

**ONCE UPON A TIME, HERE AND NOW AND FOREVER
AFTER:
A NARRATIVE ON ABUSE**

by

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**IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY GRANDMOTHER
H J REIF**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this work: *Once upon a time, here and now, and forever after: a narrative on abuse*, is my own work and that this work has not been submitted to any other university for any degree.

Signature

Nadine Kerr

Date

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**ONCE UPON A TIME, HERE AND NOW AND FOREVER
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SUMMARY

Concerning child abuse, the political stance seems to be protecting the rights of children from abuse whereas statistics on child abuse illustrate that child abuse is an enormous problem in South Africa, as well as other countries, today. I have thus undertaken research to try to understand how a female person who has been abused as a child has coped with that abuse in her life. In this regard, I have attempted to bring into focus the individual meanings and understandings of child abuse perceived by a person who has been abused so that a different dimension of understanding can be created. This dimension can then possibly generate a richer description of the seemingly contradictory political and statistical dimensions.

The literature review that I have undertaken focuses on definitions of abuse, implications and different theoretical dimensions concerning abuse. I also revised literature on coping and other relevant research.

In undertaking this research, I have worked from a narrative position that can be seen in the experiences that occur in people's lives on a continuous basis and their narrative expression that allows them to make sense of their experience. History and culture also play a role in this position by shaping the way people narrate their experiences through different contexts and over time.

The methodology that I have utilised can be seen in the attending, telling, transcribing, analysing and reading processes relating to the participant's experience of abuse. This took place over six sessions of conversation with the participant, psychologist and myself as part of the reflection team. I have also

made use of the concept of trustworthiness to create and maintain quality, and ethics were upheld through letters of confidentiality and consent communicated to the participant and psychologist.

During the session, the metaphor of a bicycle and its movement was used to explore different aspects that appear to have helped and/or hindered the participant's coping with abuse. The findings were then included in closing letters that were sent to the participant.

IN DIE VERLEDE, DIE HIER EN NOU EN DAARNA: 'N NARRATIEWE BESPREKING OOR MISHANDELING

OPSOMMING

Dit blyk dat die politiese standpunt rakende kindermishandeling daarop gerig is om kinders te beskerm teen mishandeling. Die statistiese standpunt illustreer dat kindermishandeling 'n groot probleem blyk te wees in Suid-Afrika sowel as in ander lande. Ek het besluit om navorsing te onderneem met die doel om tot begrip te kom van die ervarings van 'n vroulike deelnemer wat self mishandel was sowel as haar hantering van die mishandeling. Ek het gepoog om die individu se betekenisgewing en begrip van die mishandeling te verken met die doel om 'n alternatiewe dimensie van begryping te skep om moontlik 'n ryker beskrywing van die politiese en statistiese standpunte navore te bring.

In die literatuuroorsig het ek gefokus op die verskeie definisies van mishandeling, die implikasies en verskillende teoretiese dimensies rakende mishandeling. Ek het literatuur geraadpleeg met betrekking tot die hantering van mishandeling sowel as relevante navorsing.

Ek het vanuit 'n narratiewe perspektief gewerk wat fokus op persone se ervarings in hulle eie lewens en hoe hulle, hulle narratiewe aanwend om sin te maak van hierdie ervarings. Geskiedenis en Kultuur speel 'n belangrike rol tydens die vorming van 'n persoon se narratiewe en oefen ook 'n invloed uit op die persoon se ervarings in verskillende kontekste en oor tyd.

Die metodologie wat gebruik is het ingesluit die proses wat my keuse van 'n onderwerp vooraf gegaan het. Die volgende stap het gefokus op die deelnemer se

vertelling van haar ervarings, die transkripsie en analise hiervan sowel as die lees prosesse wat verband hou met die uitgebreide betekenis. Hierdie prosesse het plaasgevind gedurende ses onderhoude tussen die deelnemer, myself en die sielkundige.

Die konsep betroubaarheid was gebruik om die kwaliteit te bevorder. Ek het gepoog om deurentyd eties op te tree deur onder andere die sielkundige sowel as die deelnemer se ingeligte toestemming te verkry en alle inligting vertroulik te hanteer.

Die metafoor van 'n bewegende trapfiets was gebruik om die verskillende aspekte, wat die deelnemer se hantering van mishandeling gehelp of verhinder het, te verken. Die bevindinge was in briewe uiteengesit en beskryf en aan die deelnemer gestuur.

KEY TERMS

Political discourse

Statistical discourse

Individual narrative

Narrative position

Narrative analysis

Metaphor

Abuse

Coping

Reflecting conversations

Letters

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I shall focus on the research problem, question and goals. The structure of the research report will also be addressed.

1.1 PROBLEM

While undertaking this research concerning coping with child abuse, I became aware of two different discourses about child abuse. On the one hand, political discourse on child abuse is embedded in the United Nations' Convention of Child Rights and in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of South Africa. On the other hand, statistical discourse is contained in the statistics that reveal child abuse.

1.1.1 Political Discourse

According to the World Health Organization (in Fako, 1997, p.141) the 1990s began with:

A commitment to children through the adoption, by the United Nations General Assembly, of the Convention on the rights of the child. This Convention set the minimum standards of protection for children's survival, health and education; protection against exploitation at work; protection against the degradations of war; and protection against physical and sexual abuse. By 20th July, 1994, 163 countries had ratified the Convention and 11 other countries had signed but not yet ratified the Convention.

From the above quote, the discourse on child abuse in the United Nations' Convention of Child Rights becomes evident. This discourse can be said to grant rights to children. Furthermore, it can also be said that this discourse is trying to protect children from different aspects that can cause them harm. It also shows that this Convention is of paramount importance as 163 countries had ratified the

convention. In other words, the discourse on child abuse in the United Nations' Convention of Child Rights states that certain behaviour towards children is not permitted.

According to the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, children's rights are also seen as being very important. This is evident in that children have the right "to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation" (Act 108 of 1996, Section 28 (1b)).

1.1.2 Statistical Discourse

During my research, I came across another discourse on child abuse. This discourse can be called the statistical discourse. According to Montague and Pitman (1996), one million North American children were abused and neglected in 48 states in 1994. They add that there was a 27% increase in abuse and neglect from 1990 to 1994.

In this regard Montague and Pitman (1996) state that:

- 53% of the children were neglected.
- 26% endured physical abuse.
- 14% were sexually abused.
- 5% were emotionally abused.
- 22% suffered other forms of abuse.
- Almost half of the children who were abused and neglected were six years old and younger.

Furthermore, South African statistics according to the UNICEF and the National Children's Rights Committee (in Fako, 1997) indicate that:

- 15,333 child abuse cases were reported to the police's child protection unit in 1992.
- 3571 of these cases involved physical abuse.
- 3,639 involved rape.
- 4,135 involved sexual abuse.
- Emotional abuse was not recorded because of the difficulty in proving such cases but may be read into the above-mentioned figures.

Also, some authors have approximated that only about 35% of crimes per year are reported to authorities, thus making it possible that the existing statistics could be even higher (Harlow, 1986). Another approximation suggests that 72 out of every 100 offences committed are never recorded in official statistics (Skogan, 1977).

Related to this aspect, and in the light of child abuse being socially unacceptable, one can understand that when abuse does occur the perpetrator would not like to be caught out as s/he would have to face punishment and its consequences (Giovannoni & Becerra, 1979). It is further believed that the abused person may feel embarrassed, guilty or scared of the perpetrator and thus fails to inform authorities. In some circumstances, the person who is informed may not know what to do with the information. The person so informed may know the perpetrator and thus may not want to get involved because of the implications of such a decision or may not have enough evidence to do something about it (Bartol, 1999; Brown, Esbensen & Geis, 1996).

The statistical discourse paints a different picture compared to the political discourse, as it shows that child abuse is in fact occurring. It can also be seen in the statistical discourse that there are many different kinds of abuse: all with their own statistics. Furthermore, this discourse seems to be a changing discourse as reports of child abuse to authorities will vary over time (Harlow, 1986). In this regard, as was indicated, the statistics could possibly be unrepresentative of the number of actual occurrences.

1.1.3 Political Discourse versus Statistical Discourse

When comparing the political/legal and statistical discourses, one can ask why, if the political discourse governing the prohibition of child abuse is so clear, is the statistical discourse of child abuse so high. We all know that laws are made to protect human rights but why then the huge contradiction between the ways it should be and the way it is. Obviously, this contradiction is currently an enormous problem in our country, as well as other countries. I believe that this problem should be receiving more attention than it already has so that the problem of child abuse can be reduced and the statistical discourse can be more concurrent with the political/legal discourse of child rights.

The statistics of child abuse are staggering and one must pose questions about consequences: what happens later on in life to children who are abused. Hunter (1995) explains that many children who are sexually abused are identified only in adolescence. Apart from those who are murdered, commit suicide or never receive help, multitudes of people will carry the experiences of abuse with them throughout their lives (Doyle, 1994).

The war waging between the political/legal discourse and the statistical discourse, demands the question: “How do people who were abused during childhood, cope with that abuse during their lives?”

1.1.4 Personal Narrative on Abuse

During my undergraduate and postgraduate studies, I became interested in different forms of abuse. This interest resulted from knowing people who have experienced abuse as well as having to work with clients who have been abused at a young age. I thus approached different organisations concerned and was introduced to a volunteer. During a meeting with the volunteer, she explained that she had been abused as a child for several years and would be between 25 and 30

years of age at the time of this study. Her experience of abuse was also briefly discussed and I was presented with a Power Point presentation relating to her experience of abuse. The Power Point presentation was prepared for a psychologist while the volunteer was undergoing therapy (between 2002 to 2003) relating to the child abuse that she had experienced (see chapter 3).

What she discussed with and presented to me is rich in information but I found myself facing the problem of what to do with the information and presentation and what the focus should be in using the information and presentation for research purposes. I decided on the narrative approach and the process was discussed with the participant who explained that the only reason for her participation would be to help others. With this in mind, it was agreed that the participant would tell her story of child abuse to illustrate the meaning that she attaches to her experience in relation to coping and abuse. It was also decided that the Power Point presentation would be used as a starting point during the interviews. In so doing, the focus moves from the problem of child abuse to the experience of child abuse.

This narrative of personal experience is the focus of this research and aims at bringing a new and different dimension of understanding to the political/legal discourse and statistical discourse. In this regard, sometimes gaining knowledge from others' experiences can be more enlightening than reading a thick volume full of theory, facts and statistics. People who have to live in a society where abuse will probably be part of their lives forever, can learn much from others' experiences and can perhaps learn to have empathy and a different kind of knowledge and understanding of abuse. Perhaps we can learn to help those better who have had to suffer abuse.

1.2 QUESTION

The research question was: "How has a female person who was abused as a child, coped with that abuse during her life?"

1.3 GOALS

1.3.1 General Goal

The general goal of this research project was to try to understand how a female person who had been abused as a child, has coped with the abuse during her life.

1.3.2 Specific Goals

The specific goals of this research report were:

- To do a literature study relating to abuse.
- To describe the research methodology of this research project.
- To conduct the research project.
- To write the research report.

1.4 STRUCTURE

The structure of this research report is as follows:

- Chapter 1: Introduction.
- Chapter 2: Literature.
- Chapter 3: Methodology.
- Chapter 4: Results.
- Chapter 5: Conclusions.

In this chapter of the research report the research problem, question, goals and structure were addressed. The following chapter will focus on literature pertaining to abuse.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

In this chapter, a literature review is done that focuses on abuse, coping with abuse and research.

Child abuse is something that has occurred far back into our history but it is only in recent years that more intense inspection has taken place concerning the impact and incidence of child abuse (Hunter, 1995). Similarly, Dale (1999) states that adults abused as children have been neglected but he also explains that there is a growing awareness concerning their needs and that much research has been undertaken in the past 20 years. Thus, in today's society, we cannot let the abuser or the abused be without intervention because the effects of this type of interaction will filter through our society and affect it in negative ways (Cruz & Essen, 1994).

In the next section, I will discuss some of the existing research surrounding abuse. For a clearer understanding, I will first discuss the different types of abuse and their definitions. I will then list some of the implications of abuse and finally discuss three psychological traditions in relation to abuse.

2.1 ABUSE

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (in Doyle, 1994, p.7), there are definitions for the noun and verb usage of the word abuse. Abuse as a noun is defined as an "improper use", "defilement", "violation", "deceit", "a corrupt practice" and a "perversion". When the word abuse is used as a verb (to abuse), it means, "to violate" or "take advantage of". Different types of abuse exist and therefore various definitions and explanations need to be given:

2.1.1 Definitions of Abuse

- Psychological abuse

Five forms of behaviour make up psychological abuse. These forms of behaviour are “corrupting”, “ignoring”, “terrorizing”, “isolating” and “rejecting” (Garbarino, Guttman & Seeley in Cruz & Essen, 1994, p.2). Vissing and Straus (in Cruz & Essen, 1994, p. 2) furthered the definition to include “verbal/symbolic aggression”, which are forms of communication that cause or intend to cause psychological pain. This communication may be verbal or non-verbal and active or passive in nature. Cruz and Essen (1994) question Vissing’s and Straus’s addition because of the difficulties in deciding whether or not verbal/symbolic aggression was used, how it was intended and how it was interpreted.

- Physical abuse

Any physical contact that is not accidental and/or negligent that causes physical pain and injury can be defined as physical abuse. Even though some forms of corporal punishment are allowed, intentional infliction of pain and injury when it comes to children can never be justified (Cruz & Essen, 1994). However, different cultures allow for varying degrees of physical pain which makes physical abuse hard to define (Briere, 1992).

- Sexual abuse

A useful definition of child sexual abuse is any inappropriate sexual relations with a child, which is either physical and/or non-physical in nature and where attempts are made to sexually exploit the child. There are more and less severe instances of child sexual abuse. More severe abuse can be sodomy, incest and rape whereas talking about sexual aspects, revealing body parts and suggesting aspects of

sexual facets are considered to be less severe (Weikel & Krupinski in Cruz & Essen, 1994).

Another definition of child sexual abuse is any sexual contact between a child (mid-adolescent and younger) and someone who is at least five years older than that child. This contact can then range from anything between fondling to intercourse (Briere, 1992).

- Emotional abuse

This can be a form of omission, ignorance or indifference, which leads to the child not receiving constructive emotional stimulation or support. Examples include leaving the child alone for extended periods of time, showing insufficient love through withholding physical contact or failing to give the child the needed recognition and acceptance that s/he needs (Briere, 1992).

- Other

Alcoholism or drug addicted parents can also lead to a form of child abuse. Other types of abuse that are less studied include witnessing family violence, war, social discrimination, racism and sexism. Poverty and homelessness can also be seen to constitute abuse (Briere, 1992).

From the above-mentioned definitions, it becomes evident that defining abuse is a daunting task because of the many different aspects that constitute abuse. Individuals also differ in what they perceive to be abuse and how they define the different aspects involved in abuse (Giovanni & Becerra, 1979). Furthermore, the different types of abuse can occur at the same time which makes it difficult to separate them: for example, a child who is sexually abused may also be physically injured during the abuse. The child is then also emotionally and psychologically abused due to the processes involved in the sexual and physical abuse (Wenar &

Kerig, 2000). According to Briere (1992) combinations of physical, sexual and psychological abuse often occur which exacerbates the situation and consequently must be taken very seriously. As I have now defined the different forms of abuse, I will use the word abuse as an umbrella term because different types of abuse often co-occur.

2.1.2 Implications of Abuse

When inspecting the long-term implications of abuse contradictions can be found. These contradictions relate to whether or not childhood abuse definitely leads to problematic adult functioning (Dale 1999). This contradiction can be seen in the analysis of 39 research studies done to determine the long-term effects of sexual experiences on children and adolescents. Concerning the long-term harmful effects, 24 studies found that there were negative outcomes although only 9 met the scientific criteria for the study. Fourteen studies reported neutral effects but again only 5 studies met the scientific criteria. Finally, 2 studies reported beneficial effects however 1 of these 2 studies was rejected on the basis of problems relating to sampling and inconclusive evidence (Kilpatrick, 1992). In this regard, the negative consequences outnumber the neutral and beneficial long-term effects of child and adolescent sexual experiences. In relation to this, much of the research undertaken, relating to long-term implications of abuse, focuses on populations that are encountering problems. In this regard, it may seem that most, if not all individuals, that are abused grow up to have problematic adult lives (Doyle, 1994).

Doyle (1994, p.215) explains that “sexual abuse as a child does not automatically condemn a person to a disturbed adulthood”. Similarly, other researchers found that only about 40% of individuals who experienced sexual abuse as children, needed professional help with regards to the abuse (Browne & Finklehor, 1986). Furthermore, research also indicates that some individuals who have been abused do not consider themselves, or appear, to have problematic and distressed adult lives (Kendall-Tackett, Williams & Finklehor, 1993; Ussher & Dewberry, 1995).

Although these studies focus on sexual abuse experiences, it must be remembered that different forms of abuse often co-occur and thus may also be found in other forms of abuse as stated previously. Throughout my research I came across much information concerning the implications and affects that different individuals sustain after abuse has occurred. I will briefly list some of the implications that can occur according to Briere (1992), Cruz and Essen (1994), Dale (1999), Doyle (1994) and Kaufman and Wohl (1992):

- Emotional implications

Anxiety, feelings of guilt, betrayal, emotional numbness, anger, fear, depression, panic, shame, anguish, feelings of being alone, sensitivity and sadness are connected to some of the emotional aspects relating to abuse.

- Cognitive implications

Diminished self-confidence, self-esteem, trust, power, safety, autonomy, intimacy as well as confusion and negativity are involved in the cognitive implications.

- Behavioural implications

Helpless behaviour, destructive behaviour, obsessions and compulsions, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, flashbacks and nightmares, phobias, regression, substance abuse, disassociation, amnesia, aggression, attachment problems, suicidal tendencies, self-mutilation and learning difficulties can occur.

