

CHAPTER 5

Description of experience, thickened through interdisciplinary investigation

5.1. Introduction

In my introduction to chapter 5, I would like to refresh ourselves with the previous chapters.

Chapter 1 is about my philosophical, theological positioning and with an emphasis on identity formation.

Chapter 2 has concentrated on describing the problem which is poverty and its effects. My co-researchers and I have explored this concept thoroughly and we have realized that there is a connection between identity formation and poverty.

Chapter 3 has concentrated on community transformation. We researched and discussed all the processes relating to community transformation.

Chapter 4 related and discussed the in-context stories that were shared with me by my co-researchers and dealt with the development of those stories to until the new story has been discovered.

In this chapter 5 I would like to concentrate on an interdisciplinary position in order to thicken the new story.

5.2. Postfoundationalist or Transversal rationality

Muller (2009:204) states that “postfoundationalist approach forces us to firstly listen to the stories of people in a real-life situation. It hasn’t got the aim of merely describing a general context, but confronting us with a specific and concrete situation”. This approach avoids abstracts and universal truth.

Just as we discussed in chapter 1 it is stated that postfoundationalist epistemology claims to point beyond the boundaries of the local community, group, tradition or culture towards a plausible form of interdisciplinary conversation (Van Huyssteen 1998:22). Postfoundationalism is opposed to objectivism of foundationalist epistemology and the extreme of relativism of nonfoundationalist epistemology

Van Huyssteen (2006:25) says that we are not the “intellectual prisoners of our contexts”. Human beings are able to move beyond their own disciplines or cultures. Christian theology cannot have only truth, but it can add value to the system of knowledge (Muller 2009:206).

Felix Guattari (in Shrag 1992:152) uses it in his psychiatric practice where different people join forces in helping with healing the patient. There are doctors, assistant doctors, nurses, administrators, patients, parents and pharmacists. All of these people represent different disciplines but they manage to network together.

In the following section, I will discuss the interdisciplinary conversation with my colleagues from other stakeholders in the community. Our discussion will be guided by three questions developed by (Muller 2009:203). In this

interdisciplinary conversation, we are not trying to reach the absolute truth, but we are trying to see if different disciplines or traditions can contribute positively in answering the questions facing human beings

5.3. Interdisciplinary conversation

And by listening to other disciplines especially those who operate in my context; I will ask the three questions developed by (Muller 2009:227). The questions are as follows:

- When reading the story of (Nellmapius), what do you think would the co-researchers concerns be?
- How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why it is important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?
- Why do you think your perspective will be understood and appreciated by researchers from other disciplines?

These three questions will help the research to get other perspectives on the narratives of Nellmapius as they have spoken by my co-researchers

1. Mr Lekola: Professional educator: He has been in teaching for 15yrs. He had recently received promotion, to work in the Limpopo Provincial Department of Education. His position now involves him working with different schools to ensure that teaching is being carried out satisfactorily.
2. Pastor A. Spaumer: He is a Leader of the church in Nellmapius; He is also studying social work at the University

of Pretoria. I have chosen him in order that he might give his thoughts on my research as a pastor who works in Nellmapius which is the community of this research.

3. Miss Freedman: An auxiliary social worker, she is working at the grassroots of this community. She experiences poverty just as it is been experienced by the local people.
4. Miss Magakwe: Professional Nurse (manager of clinic) in our local clinic. Nursing is a multi skilled discipline because most of the time you are working as a doctor, social worker and, psychologist. I have chosen her because she woks at the grassroots of the community and she sees what poverty can do in the lives of people.

In the following section, I will be listening to what other disciplines have to say about my co-researchers shared narratives from Nellmapius. The three questions will be required to be answered on the story of Nellmapius (Muller 2009:227)

5.4. Mr. Lekola: Education

5.4.1. When reading the stories of co-researchers, what do you think would their concerns be?

- Narratives place the blame on poor people for their poverty.
- It generates guilty amongst the poor for living in poverty.
- Poverty as a historical phenomenon has not been mentioned.
- Poor people should be included in order for empowerment to be successful.

