

CHAPTER THREE

WEAVING THE BACKDROP: MIXING DIFFERENT VOICES TO COME TO A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

In the previous chapter we have listened to the stories of groups of young people about their experiences of care, of HIV/AIDS and other related stories. In this chapter, I want to listen to psychological stories, educational stories and developmental stories that play an influential role in understanding the stories of the inner city youth. I want to listen to the opinions of other people and other professions regarding young people and HIV/AIDS. How adults look at young people, regarding the care they deserve and the care that is their human right. I want to touch on the different discourses regarding young people and care, and young people and sex, and young people and HIV/AIDS.

The cultural diversity of this group forces me to listen to the cultural mixed stories about HIV/AIDS: to come to an understanding of this process with the young people, to honour their cultures as well as my own.

These stories must be brought into conversation with the life stories of inner city adolescents living in Pretoria.

In Chapter 1 a few discourses is listed that play a role in this particular research. The question of the dominant discourses that needs to be deconstructed must be addressed in this chapter.

Let me first explain what is meant by “discourses”. Burr (1995:48) explains it as *“...a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events.”* Furthermore, Burr (1995:51) explains how discourse can be recognized: *“A discourse about an object is said to manifest itself in texts – in speech, say a conversation or interviews, in written material such as novels, newspaper articles or letters, in visual images like magazine advertisements or films, or even in the ‘meanings’ embodied in the clothes people wear or the way they do their hair. In fact, anything that can be ‘read’ for meaning can be thought of as being a manifestation of one or more discourses and can be referred to as a ‘text’.”*

This description of discourse is a little broad, may be too broad. It helps us to understand what is meant by discourse, but Cheek (2004:1142) helps us to understand how to work with discourses in her description: *“Discourses are the scaffolds of discursive frameworks, which order reality in a certain way. They both enable and constrain the production of knowledge, in that they allow for certain ways of thinking about reality while excluding others. In this way, they determine who can speak, when, and with what authority; and, conversely, who cannot (Ball, 1990).”*

This description will be a guide in the following discussions on different discourses that play a role in this research. It must be kept in mind that the discourses discussed influence the production of knowledge. It allows for specific ways of thinking and excludes others. It determines who may speak, who are listened to and heard and who are not.

In this chapter I will try to describe different discourses that influence the constructing of identity and the value of young people living in the inner city of Pretoria.

- Research done in Africa
- Multi-cultural discourses

- Discourse of transition in the inner city
- Historical discourses of Pretoria
- Discourses about the role African families play in building values in young people
- Discourses about adolescence
- Care discourses
- Sexual discourses in Africa.

1. RESEARCH DONE IN AFRICA

To look at the situation of young people in Africa proves to have its own challenges. Western researchers do Eurocentric research and claim that their results are for all humans (Nsamenang 2002:61). This cultural generalization does not prove to be valuable to African youth, because they are special in their own right and need to be acknowledged for that even by Western researchers.

The context of Africa asks for more research to be done from within the African world-view. It is necessary to understand African youth and involve them in voicing their own contributions to better understand young people in Africa. What makes Africa special, is the fact that there are about 500 million people living on the continent, of which half of the population consists of children and teenagers under the age of 15. Children and teenagers make up more than 60% of the total population. In South Africa, 75% of the population is younger than 35 (Nsamenang 2002:64).

This emphasizes to me the enormous value of the youth in Africa and in South Africa, also the enormous responsibility to help create an environment of health and of growth and opportunities for them. Furthermore it emphasizes the great opportunity to journey with young people on their road to construct their own identity and come to terms with challenges like HIV/AIDS and other African challenges.

The African world-view is to be taken serious in talking to the youth. To talk to youth in Pretoria, this world-view is playing in on every story.

My own Euro-African roots (being born in a small rural town called Premier Mine just east of Pretoria, as part of a very conservative Afrikaans community, I still see myself as a child of Africa) can influence me to not hear clearly or not to hear at all what is communicated. My own frame of thinking is always in the front. To admit it and try to accommodate the fact that I am listening and writing with a Euro-African world-view is helpful to me.

1.1 Understanding world-view

In an unpublished paper, Curtis Holtzen (2004:1-31) gave a very valuable description of world-view. After discussing the history of world-view in a clear manner, he comes to a description that correlates with a Narrative description of world-view written by Sire (2004): *“A world-view is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality; and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.”* Holtzen states that the narrative way world-views are described with, confronts you with issues of truthfulness.

I will not come to the question of truthfulness within the narrative paradigm, because the Narrative paradigm is not interested in truthfulness in a scientific way. To my understanding, the Narrative paradigm is rather more interested in the person who is living the narrative: how did the person (or community) come to this narrative and what does this narrative contribute to come to an understanding of the particular world-view and what are the discourses these narratives tell of and lastly, who are to benefit from these discourses, would be questions I would ask and try to answer for myself.

1.2 The African world-view, its understanding of adolescence and its relevance to this study

The value of children in the African world-view (Nsamenang 2002:69) is described as follows: "...the African notions of individuality and autonomy are essentially relational and interdependent, not individualistic and independent. Thus, the African world-view visualizes the child as an active agent, developing in a socio-cultural field in which full personhood is a matter of assent, acquired by degrees during ontogenyIn this sense, becoming an adult is a gradual process of incremental maturation." This is a very important broadening in my own understanding of adolescence: to know that it is a gradual process of incremental maturation, happening relational and interdependent in the African context.