- Physical implications

Abuse can cause different physiological effects which can lead to increased use of pharmacological substances. Respiratory, gastrointestinal, cardiovascular,

gynaecological and urinary problems can occur. Physical pain, sleep disorders, eating disorders, auditory and perceptual disturbances can also result.

- Interpersonal implications

A multitude of problems can be found in interaction with others such as difficulties concerning intimacy, re-victimisation, isolation and social overactiveness or inactiveness. Difficulties in setting boundaries with others may occur. Coping and interpersonal skills may be limited. Physical distancing, poor parenting skills and relationship problems as well as antisocial and criminal behaviour can become evident.

- Sexual implications

The abused individual can experience diminished sexual desire and compulsions in relation to sexual behaviour. Pain, identity confusion, acting out and altered sexuality can also become evident. Relationships can become sexualised and disorders involving orgasms and arousal can occur.

The above-mentioned outcomes indicate that different individuals experience abuse differently. Thus, it must be remembered that not all individuals that are abused will necessarily develop all of the above-mentioned implications. Some individuals may experience none of these effects and thus live happy, functional lives (Cruz & Essen, 1994; Doyle, 1994).

2.1.3 Theoretical Dimensions

When looking at abuse from the standpoint of negative outcomes and as a common phenomenon, children who are abused and who do not find some way to resolve what has happened to them through treatment, may have to live with the psychological implications for the rest of their lives (Cruz & Essen, 1994). Similarly,

without the correct intervention children who are hurt often grow up and live symptomatic and distressed lives (Briere, 1992).

I have decided to elucidate further by discussing three schools of thought and their views on child abuse. The three schools of thought that will be discussed briefly are the systemic school, psychodynamic school and cognitive-behaviour school (CBT).

- Systemic school

An assumption of this model is that individuals do not stand alone but form part of systems such as family systems, peer systems and governmental systems to name just three. Thus, all life, as it is known, is made up of underlying systems and all human kind belongs to a multitude of different systems at any given time. Another aspect of importance is that all these systems influence each other so that change in any one part of the system influences other parts of the system. In this regard, the focus of this model is on the interactions between the different parts of the system as well as how that system influences and is influenced by other systems (Becvar & Becvar, 1996; Visser & Moleko, 2001).

In this model, the focus of delivering help to individuals who have been abused is thus on the interactions between these different systems, namely, between the abused individual and the different systems that are part of her/his life. In child abuse, the focus is more on the roles and dynamics of the family systems (Dale, 1999). The different systems that the child becomes part of as s/he grows up must also be taken into consideration.

This perspective thus focuses on all persons involved directly and indirectly in the abused person's life and the dynamics of their relationships as well as the roles that the different members of the systems play. The influences that these different systems have on each other are considered important. Therapeutically the

interactive dynamics of relationships need to be considered and new structures need to be implemented where necessary. Criticism of this model is that not enough attention is given to the psychological aspects of the different role players (Dale, 1999).

- Psychodynamic school

Freud believed that neurotic disorders develop due to trauma that was experienced earlier on in life. He thus placed emphasis on the processes of the unconscious and how these processes influence the abused person in different ways. From this perspective child abuse can be traumatic and hard to deal with and thus it is often repressed into the unconscious. When working therapeutically with the abused person it becomes important to retrieve these repressed memories back into the conscious mind and then to work through them (Cruz & Essen, 1994; Dale, 1999).

This view developed to incorporate the workings of the ego and its defence mechanisms. In this regard, because of trauma such as abuse, the ego is overwhelmed and causes anxiety because the ego does not want to be overwhelmed again. Consequently, the individual who was abuse experiences further difficulty within her/himself about re-experiencing the trauma. This can turn into “fear of unknown origin” through the workings of “repressed mechanisms” (Cruz & Essen, 1994, p.78). As a result, different defence mechanisms come into operation as the ego is being attacked from within. This can lead to different problematic behaviours that will vary in form and extent from one individual to another (Cruz & Essen, 1994).

In this tradition, the therapist is not personally involved in any way in the therapy and the abused person can experience diminished feelings of warmth and understanding during therapy. As a result of the value placed on boundaries, this technique seems to be of insignificant value to individuals who find themselves in crisis relating to the abuse. Psychodynamic practice is efficient however in

identifying in which aspects abused individuals have feelings of varying degrees of closeness and distance from the abusive situation (Dale, 1999).

There has been an evolution however in this tradition that has allowed for different perspectives. These different perspectives can be seen in Kohut's self-psychology, Melanie Klein's object relations and the ideas that Mahler, Winnicott and Jung have brought into focus (Dale, 1999; Hook, Watts & Cockcroft, 2002).

- Cognitive-behaviour school (CBT)

This tradition originated from the combination of cognitive and behavioural theories as they are often used together in therapeutic interventions (Dale, 1999). I will however discuss the basic concepts of these theories separately to maintain a better understanding.

In this tradition, the cognition refers to the abused person's thought processes or way of thinking. Thus, the experience that the abused person lives through becomes important in terms of the meaning that the person attaches to the experience. Meanings become problematic, however, when they are illogical, irrational or negative in some or other way. In other words, problems arise if the abused person conceptualises meanings of experiences in ways that hinder functioning (Hook, Watts & Cockcroft, 2002).

Behaviourism on the other hand focuses on the specific behaviours that are products of abuse. The behaviours that receive attention are those that inhibit the person's functioning, which means that problematic behaviour receives attention (Dale, 1999).

Thus, cognitive behavioural techniques aim at restructuring faulty thought processes or cognition and correcting associated problematic behavioural aspects. Although this technique is valuable for faulty cognitive processes and problematic

behavioural aspects, it tends to place the therapist in a teaching role and the client in a student role. Furthermore, the interaction between the therapist and client is not used as a therapeutic tool, which can limit the healing process (Dale, 1999).

So far definitions, implications and theoretical dimensions of abuse have been discussed and now attention must be given to coping with abuse.

2.2 COPING

Experiencing abuse as a child can be more detrimental than experiencing it as an adult. The reason for this is that child abuse occurs at stages in life, “when assumptions about self, others, and the world are being formed, when their relations to their own internal states are being established; and when coping and affiliative skills are first acquired” (Briere, 1992, p. 17).

As stated before, experience of abuse as a child does not mean necessarily that these children grow up to have problematic adult lives. But if child abuse can be detrimental as stated above, how do some individuals deal with abuse in a way that allows them to live effective, functional adult lives? An answer to this question may lie with the individuals ability to cope.

The word “cope” means to contend successfully or deal competently with problems, tasks, people or situations (Sykes, 1989). According to Hausman and Reed (1991) it can also be seen as a strategy for managing life’s stresses and can be successful when it leads to the person gaining a sense of meaning and security. Similarly, the words ‘contend’, ‘deal’ or ‘manage’ impart actions that we take in situations and perceive as negative and thus signify coping behaviours. Munton, West and Starker (in Shaw, 2001) explain that the more problem-focused and active an individual’s coping skills are, the better chance s/he has to adjust. In this regard, I will use the word ‘coping’ synonymously with the words ‘standing up to’ or

‘standing against’ aspects in one’s life that are perceived as negative, bad or injurious.

Moos and Shaefer (1986) postulate that people function better when they maintain equilibrium. When an individual’s equilibrium is disrupted through negative actions, their coping strategies are activated to regain a measure of equilibrium. If equilibrium can be regained then a person will grow in the process. If not, they may become psychologically, physically, spiritually and/or emotionally ill. As all individuals undergo different life crises, humans, through their learning ability, gain knowledge of how to cope in different situations and with future problems. In this regard, failing to cope can have implications for individuals in the way they cope with problems.

Related to coping is what various authors refer to as ‘resilience’. To understand the character of resilience one must take ‘risk’, ‘vulnerability’ and ‘protection’ into consideration. Risk factors imply that there is a good chance that problems will occur whereas ‘vulnerability’ implies that a person may be more susceptible to risks involved. Finally, protective factors are aspects, both internal and external, that assist a person to develop functionally. These aspects thus go hand in hand to influence individuals in different ways and a person who functions well despite difficult life circumstances is called resilient (Doyle, 1994; Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000; Wenar & Kerig, 2000).

Abuse of children can be a serious risk factor leading to interpersonal, behavioural and/or emotional problems. These problems can filter through and affect adult functioning. Although some individuals do overcome problems resulting from abuse, resilience in abused children seems to be unlikely. It is discussed and explained in several studies such as those undertaken by Farber and Egeland; Herrenkohl; Herrenkohl and Egolf; Cicchetti and Rogosch who give evidence that resilience is rare in abused children (in Bolger & Paterson, 2003). Reasons for this could be that the needs of the abused child are not being met in accordance with

developmental requirements. An example could be that maltreatment often co-occurs with other problematic aspects and there seems to be a lack of protective factors (Bolger & Paterson, 2003).

However, research indicates that in populations of abused children, some individuals show more resilience than others (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1997). Thus, it is necessary to investigate the nature of resilience and coping so that better understanding can be developed and thereby better help can be given to abused children. Bolger and Paterson (2003) explain that perceptions of internal and external control seem to function as protective factors. Thus, if the child feels out of control both in her/himself as well as having no control concerning what is happening in her/his environment, the negative implications can be more severe. I will now mention some other risk, vulnerability and protective factors that affect resiliency according to Bolger and Paterson (2003), Briere (1992), Cruz and Essen (1994), Shonkoff and Meisels (2000) and Wenar and Kerig (2000):

- In less severe instances of abuse where aspects such as violence and force are not involved, the child may rehabilitate more easily.
- Shorter durations of abuse may not be as detrimental to functioning as much as long extended periods of similar abuse.
- Victims of abuse seem to adapt better when abuse occurred at an older age than when abuse occurred at a younger age.
- Unique personality characteristics of a child affects her/his ability to deal with abuse. In this regard, aspects such as levels of coping skills, self-esteem, attitudes, outlook on life, self-resilience and self-control of the child are important.
- Personality traits of family members who are not abusive, also play an important part in coping with abuse because parents and siblings who are supportive, loving and caring provide positive input for the abused child.
- Positive relationships with significant others such as extended family and family friends, in the child's life can be important.

- Friendships that have bearing on the abused child's life can act as positive influences in that relationships with peers can be safe places where the child can feel accepted for who s/he is.
- In cases where the child is abused by more than one person, the effects seem to be more detrimental to the well-being of the child.
- When the age difference between the perpetrator and the child is small, there seems to be less severe problems.
- The child's views and feelings concerning the abuse is also important in dealing with the abuse. Aspects such as responsibility for the abuse become important as some children seem to blame themselves for the abuse.
- If the abuser is unknown to the child, recovery may be easier than if the perpetrator is known to the child.
- In families where abuse occurs, with specific reference to sexual abuse, isolation of the child and family can occur, rigid family structures and rules can manifest and role reversals can occur when daughters replace the sexual roles of their mothers following abuse by their fathers. These aspects hinder functioning and when lessened promote functioning.
- Often parents who have been abused continue the cycle of abuse by abusing their children and it seems that parents who were not abused or parents who have worked through their abuse to some degree can limit the abuse from reoccurring.
- As already mentioned different types of abuse often co-occur and having to live through more than one kind of abuse can be more detrimental than living through one.
- The gender of the child also seems to play a part in dealing with abuse as males and females tend to cope with the different types of abuse in varying ways.
- Other aspects that increase risk factors and vulnerability with specific reference to physical abuse in families are high levels of stress and coping levels. Substance abuse, impulsivity, a child that is perceived to be difficult, and one that has disabilities can also be problematic. Furthermore, when

parents communicate high expectations to their children to fulfil certain needs and the children fail, this must be taken into consideration.

- Poor parental skills increase a child's difficulty in functioning.
- Dysfunctional boundaries are often detectable in abusive situations.
- Poverty, parental mental illnesses and divorce can also act as risk factors.
- Finally, aspects such as minimal stress, lessened emotionality, sociability, easy temperament and average or above-average intellectual functioning can act as protective factors in the child's life.

Once again, it is necessary to remember that influences on outcome vary, some aspects can co-exist, while some may not be present at all and that all cases of abuse are unique. All individuals are unique and therefore they will differ in their perceptions of these aspects. For example, it was stated that abuse by someone known to the child is probably worse than by someone unknown which is probably not true if the child is violently abused over an extended period of time by someone unknown to her/him.

According to Moos and Schaefer (1986), many people can cope successfully and/or withstand a variety of serious problems in their lives because they have the ability to be creative problem-solvers. However, Hausman and Reed (1991) explain that when problems become extreme over an extended period of time and cannot be coped with, professional help may be needed. This is when mental health professionals become important, not only to give help but also to undertake research which may lead to other understandings being developed: not one understanding but, rather, many different understandings that can be shared and understood in different ways.

According to Egan (2002), many individuals cope at times, rather than conquer. This statement is understandable when one thinks about different situations where one just needs to cope: for example, when a child is being abused and has no one to turn to. It is further explained that some people see coping as negative in that it

is lived with but not overcome. My reaction to this statement is that if abuse is part of a person's experience it is always part of that person's life. The abused will have to live with that experience for the rest of her/his life and will have to make continuous decisions on how they will 'stand up to' and 'hold out against' the influences it has on their lives (refer to chapter 3).

Attention is now given to research that shows similarities with my current research on coping with experiences of child abuse.

2.3 RESEARCH

Throughout my reading during this research, I found much information concerning different theoretical paradigms. These paradigms explain child abuse, what effects child abuse has and how to work with victims to help them overcome the negative influences that child abuse can cause (Briere, 1992; Cruz & Essen, 1994; Dale, 1999; Doyle, 1994; Goodwin, 1993; Kaplan & Sadock, 1998; Taub, 1999; Wenar & Kerig, 2000).

Different paradigms were developed because of the complexity of humans and their behaviour. Ethical and practical problems as well as the question of whether or not complete knowledge of a person will ever be possible, hinder finding a single explanation. Finally, the many assumptions concerning people and research also generate more than one paradigm of understanding (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1997).

In this regard and concerning the research that I have undertaken, I have not aimed to develop 'one true meaning' but rather aim to broaden the existing knowledge base in a different way. My aim can be seen in the way I have gone about undertaking this research which involves the individual meaning of the participant and the combined meanings that the participant, the psychologist and myself have created concerning the abuse that the participant has lived through.

Although complete understanding of the experiences of people is rarely possible, my present research attempts to obtain a glimpse into the reality of a person who was abused as a child and how she presently copes with that abuse. In so doing, any information gained may assist better understanding outside the realm of theory, conventions and statistics and thus create a new and different understanding (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

Authors who have undertaken research studies (dissertations) that link to my present research, must be mentioned as their work may promote better understanding of the aspects that are discussed herein. Boonzaier (2002) undertook research regarding woman abuse: this research explores the narratives of 15 women in Mitchell's Plain and surrounding areas and investigates violence and resistance concerning the abusive relationships in a specific socio-cultural context. In this regard, the meanings that women give to their experiences are of importance. The in-depth narrative interviews show that:

- Male power and control seemed to play an important role in the violence.
- Social and cultural institutions may have played a role by either restricting or assisting women to receive help concerning the abuse.
- Change seemed to occur as a result of abuse and this could be seen in the strategies that the women used to deal with the abuse

Liss (1998) undertook research involving narrative therapeutic methods of intervention and how they are perceived by adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse (Liss, 1998). Liss conducted interviews with two participants who were actively involved in narrative therapy. The findings of this research indicate that the adult survivors of abuse perceive that narrative therapy as an intervention strategy may be positive in its effect. Evidence of the participants' positive perception is evident in their use of narrative therapy to gain new meanings in their lives as well as more positive perceptions of their reality. This process seemed to have allowed

them to re-author their lives and thus may have helped them to deal with the negative effects of childhood sexual abuse.

“Narratiewe Terapie aan die gemolesteerde adolessent” was also a subject of research but focuses on the adolescent, and not the child, who has been molested and how to help the adolescent to re-author her life through narrative therapy (Kruger, 2000). In her research, Kruger explains that the participant had been diagnosed and on medication which did not seem to have helped. Kruger further explains that after the participant underwent narrative therapy she appeared to be able to see the problem as the problem and not herself as the problem. The participant was thus able to relate to the problem in a different way. She also seemed able to make decisions independent of the problem after gaining an understanding of the functioning of a six-year-old child in relation to the abuse. This may then have allowed the participant to discover that it was her strong will that allowed her to cope and that this strong will could be master of the problem. In this way, she appeared to have gained power over the abuse by living her life according to an alternative story.

Finally, Van Niekerk (1999) undertook research concerning females who were sexually abused and how they give meaning to their experience: meanings seemed to be clarified by the sexual abused individuals in the following:

- They were abused at a time in their lives when an understanding of what was happening to them was not available and thus they experienced confusion as to what was happening. In an attempt to rectify the situation, they had to attempt to create meanings of what was happening.
- They were able to create some kind of meaning, either positive or negative which helped them to cope and make sense of what was happening to them.

- They gained meanings from what had happened to them not only by themselves but also through the meanings given to them by the abuser as well as significant others.
- They experienced confusion when they came into contact with the meanings that society places on sexual abuse. This could have resulted because societal meanings were different to the meanings that they had given to their experiences and co-constructed meanings.
- They experienced a double bind in that they had difficulty deciding which meaning to incorporate into their lives: their own personal meanings that had been influenced by significant others or the socially constructed meaning of sexual abuse.

If one takes into consideration that all individuals in the world are unique and keeping in mind the previously discussed aspects surrounding abuse, it is hard to accept a single understanding of abuse. In fact, who better to conceptualise definitions, meanings and understandings than the persons who have experienced the abuse (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White & Epston, 1990).

When one considers coping there is no one better to know the aspects of coping than the individual who had to live through abuse. Having to maintain equilibrium may be a theory of coping but the question is still: how has, does and will the person cope with the abuse in her/his life. At the end of the day, how the person copes, if they want to cope, will be their choice (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White & Epston, 1990).

Further to the above-mentioned aspects, are the different strategies that people in the mental health profession use to attain the goals of coping or conquering. We prescribe, strategise, formulate and hypothesise, on a daily basis, how to include processes of coping with and conquering child abuse. According to Gergen (in Freedman & Combs, 1996), from a post-modern perspective, the different types of

therapy are not the problem but rather their position of authoritative truth (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White & Epston, 1990).