- Poor people must take the responsibility for their own lives.

5.4.2. Mr. Lekola: How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the of interdisciplinary table?

- Holistic (Spiritual, Psychological, Social and Physical) approach to education is very important in eradicating poverty in the community.
- Education will make poor people to have confidence to change their lives.
- Education will change the way poor people think about themselves.

5.4.3. Mr. Lekola: Why do you think your perspective will be understood and appreciated by researchers from other disciplines?

- Education is a key to social transformation
- There cannot be a change without education
- Other disciplines are based on education.

5.5. Pastor A. Spaumer(Church):

5.5.1. When reading the story of co-researchers what do you think would their concerns be?

The narratives seem to focus more on people being the cause of their poverty and it being the sole responsibility of those people in poverty. The co-researchers have not considered the impact of the systems that are used in the world for managing economies as contributing to the status quo of some people who are living in poverty.

The narratives seem to generalize on some of the views they believe and are not considering that a situation for one or two people might not be the same for all people. It seems that to some of the researchers the problem of poverty is the responsibility of the person who is being affected by poverty. This view runs short because some people don't have access to information and resources that could help to improve their livelihood. This can include things like basic education, access to media (internet, newspaper, television and radio) which can be important in fighting ignorance.

This is in line with what the narratives have indicated regarding the environment and how it impacts on the position of a person in poverty. Change of environment and association can have a great impact on how a person can start to see life differently from the way he have grown-up. The impact of HIV-AIDS on our community was not emphasized by the researchers, as it has left many orphaned children and child-headed families with some children having to take care of their sickly parents and some of the responsibilities been transferred to their grandparents. Further the co-researchers don't consider the impact of

unemployment which is increasing the number of people in poverty; from those who started from a disadvantaged background.

5.5.2. Pastor A Spaumer: How would you formulate your unique discipline's perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?

Luke 9: 10-15 (NIV)

The above mentioned scripture teaches a lesson about helping people in need (poverty). Jesus uses a developmental approach (empowering people to help themselves and those around them) when he instructs the disciples to feed the crowds. He first instructed the disciples to do what they did although they did not have enough resources to do it and not to chase people away. It is from this lesson that the Theological perspective developed on poverty which we encourage churches to learn in order to look after the needy and empower people to look after themselves and those around them.

The ability of the churches to develop programs to alleviate poverty and address unemployment will go a long way towards ministering to the people both spiritually and physically. It is clear that Jesus was not just interested in meeting the spiritual needs of the people but also their physical needs. People will not be impressed how much one knows the bible but love expressed in kindness will always speak beyond words expressed from the pulpit.

Churches should encourage members to adopt orphans and needy children because this will go a long way towards alleviating poverty and give an opportunity for those in needs to find love and support. Above all this gives the church opportunity to minister spiritually and to grow as it meet the needs of people in the community.

Lastly it is important that church buildings should not only be used on Sundays but also during the week to address the community's needs which will help to fight poverty. The church should have programs like Adult Basic Education Training, Day Care Facilities for Old Age and Children, Skills Training Programs, Vegetable Gardens and many more such projects to fight poverty. Churches should also provide programs where members are taught life skills, career guidance for young people, interview skills and resume writing. An Information Desk could be introduced to provide information for people in the community about opportunities that are available in the market.

5.5.3. Pastor A Spaumer: Why do you think your perspective will be understood and appreciated by researchers from other disciplines?

The church needs to be understood and appreciated by other researchers from other disciplines as a place to connect with God and fellow men. Primarily it should be understood and appreciated as spiritual.