John Mbiti's (1969:108) rich description of the African world-view is very meaningful. He describes the value of community. "*When he suffers, he does not suffer alone but with the corporate group; when he rejoices, he rejoices not alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbour and his relatives whether dead or living. Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: I am, because we are; and since we are therefore I am.*"

In Gibellini's (1994:37) book, he records Mbiti describing this prayer used by the Anglican church of the province of Kenya. It is a prayer of intercession used before sharing the elements in communion. The celebrant calls upon the people, "*I am because we are*" to which they respond: "*We are, because He is.*"

Van Dyk (2001:111) refers to a common African world-view, even though the African people are of so many different cultural groups, geographical areas, religions, ways of life and languages. In my own experience, the group I primarily worked with consisted of young people of different ethnic groups. The biggest group spoke Northern-Sotho, but there were also Zulu-speaking and

Tsonga speaking people. Regardless, the group was united by a common goal and shared interest and experiences, as well as geographical connectedness.

Du Toit (2004:30) introduces the thought of living with *Seriti* (life force). He explains: *“African ontology can be considered to be panpsychic. In this sense, everything that exists has a spiritual cause. And these spiritual causes are ultimately manifestations and servants of God.”* This, together with the *ubuntu* concept (as explained by Mbiti), gives a feeling of an African world-view. According to Du Toit (2004:33) *“...ubuntu means to participate in a common humanity and can be understood as the African version of the common good. In Africa, a person is identified by his or her interrelationships and not primarily by individualistic properties. The community identifies the person and not the person the community. The identity of the person is his or her place in the community... African society emphasizes solidarity rather than activity, and the communion of persons rather than their autonomy.”*

The implication of the African world-view on issues of illness, medicine and technology, is that health is *“embedded in the whole of African life”*. *Medicine is not simply a drug to be taken, but a process of social and interpersonal restoration that must take place”* (Du Toit 2004:37). This is very important to me in considering the whole issue of care in an African context. To search for the understanding of care it is necessary to understand the implications of a true holistic world-view as described above. To me this implicates that care to young people in Africa, must be understood as having its roots in the community and having implications for the community.

The young people in my group have expressed their feelings of being humiliated, being embarrassed and feeling very scared, having to go to modern hospitals for medical care. The above mentioned discussion colours their experiences in a different way to me. The depth of their experience of not being cared for is opened up in a total new way to me. Having to go to a hospital, is a very

individual experience. Their feelings of vulnerability are much clearer to me in the light of this discussion. I have come to understand that care to them, is linked to their experience of belonging and their value of community. To isolate care to an individual, very personal experience is to force them into a world/world-view that is very unfamiliar, cold and impersonal and very non-African.

1.3 An African world-view in a narrative, socio-constructionist approach

There are definite parallels in the African world-view and the paradigm in which this research is done. The position stories take, brings us to an important place of communion. The position the community and family take as the foundation where values are founded, is an important parallel. Another important parallel is that objectivity is "*impossible in a personalized and sacral universe*" (Balcomb 2004:7). There is interconnection in the universe, between creator and creation: from the trees, to the rocks, to the ocean as well as between researcher and co-researcher.

In the African world-view, the natural and the supernatural is part of one another (imminent transcendent). Being part of a community, makes you part of the transcendent and makes human life part of the divine world and nature in a participatory way (Balcomb 2004:72). Collectively there are resonances between the African world-view and the post-modern, narrative paradigm (Balcomb 2004:78).

1.4 African Theology

Furthermore, there is the African theology that is very important for this Practical Theological research. I shall share through my story how political change influenced the small world that I live in.

This is also part of a much bigger reality, and that is the story of African liberation theology. It is necessary for me to deconstruct my own experiences and place it

in the backdrop of people like Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak, John Mbiti and Simon Maimela.

The reality for the youth living in the inner city is that they live in the aftermath of what went before them. They live in the world that is post-apartheid and post-white socio-economic dominant. Their world is one of still being discriminated against because they are not rich enough, not old enough not educated enough and they definitely do not have the right address.

When I read about the African theologians, I cannot help but realizing that the theological content of the struggle is still continuing. It is not the white supremacy that is creating powerful and powerless people anymore. It is not white against black anymore. It is now those in powerful positions against those who are not and those who have jobs against those who have not, also those who have money against those who have not, even those living in houses, against those who cannot.

Maimela (1994:192) cited Archbishop Tutu in saying: *“In the process of saving the world, of establishing His Kingdom, God, our God demonstrated that He was no neutral God, but a thoroughly biased God who was forever taking the side of the oppressed, of the weak, of the exploited, of the hungry and homeless. Of the refugees, of the scum of society...So my dear friends we celebrate worship and adore God, the biased God, He who is not neutral, the God who always takes sides.”*

Again, I am driven to deconstruct my own theology. I also believe that God is a merciful God who saves people on the grounds of faith, not good deeds. Yet, I am again, as in the previous 12 years of ministering in a poor community, confronted with the challenge posed by liberation theologians. The challenge to the church of Christ (Maimela 1994:193) that God is a preferential God, preferential to the poor and the oppressed, to the widows and the children who

are left to fend for themselves. These following Biblical texts are witnessing this challenge to the church (The Holy Bible 1984):

Ps. 113 verse 7-9;

⁷ He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

⁸ he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people.

⁹ He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children.