In my opinion, the question should rather concern how people understand their own ways and levels of coping. It is thus not up to us in the mental health profession to decide for abused persons how they should be influenced and not influenced by the abuse that they had to endure. When the focus changes from the mental health practitioner's truth to the truth of the abused person, richness of information can be obtained. More important than the richness of information is that this change in focus can incorporate the unbiased and honest information of how different individuals, who have been abused, cope with the abuse in their present lives. In other words, if the focus of the gathered information is changed to how the abused person lives and copes with abuse, then the information gained is not limited by definitions, theories, hypotheses and formulas (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White & Epston, 1990). Such flexibility allows new understandings to be generated outside the scope of existing knowledge (Diamond, 2000).

In this chapter, I have addressed abuse and coping with abuse. I have also discussed some pertinent current research. The following chapter will focus on the research methodology used herein.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I shall address the research context, participants, position, method, quality and ethics pertaining to this research project.

3.1 CONTEXT

3.1.1 Time

I am presently a Masters Counselling Psychology student and have recently completed my internship at the Centre for Child and Adult Guidance. Part of my master's degree entails completing a research project and thus I have tried to understand how an individual, who was abused as a child, copes with her experiences in present day living.

I have not undertaken this research project for this alone. I have known a few people in my life who have experienced abuse: some I met during my studies and others I have seen as clients during my B-Psych practical work as well as during my internship. They have allowed me to experience both positive and negative feelings while sharing their stories of abuse with me. Their amazing stories of survival have played a great part in the reason for undertaking this research.

3.1.2 Place

As my training has been through the University of Pretoria (UP) I would like to inform you, the reader, of the vision and the mission that the UP uses as a framework as this research must be on standard. The vision of the UP is to strive at being a leader in tertiary education, which is recognised internationally for its academic quality. It also strives to be internationally competitive and to have local relevance through continuous change. It wants to be the university of choice for all

its diverse members and understands its role of being a symbol of national aspiration, hope, reconciliation and pride. It also is determined to discharge its social responsibilities (www.up.ac.za).

The mission of the UP is to be internationally recognised for its teaching and research. It has a mission to give education of high quality in different disciplines, to provide scholarship through knowledge and independent thinking and to provide opportunities for continued learning which is flexible. It encourages research and academics in relevant fields and assists in the growth of students. This growth can be seen in the UP providing academic education, promoting leadership qualities, working from a sound value foundation, providing adaptation skills and allowing for participation in various other activities. Locally, the UP's mission is to promote equality, prosperity, competitiveness and quality, and to deliver these aspects to the respective fields in this country. Community development and service is also of utmost importance as well as being sensitive to current needs and the future of South Africa. Finally, the UP wants to provide an environment in which to undertake the previously mentioned aspects and it wants to be efficient, effective, caring and innovative in all dimensions of operation (www.up.ac.za).

These different aspects that I have discussed in the vision and mission of the UP create in me a sense of pride to have been able to study at a university that strives for excellence. It has also motivated me to adhere to these standards. I have chosen to belong to the UP throughout my studies because I believe in the different aspects that can be seen in the vision and mission statements. In being part of the UP, I also feel bound to adhere to the aspects of the vision and mission statement wherever possible. Thus, my research has been influenced in that it needed to be of similar high standards for local and international acceptance. From the perspective of research, I hopefully have furthered the knowledge base that the UP uses as a basis for educational purposes. This then also fits in with the continuous change and growth that the UP and scientific fields of study value. I have also tried to give back to the UP and scientific fields some of the educational

aspects that I have been taught through application of the education within a specific focus. In this regard, the UP had imparted to me the ability to deliver work that is of high quality, to think independently and to be flexible in my work. It has also enabled me to work from a sound value basis, to have adaptation skills as well as to be able to take a leadership position where necessary, which are all of importance in this research study. Finally, I am able to see the need for further research, currently and in the future, into adult survivors/victims of child abuse which is a great problem both locally and internationally (Briere, 1992; Cruz & Essen, 1994; Dale, 1999; Doyle, 1994; Montague & Pitman, 1996). In this regard, I have tried to work in a similar way to that of the UP in that they also believe that it is necessary to offer and deliver help where it may be needed.

3.2 PARTICIPANTS

3.2.1 Participant 1: Female Person (P)

I worked with a number of trauma clients during my practical work in my B-Psych (undergraduate) and Masters Counselling (postgraduate) courses. Some of the practical work specifically focused on trauma while other practical experience allowed clients to obtain help for the trauma that they have lived through. A number of trauma cases that I worked on involved abuse and it was through interaction with these clients that I became interested in abuse. I thus approached different organisations where I had done my practical work, with my ideas about research on abuse and was welcomed. It was through one of these organisations that the participant volunteered to participate in this research.

The participant is female and at the time of the research was 25 - 30 years of age. She states that she was abused from the age of about 5 years to about 9 or 10 years. She underwent psychotherapy concerning the abuse for approximately 4 months in the year of 2001 and then again with a different psychologist for approximately 8 months towards the end of 2002 to 2003. The psychotherapy took

place once a week when possible. She stated that she had also consulted various counsellors after the abuse.

During the therapy that she underwent in 2002 to 2003, she was asked to undertake an assignment concerning the abuse and she decided to create a Power Point presentation to relate her experience. After the participant agreed to participate in this research project, it was decided that the Power Point presentation would be used as a starting point for the research.

It is necessary to know that the therapy and counselling that the participant had undergone had been terminated and that the participant was not seeing a psychologist or undergoing therapy in any way during the course of the research. The psychologist who undertook the conversations in this research about abuse and coping, had had no previous interaction with the participant and thus was not one of the psychologists who had worked with the participant before.

3.2.2 Participant 2: Female Student (R2)

I acted as the second participant or researcher 2 (R2) for the purposes of this research study (refer to 3.4.2 Telling About The Experience). I completed my BA Degree with majors in Psychology and Criminology (3 years). I also completed my B-Psychology Degree, which included a year of theory and a year of practical work (2 years). I am currently completing my Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology (3 years) and this research study is part of the course requirements. My practical experience (pre- and post-graduate level) include: program development for parents with Down Syndrome children; three months practical work at Tswane Emergency Services; three months practical work at Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital; development and implementation of an anger management course at the Department of Correctional Services; parental guidance at Fraaie Pêrels pre-school in Danville; peer-support training at Attridgeville, and practical work and internship at the Centre for Child and Adult Guidance. I have thus relied on the

knowledge attained during my studies and practical experience to undertake this research as well as other recourses and resources available to me.

3.2.3 Participant 3: Female Psychologist (R1)

The psychologist, M. Brokensha, undertook the interviews and acted as the third participant or researcher 1 (R1) (refer to 3.4.2 Telling About The Experience). She completed her BA Degree with Psychology and Isizulu as major subjects (3 years). She also completed her BA Honours in Psychology (1 year) and Masters in Counselling Psychology (3 years) at the University of Pretoria. Her practical experience includes work at the Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital and at the Centre for Child and Adolescent Guidance. She completed her internship at the Technikon Pretoria. She has also completed the following research/projects:

- Compilation and presentation of a sex education course for black school children (age 10-14 years) in Mamelodi South Africa (1998).
- Dissertation: The effect of parental restrictive control on the self-concept of young adults (1998).
- Community project: Headstart – establishing a forum for preschool educators to share information – Networking with Community Services in Mamalodi (2001).
- Community project: Attridgeville – Peer Support Training – training grade 10-11 learners in basic helping skills and referral (2001).
- Masters Thesis: The South African exodus: a social constructionist perspective on emigration (2004).

M. Brokensha is currently working as a psychologist in private practice and has also held positions as psychologist, supervisor, and lecturer and manager: career counselling. In this regard, M. Brokensha is deemed to have sufficient knowledge and understanding to undertake the requirements pertaining to her role in this research.

3.3 POSITION

I have decided to work from a narrative position. My reason is that narrative allows people to make sense of their own experiences (Epston & White, 1998; Tappan, 1991; White & Epston, 1990; White, 2000). In this regard, four aspects go hand in hand to create the meanings that people have in their lives and thus the meanings that they live by. These aspects are: (1) Experiences that occur in peoples lives on a continuous basis. (2) Narratives that allow people to make sense of their experience. (3) History that shapes the way people narrate their experiences through time and (4) culture that shapes the way people narrate their experiences in different contexts (Epston & White, 1998; Freedman & Combs, 1996; White & Epston, 1990; White, 1995; White, 2000).

To better understand the conceptual framework from which I shall work, I have divided my explanations into three headings namely: (3.3.1) experience, (3.3.2) experience and narrative and (3.3.3) experience, narrative, history and culture. Discourses and metaphors will also be discussed as they are of importance when working from a narrative position as in this research project.

3.3.1 Experience

Experience is an integral part of people's everyday lives. I believe that experience precedes all aspects of beliefs, understandings and 'knowledge'. The effects that experience has on peoples lives can be seen in the way people are formed and moulded to become who they are (Epston & White, 1998; Freedman & Combs, 2002; White & Epston, 1990). This is echoed by Burns (2001) when he states that for humans to survive and enjoy their lives they must be able to experience. He further explains that learning is achieved through experience which can lead to further understanding and 'knowledge'.

People have the ability to experience and to narrate these experiences because they are human and embodied (Harré, 1999). People therefore physically act and live through both private and public experiences. Narrative allows people to give meaning to their experiences. Human beings can never directly understand another person's experience and have access to others' experience only indirectly through what they say or write (Epston & White, 1998; Riessman, 1993).

3.3.2 Experience and Narrative

The only way people can make sense of or create meanings in their lives is through narrating their experiences (Carr, 1986; Crossley, 2000; Freedman & Combs, 2002; MacIntyre, 1981; Ochs, 1997; Sarbin, 1986; Zimmerman & Dickerson, 1994). Diamond (2000, p.5) believes that "Stories, not atoms, are the stuff that hold our lives and our world-together". These realities or meanings that people gain from narrating their experiences affect their lives in different ways (Epston & White, 1998; Freedman & Combs, 2002). White (1995, p.14) states that: "...we live by the stories that we have about our lives, that these stories actually shape our lives, constitute our lives and that they 'embrace' our lives". Freedman and Combs (2002) go as far as to say that narratives are not about people's lives but are in actual fact their lives. Consequently, people's narratives are not just reflections of their lives but are the actual building blocks or structures of their lives (White, 1995).

In this way, narrative can be said to be an interpretive act and describing tool to give meaning to life or lived experience (Epston & White, 1998; Mayo, 2001; White, 2000). Likewise, the knowledge that people have is only a product of interpretation, as knowledge relating to objective reality is not possible. Thus, through this interpretive act people make sense of their world, and any statement that brings forth meaning can be interpreted (White & Epston, 1990; White, 1995). Furthermore, Epston and White (1998, p.10) state: "And to interpret the

expressions (and thus the interpretations) of others, we have to rely upon our own lived experience and imagination”.

Another important aspect is that people do not live their lives using one single narrative or story but rather use many different narratives about their experiences (Epston & White, 1998; Freedman & Combs, 2002). The result of this is that people’s narratives are filled with “ambiguities”, “contradictions” and “contingencies” (White, 1995, p.15). Thus, people actively have to choose what meaning constitutes their different narratives as well as the different parts of their narratives and must decide which meanings they are going to make part of their reality. In this regard, people have to work hard and actively in their daily lives to make meaning of their experiences (White, 1995).

Another aspect that must receive attention is that “realities are constituted through language” (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p.22). In this regard, language becomes a tool that allows people to narrate their experiences and involves verbal and/or non-verbal communication (White, 2000). In other words, the only reality that human beings can ever know is the experience that they share using language, which is an interactive process. In this way, every time that a person decides to enter into this interactive process through narrating their experiences s/he brings forth realities that are as ever-changing as the language that they use (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

From this it is evident that understanding, and ‘knowledge’, is not a static process but rather one that is constantly changing (White & Epston, 1990; White 1995). Speedy (2000), states that personal change is possible by developing a sense of agency through telling and retelling stories that add to individual identity. In this regard, every time people narrate their experiences, they generate realities but as they re-tell their narratives, they are continually re-authoring their narratives (Epston & White, 1998; White, 2000). Furthermore, these changing meanings only

remain part of human kind through being told and re-told (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

Another important aspect relates to the way people talk about the meanings of their experiences. People often incorporate problematic aspects of their lives into who they are as people (White, 1995; White 2000). For example, White (1995) explains that many people who have been abused seem to have destructive and abusive behaviours towards themselves. He adds that these negative behaviours, from a narrative perspective, can be seen in the "...meanings that the person is giving to the abuse itself; that it is these meanings that determine the form of the expression of one's experiences in life" (White, 1995, p.83). Often themes of guilt, responsibility and shame are evident (Morgan, 1999; White, 1995). These meanings are then derived through the private stories that people have about their abuse (White, 1995).

Epston and White (1998) explains that the voice or ability to narrate experiences has been taken from many people who have been abused. Likewise, the power in the relationship has been taken over by the abuser thereby leaving the abused person disempowered (Morgan, 1999). Thus, help can be given to abused people by first helping them to tell their stories and then through assisting them to obtain alternative meanings relating to the abuse. Obtaining alternative meanings can be undertaken by using "externalizing conversations" (White, 2000, p.3). These conversations allow the person to re-interpret or deconstruct their experiences. In this way, the problem and the person become separate which allows the person to discover, through the deconstruction of meanings, new meanings about their experiences (Epston & White, 1998; Epston & White, 1992; Freedman & Combs, 2002; White, 1997). These new meanings can be seen in expressions of anger, a need for justice and wanting to tell others about what had happened to them. Furthermore, these new meanings are different meanings and are not more or less privileged than the previous meanings and can be less destructive in nature (White, 1995).

3.3.3 Experience, Narrative, History and Culture

- Experience, Narrative and History

What I have mentioned about narratives so far can be connected to the time dimension in that the narratives that people use to make sense of their experiences are historically shaped (Coyle, 2000; Gergen, 1997; Gergen, 2001; O'Hanlon, 1994; Paré, 1995; Willig, 2001; Zimmererman & Dickerson, 1994). This time dimension comprising of past, present and future is described in the following quote from Shotter (1996, p.129):

Thus the 'I', who at any one moment we are, is poised in that tense bridging position (the 'present' moment), and must link an indefinite number of remembered episodes from that present point of view, while being orientated toward a future project, while – and it is this which we all forget – also noticing what is made available to us by way of the new opportunities in our current circumstances.

In other words, we are in the present that we find ourselves. This present is in a way suspended between the past memories and the future prospects (Epston & White, 1998). As Shotter (1996) explained, we must not forget that, at the same time, the present is also influenced by what is happening to us at that time.

Contextualisation as well as ordering are also of importance when considering the way people narrate their experience at different times. Contextualisation of the narrative or story of abuse allows for better understanding and for better judgement of what the person understands to be positive and negative which allows her/him to actively take a stand against the meanings that they have created that are destructive in nature (White, 1995). People's narratives about their past and present experiences together with their predictions for their future need to follow a linear sequence so that logical understanding can be maintained. This allows a sense of continuity, meaning and order in their daily lives and allows future

experiences to be interpreted (Epston & White, 1998; White & Epston, 1990; White, 2000).

In this study, the narrative position differs from other paradigms in two ways with regards to this study. Firstly, the narrative position does not try to substitute negative aspects with positive ones. In this regard, a person is not restricted to one specific meaning but can narrate her/his experience in different ways over time and therefore can connect with her/his experiences in different ways at different times (White, 1995; White, 2000). The second difference, from the narrative perspective, is that returning to the site of the abuse (which is sometimes important in other paradigms) is deemed to be dangerous if the person who has been abused is not ready to return, as it can re-traumatise the individual and thereby strengthen the destructive meanings that s/he has about her/his experience. Returning to the site of abuse does not take into consideration all the strategies that the person has already undertaken to deal with the abuse (White, 1995).

In the context of time, narrative is important also in that it can transcend the here and now through the telling about different times (Berger & Luckmann in Freedman & Combs, 1996). The language that people use to narrate their experiences "...is capable of "making present" a variety of objects that are spatially, temporally, and socially absent from the "here and now"." (Berger & Luckmann in Freedman & Combs, 1996, p.28). Also, in time experiences come into being – and constitute new realities – through the meaning given to them in the narratives that people tell.

The nature of the narrative is that of the story as all narratives, like stories, have a past (once upon a time), a present (here and now) and a future (forever after). Thus, all narratives are interpretations of the present, which are future orientated and shaped by the past (White & Epston, 1990).

- Experience, Narrative and Culture

Culture also plays a role in how people make sense of their experiences through narrative (Coyle, 2000; Gergen, 1997; Gergen, 2001; O'Hanlon, 1994; Paré, 1995; Willig, 2001; Zimmererman & Dickerson, 1994). The self does not stand alone; it is not autonomous but is rather a cultural creation (Schanck in Myrsiades, 1998). According to Freedman and Combs (1996), realities are socially constructed meanings that people have so accepted and meanings are created through interaction, socially and over time. Furthermore, White (2000, p.6-7) explains it adequately when he states that:

According to this notion of identity, the development of a sense of personal authenticity is the outcome of social processes in which specific claims about one's identity – claims that are socially negotiated – are acknowledged or 'verified' by others. It is understood that it is this acknowledgement and verification that is authenticating of people's identity claims – this acknowledgement and verification contributes to a sense of being 'at one' with whatever the identity claims happen to be.

Thus, people create reality through the way they understand and give meaning to their shared narrated experiences in a specific cultural setting (Schanck in Myrsiades, 1998; White, 2000). It must be stated also that cultural norms, regulations and rules are continuously changing as the narratives that people tell continuously change (Fairclough, 1993). These norms, regulations and rules are chosen as realities by those who wish to belong to a specific culture, group or organisation (White, 1997).