5.6. Mrs Freeman (Social worker auxiliary working for Sanca).

5.6.1. Mrs Freeman: When reading the story of co-researchers, what do you think would their concerns be?

- Unemployment
- Disability
- Single parenting
- Laziness
- People are refusing the help of the government, such as when the government funds NGO's to teach skills development e.g. where one needs to pay R50.00 the rest will be paid by the government.
- Crime
- Drug abuse
- Lack of quality of life
- Stress
 - Family break-up or family violence.
 - Stress on children
- Stigma
- Forcing people to go and look for HIV/AIDS in order to get attention and HIV/AIDS grants.

5.6.3. Mrs. Freeman: How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?

- Empowering the community

- Networking of the stakeholders working in Nellmapius because no one has all answers.
- Pastors must pray for people living in poverty.

5.6.3. Why do you think your perspective will be understood and appreciated by researchers from other disciplines?

- The social work deals with social problems.
- It is more on connecting the community with the government.
- It is helping people

5.7. Ms Magakwe (Local Clinic manager)

5.7.1. Ms Magakwe: When reading the story of co-researchers, what do you think would their concerns be?

- Diseases associated with lack of proper food nutrients e.g. kwashiorkor i.e. protein-energy malnutrition-masmus, pellagra to name a few.
- The growth of brain cells retarded and milestones
- Poor sanitation causes other illnesses.
- Substance abuse i.e. when people are unemployed they resort to alcoholism and drug abuse.
- Family violence

- Prostitution- where girls or women like to support themselves.
- Teenage pregnancies in order to get government grants.
- Overcrowding- Lots of tenants in one room and also many tenants in one yard encourage the spread of diseases such as tuberculosis and other contagious skin conditions.
- Family disorganisation due to lack of basic needs
- Ignorance- lack of vision in life.
- Relying on government to create jobs.
- Cross boarder challenges-unimmunized children from other countries/refugees-put other children at risk in day cares and schools.
- Political unrest-cause of job losses.
- Lack of proper retirement plan, dependence on state.
- HIV/AIDS loss of jobs due to illness.
- Extended families are not there anymore to reinforce support and morals.
- Corruption of government officials asking kick backs.

5.7.2. Ms Magakwe's unique perspective

- Community involvement/ participation
 - Outreach programmes/health talks.
 - Promotion of vegetables gardens

- Support groups
 - HIV/AIDS
 - Youth
 - Elderly
 - People with disability
- Open day-Marketing of available services in the clinic.
- Intersectoral collaboration with other stakeholders:
 - Schools
 - Agriculture
 - Security
 - Social workers, etc.

5.7.3. Why do you think your perspective will be understood and appreciated by researcher from other disciplines?

It should appreciate in helping the community to live a healthy life.

5.8. Researcher's reflection on interdisciplinary

It is amazing how these three questions have been answered by these four disciplines. There was no conflict, only healthy conversation that was not focusing on seeking the only truth but seeking a mutual understanding from each discipline. The community transformation will be only possible if we can work together through seeking common understanding.

5.9. Reflection on God's presence, as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation.

Poverty has been explained differently from the situation of my research process. Presence of God has been experienced as follows:

- The poor must pray to God. Prayer has been seen as a connection with God. He is the one who answers prayer. The church must assist people to pray.
- Some felt that prayer does not work. Co-researchers have been praying and there was no change in their situation.
- Poverty is spiritual. Some of my co-researchers feel that the poor must be the doers of the Word (Bible). If, we are not connected to the source (God) poverty and its effects will continue.
- Poverty caused by God. He does not want us to be equal. Some must be poor and some must be rich so that people will need each other. Life cannot be good if all of us are rich or poor.
- The church must give hope to the poor. The church has the responsibility to encourage poor people
- The church must help the poor to start projects to eradicate poverty. They must not only focus on spiritual matters but should be empowering poor people holistically.
- The church must empower the youths of Nellmapius with programs that would focus on shaping young

people with human values and help them to be aware that God made them with a purpose.

- Maybe blacks were cursed by God? One of my co-researchers felt that Blacks were cursed by God because most of poor people are black.

Chapter 6

Alternative interpretation pointing beyond the local context

6.1. Introduction

First I would like to state the main points of the previous chapters of my researchers.