Ps. 146 verse 7-9;

⁷ He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free,

⁸ the LORD gives sight to the blind, the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down, the LORD loves the righteous.

⁹ The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

Prov. 14 verse 31;

³¹ He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

Prov. 22 verse 22 – 23;

²² Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court,

²³ for the LORD will take up their case and will plunder those who plunder them.

Is. 58 verse 6-7;

⁶ “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loosen the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Luke 4 verse 18 – 19

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

I am torn between my own traditional Dutch Reformed belief that we are saved through the mercy of God alone, in the midst of the same church who are up to today, not challenging the injustices that is influencing the daily lives of these young people in my group and hundreds and thousands of other people who suffer powerlessly in the choking grip of people abusing their God given powers. I am haunted by the questions: Which belief exactly am I saved by? And I am concerned about the “salvation status” of my church...

2. THE DISCOURSE OF MULTI-CULTURALITY

The issue of cultural diversity in the group of teenagers, whom I worked with, was a real issue. The language differences in the group were difficult to deal with. Living in South Africa, the racial issues are real issues to many adults. My experience in the group was that it was sometimes difficult to understand one another, but there are much more communal issues that bring young people together, appose to issues that cause a divide. Hardships of poverty, discrimination because of being young, living in poor conditions and wearing old or unfashionable clothes are causing much more pain than racial issues.

Heath and McLaughlin (1993:36-68) did an intensive study on inner city youth. One of the very interesting issues they address is the issue of ethnicity. Their conclusion is that ethnicity is often a label given to young people by politicians. From their studies (1993:6), young people find themselves “*hang-ing out with all kinds;*” and “*be local*” are skills they have acquired to survive. My experiences confirmed this finding. In the group, we were sharing in hardships and pain, not focusing on our differences. It was amazing to me, how easily they could look past differences and focuses on what brings us together, namely the pain caused by HIV/AIDS.

By saying this, I do not want to underplay the racially divided context in which these young people live. They are faced with racial tension at school, at home, and other places. My experience is just that in our group, this did not play a major role.

3. THE INNER CITY OF PRETORIA: TRANSITIONAL DISCOURSE

My own experience of the discourses of the church and politics are also relevant to this research.

When I finished my studies at the University of Pretoria as student of theology, I was employed by the Dutch Reformed Church Pretoria in the position of a

pastoral helper. The congregation was situated west of Church Squire, the oldest part of Pretoria. This old part of the inner city was mostly the private sector and had more than 80 apartment buildings. The occupants then were mostly white middle class people.

I came to the congregation in 1992. That was in the beginning of a process of the middle class moving out, and much poorer people moved in. The people moved in, were from diverse cultural backgrounds. By 1994 (beginning of democracy in South Africa), the process was rushed in the inner city. The housing was the most affordable in town and many different cultural groups of people moved to the inner city.

The effect of this process was devastating to the old and well established congregation. Many of the leaders in the church have left. Only a few elderly people (mainly women) remained behind. The people, who stayed, couldn't afford to move anywhere else. The financial implications were defeating. The congregation realized that a whole new strategy was needed to stay relevant in their new mission-like community.

The group that was left, was at first overwhelmed with the needs of the remaining impoverished white community. Eventually people came to understand that their new neighbours that were Zulu or Sotho speaking were struggling with the same problems like paying the rent, coping with children and having no income, high school fees, expensive food, bad service, etc.

There was a homogeneous need evolving for people from different cultures and backgrounds. The needs were for child support, for housing, for food, clothing, counselling and jobs.

The congregation founded a Section 21 company called PEN (referred to in Chapter 2). The aim was to minister to people living in the inner city in a holistic way.

Now, twelve years later, this ministry is a growing organization that plays a leading role in providing in the needs of people living in the inner city through investing in healing communities and building structures for people to provide for themselves.

It now serves people from all church denominations, different cultures and different backgrounds. The Teenage ministry is one of these outreach programs. Teenagers are met on their level of needs through group discussions, after school programs, counselling, camping, etc.

The circumstances of many of the teenagers living in the inner city, is still of big concern. Many of them come from single-parent households (mostly mothers). They are left to care for themselves in the afternoons and evenings. Older siblings are responsible for younger siblings. They are also responsible for the household chores and to do extra work for an additional income. The role models of these young people are often the drug dealers and pimps working in the same buildings where they stay. Their hero's are the criminals who didn't get caught. The family situations are often very unstable: mothers have different boyfriends, the boyfriends abuse the children and these and other situations result in vast cases of child abuse and child molestation.

Vulnerable children in primary school (from 13 years) easily fall into prostitution. These mostly young girls, become the victims of older men who are HIV positive, or they become pregnant. These needs of the young people in our area further instigated the need of a care centre focusing on HIV/AIDS (Sediba Hope AIDS Centre).

The story of the vast changes and influences on the congregation and on people living in the inner city can be a research project in its own right.

My own life changed through my encounters with young people, living in these difficult conditions. I was deeply touched by the neglect and abuse that many children and teenagers were experiencing: not only physical and emotional abuse, but abuse by a bigger system that did not see or hear the children and that did not recognize their basic human rights (Examples taken from the bill of rights for children as documented by UNICEF 2004 www.UNICEF.org):

- Article 12: the right to speak
- Article 17: the right to information
- Article 18: the right to be raised by his/her parents
- Article 19/20 and 33 – 37: the right to safety
- Article 24: the right to health
- Article 25: the right to eat
- Article 26: the right to a healthy upbringing
- Article 28: the right to an education
- Article 31: the right to play.