The narratives that people have privately with themselves create meaning but when undertaken with others those meanings become co-constructed thereby leading to new and different meanings (White, 1997). According to White (in Freedman & Combs 1996), cultural stories influence the individual's life stories. He explains that each culture will have stories that dominate other stories. Accordingly,

certain understandings, meanings or ideas are more privileged and have more power than other understandings, meanings or ideas (Epston & White, 1998; Morgan, 2000; White, 1997). These dominant stories consequently influence the way people act and behave in the different cultures. This can be seen in White's (1995, p.16-17) explanation about the influence that culture has on people:

Through these operations, we govern our thoughts, our relationships with others, our relationships with ourselves, even our relationships with our own bodies – our gestures, the very arrangement of bodies in space, even how we sit and move, and so on. This is all in the service of reproducing the “privileged form” or dominant way of being of a culture.

It is these dominant stories that cause people to have certain understandings and knowledge about themselves as well as how they choose to live their lives. White (1995) states, however, that more and more people today are challenging cultural influences and question the effect that they have on their lives.

- Discourse

According to Burr (1995) discourse can be explained as a set of meanings that are communicated in any way, verbally or non-verbally, but that when placed together produce a particular version of events. Discourse can also be explained simply as meanings that have been put together to create a version of truth, which carries certain power to dominate other understandings (Freedman & Combs, 2002; White, 1997).

Discourse is also viewed as narratives or stories that contain dominant stories as main themes and underlying stories as alternative themes (Morgan, 2000; White & Epston, 1990; White, 1995; White, 2000). Individuals who are abused as children will often begin by telling the dominant parts of their stories (influenced by culture and over time) but as they continue to tell their stories alternative stories can be found. Burr's (1995) perspective is that the discourses that people use as their

realities are construed by the meaning that they give to different aspects in their lives. White (1995, p.42), however, elucidates that, “these internalising discourses constitute our blindness to life as it is produced, and as we produce it”.

Concerning re-abuse White (1995) explains that one dominant cultural discourse is that families are supposed to be loving and caring and when abuse does occur in a family, it can lead to people, who have been abused, being re-abused. This is because they have difficulty in distinguishing between nurturing and abusive situations (White, 1995; White, 1997). This difficulty in discriminating is not limited only to families but is evident in the idioms “you’ve got to be cruel to be kind” and “spare the rod, spoil the child” (White, 1995, p.93-94). Furthermore, many cultures also believe that the problem of abuse must be faced (dominant discourse). An alternative discourse can be one that allows the person to flee, avoid or manoeuvre around the abusive situation in a different way and such discourse can be an important factor if it allows the person to ‘survive’ by using a different way (White, 1995).

In narrative research, these alternative stories or unique outcomes are of the greatest interest to the researcher. White (1995, p. 20) explains that an important part of his work is: “...facilitating the expression of aspects of lived experience that have previously been neglected, and to a re-expression of other experiences of life through alternative frames of intelligibility”. White’s reason is that it is in these alternative stories that different realities can be found. In this way, the person’s narrative becomes rich, as multi-faceted and multi-layered descriptions are attained through the creation of alternative meanings. These thick descriptions are arrived at through interpretation of the shared narration of experiences which results in shared meanings (White, 1997). When these new realities or alternative stories are incorporated into people’s lives they can begin to live their lives in different ways (Epston & White, 1992; Epston & White, 1998; Freedman & Combs, 2002; Morgan, 2000; White & Epston, 1990; White, 2000):

When taken into the story-line of people's lives, these events contribute to the thickening of the alternative or counter-plots of their lives, and provide the foundations of new possibilities for action in relation to addressing the concerns and problems... (White, 2000, p.6).

- Metaphor

According to Sykes, (1989, p. 636) in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, a metaphor is defined as an “application of name or descriptive term or phrase to an object or action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable”. Similarly, “metaphor consists in giving to one thing a name or description that belongs by convention to something else, on the grounds of some similarity between the two” (Leary, 1994, p.4).

Some authors believe that metaphors constitute more than just a language strategy. They explain that metaphors are a part of people's thought processes and everyday lives (Hanin & Stambulova, 2002; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Leary, 1994; Ortony, 1998). Ortony (1998) explains that when metaphors are utilised they may create new aspects and allow for different understandings of the world. Thus, by using metaphors to create an understanding of experience people can be better understood and live lives that are enriched by the addition of varying perspectives (Burns, 2001). When used therapeutically metaphors contain two aspects that specifically alter them to become therapeutic in nature. These two aspects are “their purposeful design and their specific healing or therapeutic intention” (Burns, 2001, p.29).

Metaphors can also be used as general concepts that allow people to have a better chance of understanding what is being communicated (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Likewise, metaphors can be said to be “atheoretical” in that they form part of communication that has been developed and used in the past (Burns, 2001, p.31). Furthermore, if for some reason the metaphor cannot be related to, it can be changed so that meaning and understanding can be facilitated.

Contextualization remains important because without it true meanings cannot be created to the narrative intention. Consider the following metaphor: “it felt like I was drowning”. If this metaphor is not contextualised: “because of the work load” the meaning is contaminated and thus no true understanding of what was being communicated can result (Leary, 1994; Ortony, 1998).

Likewise, in order to facilitate and structure a person’s understanding and ability to relate her/his understanding to someone else, they may use another experience (such as the drowning metaphor above), that was similar in one or other way to what the person is trying to communicate (for example, drowning because of too much work). Metaphor thus precedes any understanding that the person may have because without other experiences (lived through or told), no understanding can be developed. It is conceptualisation in various ways of various events and aspects (experiences, actions and thoughts) that structures people’s lives and which then also allows them to gain and obtain certain understandings of what they believe to be reality. In other words, everyday life, which consists of experiences, thought processes and what people do in actions are made up of metaphors and therefore are more than forms of language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Ortony, 1998).

The question that should now be discussed is how metaphor relates to discourse. As each person, within a culture, has different discourses that inform their understandings, so metaphors can also have different meanings for different individuals. As cultural discourses inform people’s lives, certain aspects of their understandings can be similar in nature. However, if people use the strategy of testing and examining these discourses with the help of metaphors, a greater ability to gain some understanding becomes possible (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Shotter, 1996).

Concerning the use of metaphors for research purposes, Hanin and Stambulova (2002) undertook a study concerning metaphors and descriptions of metaphors of

athletes' experiences. Their study showed that all the participants were able to use metaphors to describe their feelings; that metaphors should be devised by the participants because metaphor usage is personal in nature; and, that there were consistencies in the findings. Related to these findings, other researches note:

Since metaphorical expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way, we can use metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical concepts and to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of our activity (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, P. 7).

In other words, metaphors can be discussed through the use of language because metaphors make up the way we think and act and in this way we can study metaphors by analysing language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

3.4 METHOD

I have used the work of Riessman (1993) as research method. She explains that there are five levels of representation in narrative research that aid in the creation of order and the construction of texts in specific contexts. These five steps are as follows and will be used as headings to maintain an ordered explanation.

- Attending to experience
- Telling about experience
- Transcribing experience
- Analysing experience
- Reading experience

Although the research methodology can be divided into the aforementioned points, it must be noted that people do not and can never have direct understanding of the experience of another person and any type of representation will be ambiguous and therefore not neutral or objective (Epston & White, 1998; Freedman & Combs,

1996; White, 2000). Furthermore, Riessman (1993) explains that the five steps are permeable and are not absolute.

3.4.1 Attending to Experience

This is the beginning stage of the research study and is concerned with choosing an aspect/s for consideration (Riessman, 1993; Shaw, 2001). Giving attention to one's experiences goes hand in hand with gaining awareness about different aspects (White & Epston, 1990; White, 1995; White, 2000). Experiences such as trauma, crime, and psychology have played a big part in my personal life as well as in my studies. These experiences, thus, have allowed me to become aware of the problem of child abuse. In this regard, the processes of thinking are of utmost importance (Riessman, 1993; Shaw, 2001).

For better understanding: before this research project was decided upon, I first became aware of different aspects in my experience (psychological, criminological and traumatic) that would be worthwhile to research. Of these different experiences, the current one of child abuse stood out as a significant part of my experience of knowing, working with and learning about people who have been abused as children. I then decided to undertake this research project and I began thinking about it. Through the process of thinking, asking questions, developing ideas, generating answers and gathering information the research became more focused. In this regard, a choice was made concerning the focus of the research project, which was connected to my own past experiences (knowing, working with and learning about people who were abused), which lead to awareness of different aspects (causing the research to become more focused) through the process of thinking.

It becomes obvious that research study is shaped not only by the participant but is also shaped and constructed according to the researcher's thoughts and ideas. Sensitivity to interactions and observations is thus essential so that important

phenomena can be considered, which can then lead to new ideas and views (Shaw, 2001). In this way, the research findings are shaped through the interactive processes that evolve through combined interactions of the participant, the psychologist and the researcher/reflector (Epston & White, 1998; Freedman & Combs, 2002; White, 2000).

3.4.2 Telling about the Experience

In this stage, awareness is translated and expressed through words in the form of stories or narratives and as I had already constructed my reality through the process of awareness, in this stage, the participant was given the opportunity to formulate her story in the manner of my identified topic for this research project (Shaw, 2001). In other words, the participant was able to express the story of her experience through the process of conversation (Riessman, 1993).

To explain how telling about the experience was undertaken, I will discuss the different aspects that form part of this stage of the research: Firstly, I will explain who was to be involved in the research and what their roles were to be. Secondly: I will discuss how the research was undertaken. Finally: I will discuss five characteristics that are important in the telling of experience (Shaw, 2001).

Three individuals played part in the process during this phase of the research. There was the participant who shared her experience of child abuse and how she had dealt with it prior to and at the time of the interviews, the psychologist who led the conversations, and I formed the reflection team together with the psychologist. My reason for employing a psychologist relates to the fact that I am still in training and I believe the topic of abuse to be of a sensitive nature. Furthermore, as I decided to work from a narrative point of view and that a psychologist, who has been practising in this paradigm for some time, would be of great help in this research.

My reason for deciding on using a reflection team can be found in the following observation:

If the stories that we have about lives are negotiated and distributed within communities of persons, then it makes a great deal of sense to engage communities of persons in the renegotiation of identity (White, 1995, p.26)

Reflection teams can assist those who are telling their stories by acknowledging and validating the different aspects that are being discussed as well as helping the person to break free from the parts of their narratives that are restrictive or dysfunctional. Thus, additional individuals in the process can provide more weight in the acknowledging and validating process. Furthermore, the persons telling their narratives become more aware of themselves and the part they play in producing their lives which, in turn, allows them to take responsibility for their lives (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White, 1995; White, 1997; White, 2000).

Reflections were therefore undertaken by the psychologist, and myself towards the end of each session. Because of time limitations, these reflections were confined to aspects considered as significant by the psychologist and myself during the conversations. In so doing we had the opportunity to re-tell some parts of the participants story as we understood them. Finally, the participant then had the opportunity to re-tell our reflections. Thus, the descriptions of the participant's identity became richer in description (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White, 1997; White, 2000).

The meetings comprised six, one-hour sessions, once a week. Each meeting involved 45 minutes of conversation and 15 minutes of reflection. Reflection first occurred between the psychologist and myself and then the participant was given time to reflect on our reflections. These six sessions occurred as follows:

- Session one
 - Introductions were done (2 min).
 - Explanations of what would be expected of each person were given (3 min).
 - The Power Point presentation, that the participant had created for the psychologist whom she had consulted between 2002 to 2003 concerning her experience of abuse, was then viewed and the participant was given time to reflect on this material (40 min).
 - Reflections between the psychologist and myself followed (10 min).
 - The participant was given time to reflect on the aforesaid reflections (5 min).

- Sessions two, three and four
 - The participant was invited to tell her story of child abuse and how she copes with it in her current living (45 min).
 - The psychologist and I reflected on the session (10 min).
 - The participant was given time to reflect on the reflections (5 min).

- Session five
 - The participant was invited to tell her story of child abuse and how she copes with it in her present day living (40 min).
 - The psychologist and I reflected on the session (10 min).
 - The participant was given time to reflect on the reflections (5 min).
 - The participant was informed that the sessions were coming to an end and that the next session would be the end of the process (5 min).

- Session Six
 - The participant was invited to give her experience of the process that had transpired in the previous five sessions (40 min).

- The psychologist and I then reflected on the participant's reflections (10 min).
- The participant was also given time to reflect on the reflections (5 min).
- The session came to an end and the participant was given further information concerning the process of the research (5 min).

At this stage of the process focussing is important so that the research does not include aspects that are not relevant to the question that the research is trying to answer (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Lawler, 2002). Thus, in order to answer the research question in a focussed manner, two main aspects became important in the telling of the experience: the telling of the experience of abuse and the coping or dealing with the abuse. The participant was thus given the opportunity to tell her story in relation to these two ideas in the above-mentioned way.

Shaw's (2001) work explains further that there are five characteristics involved in telling, namely:

- Firstly, that during the telling of a story constituting an experience, different aspects come to the fore such as characters, settings and plot. Throughout the telling the narrator also wants the listeners to have an understanding of what is being said (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Lawler, 2002; Shaw, 2001).
- Secondly, a combined and shared narrative comes into being via the person telling the story and the listener and her/his reactions about the story. Shaw explains that the "research becomes a reciprocal interactive process between the person and reality, so each may serve as both subject and object" (Shaw, 2001, p.124). In this regard, I believe that it is the interactive spaces between the participant and the researcher that becomes important, as it is in these spaces that meanings are created (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Lawler, 2002; White & Epston, 1990).

- Thirdly, through the telling process memory becomes more important than time as one is reliving the experience (Lawler, 2002; Shaw, 2001).
- Fourthly, that during the telling of the narrative two aspects are evident, namely the lived experiences and the telling thereof. The time that passes between these two aspects as well as that one is the actual happening while the other is the telling thereof, show the differences between them (Lawler, 2002). What is important, however, is that experience cannot exist without words. To expand this important point: when experience is communicated to others and given meaning, then the person telling can think about the meaning of what is being said and not only live it (Polkinghorne, 1988).
- Finally, different aspects such as setting, audience, or mood, to name just three, influence a story in a unique way. If any of the aspects change, it can lead to the story being told in a different way (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Shaw, 2001).

The reason for mentioning these aspects is that they are important to remember in the process of undertaking a research project of this nature. To understand these aspects allows the information discovered, through the research, to have certain relevance for you, the reader, the participant and for me, the researcher.

3.4.3 Transcribing the Experience

This stage involved deciding on ways to record conversations (Shaw, 2001). In this regard, the conversations were recorded using both audio (tape recordings) and audio/visual recordings (video recordings). This was decided as audio and visual material gives much detail of both verbal and non-verbal communication during interactions (Shaw, 2001). Recording also allows the researcher to pay more attention to the processes involved in the interview and provides opportunity for detailed analysis by means of transcriptions of data later on in the research

(McNamara, 1999). Although there are advantages to tape and video recordings, it must be remembered that disadvantages also exist. Two important disadvantages are that the recording situation can cause distress to the participant that can cause uneasy conversation. The second aspect relates to the possibility that the equipment can fail and thus important information can be lost (Greeff, 2002). In this regard, during each interview, the video and tape recorders were placed in the same position and in the least threatening place possible. A back-up tape recorder was also used.

After gathering the information, the recordings needed to be transcribed. Problems can be found in transcribing, however, as the amount of detail one finds in audio/visual material cannot always be captured (Shaw, 2001). Therefore, the recorded narrative itself, as well as the transcribed narrative, can be described at times as selective, partial and incomplete (Riessman, 1993; White, 1995; White, 2000). In this regard, I fully transcribed the data of all six sessions so that I could capture the wealth of information. The most important aspect, in my opinion, is that one remembers that the focus of this research is on the abuse and the coping of the abused participant (transcriptions available on request).

Relating to what I have just stated is that these days there is much more focus on language and because of this, taking conversation and putting it into written text is taken very seriously (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Riessman, 1993). Furthermore, Shaw (2001) explains that exclusions, inclusions, display and arrangement of text, omissions and the amount of detail are all important in the implications for understanding and making interpretations.

According to Lieblich, Riessman, Tuval and Zilber (in Shaw, 2001), the researcher's views and values can be found in the form of the transcript. Consequently, transcribing can be seen as an interpretive act, based on theory. As a result, transcripts vary from one researcher to the next leading to different interpretations and ideological possibilities. Thus, there can be different meanings

for the same selected conversation and therefore different interpretations (Lawler, 2002).

3.4.4 Analysing the Experience

At this level, analysis of the transcripts must be completed. This must be undertaken through reading and re-reading the transcripts and becoming well acquainted with them: "...narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.150). Thus, in this phase of the research almost everything is important in the recreation of the stories: the why, how, when, where and what of the story is important. Why is the participant choosing to tell certain parts of her story and not others, how is she telling the story, when was it told, where is it told and what is told, are just some aspects to think about. The process of analysis is thus part of the listing, transcribing and analysis of the parts of the stories that focus on inclusions and exclusions (Riessman, 1993; Shaw, 2001).

While listening, transcribing and analysing I was putting together my own understanding of the experiences of the participant by trying to understand how the participant orders her experiences to make sense of different aspects in her life. The process thus far involved my listening, transcription and analysis of the participant's narrative. In the process, the participant's story became part of my story (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Lawler, 2002).

Another important aspect that I have incorporated into this phase of the research is letter writing. Letter writing can be an effective way of continuing stories that have been told or to add to the value of the different aspects that have been discussed as they are undertaken from a reflecting position and thus allow people to think, about what was said, in a different way (Morgan, 2000; White & Epston, 1990; White, 1995). According to White (1995), Epston, undertook informal research concerning documentation such as letter writing and found that documentations

can be worth about 4.5 sessions of therapy. Thus, it was concluded that documentation such as letter writing can be an aspect that has benefits. Another important aspect is that letters are accounts of what occur in the sessions and thus new information is rarely included in the letters (White, 1995).

