannot disregard the fact that even in Pretoria, one is influenced by an African cosmological world-view, as explained by Hammond-Tooke in Du Toit (1998:75-91). The Western and African culture meets in a special way and create an interesting cosmological world-view that must be taken into account in trying to understand the social construction processes in the inner city of Pretoria. It is noteworthy that a focus point in the African world-view is perceived to be the household. (Müller and Van Deventer 1998:260-271). This view will be tested within the inner city context, but none the less, the value of the household as a value in African culture will be carried throughout the research.

Shifts in world-view are made with difficulty and is often a painful process. In his article, Hiebert (1991:264) gives an interpretation of the shift from colonialism, to anti-colonialism and finally to globalism. According to him, Western missionaries "*equated Christianity with Western culture and the latter's obvious superiority over other cultures proved the superiority of Christianity over pagan religions.*" He furthermore explains that "*Intense interaction with others produced in the West a reaction against colonialism and the arrogance and cultural oppression it exhibited……In the end, contextualization often became an uncritical process in which the good in other cultures was affirmed, but the evil in them was left unchallenged* " (Hierbert 1991:267).

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Entering into an African cosmopolitan city from a Western way of thinking I am confronted by the issues of different world-views. This poses a continuous struggle to me to come to terms with changing my own world-view and to take the process of globalization seriously. My own challenge is to find a balance between an African world-view, globalism and other world-views I am confronted with; or the view my own world is perceived by. To be an incarnational witness *with integrity* is a real challenge. The impact of an African world-view will consequently be explored further.

4. RESEARCH METHOD

This research project is part of a broader project sponsored by SANPAD (South African Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development). The need to do research in a way that really impacts the lives of people in South Africa in a new way, have come to the attention of the research team. The team felt that current research does not really communicate the real life-stories of people infected and/or affected by HIV/AIDS in a way that impact other people's choices in life.

An approach putting the news of AIDS in a content that will communicate the horror of this pandemic in new language is desperately needed. Müller ((2003:4) explains the difference of this research approach from others, as follows: *"The difference of this approach lies in the fact that firstly it is a narrative approach to research. ….One of the implications of a narrative approach is that emphasis is not put on HIV/AIDS as a phenomenon, but on **people** infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Therefore, this is research not in terms of statistics and data, but in terms of the stories of people."*

The main aim of the research project as a whole (Müller 2003:5) is "***to come to a holistic understanding of the stories of adolescents infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and about their experiences of care and/or the lack of care."***

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In line with the above formulation, the question for my own research project was formulated as: **What do the unheard stories of adolescents infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and living in the inner city of Pretoria tell us about care and/or the lack of care for them?**

My research aims to reach a holistic understanding of adolescents living in the inner city of Pretoria, who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and their experiences of care and/or the lack of care and furthermore will aim to work towards transformation of the researcher, the co-researchers, the discourses and the systems influencing all of these stories.

The context of this research makes this study especially important, because there is very little research done on adolescents living in the inner city, who are poor, disadvantaged and multi-cultural (Crockett and Crouter 1995:119).

The above also describes the research shortcoming to me. Much is said and written about youth and HIV/AIDS. People talk a lot about the youth, but there are very few researchers who really listen to young people. There is a real need to hear from members of the youth themselves as to their experiences. These experiences need to be taken seriously by adults and people constructing and planning care and care facilities for young people.

My personal opinion is that young people are marginalized because of their age. They are often not taken seriously because they are perceived to be too young to talk and convince people. With the reality that people who live in the inner city is already a marginalized group added, this to me qualifies them especially to be invited as co-researchers.

Just trying to focus on a model of doing research, to me has proved to be a humbling experience. To experience the art of doing research in itself constitutes a time of discovering hundreds of people who have proved to be real experts in

this field. To try to position myself within such a vast world of philosophical and ideological differences and even minefields, is no easy task.

Babbie (2004:107) gives an example of how to write a research design. He uses terminology like conceptualization, choice of research method, operationalization, population and sampling, observations, data-processing, analysis, application and review. In the narrative approach, researchers, sometimes deliberately, move away from this technical terminology. Narrative researchers deliberately choose to position themselves differently.