For the purpose of this study, I shortly want to focus on the effects that the changed political environment brought to the inner city and to daily lives of people living there.

4. DISCOURSES ON HISTORICAL INFLUENCES IN PRETORIA

4.1 Focusing on the inner city

On the 16th of December 1855 the “Volksraad” decided to make Pretoria the administrative capital of South Africa. Pretoria became the seat of government on the 1st of May 1860. The Pretoria Central Correctional service was built. Here one of the youngest black activists against apartheid was hanged and died on death row in 1976. He was Solomon Mahlangu, from Mamelodi, a township

just outside Pretoria. Church Square is in the central of Pretoria and is associated with many struggles for freedom. The Palace of Justice is known for the most well known trial ever to be held in South Africa, the Rivonia Trial, where Nelson Mandela and his associates were charged with treason. The time from 1902 to 1910 was spent on building better relations with Britain after the bloody Boer War (www.worldfacts.us/South-Africa-Pretoria.htm).

The process of desegregation is also evident in the inner city of Pretoria, as in other cities in South Africa. This can be described by a process of invasion and succession. When a certain point is reached of people of different cultures who move into an area, the so called “white flight” takes place. The White middle class move out and a group of lower middle class Indians, Black and Coloured people move in (www.Mod1_political.htm). This did not only have a negative effect, but had its advantages as well. This process forced people who have historically been driven apart from one another, closer to one another. People share the same flat buildings, have the same hopes and experience the same difficulties. Since 1985 the traditionally white central business districts was changed into vibrant cosmopolitan trade centres.

This hollowing process has left the city crippled because businesses have moved to the more affluent suburbs. With an influx of people, the inner city has become a very unsafe place to be, especially at night.

The following encounters were documented by women who live in Johannesburg’s inner city (Vetten and Dladla 2001). These experiences are much the same as people in Pretoria’s inner city.

The regulation is that I have to limit the time that I spend outside of the place because I am afraid that if I stay out beyond a certain time – six o’clock – I may get hurt. It is because the area is unsafe that makes us limit the time we spend

outside. If I am late I sleep at the place wherever I am to save my life.
(J, homeless woman, 30/4/00)

When you get in there to use the toilets you find a man standing on a hill near the bridge. He is just waiting there so that if you get inside the toilet he will jump you. Rape you and finish with you... If you are unlucky he will also stab you.
(C, waste management worker, 22/2/00)

Where I live I don't use the train station in front of my flat. I don't use it because it is usually deserted and quiet and most of the people who walk there are men. Women are very few. Most of the time if you go there, you are alone.
(B, security guard, 18/2/00)

In the toilets on President and Delters a girl who had been raped was found inside the public toilets. There is also a street at the corner of Market and Delters where there are public toilets. A girl was raped in that place and she was killed. So a woman who does not know may walk that place not knowing that it is unsafe, but there are taxis and a disco in that area and so the place is not safe.
(A, waste management worker, 22/2,00)

This local knowledge of people who live in the inner city is a very valuable contribution to me to clearly describe the hardship that people live with every day. The fear of being raped or hurt every minute of your living day is very real. For children who are much more vulnerable because they are sometimes too innocent to be afraid, this reality is far worse.

4.2 The Dutch Reformed Church Bosman Street

The church I am part of and where PEN was founded is the Dutch Reformed Church Bosmanstreet (Groote Kerk). The congregation was founded in 1854 (Du

Toit 1954: 46) and the church was inaugurated in 1904. The governing body, “*Volksraad*”, had to give permission for the church to be built on the farm Elandspoort. Members of the “*Volksraad*” were all members of the same church. With the inauguration of the church, the flag called the “*Vierkleur*” was hoisted. Historical events were weaved into the history of the church. The Queen of England attended a service on the 30th of March 1947. General Smuts was buried from the church. Other big political moments were interwoven with the church history (Smit 2004:5): Generals Louis Botha, JC Smuts and Dr Jansen were buried from this building. In 1961 the State President CR Swart was inaugurated in this building. The last big political figure in the Afrikaner history that was buried from the church was Dr AP Treurnicht, in 1982.

Having this rich history, deeply bonded with the Afrikaner- and apartheid history, this church was a symbol for the Afrikaner nation of how God was with them.

With the political changes, this symbol was deeply changed, especially when the small church council (of which I was a member), consisting of mostly elderly people, took a bold step in history by inviting a coloured reverend of the Uniting Reformed Church to become a reverend at the congregation. Unfortunately he declined, but the Church Counsel continued on their bold road to sell half of the church to the Uniting Reformed Church in 1995 (Smit 2004:10) and to begin a strong partnership that plays a leading role in church unity today.

This whole change of the history of the church and the congregation was experienced very negatively by the broader church. The church counsel was accused of being traitors to the Afrikaner nation and to its history. The church members had to cope with their new environment. They had to make hard choices for example, do they only minister to the dwindling Afrikaans speaking members, or do they include this new cosmopolitan multi-cultural community into its ministry. They chose the latter, with dire consequences: Church members leaving, the Synod not supporting the congregation in its decisions at the time,

the broader church abandoning the small but brave inner city congregation (according to my own experience).