Likewise, I used letter writing as documents in my analysis of the conversations that transpired. I first transcribed what had been said and thereafter through the process of reading and re-reading identified major themes. These major themes were then discussed with the participant in order to identify the themes that she would like to be included into this research study. Finally, I used these main themes in letters to the participant (which were forwarded to her) so that the stories that she had told could be continued and in a way that could thicken her understandings of the alternative stories that she has used to deal with the abuse in her life. The contents of the letters may perhaps also open up spaces for her to create new or alternative stories that were not discussed in the sessions. Likewise, the letters' contents may also help you, the reader, personally and professionally, to understand what has transpired in the conversations. In this regard, letter writing assists in the co-authoring because it is about what was created between the different individuals involved in the conversations. It also allows for co-authoring between the letters and the persons who interact with the letters through reading, as this is also a form of communication. In this way, letter writing helps to summarise what has been said, to expand on what has been said, as well as to allow others who have not witnessed the conversations to become part of what has transpired (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White, 1995; White, 2000).

To facilitate the process of understanding I have included into the letters, addressed to the participant, parts of the conversations that had transpired. I have also included a picture (Appendix D) of a bicycle metaphor that the participant had drawn during the conversations. This bicycle metaphor was then used in the letters to describe how different aspects in the participant life may have either helped or

hindered the movement of her bicycle, which related to helping or hindering her coping process.

This research undertaking is post-modernistic as I believe that no one can stand apart and be objective as all human beings exist only in relation to others. Thus, the more people who read this research and the more interpretations that they make, about what the participant is trying to say, the better (Lawler, 2002; Shaw, 2001; Speedy, 2000).

3.4.5 Reading the Experience

Relating to what has been said in the previous section concerning different interpretations, the last phase is where you, the reader, become an important part of the process. The reason is that your meaning now becomes relevant to the research. In other words, an interaction or relationship is established between you, as reader, and the text. There will be different understandings for different readers but there will also be different understandings for the same reader depending on the context that s/he is reading it in (Bruner, 1987; Lawler, 2002).

The interpretation results will thus be interwoven with the researcher's ideas and discourses. After you, the reader, have read the content of this research study, your ideas and discourses might form even richer understanding. If this becomes the case, then I have succeeded in my quest to realize the potential of narrative analysis. Thus, only in interaction is meaning developed and what better meaning to develop than the combined meanings of a person who has experienced child abuse, a researcher/author/reflector, a psychologist and you, the reader (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Freedman & Combs, 2002; White & Epston, 1990; White, 2000).

Finally, from the above-mentioned aspects, it becomes evident that there can be no final or absolute truth as there are so many different truths that become evident

through the different interactional aspects (Clifford, 1986; Freedman & Combs 1996). This may seem frightening in the beginning and I was no exception to experiencing some anxiety when I first started learning about this approach. As I continued on my path of learning I came to realise that by working in this dynamic way, aspects such as structures, definitions, absolute truths and facts, which are all limiting in some or other form begin to fall away.

3.5 QUALITY

According to Sparkes (1998, p.365-375) there are three perspectives regarding the measuring of the quality of research namely “the replication perspective”, “the parallel perspective” and “the diversification of meaning perspective”. The replication perspective is positivistic or post-positivistic in nature and thus tends to draw no distinction between qualitative and quantitative research. In this regard, one set of rules should govern the way quality in research is to be governed. The parallel perspective, on the other hand, believes that qualitative research differs from the positivistic and post-positivistic quantitative research. The problem with the position I have chosen is that the different criteria are still based on the positivistic criteria and thus the criteria for qualitative research were changed or adapted only to fit the criteria held by qualitative research. Finally, the diversification perspective does not discard validity but rather “from this perspective, any notion of validity was considered socially constructed within specific discourses and communities, at specific historical moments, for specific sets of purposes and interests” (Sparkes, 1998, p.375). In this approach, the quality of the research is seen as measured by techniques that have been socially defined as adequate for the research at hand and may change over time. It also allows for different meanings and thus more possibilities.

I have decided to discuss the parallel perspective and how it has helped me to attain quality according to what society has deemed appropriate for research. I, however, would like to ask you, the reader, to remember that the following

discussion is built around the discourses of what seems to be society's current understanding or meanings of what constitutes quality or trustworthiness. Thus, in remembering this, there will be a movement away from the positivistic and post-positivistic approaches in that the following discussion is focuses on a meaning that can limit other meanings (Sparks, 1998).

According to Krefting, (1991, p.215-217), Guba constructed four aspects that relate to trustworthiness namely: "credibility", "transferability", "dependability" and "confirmability". I shall explain each aspect and discuss some of the strategies that I have undertaken in this research to increase trustworthiness. It must be remembered, however, that some of the strategies can be used in more than one instance (Krefting, 1991).

Credibility can be seen in the discovery of experience as perceived and lived by the participant (Krefting, 1991). Lincoln and Guba (1985), explain that if it is believed that people have multiple realities then it is up to the researcher to try to represent those multiple realities to the best of her/his ability. Similarly, according to Shenton (2004), credibility is attained when the experiences of the participant are represented to the extent that others who have had similar experiences recognise the descriptions immediately.

Thus, I have obtained credibility by identifying and documenting recurring patterns in three ways (Leininger, 1985). Firstly, six sessions were undertaken to lengthen the time spent together; secondly, recurring themes were identified during the conversations with the help of the psychologist; and finally, the transcripts were read and re-read for identification of recurring themes. Triangulation of investigators and the triangulation of data methods were also utilised (de Vos, 2002; Shenton, 2004). The former method helps the researcher to use more than one perspective in the research, namely the perspectives of the psychologist and that of the researcher. The latter method increases the data collection process in that audio/visual and audio recordings were utilised (Knafl & Breitmayer, 1989).

Reflection at the end of each session also allowed for credibility as the participant, psychologist and researcher gained a better understanding of what had been said (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A research question and a sound research methodology led to focus in the conversations and thus to credibility. In this way, a logical explanation of the participant's experience as well as allowing for different questions relating to the focus of the research were attained (Krefting, 1991; Shenton, 2004). Reflexivity was also attained as I positioned myself as a participant involved in the roles of researcher and reflector. I have also used the strategy of peer examination by obtaining help from my supervisor who continually revised this research (Krefting, 1991).

The second aspect is **transferability** (Guba, 1981). This aspect is attained when the findings can be related to beyond the context of the research (Krefting, 1991). In other words, if the context of the research can be used in other contexts, then the problem of transferability will be solved. Furthermore, Shenton (2004) notes that if the researcher appropriately describes data that will allow for comparison, transferability will be attained.

According to Sandelowski (1986), if research focuses on the life experience of a person then transferability is not of importance as the data already has descriptive worth. In this regard, you, the reader, may identify with the research or parts of it, but may not identify with it at all. You may read the research, however, to gain some understanding about another person's experience.

Dependability allows for variables that the participant brings to the research to be connected to different sources in her/his life (Guba, 1981). Thus, unexpected and unrelated variables can become part of the research at any time as the goal is not to control the participant but rather to learn from the participant (Krefting, 1991) which can lead to increased insight.

Dependability is also adhered to in that the variables in the conversations became more evident as the interactions increased; in that the psychologist assisted; and in that the data was thoroughly worked through. The procedure of code-recoding was also used: information was worked through then left for a period of time and then worked through again (Krefting, 1991). Dependability also increased through the triangulation of investigators and data methods which allowed more variables to become evident (de Vos, 2002; Knafl & Breitmayer, 1989; Shenton, 2004). Moreover, this research remained focused on specific variables, which increased the dependability factor. Through description of the research method, I make this research understandable for other researchers, to an extent, which thus also leads to dependability. And finally, after the main themes or narratives were identified in the transcriptions, the participant was consulted about what themes she thought were most significant in adding to this research.

The final aspect of trustworthiness is **confirmability** (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) whereby the researcher tries to decrease the space between the participant and the researcher to increase the worth of the research. This can be done through increasing the number of meetings or meeting time spent together (Krefting, 1991). Confirmability thus was maintained not only through increasing the time spent together but also by increasing the time spent attending to the data collected. The above-mentioned triangulation and reflection also play their role in confirmability in that an increase in the number of heads involved, the type of data collection and thorough data collection methods, opportunities for more and better understandings were created (de Vos, 2002; Shenton, 2004).

Relating to this aspect, the researcher should focus on the experiences provided by the participant and not on their respective predispositions (Shenton, 2004). Krefting (1991) explains that two problems can become apparent. The first is that the researcher may base the data on what will be more socially accepted than on the actual experience of the participant (Kirk & Miller in Krefting, 1991). The second problem concerns the bond formed between the participant and the researcher

(Marcus & Fischer in Krefting, 1991). In this regard, I made use of my supervisor, the psychologist, colleagues and my trained experience to help me focus on the experience of the participant and to assist me in detecting where my own realities come into play. My supervisors (Dr L Human) role in auditing the work as well as the fact that I have included parts of the transcripts in the findings have also led to confirmability. I have included parts of the conversations that will be analysed so that you, the reader, can decide for yourself whether or not my interpretations are focused on the experience of the participant. As I have been part of the process, I believe that one of the critical aspects is that I constantly had to be aware of the part that I had to play in this research.

Finally, the value of any research that is undertaken lies in peer evaluation, grant reviews and readers' acceptance (Krefting, 1991; Shenton, 2004). With this in mind, I have my supervisor, the psychologist, colleagues and you, the reader, to determine the value of this research.

Hardy, Jones and Gould (1996) warn that no matter what perspective a person chooses to follow, research can never be perfect as there are always restrictions as well as strengths. In this regard, Sparkes (1998) criticises this perspective in that no clear explanation is given about the choice of techniques used. Concerning my current research, the aspects that I have attended to concerning trustworthiness can be challenged as I have only chosen to adhere to the above-mentioned qualitative guidelines and not others. One example not used is that of member checking as a technique as there was only one member, namely the participant (Krefting, 1991). Furthermore the meanings of the different techniques are also not always clear which results in the researcher having to resort to her/his own meaning at times. This technique used in this research can also receive critique in that it does not fulfil some of the aspects relating to qualitative inquiry. In this regard, the parallel perspective contains some of the values important to the replication perspective and thus techniques such as the triangulation of investigators (to name just one) can be seen as working towards a consensus of

truth claims about the research (Smith, 1984; Sparkes, 1998). From a narrative perspective there is no one single truth but rather multiple truths that derive from experience (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Morgan, 2000; White, 2000). Concerning techniques or criteria that seek to discover trustworthiness:

...even though such a move might calm the nerves of those who seek security in tightly controlled procedures, it is ultimately self-defeating in that it cannot resolve the inherent philosophical contradictions on which it is based (Sparkes, 1998, p.373).

However, this does not mean that there is no place for techniques and methods to create quality in research. It just means that people should be aware of the nature and effects of quality controls and that the main objective of the research should not be compromised by lack of awareness or over-emphasis on related requirements of research (Sparkes, 1998).

3.6 ETHICS

Ethics are very important when undertaking research, especially where participants are concerned (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). In this regard, it was of utmost importance that everyone involved in the research project understood clearly what would be expected of them, as this type of research is of a sensitive nature. Accordingly, documents were given to the participant and psychologist, wherein it was explained that the topic of the research was to be the participant's experience of child abuse and how the participant copes, to date, with that experience.

In the letter of consent given to the participant the procedure as well as what would be expected of her, was discussed (Appendix A). The document thus explained that the Power Point presentation concerning her experience of child abuse, would not be included in the final research document. Transcripts of the video-taped and audio-recorded conversations, would be added, however, to the final research document. Confidentiality was thus maintained by manipulating any information

that may lead to the identification of the participant and any other person that the participant may identify. In this regard, the participant was referred to as Anna in chapter four so that confidentiality could be maintained. Furthermore, to preserve the participant's trust and understanding, the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of the research, if she were to consent to it, were explained verbally to her. Ethics were thus assured through obtaining written permission from the participant concerning the above-mentioned aspects (Struwig & Stead, 2001).

The psychologist who conducted the conversations also received two documents. The first document contained the psychologist's signature requiring adherence to confidentiality (Appendix B). This document also explained what would be expected of her and how the research would commence. The second document grants permission to use the psychologist's facilities (Appendix C).

At the end of the research, the participant was presented with a copy of the research study which enabled her to follow through the entire process and would thus lead to closure. As this research is of a sensitive nature, the participant was advised that she would be assisted, should she need further help concerning the abuse that she had experienced and she would also be more than welcome to contact and discuss with me any questions she might have relating to the research.

In this chapter I have addressed the research methodology with regards to context, participants, position, method, quality and ethics. The next chapter will focus on the research results.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, I first explain to the participant, through a letter of introduction, aspects surrounding the metaphors that were used during the conversations. These aspects relate to the introduction and exploration of the metaphors as well as how coping can relate to movement. The growing of the metaphor will also be discussed. Finally, I introduce the letters which consist of coping and anger; coping and contradiction or conflicting stories; coping and embarrassment; coping and emotional connection; coping and introspection; coping and psychology; coping and religion; coping and telling as well as coping and voice.

4.1 LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

To Anna,

In this letter, I will first discuss the process holistically in terms of the metaphors that were used in the sessions and then introduce to you the main narratives that I have identified, with your help, throughout the conversations. These identified narratives will then be discussed separately in the other letters that you have also received. I will also add to the letters, abstracts of the conversations that we have had. This will then hopefully allow better understanding and refreshment of memory for both you and me. It will also assist other people, who may read these letters, to understand what transpired during the conversations.

Introducing the metaphors

Throughout the conversations that were undertaken the metaphor of a bicycle was used. I introduced the metaphor in the first session during my reflection with the psychologist (R1) by saying:

(R2): If I can maybe share with you a metaphor that came to mind while you were just saying what you said, is a little child learning to ride a bicycle. Um, the little child would get on, fall off, hurt herself, himself, get back on, try again, try again and eventually can turn out to ride a bicycle really well, and even go to competitions and grow up and do mountain biking and motor biking, whatever...

You accepted this metaphor a while later by saying:

(P): ...it is like she said with the bicycle...

You also accepted the metaphor as something that can be worked with in the second session after the psychologist (R1) asked you how you felt about using the bicycle metaphor in the following sessions:

(R1): Picking up on that metaphor of the bicycle - because that was something that stayed with me over the last few days after our session that we had. Um, that was something that Nadine (R2) mentioned and I don't know how you feel about the metaphor, and I know that after the previous session you said "ja," no... it was something that could work. And, it stuck in my mind as well. And, I was just wondering if in terms of the bicycle metaphor, that it is possibly something that we could possibly work with. And, if it does not work at some stage, we can drop it and change the metaphor.

(P): Ja, no problem.

Although I will focus on the bicycle metaphor - in the last session you decided to talk about your experience of the conversations by using a different metaphor. This can be seen in the following statement:

(P): Um, okay, basically, if I think about the meaning of these sessions we've had together, I think of um, when I went diving, when I did my scuba diving course...

You also seemed to use the scuba-diving metaphor to discuss the metaphor of the bicycle. In this way, another metaphor was created to discuss the previous one. Here you state:

(P): And we are swimming underneath the water and you are - you actually started seeing the different parts of the bicycle lying around and you helped me to collect the bicycle...

Exploring the metaphor

Throughout the following letters, you will discover that I often use the word 'movement'. The reason is that when I think of the bicycle metaphor I think of movement because a bicycle is a form of transportation that takes a person from one place to another. In this regard, you seemed to use the bicycle metaphor to discuss or to tell your narrative about how you have coped and are coping with the abuse that you have experienced through the movement from one place to another. In the conversations that were undertaken you discussed aspects that helped the movement as well as aspects that hindered the movement and, thus, your movement in coping with the abuse. Before I mention these aspects it is necessary to discuss the connection between coping and movement in more detail, as well as how this movement was visible in the growth and development of your bicycle metaphor.

Coping as movement

When looking at the metaphor of a bicycle, movement can be an integral part of the bicycle riding process as has been discussed. Another important aspect relating to the movement is the change that a person may go through while undertaking her/his journey such as riding through different weather conditions, seeing different nature scenes and different people, to name a few possibilities. In people's daily lives, as well as in psychology, movement that brings about change is very important as it allows new and different meanings as well as understandings to be created. These new and different meanings can then help people to see their experiences in different ways that may help them to cope or deal with those situations in different and better ways (Epston & White, 1992;

Freedman & Combs, 1996; White, 1995, 2000). This change or movement is evident in the following extract:

- (P): Um, okay, the bicycle is my voice right?
(R1): Ja, your way of dealing with the whole thing.
(P): Okay, it is the way of dealing with it.

In this extract, there seems to be movement or change in that the bicycle metaphor changed in meaning from being your voice to becoming your ability to deal with what had happened to you in relation to the abuse. This change then shows that meanings are not static but, rather, are in a continuous process of change (Epston & White, 1998; Speedy, 2000; White & Epston, 1990; White, 1995; White, 2000). I will thus discuss the bicycle metaphor as your way of coping with the abuse that you have experienced.

A growing metaphor

This movement was also evident in the changing or growing of the bicycle metaphor in that your bicycle changed from having fairy wheels to the removal of the fairy wheels:

- (R1): Ja, ja, okay, so if you look at the process of bicycle riding, I know first of all you have to get on the bike. Normally you stand over it don't you? Just hold the handle bars. You get a general feel for it and then - you sometimes you've got someone pushing you, helping you along to balance, etcetera. Then you get the fairy wheels those little wheels on the side. Eventually those get taken off and then, well, you are on your own - kind of thing. Um, so when you say, now this first time, that um, you know when your (abuser) came to you and said "ja" that "we need to ask for forgiveness": what stage of the bicycle riding would you say that was on for you?
(P): I would really say it was the beginning stages.
(R1): Uh.

(P): Although, I mean, if I probably go and analyse it further, it had started further, earlier than that but, um, I think this is the stage where the wheels started coming off - the little small ones.

...to perhaps becoming a motorbike:

(R1): It's okay, this fuel or energy that you get from these emotional connections. Okay, I wonder if there's a link to the motion of the bicycle?

(P): That turns it into a motorbike then?

(R1): Or the bicycle peddles (laugh).

(P): Yes.