In chapter 1 is about my philosophical, theological positioning and with an emphasis on identity formation.

Chapter 2 has concentrated on describing the problem which is poverty and its effects. My co-researchers and I have explored this concept thoroughly and we have realized that there is a connection between identity formation and poverty.

Chapter 3 has concentrated on community transformation. We researched and discussed all the processes relating to community transformation.

Chapter 4 related and discussed the in-context stories that were shared with me by my co-researchers and dealt with the development of those stories to until the new story has been discovered.

Chapter 5 has concentrated on an interdisciplinary position in order to thicken the new story. I had a discussion with other disciplines.

In chapter 6 I will state a possible alternative story which could point beyond the local context. There could be many alternative stories in my community. So my findings are not

absolute or universal answers to the world or to every poor community.

In this section I would like to state my positioning which helped in discovering an alternative story or my conclusions and recommendations.

6.2. Postfoundationalism or interdisciplinary approach

Muller (2009:204) states that a “postfoundationalist approach forces us to firstly listen to the stories of people in real-life situation It hasn’t got the aim of merely describing a general context, but confronting us with a specific and concrete situation”. This approach avoids abstracts and universal truth.

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Van Huyssteen (2006:25) says that we are not the “intellectual prisoners of our contexts”. Human beings are able to move beyond their own disciplines or cultures. Christian theology cannot have only truth, but it can add value to the system of knowledge (Muller 2009:206).

Felix Guattari (in Shrag 1992:152) uses this in his psychiatric practice where different people join forces in helping in healing the patient. There are doctors, assistant doctors,

Nurses, administration, patients, parents, pharmacies. All of these people represent different disciplines but they manage to network together.

In this research process, Christian theology must play an important role of facilitating community transformation as equal partners with other disciplines or stakeholders.

6.3. Voices involve in creating the new interpretation.

An alternative story needs the following voices to be listened to:

- Co-researchers
- Literature
- Scholars listened to in the interdisciplinary process

6.4. An alternative story

In this section, I will give an alternative story that could bring liberation to the poverty stricken community we are dealing with in this research. I am not trying to state a universal solution but an alternative or a developed story in Nellmapius that would point beyond the local. The alternate story will be one amongst other stories that can develop from Nellmapius that would point beyond the local context

It is hard to say what must go beyond. So, in this research I suggest that what has mostly been discussed on poverty and community transformation by co-researchers, literature and the researcher can be taken beyond the local context. This

would not be treated as the only truth by as a way that other contexts can learn from.

6.4.1. Poverty

It was not easy to describe poverty. People give different descriptions which makes it difficult to find the alternative story. To eradicate poverty, it is impossible to look at one description, but we should look into a specific context. These are the different discourses of poverty:

- Lack of resources
- Exclusion from power and decision-making.
- Limitation of freedom and choices
- Damaged relationships amongst the community, and officials and community.
- Lack of information
- Voicelessness
- Lack of education
- Broken relationship with God
- Lack of opportunities and capabilities.

All of the above discourses make it difficult for the governments, church, and business community to come up with a universal solutions to eradicate poverty. The solutions would be to focus on a specific locality and not a universal solution. And, also the solutions to poverty, is to listen to the poor themselves. Listening to the voices of the poor can bring a quick solution to the problem of poverty.

6.5. Suggested recommendations for community transformation.

6.5.1. Development

The following are very important in bringing development to the community where people are poor. Co-researchers, voices from different disciplines and literature have common views on community development. Here are the views:

- Allowing poor people to participate in all spheres of life.
- Give ears to the voices of the poor.
- The poor people must own the development projects that affect their lives.
- Post-development theory need to look into development as people-centred.
- Government should play an important role in removing structural poverty and making it easy for the poor to access the information and resources needed for their community development.
- People must take ownership of the development project.