Creswell (1998:47-68) discusses five different possibilities to use as a research design. The approach I chose (together with the SANPAD team), correlates with two of the described possibilities: phenomenology and ethnography. Some useful guidelines are given in these descriptions that are useful to this study.

Another model that might be used is Browning's four movements of descriptive theology (further described in **Background of the story)**.

The method I have chosen to use for doing research is also in correlation with the choices made by the broader research team of SANPAD. The research team (Müller 2003:9) chose to use fiction writing as a metaphor for doing research (ABDCE) within the Narrative Approach (Müller, Van Deventer and Human 2001:76-96). This method does not represent a big movement away from Browning, but rather a different application and broadening of his methodology.

A joint publication was issued by the participating researchers as a reflection on the research project as a whole. In this publication, the choice of a research approach is explained by different researchers (Human (2003:44-48), Van Niekerk (2003:113-122) and Müller (2003:1-16). To better understand the choice of a research approach, Müller explains (2003:5) *"According to our preliminary research, the influence and impact of the broader culture and community context*

on the success of any preventative or caring programme cannot be over-estimated. Our research is based on family and social systems and on the assumption that self-experience is socially constructed. These insights seem to be lacking in existing programmes and our cautious hypothesis suggests that the huge impact of HIV/AIDS can not be fully understood without this holistic and totally integrated approach."

I have chosen this way of doing research because it is a comfortable metaphor when doing research on stories about the lives and experiences of people. Furthermore it helps me to find a flow in the process that I am about to embark on. It provides a beginning and an end, and a journey in between. This motivates me to keep going. It helps me to focus on where I am in the process of the research process and what comes next. The "writing" metaphor invites the telling and developing of stories. These stories need to be interpreted retold, to yet again have new stories developing. What further excites me of this process is to allow the stories of the young people I have chosen as co-researchers, to be made heard and to be taken seriously. In the end, these stories will change lives, even if only by being allowed to be voiced. There is a deep acknowledgement of humanity in the process of making unheard stories heard.

Van Deventer explained the value of this metaphor as follows: *"This is no linear process, but rather reflects an emergent design which is focused, but nevertheless flexible, iterative and continuous and therefore gives this research the character of an evolving spiral"* (Van Deventer 2002:5).

The concept of an evolving spiral has captured my imagination. It motivates me to continue on a journey of discovery, of personal evolvement and of social transformation. There is no clear-cut answer to where I am going, but I know in the end I will not be where I am now. The spiral will take me somewhere I haven't been before.

Consequently the ABDCE-method to be used in this research process will be explained. Being part of the research team, the content may correlate with the work of Müller, Van Deventer and Human (2001).

4.1 The action field of the story

In the narrative approach, the emphasis is on the action and not necessarily the problem. The narrative researcher has a deconstructive agenda. Things need to be unpacked and alternatives explored. According to this approach, not only the problem areas of life have to be researched, but every action, with a possible alternative story in mind.

In describing the action, the problem is addressed, but the description goes far beyond that. In the narrative approach the now is action, and therefore dynamic in nature. (Müller, Van Deventer and Human 2001:76-96). "*To take the action seriously and to have it told is to open up a possibility, to create a new now for tomorrow*".

The now must be described as truthful as possible, without clouding the interpretation. The stories about the action must be reported.

Then the researcher must interact with the stories that are reported. His or her own stories, experiences and discourses must be reported.

4.1.1 The action or fields of action (*habitus*) chosen, are:

- Adolescents living in the inner city of Pretoria
- Affected and/or infected by HIV/AIDS
- In regard to the care or lack of care available to them.

4.1.2 Possible questions to be focused on during the research:

Questions I would like to explore would be:

- What words do young people use to talk about HIV/AIDS?

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- How do they experience care?

- What do they see as their role in the process of HIV/AIDS?

- What are the unheard stories they have to share?

- How does the context of the inner city influence them?

- What can I, as a researcher, learn from them?

- What can they contribute in future plans of care towards adolescents?

4.1.3 Data collection:

Rubin and Rubin (1995:56) explain the use of theory building in a Qualitative approach as a step-by-step process of collecting data, to build a rich description of the arena of research.

Ways of collecting data can include:

- Qualitative and quantitative questionnaires.

- Observations of people involved in the care of adolescents.

- Physically walking through the city doing rapid appraisal where necessary.