You were even aware that your metaphor might still change in the future:

(P): ...I think my next picture - for my next - for me will be a treasure chest...

In this regard, your bicycle developed over time starting with fairy wheels to the removal of the fairy wheels. Your vehicle then either became a motorbike or obtained peddles to help the movement. Finally, you were able to contemplate the future through thinking about how your picture of what had happened to you may change (Coyle, 2000; Paré, 1995; Shotter, 1996; White, 1995).

Introducing the letters

In the other letters that you have received, I have discussed some of the aspects that you have mentioned with regards to coping with the abuse that you have lived through. In other words, I discuss different aspects and how they have helped or hindered the movement of your bicycle or your coping with the abuse that you have lived through. Anger, contradictions or conflicting stories, embarrassment, emotional connection, introspection, psychology, religion, telling, and voice are some of the aspects that I will discuss. These discussions may possibly lead to a better understanding of how you were and are able to cope and deal, in your daily life, with the abuse that you have experienced in your life.

Nadine

4.2 COPING AND ANGER

To Anna,

In this letter, I write to you about the role of **anger** in coping with abuse. In this regard, you stated:

(R1): So anger helps you as well?

(P): Yes, yes anger was the main helper.

In this regard, it seems as though anger played an important role in your life. White (1995) explains that anger can become evident when people who are/were abused begin to create other meanings in their lives. What also became evident throughout your conversations with the psychologist (R1) is that anger seemed to help the movement of the bicycle, that is, coping with the abuse that you had experienced.

During the conversations with the psychologist (R1), I noticed that anger may have allowed you to regain power in your life, to stand up to embarrassment and gave you a voice. This was interesting to me, as I believe that most people understand anger to be a negative emotion. In this regard, I would like to write to you in more detail on each of these aspects.

Firstly, it seems, from the conversations, that anger allowed you to regain power in your life, as can be seen in the following words:

(P): ...he got me in a very - although I was vulnerable in the room. When I was crying he got me even more vulnerable and that just - it - turned into anger, real anger.

...

(P): No, my anger was for feeling so vulnerable.

(R1): Okay, vulnerability... double, double vulnerable...

- (P): You see I always felt extremely vulnerable - but I felt helpless, so helpless - like I couldn't do anything and, um, for the first time here I was - I could - I became so helpless and so vulnerable that it turned into anger so that I could direct it at him. Do you understand? It was the first time - almost like I had a little bit of power but it - I didn't. The anger is a way of fighting him - the helplessness - I just couldn't. I'm just this "slap ding".
- (R1): Um, so, so the anger was that, even if it might have been for a moment - was that, - your bit of power for that moment?
- (P): Yes, it was hurting so much to be vulnerable - even more vulnerable, that it was my defence mechanism. So, it helped at that moment but it's still - the memory of it is still horrible.

It seems therefore as though vulnerability brought about feelings of helplessness and when they became intense they turned into anger which could then be directed at your abuser. You used the word defence mechanism which I interpret as something that allowed you to defend yourself against something that appeared to be taking away your power. In that you were able to stand up for yourself through the anger that you were feeling, it seems as though you were able, even for a brief moment, to take back the power that your abuser was taking from you when you felt vulnerable and helpless.

Secondly, anger seems to have played a role in fighting embarrassment in your life, which can be seen in the following extract:

- (R1): I think, this is what I'm hearing, is that the anger that you eventually got to the stage of feeling. This anger that you have, allows you to say: I don't want, I'm not going to carry this embarrassment any more. It is not mine to carry.
- (P): Ja.

Here it appeared as though anger allowed you to fight the embarrassment that you were experiencing. In this way, it might have been the anger that came into your life that helped you change the way you were relating to the abuse, by feeling embarrassed.

Finally, anger also seemed to have helped you obtain a voice:

(P): Well, let's see I remember last week, I said anger brought out the voice, remember when -

(R1): With the screaming and everything, ja.

(P): Ja, to bring out my voice now? I think no, ja, I don't know what else, but the anger has turned into determination just to bring out my voice... But I think the anger was the start of everything.

...

(P): ...It took me a very long time. My voice was always smaller than other people's. Their voices were always louder than mine and it took me a very long time to get to get to the place. But my anger, the anger inside of me, because of this, became so strong that if you don't hear my voice I get extremely angry.

In this extract, it appears that anger gave you a voice through screaming and later on, it turned into determination to continue bringing out your voice. It also seems as though the anger is still with you when your voice is not heard. Therefore, anger helped you to stand up to and against aspects in your life through determination so that your voice could and can be heard.

It seems, therefore, as though anger has helped you to move on in the process of coping with the abuse that you have experienced. This has then also helped me to strengthen my belief that anger can be a positive aspect in a person's life.

Nadine

4.3 COPING AND CONTRADICTION OR CONFLICTING STORIES

To Anna,

In this letter, I would like to address the seat of your bicycle, which seems to be **contradictions or conflicting stories** and how these have played a role in your narrative of abuse. These can be seen in the following two examples:

(Example 1)

(R1): Okay, so you have identified several contradictions in this story. Um, I wonder if these contradictions that you have in your story which exist, um, don't somehow introduce, perhaps, the confusion around how to talk about it?

(P): Oh yes.

(Example 2)

(P): I think my seat is my confusion.

(R1): Um.

(P): Or what did we call it, conflict, confusion.

(R1): Confusion or conflicting stories.

(P): Okay, because now I can sit down and relax I don't have to worry which side... I have to go.

In example 1, the psychologist (R1) asks if contradictions could lead to confusion about how to tell your story and you explain that they do. In example 2 the concept of 'conflicting stories' was also used to describe confusion. In this regard, I will use the words 'contradiction' and 'conflicting stories' synonymously. In example 2 you also explained that the seat is your confusion or conflicting stories. If I think of a contradiction, for example, sitting on a chair that is both high and low at the same time I can imagine that it would not feel comfortable. Such contradictions in your narrative can be seen in the following:

(R1): ... do you have any contradictions in your abuse story?

(P): Yes, I've got the thing where I didn't enjoy it. I hated it and then on the other hand, I was sexually aroused, um, where I hate my (abuser) and on the other hand...I care for him, do you get that.

What is interesting, however, is that you have found ways to sometimes sit on your bicycle seat with some comfort, which then appears to have helped with the movement of your bicycle. Two aspects that seem to create this comfort are that you were open about the contradictions or conflicting stories and you created different meanings about the abuse. I will thus discuss these two aspects in more detail.

The openness that I have just discussed becomes apparent in the following statement:

(R1): Yes, yes, okay, so how can we, um, combat that fear of not being able to tell the whole story, um,

(P): Well, we just did it.

(R1): Okay.

(P): By being open about it.

(R1): Okay.

(P): Makes me feel much better to just say it. Makes me wondering if you're thinking it.

(R1): Okay so, there are contradictions and you can accept that there are contradictions, um, and that allows you to tell the whole story. Okay.

(P): Ja, and also, of course...

In your discussion with the psychologist (R1), you explained that by being open about the contradictions you were able to combat the fear of not telling the whole story. In this regard, being open about contradictions seemed to assist you by allowing you to accept that there are contradictions in your narrative as well as allowing you to “feel much better to just say it”.

The second aspect is that of creating different meanings and can be connected to the previous aspect of openness. In this regard, you stated:

(R1): ...Maybe those are the two things, um, that cause confusion in your story, and between us as well. Maybe there is a certain emotional experience that is one of domination and one of um, morally not right etc. etc. Maybe the sexual experience where there's biological arousal um, maybe it's about that. And maybe that's where the contradiction,

(P): That is definitely, where the contradiction is. Yes. Emotionally no, but sexually you know. If you get aroused, who cares who satisfies that arousal. But again, my emotional, it clashes too much, where I can't say - I won't let my sexual arousal dominate my emotional arousal, ag, my emotional side.

(R1): Okay.

Allowing contradictions to become part of your narrative through being open, seems to have allowed different meanings and understandings to be attained. In this extract, it appears that through identifying the contradictions you were able to create two different meanings: one of an emotional experience and one of a sexual experience.

From this discussion, it became evident that by being open and thus being able to create new and different meanings the movement of coping could have been possible. If I were to state this in a different way, it seems as though being open about the contradicting or conflicting, the now more comfortable seat of your bicycle allowed you to move or ride it more easily. Such, openness may have also provided you with the ability to create a different meaning surrounding your bicycle seat. As the bicycle was your way of coping with the abuse, it may have enhanced your coping.

Although these aspects that relate to contradiction or conflicting stories allowed movement and coping, there also seem to be aspects that hindered the movement of your bicycle by making it uncomfortable to ride, which may restrict the coping with the abuse. These aspects relate to the confusion that was caused by contradiction or conflicting stories. Guilt and the perceptions brought about by these contradictions and conflicting stories also seem to have hindered the movement of the bicycle and concomitantly your coping with the abuse.

The confusion that I have mentioned can be seen in the following excerpt:

(R1): ... do you have any contradictions in your abuse story?

(P): Yes, I've got the thing where I didn't enjoy it. I hated it and then on the other hand, I was sexually aroused, um, where I hate my (abuser) and on the other hand...I care for him, do you get that.

(R1): Ja.

(P): Ja.

(R1): Okay, so you have identified several contradictions in this story. Um, I wonder if these contradictions that you have in your story which exist um, don't somehow introduce perhaps, the confusion around how to talk about it?

(P): Oh yes.

Here you explain that contradictions cause confusion in the way that you talk about your story of abuse. According to Sykes, (1982, p. 198) confusion means to “throw into disorder”, “make indistinct” and “mix up in the mind”. In this regard, confusion that came about because of contradiction can be seen as a hindrance as it seems to oppose understanding and meaning.

Guilt also seems to play a role in the contradictions and conflicting stories in the following statement:

(P): You know, it makes me feel guilty, so instead of telling you the whole truth, I will only tell you half of the truth because I am afraid if I tell you the contradiction you will think I'm lying you know or not getting the story right.

Here it appears that you felt guilty because of the contradiction, which you thought other people would interpret as being a lie or not getting the story correct. This may then have led to you telling only parts of the truth. Although narrative itself can be selective, partial and incomplete at times (White, 1995), there seems to be the added aspect of guilt causing your story to be only partially told. Thus, guilt can be seen also as an aspect that might have hindered the movement and coping in your narrative of abuse.

Finally, your perspective that you had concerning contradictions or conflicting stories also appears to have played a role in your narrative of abuse. Here you state:

(P): Ja, and also, of course I don't want to tell the bad story. I don't want to say that I love my (abuser). I don't want to say - well I don't know if I love him but I care

about him. Or, you know, I don't want to say that I was sexually aroused and went looking for the, not the abuse but whatever, the satisfaction.

In this regard, you explain that you do not “want to tell the bad story”. Thus, you seem to have perceived that caring for your abuser as well as becoming sexually aroused could have been “bad”. This perception could then perhaps have stood in the way of movement and coping as you explained that you do not want to tell it. Therefore, by not telling the “bad story” you may have restricted yourself in not being able to obtain other or different meanings relating to the abuse.

In this regard, from what I have just discussed it appears that contradictions or conflicting stories might have hindered the movement of your bicycle and your coping with the abuse that you had lived through.

Nadine

4.4 COPING AND EMBARRASSMENT

To Anna,

Embarrassment is an aspect that appears in the discussions about your abuse. In my mind, people do not always discuss their embarrassments with others. In this regard, it was interesting to me, how you openly discussed your embarrassment concerning the abuse and, in this way, were able to stand up to and against it, which is evident in the following extract:

(P): ...That is why, Ja, but this is part of my fight with the sexual abuse. That is why, you'll see, I talk easily about sex. I try to. I try to call a penis a penis and a whatever by their name. That's part of the reason why I said I won't be embarrassed...

From this statement, it seems that embarrassment was and, perhaps is a negative aspect in your life as you explain that a part of your fight against sexual abuse is not to be embarrassed anymore. In this regard, I would like first to discuss the aspects that seem to act as a barrier against the embarrassment in your narrative of abuse. These aspects appear to relate to deciding who the embarrassment belongs to, anger that stood up to and against embarrassment and the creation of new and/or different meanings.

Firstly, being able to decide who should own the embarrassment appears in the following extract:

(R1): So, what made you refuse to be embarrassed about sexual activities using the words and the abuse?

(P): Well, because I could never speak about sexual abuse and, then, I decided, it wasn't - It didn't - it wasn't something I did. It was something somebody else did to me and that, that is why I am not going to be embarrassed about it. Understand - it's not I didn't go and rape somebody. Somebody came and raped and molested me.

(R1): Okay.

(P): You get it, so I'm not going to be embarrassed. It's his embarrassment. It's not my embarrassment.

...

(R1): Would you say that, that being able to, 'jees-like', to identify who embarrassment belongs to, um, was part of the balancing process, and learning to ride.

(P): Ja.

In this regard, you explained that your abuser came and raped and molested you. By telling this, it seems that you made your abuser responsible for the abuse and it appears that you were able to place the embarrassment on him. Thus, by identifying who must own the embarrassment you may have been able to rid yourself of it.

Secondly, the anger that you experienced because of the abuse also seems to help you fight the embarrassment contained in your narrative of abuse as you state:

(P): You see the thing is with me is... Let me explain this to you nicely: because I was embarrassed, I didn't tell anybody about it. That's not the only reason but that's part of the reason and it really hurt inside. And, at a stage I became so angry that I decided that I am not going to be embarrassed about anything because if people are embarrassed it just keeps it covered - it just it. Why should anything be a secret. If something is a secret then something is not right. You know, why can't we just talk about it and get it out.

Here you explained that embarrassment kept things secret, which according to you was not right. You also explained that because you were embarrassed you did not tell anyone about the abuse which caused you to feel hurt inside and that turned into anger. Your anger then seems to have led to the decision that you were not going to be embarrassed anymore. Anger seems to withstand embarrassment.

Finally, creating meanings with regards to the embarrassment that you experienced also appears to have influenced you in some way.

(R1): Alright, okay, so perhaps what's important for all of us – to - to agree on the meaning of what we are doing, what we are looking at and what we mean by pornography. What your meaning is, what my meaning is, what Nadine's (R2) meaning is and, um, what you've explained or what my understanding is of what you have said is... What we are doing today is not looking at pornography. We are looking at your experience represented through this media.

(P): Yes.

(R1): So that's my understanding. We will chat about it just now, um, or a bit later on. Um, do you think this common understanding that we have will allow embarrassment to leave the room?

(P): Yes, now for the first time, I feel more comfortable.

In this extract, the psychologist (R1) asked if embarrassment could leave the room after a common understanding of what was being done has been discussed, which you then agreed upon and explained that you felt more comfortable. In this regard, the meanings created in your shared conversation appear to have diminished the embarrassment that you were feeling.

These three aspects can be seen as movement and coping helpers as they appear to lessen your embarrassment that you explain was a negative aspect in that it was something that you were fighting against (refer to the first extract of this letter).

Movement and coping hindrances, however, were evident when it came to your embarrassment. These hindrances can be seen in the embarrassment itself and in the aspects that encourage embarrassment. Embarrassment seems to have hindered your coping with abuse by restricting your voice as well as not allowing you to receive help. Aspects that relate to the embarrassment and thus encourage embarrassment in your life seem to be your perceptions concerning the meanings of other people, how you were socialised and fear of being rejected. For a better understanding, I would like to discuss these aspects in more detail.

Your perceptions concerning the meanings of other people can be seen in the embarrassment that seems to have restricted your voice:

(R1): This embarrassment theme seems to... We spoke about embarrassment last week as well and it is featuring again. Why (laugh)? What's, ja, what's the link? How do you understand embarrassment in the story of yours?

...

(P): ...I have this picture of sexual abuse in my mind. Okay. He's got a whole lot of influence on me. Does a whole lot of things and one of the things he does is make me embarrassed, you understand.

...

(P): Well, the sexual abuse 'né': he told me that it is embarrassing to talk about sexual things and I shouldn't be talking about it and people don't really want to hear about it. Ja.

Here you explained that sexual abuse has many influences on your life - one of which caused embarrassment. Later you explained that sexual abuse led you to believe that it was embarrassing to talk about sexual things and that other people did not want to hear about it. It seems as though this understanding that sexual abuse created in you, could be restricting as it caused embarrassment to tell your story because it was not something you spoke about and that other people did not want to hear it.

It also seems that embarrassment can be a reason that someone does not receive help concerning abuse, which is evident in the following extract:

(R1): And have you now owned it?

(P): (laugh) No, I refused to own it. That is why. Ja, but this is part of my fight with the sexual abuse. That is why, you'll see, I talk easily about sex. I try to. I try to call a penis a penis and a whatever by their name. That's part of the reason why I said I won't be embarrassed. Maybe some of the times, sometimes, I think to myself... Maybe, if my (family members) weren't so embarrassed to talk about sexual things, I could have told them which, I don't know if it's true, but that, was what I was feeling.

Here you explain that one of the reasons that you did not talk about the abuse could have been that your family members were embarrassed to talk about sexual things. It therefore seems as though the embarrassment of others could have been a barrier to getting help because you felt you could not tell your family members what was happening to you.

It also seems to me that a person's perception about what others think can be a hindrance. In the following statement, you discuss embarrassment in terms of pornography and what is of importance to me is your perception:

(P): Yes, Yes, Yes, I mean, usually if you look at pornography I suspect that you get horny. I'm not - I, I want to make this very clear: I'm not a person who looks at pornography and the reason I put this on here is not to be aroused or anything. It

was... I had a need to show somebody exactly what I was feeling - the intensity of what I was feeling and that is why I put it here... So, yes, I am embarrassed about you guys seeing it because I am feeling, yes, you are going to look at the pornography and think of the church and think I am sitting in front of the computer feeling whatever.