Gray (2006:S56) stated that development through participation and partnership rather than social service provision was regarded as the main means of alleviating poverty. The poor people should see it as their responsibility to come out of poverty. In social service provision, the government was intervening into the lives of the poor without

their fully participating but social development says let us work together to identify the problems and answers to those questions.

6.5.2. Empowerment

Empowerment has different descriptions from the many theories that have been promoted. In this research what can be taken beyond our context is that people who live in poverty must be the ones who drive the process of eradicating their poverty. They should take ownership of their freedom from poverty. In order to do this those people must be empowered.

Adams (2003:3) stated it this way, “the concept of empowerment should be constantly redefined and reconstructed not just by so-called professionals but also through the actions and words of people wanting greater control over the services they receive”.

Poor people must define the word empowerment in a way that will make sense to them and also to suite the situation they find themselves in.

Empowerment is all about giving authority to those people who did not have any. As we have indicated in this research people who live in poverty should be the one who fight to redefine and reconstruct the word empowerment, which will be the means that will bring an alternative outcome for them.

6.5.2.1. Empowering individuals

Adams (2003: 66) speaks of “consciousness-raising” to empower the individual. This is a psychological approach, first of all people especially those who live in poverty must feel that they are in charge of their lives. Also, (Adams 2003: 67) continues stating that “the learned helplessness is a state of mind which leaves people unable to see the point of engaging with a new task in view of a previous experience failure, not necessarily in an identical situation, but sometimes in one with only some similarities”. My research carried out in a deprived area has shown me that poverty will leave people helpless and fearful which will render them powerless from engaging against their poverty. Helplessness is psychological.

The psychological strategies that are pursued by a cognitive-behavioural theory is to empower by enabling them (the poor) to feel in control (Adam 2003:67). Poor people must be helped to think that they are important and that they have the ability to make things happen. In addition poor people must be made aware of their rights and how to access those rights. Let them be aware that they are not doing anyone a favour and they do not cause the problem, but they just need their rights.

Munroe 2001: 43 stated the importance of purpose in our lives. He mentioned seven purposes that human beings must operate in order to live a fulfilled life. The seven purposes were mentioned as follows:

- God is a God of purpose
- God created everything with a purpose

- Not every purpose is known to us because we have lost our understanding of God’s original intent for us.
- Where purpose is not known, abuse is inevitable.
- To discover the purpose of something, never ask the creation; ask the creator.
- We find our purpose only in the mind of our Maker.
- God’s purpose is the key to our fulfilment.

According to my understanding of the purpose that Munroe has described in the above paragraph is that purpose gives us the reason for life. Empowerment is to show that to the individual.

Munroe (1998: 84) continues saying the following “third world people must look for the inner strength and potential lying deep within them. With a renewed commitment to the Creator, Jesus Christ, they must prepare themselves to refine their skills”.

6.5.3. Transformation

If all the voices are given the opportunity to be heard that could bring a total transformation in the lives of people as individual and as a society. Empowering individuals and a community would then enable them to transform their community. Outsiders such as community development agents cannot transform the community, because they are just facilitators.

6.5.4. Poverty and stress

In chapter 2 it has been found that poverty causes stress in the lives of people. Because poor people do not have life necessities this cause stress in their lives. Parents, who feel unable to give their children what is necessary for living, would be feeling badly and that causes pressure in their lives. So it would be wise if the issue of poverty can be taken seriously by the church, government, private sector and poor people.

6.5.5. Stigma and poverty

As I have stated in chapter 2 of this research, people who live in poverty stricken communities very often feel that they are not worthy or are not like those children who come from wealthy families. In addition those people from the wealthy families may label them as if they are unworthy. I believe that poor people should be aware that it is not what they have or what others think about them that is the main issue it is that we have all been created in God's image. I have also written more about God's image in chapter 1

6.5.6. Sustainable community transformation

As a person, I value starting a project and finishing it well. In this research, I have learned from co-researchers and from the literature I have read on the area of emphasizing

sustainable transformational development that poor people must be involved from community analysis right up to the implementation of the poverty alleviation project and they should be part of the evaluation team.