This historical overview is important to me because it thickly describes the depth of change that really took place in people's every day lives. A small declined Afrikaans congregation who went through deep changes theologically, physically, economically and environmentally. It helps to understand the depth of change that Afrikaans people who stayed through this "white flight", had to experience. It also throws light on the total new communities that were formed and how people's lives were changed by the brave decisions of a few elderly white Afrikaans speaking people.

5. THE ROLE AFRICAN FAMILIES PLAY IN BUILDING VALUES IN YOUNG PEOPLE

African families can be described as members of the nuclear family. The extended family includes grandparents, uncles and aunts, in-laws and all relatives alive and deceased (Vilakazi 1998:26). In the inner city, the family nuclear is often a single parent and the children. The nuclear family is ripped away from the extended family because of differing circumstances.

In my individual sessions, I touched on the influence that family has on building values in young people. What I learnt, was that the extended family does play an important role. When a young girl enters puberty, she is taken to her grandmother to be instructed on what it means to become a woman. Mostly the discussions will focus on hygiene and the young girl will be warned that if she sleeps with boys, she can become pregnant. This is confirmed by Vilakazi (1998:28). She refers to guidelines for living that is mostly formulated in the form of negative injunction, handed down from father to son, by word of mouth in the form of unwritten laws or taboos. *"Through taboos, African parents teach their children the African code of living"* (Vilakazi 1998:29).

To the inner city family, these assumptions about traditional African families and their role must be revisited. The inner city family mostly consists of a single mother and her children. The extended family is not always geographically close to play a meaningful role. What I have often found, was rather that the inner city family is providing for the rest of the extended family in the rural area, and not the other way. The traditional African family plays an important role in teaching values to young people, but this is not necessarily true in the inner city environment, simply because of geography and economic pressures which implies lack of time to spend with families.

6. DISCOURSES ABOUT ADOLESCENCE

6.1 General adolescent discourses

Defining the age group of adolescence can be confusing, because it differs a lot. Different criteria (Montemayor, Adams and Gullotta 1990:9-10) have been used, like the onset of puberty or cognitive abilities and psychological characteristics. Jurists see adolescence as *a proxy measurement for competence* (1990:10).

A general indication would be to talk about adolescence from the age of 12 to 21 years. I will use the terms teenagers and adolescence to describe this age group. Sometimes I will use the term “children” in a collective sense. UNICEF (2004) refers to the term “children” for young people up to 18 years.

The youth is described in so many different ways. To me, a simple description of the youth and their developmental path is provided by Crockett and Crouter (1995:1) *“Adolescence is commonly viewed as a period of preparation for adulthood. During adolescence, young people reach physical maturity, develop a more sophisticated understanding of roles and relationships, and acquire and refine skills needed for successfully performing adult work and family roles. The developmental tasks of this period – coping with physical changes and emerging sexuality, developing interpersonal skills for opposite-sex relationships, acquiring*

education and training for adult work roles, becoming emotionally and behaviourally autonomous, resolving identity issues, and acquiring a set of values – are all tied to successful functioning in adulthood in one way or another.”

6.2 Discourses about young people living in the inner city.

Different views are held by people about youth living in the inner city. Heath and McLaughlin (1993:40) explain: *“Some see young people (in the inner city) as a resource to be developed; others, as a problem to be managed and others, as adults-in-waiting.”* In my experience, the youth living in the inner city, deal with a whole world of negative discourses, far more negatives than positive. One youth worker explains (Heath and McLaughlin 1993: 60): *“We spend at least an hour every afternoon making up for all of the negative stuff kids hear about themselves in school. All they hear all day is that they can’t do it. We have to reassure them every day that they can. Teachers want things orderly and controlled; they want to be in charge of the kid; they use punishment to keep things in line. All that negativism accomplishes is to further belittle the kid”.*

People who talk to me about my work (focusing on the young people), will often ask me how I cope working with teenagers. They will tell me that working with teenagers, is the hardest thing they can imagine. I get confronted with messages from teachers about the impossible young people. How naughty they are, how disobedient they are, how rude they are, how vandalistic they are etc. My perception of young people is not at all the same. I think the young people living in the inner city endure much hardship and survive under very difficult circumstances. I love the passion they live their lives with. It is wonderful to learn from them that life can be worth living without having all the material wealth that we can sometimes attach so much value to.

6.3 Discourses of my co-researchers about adolescence

Contradictory to general belief that adolescence is apathetic, self centered and not interested in their community, my co-researchers have their own discourses about being teenagers.

- They are very focused on the impact of their decisions on their every day lives
- They feel restricted in their social choices: Louis said: *“We want to enjoy ourselves; we must first think how is this going to affect us.”*
- They feel an obligation towards their parents and their traditional upbringing
- They act in a responsible way towards younger children and towards their peers
- Sex and interpersonal relationships are very important
- They struggle with finding their identity: sexual identity, gender issues, issues of character and issues regarding values
- Contradictory to general discourses, this group did get involved with one another and with their peers. They did act on the challenge brought before them to speak out and to speak for themselves. They did dare to care.

6.4 In the Narrative paradigm, a new description of adolescence is required

To me, young people are in a specific moment in their personal journey, where they are challenged to engage with their world especially focusing on constructing own identity. Their experiences of life are not so vast, but very real.