In this statement, you explain that you put the pictures into your Power Point presentation because you had a need to show someone what you were feeling or the intensity of what you were feeling. You call these pictures pornographic and explain that you were embarrassed because you think that the psychologist and myself would look at the pictures and “think of the church” and then think of you sitting in front of the computer “feeling whatever”. In this regard, you may have imagined what the psychologist (R1) and I would think about the pictures, which caused you embarrassment. Your idea may have been true or untrue but in my opinion is irrelevant. What is relevant, however, is that you experienced embarrassment because of what you perceive to have been true. Thus, a person’s perception about the feelings of others may be limiting as it could cause embarrassment.

Concerning the aspect of socialization, several authors explain that the meanings and understandings that people have, are influenced or created through the cultures or societies that people find themselves in (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Morgan, 2000; White, 2000). In this regard, you also seem to have been influenced by the meanings of others in your environment:

(R1): ...Where does this story come from?

(P): I think, my (family member) is, ‘sjoe’, my (family member) is very embarrassed to talk about sex.

...

(R1): So is it possible that you have inherited this embarrassment from your (family member)?

(P): Yes.

In this extract, there seems to be a connection between the embarrassment and the way you have been socialised. In this regard, you mention that you may have inherited your sense of embarrassment about sexual matters from a family member. Thus, it appears that socialisation could have encouraged embarrassment, which has been a negative aspect in your life (refer to first extract in this letter).

Finally, fear of rejection appears to have increased your embarrassment:

(P): Um, I would say I was very... I was still very, um. You know, sexual abuse had a very strong voice of being - of making me embarrassed. I was, I was embarrassed of what I was saying to other people, and I was also embarrassed about... No, I was afraid that I will be rejected... I felt really embarrassed to talk about it.

Here you explained that you were embarrassed to talk about the sexual abuse because you were afraid that you would be rejected. In this regard, embarrassment itself may have been a hindrance as it created fears of being rejected and thus may have caused you not to tell your narrative about abuse.

It appears, therefore, that the embarrassment in your narrative about abuse has movement and coping hindrances and that embarrassment itself as well as aspects surrounding embarrassments can restrict the healing process.

Nadine

4.5 COPING AND EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

To Anna,

In this letter, I would like to discuss the aspect of **emotional connection**. You connected this aspect to your bicycle riding process as follows:

(R1): It's okay, this fuel or energy, that you get from these emotional connections.

Okay, I wonder if there's a link to the motion of the bicycle?

(P): That turns it into a motorbike then.

(R1): Or the bicycle pedals (laugh).

(P): Yes.

This is interesting to me as emotional connection can turn your bicycle into a motorbike or a bicycle with pedals. What is also interesting is that without fuel or pedals it may be difficult for a bicycle to move. I will first discuss how emotional connection appears to have allowed you to work with your story of abuse. I will also discuss transparency, creating a climate, being open and honest, and open to suggestion that could have played a role in allowing emotional connection and the fuel/pedals to become part of the movement and thus promote coping with the abuse that you have experienced.

In this extract, emotional connection seems to have allowed you to work with your story:

(R1): Alright, how did you, how do you use that emotional connection?

...

(P): O my soul. Well, to a degree it, um, encourages me to go deeper - to work with the person. Um, for example, if you and I - if I'm in therapy with you and I know, if, if there's an emotional connection, then I don't just want to put all the pressure on you to be the therapist. I know the ball is on my side. The ball, what, the ball's on my side. So, it's sort of it. I try to make the pressure less on you and take it on me.

Here it appears that the emotional connection has allowed you to go deeper with a person so that work could be done. I interpret 'working' as an action where a person is undertaking a task. Whether the action is to start, develop, change or complete the task is irrelevant. What is important is that something is being done:

Riding a bicycle and making it move entails work and in so doing deeper work may be done to assist in coping with the abuse.

Transparency is another aspect that seems to allow emotional connection in your life:

- (R1): Did you, you use transparency to build that emotional connection?
- (P): Yes, let me just see. Ja, it was the transparency mostly but it was also seeing you being genuine towards me.
- (R1): Okay, getting back to the transparency. Um, it reminds me of when I made a - it could have been the first or the second session - I'm not too sure where I said, "Could it be something like this?" and you said to me; "No, it's not like that". Does that link to your transparency?
- (P): Yes, yes.
- (R1): And that brought the emotional connection?
- (P): Yes.

In this extract, transparency appears to be perceived as a coping mechanism because it allowed you to gain an emotional connection. You were able to explain to the psychologist (R1) that you did not agree with something that she had said and then you explained that you understood this as being transparent which led to an emotional connection between the two of you.

In the following excerpt, the second aspect, climate was discussed in relation to emotional connection:

- (R1): Okay but I asked you first, if I could tell you - could share my story with you.
- (P): And you're saying?
- (R1): And you said, "yes, I would like to hear your story".
- (P): Ja.
- (R1): Okay, so you also created that sort of climate - safe for me as well to tell my story - that non-judgemental approach as well.
- ...
- (P): Ja.

(R1): Okay, so perhaps you create a space for people, okay, to interact with you in an emotional way.

(P): It's nice. I haven't thought of it like that. I probably do. I demand it from them.

In this regard, climate seems to have played a role in gaining an emotional connection. Here the psychologist (R1) explains to you that for her to have been able to share a story of abuse with you, you had to give consent, which allowed a safe and non-judgemental climate. You explain that creating an appropriate climate seems to be a coping helper as it allows an emotional connection to be created.

Openness and honesty also appears to allow emotional connection:

(R1): What do you do to create emotional connection?

(P): Okay, open and honest. Um, don't I have that on here somewhere? How can I draw that? Okay, you know you've got this little bag that ties to the back of the thing with a little thing with the...

(R1): Yes.

(P): Plasters to fix the thing whatever.

(R1): Ja.

(P): So that is almost - that's how my honesty is. I tell them my faults and my everything, um.

(R1): Okay.

(P): Hopefully knowing that they can tell me back my faults and everything.

In this discussion, after being asked how you create emotional connection you examine openness and honesty. You state that openness and honesty could be the little pouch at the back of the bicycle that perhaps contains medical supplies. I interpret medical supplies as something positive as it can help in a situation where you sustain injury. You also state that the honesty involves you telling your faults and everything to others and that you hope that they can tell you their faults and everything. Openness and honesty seem to be coping tools.

Finally, being open to the suggestions of others appears to assist you in gaining an emotional connection and thus able to cope with abuse by allowing other meanings to be created.

- (P): ...so I think that created an emotional,
(R1): Okay.
(P): connection.
(R1): In terms, when I started, um you know... talking about protection and why they didn't tell you why they were keeping quite, etc. Um, you listened to what I had to say and you could very easily have closed it off. And, you still have the opportunity now to, to disagree with it but you remain open to the suggestion and you could either take it, or, or leave it. That was your choice, either way, but the fact is you listened. You opened yourself up to another way of possibly thinking about this
(P): I get what you're saying, there are two sides to everything for you to be open. I need to be open. Of I'm open, you'll be open.
(R1): ... Alright, did you realise that you had this ability to create these emotional connections?

In this regard, the psychologist (R1) explains that what she had said could have been rejected or accepted and that through your openness to different suggestions you were able to think about things differently. You seem to have understood what the psychologist (R1) was saying by explaining that openness needed to be a two-way process. For an emotional connection to be formed all the parties have to be open to what is being said and being open to suggestions seems to help coping.

In your discussion here before, emotional connection seems to be a positive aspect in your life. Here, there may be movement in your bicycle metaphor and thus coping with the abuse. However, there also appears to be hindrance in your story of emotional connection:

- (R1): Alright, ja, that was it. What does emotional connection do for you?

(P): In the one hand it's horrible, because I don't like losing it. Um, even in my normal relationships. Once I build a relationship I don't easily let go. Um, but on the other hand...

In this instance, it appears that emotional connection may be a hindrance as it seems to be negative in that you do not like to lose it. You use the word "horrible" to describe losing emotional connection. The hindrance may thus lie in your fear of losing the emotional connection as well as believing that you cannot create an emotional connection:

(R1): ...Alright, did you realise that you had this ability to create these emotional connections?

(P): No, that's why I thought to myself if you are going to ask me about the emotional connection I am just going to say let's leave it (laugh) because I don't know how to create it. Well, now I know, so it's nice.

(R1): Okay, so that not realising, I wonder if, I wonder if there is a link between being scared or fearful of losing the emotional connection, um, and feeling that you don't necessarily have the ability to create an emotional connection?

...

(P): I'm afraid that I am going to lose the connection with you because I don't think that I have the power to create it, yes, definitely. Look, I don't think I am totally clueless in doing it.

(R1): No.

(P): But I don't think - often I think maybe the ball lies in the other person's, you know, court, side.

In this extract, you also connected these two aspects by stating that you were afraid to lose the emotional connection because you did not know how to create it which could have been a movement and coping hindrance as you stated that you were going to say "let's leave it". Thus, without having the knowledge on how to create emotional connection you may have limited yourself in creating them and thus limited your talking about the abuse. You, however, did go on to explain that you have some knowledge about how to create emotional connections, which can then promote movement.

Nadine

4.6 COPING AND INTROSPECTION

To Anna,

During the conversations undertaken, the aspect of **introspection** was addressed. In this letter, I would like to further this discussion by first mentioning when introspection became part of your bicycle riding process, which can be noted in the following conversation:

(R1): Okay. Um, in terms of the bicycle riding process, when in this stage did introspection arrive?

(P): ...in my mind I thought, well now, I should be healed of everything and then I started thinking to myself but why am I still feeling all these feelings? Nothing has changed. What's happening? And, I think a lot of introspection started there.

This extract shows that introspection may have become part of your bicycle riding process when you started asking why things were not changing. Relating to this, people actively have to decide which meanings in their different narratives that they are going to make part of their reality. People therefore work hard and actively in their daily lives to make meanings out of their experiences (White, 1995). Sykes (1982, p.527) explains that introspection means to “examine one’s own thoughts and feelings”, or “examination or observation of one’s own mental processes”. Examination or observations may be actions that a person must undertake. Thus, introspection may be a movement and coping helper in that people must actively observe or examine their own thoughts, feelings or mental processes to attain meaning in their lives, which you seemed to have undertaken in the above-mentioned extract.

I will now discuss some of the aspects that seemed to have helped introspection to become part of your story of abuse, such as questioning, honesty, truth and

integrity. I will also discuss active introspection, as well as reflection which in my mind is related to active introspection.

The aspect of questioning is contained in the extract here before as well as in the following:

(P): ...and I started realising: “But, listen, I’ve been to therapy twice already. This is the 3rd time. So what’s happening? Why am I not changing? What is the influence of sexual abuse on my life?” etc. etc. etc.

In this extract you ask, “What’s happening?”, “Why am I not changing?” and “What is the influence of sexual abuse on my life?”. You explained in a previous interaction (previous excerpt) that introspection seemed to start when you began questioning your circumstances. Questioning may become a movement and coping helper as it allows introspection to become part of your life.

Questioning seems to be one aspect that can increase introspection in your life but you also mention honesty, truth and integrity as factors of introspection in your story of abuse:

(R1): Who - how did you come to know introspection?

(P): I think through honesty and truth and integrity because you always need to ask yourself: “Am I telling the truth now? Why am I not telling the truth? Let me tell the truth now.” So, it probably started there. So, that is where introspection, ag, introspection started in my life.

It seems as though you related honesty, truth and integrity to the questioning aspect, which in turn may have led to introspection. Thus, honesty, truth, and integrity also seem to have been movement and coping helpers.

The word active introspection was mentioned for the first time in the following conversation:

- (P): ...then I went to a psychologist, my first psychologist.
- (R1): Okay.
- (P): And I think that's where the biggest introspection started.
- (R1): Ja.
- (P): Or the active introspection that I would rather say. Where she started with narrative therapy wanting to know more and I started realising: "But, listen, I've been to therapy twice already. This is the 3rd time. So what's happening? Why am I not changing? What is the influence of sexual abuse on my life?" etc. etc. etc.
- ...
- (P): ...I guess the psychologist just showed me or said to me "do this and maybe it will help" and then it did help. I had to. I couldn't just believe in this instance that the traumatic incident was out of me, you know. I had to go and draw it. I had to do something physically to get it out of me.
- (R1): Is that, that active introspection?
- (P): Yes,
- (R1): Is there a link between the word "active" that you used just now?
- (P): Yes.
- (R1) The active introspection meaning that you are doing it?
- (P): Um-hm (agree).

In this extract, you began to talk about "introspection" and then changed it to "active introspection". You explain that you had to go and draw it or do something physical to get the trauma out of you. You also agreed with the psychologist (R1) that active introspection is "you doing something". You explain that when the psychologist, whom you had consulted, showed you or said that you must do something, it helped. Thus, active introspection could have helped you in the process of coping. The following is an example of active introspection:

- (P): I tried before to just draw the picture which also helped a lot especially when I drew the, the room, the surroundings. It helped a lot but - it is like I'm saying - if I can just get it for you to see it exactly like I saw it then I feel better. Strange, I don't know why.

In this example, you explain that you drew pictures and that undertaking these activities helped a lot and that just by getting someone else to see exactly how you saw it made you feel better. In this regard, active introspection, when you seemed to do something physical, may have helped in the coping process.

Finally, you discussed reflection and although reflection may be different to active introspection, I will discuss it here because I interpret it as something that must have been actively undertaken by you and in a sense it may link to observation or examination of something that occurred in the past.

(R2): (The participant) came in the beginning of the session with a piece of paper that she did and I thought to myself what an amazing ability to reflect on previous experiences. It was almost overwhelming for me. It was wow, um, and then I wonder to myself, that ability that she has to reflect back on things. I wonder if that couldn't also be a friend that is situated around the bicycle.

...

(P): ...okay Nadine (R2) spoke about transparency being another thing that is helping this bicycle to go and it definitely is, ag, not transparency, reflection.

(R1): Yes.

(P): If I didn't reflect back I wouldn't have even have known I had any of these things. I wouldn't have made a bicycle. Okay, so 'yes' reflection was definitely part of it. Um, ja, I think it was also – part – like, you know, I'm imagining in my mind this sea thing.

(R1): Ja.

(P): And we are swimming underneath the water and you are - you actually started seeing the different parts of the bicycle lying around and you helped me to collect the bicycle. But, yes, I did need reflection and it is nice to hear because sometimes I think I am the worst person when it comes to reflection, um...

(R1): Would you like to add reflection to the bicycle?

(P): Um, I'll put a little mirror on (draw mirror)...

In this extract, you added reflection and a mirror to your bicycle metaphor. You agreed with me that reflection helped your bicycle to move and that without reflection there would not be a bicycle. Reflection seems to be connected to active introspection in that you actively had to reflect on your experience so that a bicycle

could be created (swimming under the water and collecting the parts of the bicycle). Reflection, therefore, may be seen also as a movement and coping with abuse facilitator.

These aspects that I have discussed about introspection appear to have assisted the movement of your bicycle metaphor and consequently your coping with the abuse that you have experienced.

Nadine

4.7 COPING AND PSYCHOLOGY

To Anna,

In this letter, I would like to discuss how **psychology** might have played a role in your narrative of abuse. However, before I discuss this, I would like to remind you of how you connected psychology to your bicycle metaphor in the following:

(R1): ...and I was wondering about the psychology. If that isn't, um, another person. A picture in my mind that's also standing around that bicycle?

...

(P): What you said about forgiveness, of faith, ag, psychology pushing the bicycle – yes, for sure this is - this - what we're seeing here is narrative therapy, psychology that is helping me to place it all into context. I never saw it in context until recently. So, 'yes' psychology is - psychology is - the wheels (laugh).

(R1): That's fantastic.

In this extract, the psychologist (R1) asked you whether or not psychology could also be connected to the bicycle riding. You explain that psychology is the wheels of your bicycle. I imagine that without wheels, a bicycle cannot move and so, psychology seems to have played a big role in your life. I will now discuss psychological aspects that seem to place wheels on your bicycle so that movement

is possible in your coping with abuse: receiving help, being able to release anger and being empowered.

Firstly, the healing that you seem to have received through psychology can be seen in the following statement:

(P): ...Okay, so psychology helped me to map everything. To see: alright, I'm going - I need to get an alternative story. It also gave me the opportunity to speak to the two psychologists. Um and it really encouraged me just to get my healing so that I can help other people to get healed. I think psychology is much more...

Here you state that psychology had helped you to map everything and to get an alternative story to the one you had (Morgan, 2000; White, 2000). You also state that psychology allowed you to see two psychologists so that you could “get my healing” and that you could then help others. Psychology, therefore, appeared to have opened doors to the means of coping with the abuse in your life.

Secondly, through psychology it seems that you could ventilate your anger:

(P): ... and we got onto the whole topic of abuse again and (the psychologist) was very concerned about me not showing any anger about saying that I've forgiven my abuser completely and totally. And, that is where the process came in where she said to me okay, I must go and get my anger out.

In this statement, you explain that the psychologist was concerned about you not showing anger about what had happened to you. In this way, the psychologist may have opened up the possibility for a different meaning in your life. The possibility of changing or adding different meanings to your story may have helped the process of coping or dealing with the abuse that you have experienced (Epston & White, 1998; Freedman & Combs, 2002; White & Epston, 1992; White, 1997).

Finally, psychology also seems to have helped by breaking the silence which then led to some of your empowerment.

- (P): ...So I thought well, let me just go and see what is going on which was also very nice. And, it was at this time where (the psychologist) broke the silence to the people I feared telling the most.
- (R1): Okay, so what did you get from that conversation.
- (P): The most empowerment I've ever had.
- (R1): Empowerment.
- (P): Yes.
- (R1): Okay.

In this discussion, you explain that the psychologist broke the silence and that you gained power from the experience. The voices and power have been taken away from many people who have been abused and consequently regaining power through breaking the silence may be important to individuals who have been abused (Epston & White, 1998; Morgan, 1999). Thus, empowerment may facilitate coping with abuse.

The three aspects of receiving help, releasing anger and empowering therefore appear to assist the movement of the bicycle in your metaphor by allowing different possibilities to become part of your narrative of abuse and thus they seem to have helped with the coping process. However, as much as I regret it, psychology also seems to have hindered the movement of coping with abuse. My regret stems from the idea that I have about the meaning of psychology, which is that it is meant to be of assistance in the lives of people who interact with it. Nonetheless, taking a position of expert knowledge as well as making decisions that will affect a person's life without her/his permission, may be seen as hindrances in the movement of coping with abuse.