Community ownership of development projects is so essential and this could make the project sustainable and bear good results. Equal partnership between the government, private sector and poor people is important in community transformation and that would sustain community transformation. The solution cannot come from one section or discipline, it needs a postfoundational approach. The poor of Nellmapius must take ownership of their community development projects.

(Pieterse 2001:115) speaks about prophetic preaching in the church in order to assure the poor that God is on their side. He is always ready to help them through the causes and from the situation of poverty. The issue of hope must be high on the agenda of the church.

As a researcher, it feels that this kind of prophetic preaching is more than giving money. Prophetic preaching will assist them to see the value and the potential that is in their lives. Hope will assist them to rise and face the tomorrow. The poor will be energised to keep on trying to fight their poverty and its influence on their lives.

6.5.6.1. Ownership of the poverty alleviation project.

The project must be owned by the government, poor people, businesses, and the bank. All of these stakeholders must

participate fully in the project from the start to the finish of the project (Rob 2002:62)

6.5.7. Self help

Kgomo go tshoshwa e etshoshago (the meaning of this saying is that only people who try to help themselves will receive help from others)

Therefore it is saying that God helps people who help themselves. Let us pray, but at the same time let us look around and see what we can do to eradicate poverty. It is not enough to pray and sleep only. Poor people must learn how to start small businesses, after that they must ask God to help them to implement the knowledge.

The previous section, speaks more about prophetic preaching. It should make people aware that they must rise and do something for their lives. My co-researcher put it this way;

“Poor people lack initiatives”(Mr.TN)

6.5.8. The church and economical transformation

The church is one of many role players in the community. Walking down the streets of Nellmapius one can see tents (people of Nellmapius hold their church services in tents since there are no church buildings) all over Nellmapius. The church has the capacity to transform the community.

On Sundays, we see many people wearing different uniforms and suits going to their place of worship. Is the church playing a role in influencing the community in the positive way? (Pieterse 2001:111) put it in this way “the church has to minister in deed- and word- and in that order-impelled by Christian love”. The church as the embodiment of the love of God should be the light in the community. The church should change from a Sunday only ministry and it should be an everyday ministry in order to change the lives of people and their conditions.

According to the following authors Wink (1999: 83; Erasmus 2005:142; Olupona 1999: X), my co-researchers and my own personal experiences in poverty, the God story can bring a total social transformation and as well as personal transformation. The moral renewal without the God’s story will be ineffective. The church must begin to play her positive part in social transformation.

Pieterse (2001:113) says it in a clear way that to help a poverty stricken community is the mission of God. He has shown His love to the world, He is involved with the world, and God likes to participate with people in their context. God’s will and plan is to help poor communities is God’s initiatives, the church joins to be co-partner with God also partner with the community of poor people.

Bruce J. et al 1996: 95 mentioned that “to help people help themselves”. The church should not be there to do things for people but to facilitate a process that can help people to take charge of their situation. The role of the church is not only for

encouragement but also to empower people to claim back their freedom.

Handouts such as food parcels and clothing and grants have negative effects when people depend on them for long periods of time. (Nieman 2006:599) says in “receiving handouts, the individuality of people is suppressed and their inherent skills and strengths are not acknowledged. This can lead to apathy, self-blame, low self-esteem, frustration and anger”. One of The functions of the church is to help in identity formation.

6.6. Community transformation strategy

The church should have a concrete strategy of implementing God’s plan for a poverty stricken community. I would like to do the following, follow the way the different voices have highlighted. I also, think that people starting with any research should know that prayer is very important especially for Christians and the church. By prayer we seek the guidance of the Lord and we seek His will for the community.

- **Research.** The community should be helped by being taught the tools in order to do research about their community. This is the stage where the community would gather the information, because one of the things that keep people in poverty; which was mentioned previously is a lack of information. So, the church must partner with the community to search for information. The community should be aware of the plans of government and businesses to eradicate poverty.