- Young people are challenged to construct themselves and their identity in conversation with their environment and people who become meaningful characters in their evolving narratives
- They are to reflect on their own stories in order to move to new places which can entertain opportunities for restorying of their lives and their identities. This process of story making is influenced and even co-

constructed by many other stories and realities – that of their parents (or lack of...), their environment, their communities and their peers

- **More specifically related to my research: young people must become involved in co-constructing their own expectations about care focusing on young people's needs and find ways to make their stories about their expectations heard and taken serious by adults making decisions about their lives.**

According to Crockett and Crouter (1995:1), there are two major influences that can determine a young person's developmental path, namely personal characteristics and social environment.

Personal characteristics can influence the way a person react to the environmental obstacles or opportunities. Also, environmental obstacles or opportunities can play a major role in the forming of characteristics. (Crockett and Crouter 1995:9) *“An individual's path through adolescence and into adulthood depends on the history of interactions between person and environment occurring both in daily life and at critical turning points. Developmental turning points and the pathways they define are thus constrained by characteristics of the person, by resources and opportunities in the social environment, and by the patterns of interaction, or co-action that develop between person and context over time.”*

From a Narrative paradigm, I would reformulate that these different realities play into the constructing of identity. Identity is then influenced by own stories and other stories. This description is very important to understand the special importance of the research done in the inner city with teenagers from a poorer environment that is often disadvantaged. Young people's sense of identity **and experience of care** is constructed through their interaction with other realities.

To clarify this, Burr (1995:17) explains how social constructionist thinking influences our traditional thinking about personality: *...with regards to our notions of personhood this means that the very idea that we exist as separate, discrete individuals, that our emotions are personal, spontaneous expressions of an inner self we can call our 'personality', is fundamentally questioned.*"

Burr also chooses to talk about "identity" instead of "personality".

7. CARE DISCOURSES

There are so many discourses about care. Care can be focused on emotional support, spiritual guidance, physically caring for someone who is ill, professional care provided by doctors, social workers, psychologists, etc.

Discourses are varying from describing poor health care in South Africa, to praising the very high quality of care givers in South Africa, especially referring to training. Young people have their own discourses about care and people have discourses about young people and care.

One such discourse would be: *young people do not care... (for themselves or for others).*

7.1 Young people caring about themselves and their future

According to my understanding, for young people care starts with views about caring for themselves. Questions we touched on in our sessions are about how young people perceive their own future – do they care at all about themselves and their future?

In an assessment about African youth and their views on their own future, Nsamenang (2002:95) records the following: Some young people take up their responsibility to engage with their future and make valuable contributions as evolving adults. Others see no need to take up the responsibility of building their

future. Because of AIDS, they do not see the need to care about tomorrow; they live their lives as if tomorrow doesn't count.

Young people in the inner city have broken my heart on many occasions, by expressing this absolute lack of dreaming about a future. They live for today – are bound by their worries of having food to eat, today and having a family, today. Some of the inner city teens do not see the sense of caring for themselves, because they do not see a future.

In my session with Dineese, (which I have referred to previously) I have come to understand something of how today influences a young person's whole perspective on life.

When there is food in the house, she can afford to dream about her future. Previously, that luxury was not an option.

Welkom. Jy hoef nie benoud te voel nie, ek wil sommer net hoor hoe dit gaan

Dineese: Dit gaan so-so op die oomblik. Ek het baie gebid en met die Here gestoei en somtyds dink baklei met die Here. Toe ons nou see toe saam met PEN, kom toe sê ek net: Dankie Here. Nou as ek sien dit gaan nie goed nie begin ek net te bid. Nou gaan dit baie goed by die huis.

Op watter manier sien jy dit gaan goed?

Dineese: Op die manier dat ons kos het. My Ma het groente, vleis en mieliemeel gekry. Die Here sorg so mooi. Ons het 'n uitbetaling gekry en ons bly op die oomblik in 'n kamer. Die welsyn het 'n uitbetaling gemaak en hulle betaal my skoolfonds en ek sê vir my ma dis nou 'n . My Ma was baie snaaks toe ek net gekom het. Ek het baie probleme by die

huis gehad. Ek het 'n terapeut gehad en hulle kon my nie reghelp nie. Ek het altyd gehuil. Ek het elke dag gehuil. Maar nou is dit baie beter. My Ma het my geskel maar nou nie meer nie.

Wat dink jy het die verskil gemaak?

Dineese: Gebed. Ek dink so. Ek het baie gebid. Ek het vir my familie ok baie gebid: my suster en my oupa-hulle.

Het julle 'n goeie verhouding?

Dineese: Baie goed. Daarvoor sê ek dankie. Gister kon hulle nie gekom het nie - daar was 'n probleem by die huis.

Ek glo heeltemal dat jy sê gebed het gehelp – dit help vir my ook, maar dink jy die feit dat jy gebid het gemaak dat jy die goed anders gedoen het as altyd? Wat het nog verander saam met die bid?

Dineese: Gehoorsaamheid. Ek het my bes geprobeer om iets reg te maak. As my ma sê ek moet iets oormak het ek gehuil terwyl ek dit doen maar nou probeer ek my bes. As ek iets nie reg gedoen het nie het ek dit oor gemaak.

Sy het gesien jy doen die goed mooi en nou is sy ook mooier met jou.

Dineese: Ek het begin glo. Ek het eers gedink die Here niks vir my doen nie. My Ouma het my die Bybel geleer. En ek het begin bid uit die Bybel uit. Ek het nie geles nie maar nou begin ek te like om te lees.