- Discussions and interviews (semi-structured and unstructured) with adolescents, care givers, policy makers and other people involved.

- Narratively, data collection will be focused on creating space for new stories.

The processes of triangulation, member checking and peer examination as explained in Krefting (1990:214-222) is helpful to enhance credibility in the *modi* of research.

I continuously tried to report interviews in the language of the participants and the reflection in my own language. Technical terms are used and explained where applicable. I have always experienced resistance towards the trend to use unnecessary or complicated language just to prove your ability. I chose to write my dissertation in a clear and understandable manner which will reflect the views

of my co-researchers in a responsible way and try not to play up to people in power by using that language.

Feedback will be done through the use of reflection groups. The broader parameter for the research is Family pastoral care in the field of Practical Theology. Sociological and medical issues are also addressed from this perspective where necessary.

My relationship with the different role players, who form part of the action and action field, is described. I am aware of certain feelings of compassion or discord or negative attitudes toward different people and institutes, for instance power structures and care facilities. My assumption is that there is a lack of care toward adolescents living in the inner city. Deep bonds of personal relations exist between different teenagers and me and thereby I am biased towards their stories and am compelled to have compassion with them. However, being a pastor in the Dutch Reformed Church contributes to attitudes of distrust on the families' side. My own experience with lack of care from different medical institutes might influence my openness to listen to the stories of caregivers and others.

Through this research I will strive to become part of the action and not to remain an outside observer. I will therefore become personally involved and get to know caregivers and young people infected or affected. I will be listening to the stories of care and/or lack of care and will be drawn in by stories of adolescents and their families.

4.2 Background of the story

The first movement of this process which will be action and the second which will be background together, can be compared to Don Browning's first, second and third movements: descriptive, historical, and systematic (Browning 1991:47). The first movement as horizon analysis *"…also attempts to analyze the horizon*

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of cultural and religious meanings that surround all our actions."   Browning uses the term *"thick description"* and emphasizes the necessity to interpret the action that is being researched against the background of different perspectives: Sociology, psychology, economy, and others.

The first movement (descriptive) asks for a "thick" description where the actual situation is described according to every possible scientific perspective. This movement asks for an interdisciplinary approach and involves the empirical situation, (action and action field) to be described with honesty and integrity. The research team has to use sound methods during this movement. Both qualitative and quantitative methods will be considered social-constructively and narratively, as explained under "Action".

Following the "thick" description and as part thereof, the background should be extended to include the historical perspective and the systematic concepts already developed with regards to specific or related actions.

Browning's movements imply reciprocal dialogue between "Action" and "Background". Socially constructed narrative-based research is in no way linear in nature and although we are assisted by guidelines of research, the various steps should rather be viewed as a spiralling process. This short description of what is meant by the Background is taken out of Müller, Van Deventer and Human (2001:76-96).

In the next chapter, different identified discourses will be discussed. I will furthermore explain the meaning of discourses.

Persons and/or the discourses which have played a role in the development of this particular field of action are the following:
- Sex education
- Family value systems of different cultures

- Poverty and Political discourses (Some of these discourses are visible in the speech of President Thabo Mbeki as he addressed the ANC members at their celebration of their 90 years of existence (Summary in *Beeld(a Sunday newspaper)*: 15 January 2002, pg 9)
- Discourses of how adolescents are viewed by society and visa versa
- Theological discourses and discourses involving moral values
- Health care discourses
- HIV/AIDS discourses
- Rich vs. poor discourses
- Discourses regarding inner city life

These groups and people are all involved in different ways in the action being researched**.**   Society has strong views on HIV/AIDS. The way people grow up, learn about sex and relationships and structure their own lives accordingly, are influenced by so many structures, cultures, groups and individuals. The state is involved in litigating and influencing public opinions. Families and their way of interaction and communication evolve around HIV/AIDS.   Individuals, their religion and their value systems, contribute holistically to the experiences of people living with the effect of HIV/AIDS.

Different strategies are implemented to gather, compile and report the background of the action.   Current relationships with adolescents serve as starting points to gather stories. Medical personnel are interviewed. Current research on these issues is used to gather the history of the inner city of Pretoria and its people. The openness that interviews might lead elsewhere than where I want it to go, is apparent from the start.