- **Planning.** The next step is to plan around the findings of the research. The poor people must be included in this plan. Actually, it is their plan. They must learn by being hands on rather than by theory. Most of the time, development agencies will come in and tell the community what to do. By collaborating with the community, this will give them a sense of dignity.
- **Organizing.** In this stage, people are been filled in the role to play in the project. Getting the right people with right the abilities to do what needs to be done. In all of these processes the poor should own the process. Training should be offered to those who have been identified on how to carry out the community project.
- **Implementation.** The poor people themselves have to making sure that everything that is been planned and organized has been implemented.
- **Managing.** The implementation should not be the end of the story. The project must be managed in order to be sustainable and be fruitful. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the project is very important. The power should be with those who are equipped with the skills of managing the project.

Pieterse (2001:117) argues that community development is a process whereby a group of people come together to exchange ideas. There are four questions that the poor must ask themselves:

- What are the problems?
- What is the order of priority of these problems?
- What are the causes of these problems?
- What will be our programme of action?

The community transformation process needs the involvement of people. If, people are not involved in the process, it can not bear good fruits or it will be a useless process that will never transform the community. These four questions stated above are part of the research process.

Bruwer 1996:66-74 states the following as the procedure followed by the apostles in acts 6:1-7. The Greek-speaking people raised their concerns about their widows. The Apostles had listened and acted on their concern by asking the congregation to select those people who could help in solving the crises. The problem became the congregation problem and no longer the leadership problem.

Today in our churches we must follow that system in our community transformation process. If, people are not included in the decision making, from the start, there would be no development Maluleke (19990:39). Very often decisions would be made away from the poor and only the implementation of these decisions would be expected from the poor. It is hard to correctly implement something when you were not part of the decision-making of it.

6.7. Equipping poor people with skills for community transformation

The church should facilitate the process of running the skills development programmed. The workshops should be concentrating more on building the capacity of poor people.

Mind you, these people should be capable of heading up the transformation. The following will be done and I mention them in bulleted way.

- Management system.
- Financial management
- Bookkeeping
- Cash flow management
- Budgeting system.
- Human relationships
- Strategic planning
- Project management
- Conflict resolution

Poor people will transform their community, if they have been empowered with the necessary skills. In our church, we are focusing on these processes.

6.8. Poverty has a negative impact on Identity formation

It is true that because of the process of exclusion of the poor in decision-making, it brings a sense of low self-esteem and lack of confidence. Identity is how I feel about myself and also, the perception that I receive from other people about myself. In narrative research, we listen to the narratives of those who are poor. The narrative approach will fight to identify preferred stories and begin to develop those stories until they are thickened and become the dominant story. In this way, poor people will gain strength and have a sense of being significant.

Demasure and Muller 2006:415 put it this way, “identity is co-constructed out of the discourses available in a certain culture, such as a gender, discourse, education, age, sexuality”. The discourses on poverty will shape poor people in a very negative sense as we have seen in chapter 2, chapter 3, and chapter 4. Community transformation should be more about re-authoring of the stories of the poor people.

6.9. Future research focus

- Why the people who were born in a poverty stricken community continue living in poverty despite the money allocated by government to improve their lives.
- Understanding of the interdisciplinary contributions.
- Impact of poverty on the identity formation
- How to transform the poverty stricken community.

Chapter 7

Reflection

7.1. Introduction

In this short chapter, I would like to reflect on the research process itself how do I feel about the research.

7.2. How I felt before the research process?

As a narrative researcher, I think that it would be appropriate if I reflect on my own and to try to be honest with it. I started the research process very angry inside. Being born and grown up in a poverty stricken community and still living in such a community. I felt that the white man has robbed me of what belongs to me. Through this research process, I wanted to tell how the white man has taken our land and resources and left us with nothing. Also, I wanted to find a way of how can African take back what was stolen from them.