Het jy 'n Tienerbybel? Dit lees net makliker. Dit is in 'n makliker taal geskryf.

Dineese: EK wil so graag modelwerk doen. Toe begin ek te vet raak om my maag. Ek het 'n klomp voue gekry. nou baie by die huis ek weet nie hoekom nie. Ek wil graag modelwerk doen. Ek weet nie hoekom nie. Ek dink dit is my talent.

Dink jy die feit dat jy bid en glo maak jou sterker?

Dineese: Dit maak my rêrig sterker. As jy moenie modelwerk doen nie want jou hare is lelik het dit my afgesit. Maar toe dink ek hoekom moet ek hulle glo – ek glo in myself. Ek is mooi - die Here het my mooi gemaak. Hy het my gesig mooi gemaak en alles mooi gemaak. Hoekom moet ek hulle glo en worry oor hulle. Ek kan mooi sing. Ek kan nie vals sing nie. Jy moet luister. Ek sing. Ek worry nie oor hulle nie.

Dis wonderlik. As dit nou weer in die toekoms moeilik raak tussen jou en jou ma, hoe gaan jy dit hanteer?

Dineese: Ek het al baie goed gedoen. Ek het al weggeloop. Ek weet nie wat gaan ek maak nie. Dit kan erger raak. Maar wat kan ek doen? Ons het baie swaargekry. Ek het al vir twee dae nie geëet nie – maar ek weet al gaan dit hoe swaar, die Here gaan sorg. Ons het nie 'n TV in ons huis nie – al gaan dit hoe swaar – al nie brood in die huis nie - ek gaan nie worry nie. Al eet ons pap. Ek kan nie sê omdat dit swaar gaan ek gaan nie vir die Here bid nie. Ek gaan nog steeds vir Hom bid. Ek kan nie help nie.

As dit rêrig sleg gaan vir wie gaan jy vra om te help. As jy weet daar is nie kos

om nie vir wie gaan jy vra. Het jy nog boeties en sussies?

Dineese: Ja ek het 'n klein broertjie en 'n sussie.

Gaan daar iemand wees met wie jy kan praat?

Dineese: Maar ek kan mos nie vertel as daar nie kos in die huis is nie.

Dis mos nie iets wat jy gedoen het nie. Dis nie jou skuld dat daar nie kos in die huis is nie! Jy het niks skaam te wees.

Dineese: Party keer dink ek hoekom moet dit met my gebeur. Ek het vriendinne by die skool wat elke dag kos het. Ek kry dalk twee keer 'n week. Maar nou weet ek dat die Here my gaan help om elke dag kos te kry. Ek glo in Hom. Ek glo dit. En nou gaan ek Hom vra om my Ma te help. Eendag toe loop ons Shoprite toe. Ek kon R150 'n dag gemaak goed te koop – ek kon vir myself iets gekoop het.. Toe sê my ma nee.

Sy wou dalk hê jy moet huiswerk doen. Sy was dalk maar net bekommerd dat jy iets sal oorkom.

Dineese: Miskien was sy dalk bang. Een van die dae werk. Ek kry niks nie. Ek kry nie geld nie. My ma doen die duiwel se werk Dobbel. My oupa as hy die dag daar gekuier het probeer hy help daarso. Hy los so R50.

A short summary of the discussion: Dineese experienced poverty and hardship in her house. Her mother tried her best to provide for them. For Dineese care was having food in the house and not being embarrassed in front of her friends. Her biggest fear was not having sandwiches during lunch breaks at school. Only when she overcame the shame, could she afford to dream about her future.

Other young people take the responsibility of constructing their own future very serious. In a session with Tsepo, we had the following conversation:

Susan tells me that you are interested in helping at the ministry next year. That is a big decision, Tsepo. How did you come to make such a big decision?

Tsepo: The thing is. Most of my friends are like criminals. They are breaking houses and stealing cars. So like helping at the church I will be somebody. I want to be somebody.

That is a great thing to make a different decision than all the people around you. It is quite strange, isn't it? Wonderful but strange. What gave you the courage to make such a decision?

Tsepo: My involvement in the group helped me. I see I can help other people. It is great with the drama group. I feel God can use me. I have faith.

What would you say, where does your faith lie?

Tsepo: In God.

How did that make you different?

Tsepo: My mom took me to this other church. She goes there. It was last year. It was different to all the others. If you look at my friends now – what they do if they don't go to school. If I don't go to school I want to go to church. Not like my friends. I am different to them. My mom asked me why I don't go to college. Even if I go there, my friends will be there.

Tsepo rose out of his circumstances to meet his future. He had the experience of leading the drama group and be acknowledged as a leader. That experience made him feel like “someone”. He made the decision to engage with his future. His relationship with the group members and his faith in God made the difference to him.

Many other teens do not come to this point. They choose to have multiple sexual partners, knowing the dangers of possibly being infected. Out of informal discussions, the stories of many young people were told, who did not care about their future. They do not have the opportunity to dream about going to college. There are no other job options for them. All they have is today. Tomorrow doesn't count.

Both of these two young people had a strong religious conviction that helped them to cope in difficult circumstances. It also gave them courage to make difficult decisions. Their experience of care was concrete: people in their lives, food to eat, having a job, these were the measuring instruments of their experience of care.