One such an example is the story of Thandi. She is one of the members of the group which is participating as co-researchers in this project. The aim of the group is to talk about HIV/AIDS. She is an only child in grade 10. I had a conversation with her, where we explored the value of the group which she is

attending. She is currently in a relationship with a boy, who has disciplinary problems at school. She is concerned about the pressure he is putting on her to become more involved with him. Because of her strong religious convictions, she wants to save herself for marriage.

We discussed her decision and how it is influencing her relationship. She was enthusiastic to talk about her problems, and asked me to talk to her friend as well. Her friend came immediately after these discussions between Thandi and me. Her name is Dineese, and her life is characterized by severe poverty and an extremely difficult childhood. She is the elder of five children and also very concerned because of the lack of food in the house. She is furthermore very concerned about her future and that of her brothers and sisters.

The discussion I had with Dineese was very meaningful to me. I was assured that the system in the organization which I am a part of, was working well for the family. Three of her siblings received food and academic stimulation at our drop-in centre.

This entire discussion had no relation to HIV/AIDS, but it naturally flowed out of my relationship with Thandi and our relationship that started out of the group which focused on HIV/AIDS.

Through these two meetings, contact was made with Thandi's parents. Dineese's family was also served on different levels of need. A whole new dynamic grew out of these two young people's participation.

4.3 Story Development

Müller, Van Deventer and Human (2001:76-96) describes this part of the research process as follows: A narrative researcher is patient and interested and curious. He or she doesn't know before hand what the solutions are or should be. The narrative researcher has patience and waits for the research plot to develop.

Research is not in the first instance about an action, but about people (characters) in action. These characters are participants and not objects. They are the co-researchers and should be allowed to become part of the evolutionary process. The contribution of the researcher is to reflect and facilitate and wait until the plot emerges. It is more than being a scribe – it is rather like being the assistant to someone who is writing an autobiography. In order to do that, you have to listen to your "characters" and have compassion for them. The better you get to know them, the better you will be able to see things from their perspective.

The research process is not only about story telling, but also about story development. The narrative researcher is looking and waiting for new and better stories to develop. As researchers, we have an interest in emancipation. Gergen (1999:5) says: *"In the hands of these scholars, the data dramatically succeeded in bringing provocative ideas about human interaction to life, thus generating debate and dialogue."*

Different stories are included in conversation through listening to the different voices, making them heard and by critically evaluating the different voices. Reflecting teams of different representatives are invited to co-interpret different stories and influences.

Alertness for unexpected developments is essential through focusing on the hearing of unheard stories about care and/or lack of care. The broader scientific community is involved through the publishing of an article with preliminary findings for critical evaluation.

Story development and the sensitivity to new, unexpected stories enhance this. Reflection-teams will be used for greater credibility. These teams are asked to participate in the process of drawing conclusions and evaluating interpretations made by myself or by co-researchers. There is no aim to be universal in any way, regarding the provision of answers or making conclusions. Guba's criteria

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(1981:75-91) for establishing trustworthiness are taken serious. Scientific integrity (asking questions as: "did I listen properly and did I ask the best questions"), rather than validity is valued as principles to proper research (Freedman and Combs, 1996:285).

Participants in the research are treated as co-researchers when they are asked to become involved in the interpretation of possible findings as well as to act as reflecting teams. Upfront, the marginalized appear to be the affected and infected adolescents. Parents of these children might also feel marginalized. In some cultures, children's voices are not taken seriously. Particularly voices of the mothers of the children are seldom heard. Young people are valued as too young to be taken seriously.   Literature studies will help to confirm or contradict these assumptions.

Entry points to the unheard stories are known people, which lead to new relationships. Medical institutions will also be used as entry points.

4.4 Climax of the Story

"You move them along until everything comes together in the climax, after which things are different for the main characters, different in some real way" (Lamott 1995:62).

In Müller, Van Deventer and Human (2001:76-96) the climax of the story is explained: "*The socio-constructionist and narrative researcher sets the scene in motion and wait anxiously for the climax to develop. The fake or quasi researcher on the other hand, is a propagandist who knows the answers to the questions and therefore doesn't really need to do any research. Then the research document becomes propaganda material instead of an honest development of "character" and "plot". The person, who knows the outcome or climax before hand, hasn't even started the process of becoming a researcher".*

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When understanding comes too quickly, it is not understanding at all. The way towards the climax is not an easy one. Research is seeing people suffer and finding meaning in it. One can not do that if you're not respectful. If you look at people and just see rags or smart clothes, you will misinterpret them. To be a researcher, you have to learn to be reverent. Research is more than mere technique; it is about reverence and awe.