7.3. How did I feel during the research process?

During my research process, I had mixed feelings, especially when I was having conversations with my co-researchers. The cause of my mixed feelings was that my co-researcher responded differently from me on the issue of poverty. Most of them, they sounded like they had forgotten about the past and were focusing on the future. They emphasized that it is time to stop blaming apartheid for every one of our own failures. I felt frustrated because had thought my own answers to the poverty issue, also, maybe what I needed is for them to support my preconceived answers through this research. I felt very lonely because I was still blaming Apartheid.

I felt the impact of poverty during the research process. I did not have money to make more copies to assist me in my research process, lack of enough space to study without disturbing my family while they enjoyed TV, and lack of the computer skills that would make my work more professional without paying more money outside.

7.4. How did I feel after the research process?

I felt that I should repent. As a Christian and a pastor I also had to encourage all people to do the same. Poverty is a global issue as I have indicated in chapter 2 of this research process. The whole world must stand together to defeat the common enemy which is poverty. Yes, the systems such as politics, economic and societies can cause poverty but it is us human beings who should hold hands to work together to put the proper systems in place.

7.5. Positioning

The positioning in the philosophical frame has been a challenging one, during and at end of my research I felt encouraged and felt empowered. I can work with different people from different disciplines. (Van Huyssteen 200:430) argues that in this sense it is vibrant and a constructive postmodernist move to integrate all ways of knowing without totalizing them in any modernist sense.

I have realized that the solution in life will come from different disciplines. The science and theology can have conversation and find a common understanding but still working from different disciplines.

7.6. The narrative approach

In narrative approach forces us to listen to the stories of people living in a specific context. We deal with a now action as we have described it in chapter 1. The co-researchers speak as they know without any thread. In a narrative approach the researcher must be positioning in the not-knowing position. The researcher is not demanding scientific answers (Muller 2003:81). As, a researcher, I would like my co-researchers to feel that they are part of the process.

Also, what I like with the narrative approach, we are not only listening to stories but there is a developmental part, which means that if the story is dominated with a problem, when development takes place we can hear new story, and my job as a researcher is not to force the outcome but my job is to wait and see developmental process develops.

This approach has taught me to listen without trying to push solutions into the research process also during my pastoral ministry I'm able to listen to those who need my help. Most of the time I tell them that I do not have any answer but together would discover the answer we need.

7.7. Excitement of the emergent of the new story

After the discouragement of positioning and then experiencing the practical phase of the research I felt good and great to see that there is a hope at the end of the tunnel, to see that poor people indeed have a future. And this hope has not been brought by me or any expert but by listening the voices of those who live in poverty. Listening empowers the poor to take their role in their empowerment. The government, church, community, and business community must converse with each other and together they will find a way of eradicating poverty.

I have learned that most of the time that certain problem especially the problem of poverty cannot be solved because of a single solution from an individual stakeholder without including other stakeholders has been followed. This is where transversal rationality comes into being. All rationalities must come into being. The strategies of all rationalities must be listened too. Yes, the new story would emerge only when all strategies can converse and be shared.

7.8. Identity formation and poverty

How do I feel about myself, will this enable me to be happy or sad in life? There are many factors that contribute to the way that I feel about my life. (Tatum 1997:2) put it this way the concept of identity is a complex one, shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political context. The context of poverty in many times will affect human identity formation in a negative way.

The focus should be to change the context or environment before the individual can try to change and then try to change other people. The church, government and poor communities must join hands. To promote healthy behaviour and partnership is important. Crime, drug addiction, and sometimes laziness are because of a negative identity formation.

7.9. Empowerment

The term empowerment is a process that helps those who are needy to take charge of their lives and move towards their God given destiny. A Northern Sotho proverb says “*tau diahloka seboka di shitwa ke nare e hlotsa*” it means in English without unity or collaboration we will fail to achieve even small things.

7.10. Conclusion

In this chapter I focused on how I felt before the starting the research, and how I felt during and after the research. There was a life transformation taking place inside of me. The

challenges of the research were worth it. I am happy I have finally reached my goal. Blessed be the name of God.