7.2 The message sent by the media

In one of the sessions, Happy referred to the television advertisement made by Bishop Desmond Tutu that marked that nobody loved him enough to talk to him about sex. According to UNAIDS 2003, the message of the media is making an impact. According to the Youth report done by the magazine, *Love Life* is very effective in breaking down taboos about sex. This might be true for some young people, but not to all. The young people in the group did not experience the care of adults, measured against the measuring of “if people love you, they will talk to you about sex”.

7.3 Medical care provided by the government

Article 24 from UNICEF's (www.UNICEF.com) Bill of rights for children, the government is supposed to provide care for young people. According to the experiences of the inner city young people, they do not experience the quality of care from a medical point of view, they are supposed to receive.

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

2. States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures:

(a) To diminish infant and child mortality;

(b) To ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on the development of primary health care;

(c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution;

(d) To ensure appropriate pre-natal and post-natal health care for mothers;

(e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breastfeeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents;

(f) To develop preventive health care, guidance for parents and family planning education and services.

3. States Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.

4. States Parties undertake to promote and encourage international co-operation with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the right recognized in the present article. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

In my joint experience with the young people referred to in Chapter 4.2, real experiences in clinics and hospitals are far from promises made by politicians. According to the UNAIDS report (2004) (www.unaids.org) there are 900 government run clinics in South Africa. There are efforts to make these clinics more youth friendly. But, this has not yet impacted the experience of this group and other inner city young people's experiences of the accessibility of clinics and care.

7.4 Illness discourses

Traditional African people think of the cause of illness in terms of who caused it and why some one is having a specific illness (Sow 1980). The cause of illnesses can be attributed to the ancestors, to witchcraft or to God. Some of the African Christians see AIDS as God's response to the sinfulness of people; as a result of their immoral lives (Van Dyk 2001:7). This traditional stance was confirmed by some of the young people in my group.

7.5 Healing discourses

Illness is a metaphysical issue. Healing then is also metaphysical and holistic. Archbishop Buti Tlhagale (2000:28) says that *"healing restores what a person has lost: self confidence and balanced relationships. A status of dignity is achieved through self construction, through one's ability to create social value, to maintain and enhance one's livelihood, to create a family, to establish a network of relationships"*. This holistic African view on healing, contributes to an inclusive view on health, often misunderstood by modern medicine.

This contributes to the understanding of the ethical dilemmas African families experience when expected to leave their traditions behind and put their faith in modern medicine. Especially in the inner city, these expectations and even pressure are more in the front. This can be contributed to a more culturally integrated environment.

7.6 Caring about care

When I think about care, I recall a conference advertisement I once read: *"The very beginning and sometimes the end of care, is merely showing up"*.

Baart and Vosman (2003:1-12) explains what they call, Presence Theory to come close to the above mentioned view on care. To Baart, people who work with this frame of mind, is there where the people are: long hours in the presence of those in need, not in an office or at a specific location. Their care is

unconditional. Whatever the need, there they are available to help. Care in relationships is the key to understanding the Presence theory. The care giver is not on the search for problems, but serious issues can be addressed through informal daily contact. The care giver is an open person, with no deep rooted agenda to provide care. It just comes natural and unforced. The care giver moves outwards towards the life of people in need. This provides a comfortable bridge to especially marginalized people.

In the inner city context, which have correlation to the inner city context of Utrecht where the Presence Theory grew out of, this is a very valuable approach to care. Much of the same modus operandi is used in the outreach programs of PEN.

My own understanding of care correlates with an absolute relationship oriented care. Care that has meant a lot to me is embedded in relationships. To go to an unknown doctor to talk about physical or emotional problems, is not comfortable to me, it rather makes me feel anxious and embarrassed.

8. SEX DISCOURSES IN AFRICA

Traditionally parents in most African cultures are very strict and conservative when it comes to sex. Most cultures believe strongly in the virginity of young people (especially girls) and believe it to be a very important moral value to live by: no sex before marriage. Even in the Afrikaans culture, this moral value is very important.

Conflicting values are sometimes held for boys and girls. In some cultures men are allowed to have multiple wives (polygamy) but women must be true to one partner.

To the traditional African, sex is a way to overcome death and to insure immortality (Van Dyk 2001:118). For women, it is very important to bear children. A person is believed to continue your own person, in your children. Having

children is very important in traditional African culture. Children are a sign of wealth and success. Children must also help to provide for a person in old age (Van Dyk 2001:121).

Although lots of money is invested in distributing condoms in Africa, the use of condoms is not popular. There are deeply rooted cultural reasons for this. Some of the beliefs are that condoms block the “gift of self”. The semen flow symbolizes a deeply personal gift in a relationship (Van Dyk 2001:122). Other beliefs are that semen is needed for the healthy growth of a fetus and that semen contributes to the physical and mental health of women and it contributes to their beauty and fertility (Van Dyk 2001:123).

These and many other beliefs regarding sex must be understood to better understand difficulties and challenges in talking about sex in an African context.

9 IN CLOSING

There are more discourses about youth, about HIV/AIDS, about care and about the inner city. I tried to bring the above mentioned discourses into the discussion of the research. I am sure any one of these can become an action field in its own right. Other discourses that can be focused on by other researchers, is teen pregnancy, rape, drugs and sex education. New action fields can be found in the contexts of political struggles and young people. I hope that this décor will help me to hear and understand the stories of the young people in my group better.

In the next chapter, I want to bring these different voices into conversation with one another and become part of the evolving of new stories.