In this research project I do not intend to manipulate the climax, but to allow it to unfold through the process of "Action-Background-Development".

Transformation is taking place in the telling of the stories, the retelling by the researcher and through the process of story development and re-storying. This expectation might influence the research in creating the hope and even in planning a good outcome.

I am continuously listening responsively to opportunities for story development, restorying and to let stories develop without forcing or manipulating a certain outcome.

Thandi's story took an unexpected turn when she ran away from home a few weeks later. Her parents immediately came to me in desperation. The group which Thandi was part of took co-responsibility for her. They found her with a friend and encouraged her to return home. The group wrote her a letter, encouraging her to deal with her problems with her parents and with her boyfriend. As a group they expressed their concern with the relationship between her and her boyfriend. This outcome was totally unexpected and unplanned.

A climax will be reached when the participants themselves have named transformation, or if I as the researcher experienced transformation. Some

structures are already in a process of going through transformation as a result of the research (launch of the Sediba Hope AIDS Centre).

4.5 Ending of the Story

Müller, Van Deventer and Human (2001:76-96) explains ending as follows: The researcher easily gets discouraged towards the end of the research encounter. Did I achieve anything? Was all this work worth the effort? To be a researcher is to be able to dream for and with people. The research process involves many of the stories of those involved: the co-researchers, the families, the therapists, the patients and the church members. The research process is not only a mere reflection on those stories but it is always a new writing.

Research creates its own story with new possibilities. Therefore, narrative research doesn't end with a conclusion, but with an open end, which hopefully will stimulate a new story and new research. Research sets off with action. In the description of the action, and in interaction with the action, the need arises to create a background. And with background and interaction co-characters are created. With such interacting characters, development is inevitable. With development there is dynamic evolution and one can expect to move to some sort of a climax.

Research is like any other story, bound to have an ending somewhere. Hopefully the end will be happy, but in every case, there will be an end that's different from the beginning. In that sense the end will always be better than the beginning. It provides a new, although not always pleasant and even disappointing, perspective. With "Climax" and "Ending" the team will have to test existing and newly developed theory in the practical situation. In doing this, they have reached Browning's fourth movement and will again have to consider all possible research methods, and involve the relevant individuals, families and communities to ensure a broad base of ownership of the emerging strategies.

In the end, unheard stories of adolescents living in the inner city are heard. Through this process a holistic understanding of how they experience being affected or infected by HIV/AIDS, should come to the fore. The research must be of value to the research participants. Maybe this research can contribute to the standard of care for people infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

The belief that telling and retelling stories is a worthwhile process in itself is encouraging enough to continue with the research, even if the outcome is not as hoped for. My own experiences of becoming part of these unheard stories are already rewarding enough.

Self-reflection is an important part of the research because I continuously move to different places of understanding. To formulate that understanding is part of the process of re-storying. Not being an expert, I need to come to terms with unheard stories made heard and the effect it has on my life. It is difficult to write in a self-reflecting way.   This is accommodated by asking the experts (co-researchers) and trusting them to be the guide through the research process through assisting me.

The church might be influenced in some way by learning how people perceive her quality of care towards young people.   PEN (Pretoria Evangelism and Nurture, Section 21 Company) – the company I am accountable to - should be influenced because the research results might contribute to the quality of care given to young people involved in the work being done. These results may be of significance in the launch of the HIV/AIDS care centre for homeless people living and dying on the streets because of AIDS and other people living in the inner city.   Research findings are communicated in personal presentations, relationships and through the possible reading of the dissertation by others.

5. IN CLOSING

In this first Chapter, I tried to come to terms with my own positioning within the different paradigms. It is important for me to clearly explain the process of my research that is done in the ABDCE-model as a metaphor for doing research.

As explained in the Action – focus of the research, it is important to start with the stories of the co-researchers that were listened to. This will then be the logical next phase of the design.

5.1 Index