One negative aspect of expert knowledge can be noted in the following examples:

(Example 1)

- (P): ...I went, which was, it was nice, but this (psychologist) was an expert on sexual abuse,
- (R1): Oh...

(P): That was (the psychologists) claim to fame. So I thought: well, let me just go and see what is going on which was also very nice. And, it was at this time where (the psychologist) broke the silence to the people I feared telling the most.

(Example 2)

(P): If I spoke to them yes, I suppose. Um, I think it has to be a psychologist because I don't know if other people will be able to define it that way. I don't know if they will understand about the voices. If they will understand - I don't know, maybe.

In example 1 you used the words “expert on sexual abuse” and “that was (the psychologists) claim to fame”. The language that you use seems to give the psychologist a lot of power and thus less power to you as a person. However, only the person consulting a psychologist has expert knowledge about her/his life (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White, 1995; White, 1997). Even though the psychologist might have been well acquainted in working with people who have been abused, I believe that every person's experience is unique. Moreover, when psychologists are related to as people who have expert knowledge, much of the power and knowledge of those seeking help can be lost (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White, 1995). Thus, subjecting oneself to the idea of almighty expert knowledge can restrict the coping skills of the person consulting the psychologist.

In example 2 you explain that you thought that only a psychologist would be able to understand certain things and in so doing you again seem to give the psychologist status different from that of other people. The idea that psychology has expert knowledge may limit your opportunities to improve in coping in that people who have valuable contributions, but who are not psychologists, may not receive the opportunity to share their stories with you.

Concerning the second aspect of psychology and expert knowledge, namely decision-making without client consent, the following may reveal a hindrance to coping:

- (P): Um, I think 's joe', now that it's broken - it's hard to think back what it was like.
Um, after (the psychologist) broke the silence - okay, I wasn't.
- (R1): That's right, (the psychologist) broke it didn't (s/he)?
- (P): After (the psychologist) broke the silence - It wasn't with my consent.
- (R1): Ja.
- ...
- (P): Which I'm glad, I'm very glad (the psychologist) did it now. I just wish (the psychologist) didn't - I wish (s/he'd) asked my consent because I probably would have given it to (h/him). And, I wish (s/he) didn't tell all the things that (s/he) did say.
- ...
- (R1): Okay, so that moment where (the psychologist) took your power away from you, how did you respond to that?
- (P): I fled. I went to - and I went to live with my friend...

In this conversation, the psychologist broke the silence without your consent. When a psychologist takes decisions that concern the client's life without her/his permission, the client's control over her/his own life can be taken away (White, 1995; White, 1997), which appears to have happened in your narrative of abuse. Thus, it seems that decisions taken for another person without their consent can be a coping and movement hindrance.

Nadine

4.8 COPING AND RELIGION

To Anna,

Religion seems to have played a big part in your movement of coping with the abuse that you experienced. This is evident in the following excerpt where you and the psychologist (R1) linked religion to the metaphor of the bicycle:

- (R1): That comes across as quite a strong story, as well in terms of...of your bicycle riding skills.

(P): Ja, you see the religion has always played a very - my parents are extremely religious and I have grown up in a - it was in a Christian school - in a Christian church. I was always surrounded by Christian people. So, 'yes', the theme of Christianity runs very strongly, or religion or spiritually or whatever you want to call it.

(R1): Alright, and so you found that this Christianity has helped you along the way?

(P): Yes, in the beginning - definitely helped me.

You state that religion helped you especially in the beginning. There also seem to be other aspects such as prayer, faith and inner healing that may have assisted in the movement of coping with abuse. You also discussed being actively involved in the process of religion as well as being able to express your feelings or emotions in different ways in your religion, which then also appears to be of assistance in coping.

You mention prayer:

(P): ...Ok, so that was I think spiritually - I felt God was helping me it was a relief to pray that...(To break the soul ties).

Your relationship with religion seems to show that you felt that you were receiving help from God through religious prayer, which might have given you a sense of relief about what had happened.

You also mention faith in the next extract:

(R1): Ok, what helped? How did you come to, um, to break that tie just through that aaa, prayer, um or how ...?

(P): I think, ja, you, ja, we just prayed that it would be broken and I suppose that the rest is just having faith that it is.

(R1): Ok, so that's, that's a nice word to use - the faith that kept that helped you to balance.

Faith seems to have played an important role in allowing you, through religion, to believe that you were receiving help.

Your adherence to religious expectations seems to have helped you to cope and heal:

(R1): What - um, was there anything else that you used at this stage in terms of, you know, getting on the bicycle, starting to ride, taking off the fairy wheels...?

...

(P): I think it was still the spiritual, spirituality, getting spiritual healing... In our church we talk about inner healing.

(R1): Okay.

(P): And they always say go back to your past and let God go heal you in those situations. So I suppose that was also part of it.

You also asked:

(P): Now what did I get out of my relationship with her? Um, to me, yes, it felt to me like I was going through inner healing to build my relationship with God. Um, yes, so that's what I got out of it.

Groups, organisations or cultures differ in the way that their members are expected to behave (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Expectations can be restrictive or unrestrictive in nature but what is of importance is the meaning that you give to the expectations (White, 1995; White, 2000). Your expectation of obtaining inner healing may have given you the opportunity to work on what had happened to you which, you explain, helped with getting on the bicycle, starting to ride it and taking off the fairy wheels. Your expectations also seem to have led to a better relationship with God in your religion. Related to this aspect, it seems a reciprocal process existed as you did adhere to certain religious requirements and thereby obtained a deeper and closer relationship with your God.

I have interpreted from the following statement that you may have become actively involved in the process of coping with abuse through your religion:

(P): I think the inner healing from God is quite simple. You know you just ask Him to heal you and have faith that He will. But, um, I haven't thought about this yet. But, I think it's sort of like if you go through a traumatic incident. For example, in the Bible they always say you have to - when the Israelites went into Canaan, they had to possess the land. God gave them the land but they had to fight the giants and they had to kill and take. So, that's how I see it. I had to go into my own land and possess my own whatever, fight my own giants, kill them and take over.

I believe that when a person belongs to a group, organisation or culture where they have to behave in a certain way, much of who they are can be lost. In this regard, it seems, however, that your religion, according to the meaning that you gave to it, allowed you to be actively involved with what had happened to you. In this way, you appear to have been allowed to reincorporate aspects of who you are into the process of coping with abuse.

Freedom to express yourself in your religious life may be evident in the following statement:

(P): I don't if it's exactly linked with this but the feeling I'm getting is when the abuse happened, I was so angry, I said to God, "why did you make this happen to me?" Um, I was just so angry that it happened to me. Now, as I'm moving this way, I'm feeling more like I'm glad it happened to me. Not glad but I'm glad that I'm able to work through it so that I can help other people. It's not so much anymore. I'm not cursing God and saying, "why did you do this to me?" Its - I'm saying, "thank you God for helping me so that I can help other people...".

In your religion, you may have received the freedom to express different emotions such as anger but at the same time, you were also perhaps allowed to change these emotions to feelings of gratitude. Thus, it seems that your relationship with

religion has not been restrictive in that you did not have to adhere to a prescribed emotional status (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

The aspects that I have just discussed allow for the movement in your bicycle metaphor and in coping with the abuse that you have experienced. I also, however, discovered aspects in your religious interactions that may hinder the movement and coping with the abuse that I will discuss next. These aspects relate to the contradictions that you have experienced in your religion and the authoritative stance that your religion sometimes seems to have taken. Hindrance is also evident in a “no negotiations” policy; the requirements that you needed to fulfil; as well as how your religion labels people.

You discussed the following contradictions:

(P): Um. Okay, this is a whole new story. But, I think the church has really bugged me or irritated me with their little thing - especially because I was in a Christian school. They liked to use Christianity a lot to, ag, you know – every - Christianity is supposed to make you closer to God. And, what they did, they used Christianity to make us obedient to them.

(R1): Okay.

(P): If you are naughty: you are going to hell. You know: I need to give you a hiding now because I just want to put you on the right road. They used it – wrong – wrongly. You understand what I'm saying?

...

(P): Okay, so, this started in my life. I was so fed up by hearing these two contradicting things: God is love yet I must punish you because you are being... You know, it was contradicting. It was irritating to such a point that I decided never again in my life am I just going to accept what people say to me. I will process it through for myself and I suppose it carries on to anything - to everything. It doesn't just stay in a Christian setting. It goes - what you say to me, what Nadine (R2) says to me, what everybody says to me.

What becomes evident from your telling is that the two contradictory aspects may create hindrance to coping. In this regard, you used words like “bugged”, “irritated”

and “fed up”. If a person follows a road map that directs turning both left and right at the same time, the person could become confused about what direction to take. I can imagine that mixed messages may lead to frustration through not knowing where to move to or how to change.

This following excerpt, in my mind, creates the idea that your religion seems to have been authoritative at times:

(P): ...Okay, there the lady sort of forced me to talk. She said - I said to her, here (points to). I said to her “no”. I said to her “no”, I have already gone through inner healing. I don't need any more inner healing. This is still the church here. And, she said, “no it's impossible, you need to. I don't believe you've gone through inner healing. You must still talk about your problems.” So - I go - I went through the whole abuse story again...

Having authority exercised over your life may cause limitations, which may prevent you from finding more than one way of coping with different situations (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Morgan, 2000; White, 1995; White, 1997; White, 2000).

When I look at a road map for directions I consider all the different possibilities on how to get there. In this way, I can negotiate the fastest way, the most economical way or the way to get where I am going via some place I want to stop off first. In the following excerpt, you state that no negotiation is possible with the God of your religion and therefore I have to wonder how this may limit possibilities in your life for coping with abuse.

(R1): Alright. And, part of that working relationship with God is that you negotiated with him. And, I'm putting words in your mouth here. So, please feel free, you know, to correct me. You've negotiated with him that forgiveness for you is something that will take as long as it takes for you to heal.

...

(P): I'm not negotiating with him, there are no negotiations with God.

(R1): Alright, ja.

- (P): Alright but the experience I've had with the church is they like to interpret things their own way and if the bible does not say "forgive" – okay, the bible says: "Forgive, else you won't be forgiven". So, yes, you can interpret "forgive" in that way. But, if I can't, yes, people interpret the bible differently. And, so why must I listen to their interpretation? Why can't I make my own interpretation? But, it must be based on scripture.
- (R1): Alright, that's exactly what I'm - thank you - what I'm trying to get at and trying to say. You've made your own interpretation based on the scripture.
- (P): Yes, yes.

When an authoritative stance is undertaken it prevents negotiation. In this regard, there is only one way to behave and that is in the way of the authoritative figure (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Morgan, 2000; White, 1995; White, 1997; White, 2000). Accordingly, this may create limitations because possibilities for different ways of creating meanings are taken away. However, you do explain that interpretation was allowed as long as it was based on scripture. You therefore did seem to find a way to allow for the movement of change in your narrative of abuse.

In the following discussion, you seemed to have been required to undergo inner healing:

- (P): ...I became a Christian and I was going through a time where, um, okay, the church was telling us to get inner healing and I just decided okay, fine, I need to get inner healing because if you want to build on a relationship with God, you have to. Your relationship with men have to be right and I thought to myself: alright, my relationship with men aren't right and the church has been telling me... that - you need to go through therapeutic - you need to go through therapy to get inner healing to have a good relationship with God.
- ...
- (P): Ja, so that's why I went to the teacher. I felt that - like, okay - I must get my relationship with God now right so that I can go to heaven wara, wara, wara. And, um, so that was the first thing - that's why I went to speak to her.

In this discussion, the authoritative stance is noticeable again as you were required to go through inner healing so that you could have a good relationship with God and go to heaven. But you first needed to be right with men before you can be right with God. This might have limited your own way of coping with the abuse because you had to do it by complying with the requirements of your religion, which was to go through inner healing. If you did not adhere to this requirement it seems that you could not have a good relationship with the God of your religion and could not go to heaven.

Finally, labelling also seems to have had a role in your religion as you state:

(P): I think, you know, I would say we grew up in a very religious home. Okay and that specific incidence - they always spoke about soul ties I don't know if you know what that is: they say if you sleep with a man before marriage or with a woman then you get a soul tie because you become one. Okay, so that was always a fear in my mind. I was always fearing that I have become one with my (abuser) which I hated ...

In this regard, “soul ties” can be seen as a label or category for all people who have had a sexual experience with someone outside of wedlock. When a label is attached to a person it may create a restriction because labels leave no room for alternatives meanings or understandings to be created (White, 1995). This can be restricting especially if you had no control over an abusive situation. It is evident also that the idea of a “soul tie” is negative to you because the idea of having a soul tie with your abuser generates words of fear and hate: “fearing”, “hating”.

In this regard, certain aspects of religion can restrict the movement of your bicycle riding process and thus also in your coping with the abuse that you experienced.

Nadine

4.9 COPING AND TELLING

To Anna,

During my practical experience while studying psychology and working as an intern-counselling psychologist, I heard many people telling narratives or stories about their experiences. The comfort level of the tellings ranged from 'difficult' to 'easy'. The tellings were sometimes sad, sometimes happy but the value always lay in the telling. These tellings always led to new and different tellings as the stories grew and changed. The narratives or stories that people tell about their experience are important as they reveal realities and the meanings attached to the experiences (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Morgan, 2000; White, 1995). In this regard, I was excited to hear that **telling** also played a big role in your life, which I will now discuss with you in more detail.

Your bicycle riding metaphor appears to embody your narrative:

(P): ...And the peddles - yes, I love it, because it really is hard work. It's not easy. It's not just telling the story. It's hard work telling the story and it's definitely what the peddles are. 'Ek gaan nou sommer tjank'

In this extract you include narration or story telling to become part of your bicycle riding process, to become the peddles of your bicycle. I will discuss ways that telling played a role in your narrative of abuse by being a movement and coping helper. In this regard, it seems as though telling assisted you in being helped and to gain alternative stories or meanings. Hearing other people's stories also appears to have assisted you in some way and, finally, tellings appear to have influenced you in wanting to help other people.

To discuss coping and telling in more detail, I will begin by explaining how telling could have led to you feeling that you were receiving help:

- (R1): Um, what was it like for you to tell her your story for kind of like - I suppose, that was the first time you ever told somebody?
- (P): Ja, it was very nice. I was very scared. Uh, I wish that she had more, um, counselling skills. Ja, it is terrible to say that but I wish she had more - she had more - knowledge or whatever the skills, to be able to help me better. Uh, but just the fact that I could tell her my story helped a lot...

In this extract, you explain that the person you were telling your story to did not have enough skills to help you. What is interesting, however, is that you also explain that it still helped you just to tell your story and thus it is so that telling may encourage assistance with coping.

In relation to coping, all stories, that are told, have dominant as well as alternative stories. The dominant parts of people's stories are usually told first and have the most power in a person's life, whereas alternative stories catch less attention and thus have less influence over a person's life (White & Epston, 1990; White, 1997; White, 2000). An alternative story is evident in the following extract:

- (R1): Okay, so, and does the telling - get different - become different each time.
- (P): Yes, It's more defined. I get more meaning to it. I understand more what I was going through.

This extract shows that every time you told your story about the abuse it became more defined, meaningful and understandable. In this regard, for alternative stories to come to the fore, a person needs to describe their experiences and the more they describe and discuss their experiences the easier it is to find alternative meanings (White & Epston, 1990; White, 1997; White, 2000). Telling probably helped your story of abuse to become more defined, meaningful and understandable.

The aspects of hearing other people tell their stories to you also seems to have played a part in your coping with abuse:

(R1): Okay. Um, I'd like to talk about the gathering stories as well. Okay. Cos its - cos you started the process of gathering stories. First of all with - um, when you were (age), um, with that psychologist - there with her sharing her story with you about her son and now you have added another story to your - to your – repertoire. Um, how else? And, you have said that this is something that helps you. How else could you go about gathering these types of stories?

(P): Well, from hearing from other people.

...

(R1): Okay, so do you think that you could build, um, a theme into your story or a chapter in to your story called 'gathering stories?'

(P): Yes, I'd love that.

...

(P): ...and at one point you shared your story with me and in sharing your story I - although I had made a connection, an alternative story with guilt not being part of me anymore - you helped thicken that, that thing. Okay, so that I - it will never break again in my life. It's going to stay there forever which really meant a lot um...

By hearing stories from other people about their experiences you seem to have been able to adapt your story in a way that lessened the guilt that you were feeling. Through the interactive process of sharing narratives or stories with others, from a similar environment, meanings were developed and changed (Gergen, 1997; O'Hanlon, 1994; White, 2000). You seem to have taken meanings from other people's experiences and made them part of your story. By developing and changing your story in relation to new meanings, you may have created your own new meaning.

Finally, telling may also have influenced you in wanting to assist other people who have had experiences of abuse:

(P): Because, to me it feels like, you know, I am at this stage now where I don't just want to help myself. I want to help others and in gathering these stories it won't just help me it will help others as well.

(R1): Um (agree). Okay. So it sounds like a good thing for you all round.

(P): Yes.

In this extract, you explain that through gathering tellings of narratives or stories you could help yourself as well as others. White (1995) explains that when people, who have been abused, begin to create other meanings in their lives it can be seen in them wanting to tell and telling other people about what has happened to them. The telling of your experience appears to have assisted you in moving to the point where you felt that you wanted to share your story and/or your gathered stories with others to create movement in coping for yourself and others.

Your narrative shows that telling may have had a positive influence on your experience and your circumstances surrounding abuse. This positive influence appears to have promoted your coping with the abuse by making movement possible. However, when aspects like embarrassment entered your life your telling seems to become restricted:

(R1): Why you laughing?

(P): Because I'm embarrassed that it took so many tellings.

(R1): Okay. Um, don't want to get side-tracked again but you basically took so many tellings - so many tellings for what? To 'what' so many tellings?

(P): So many tellings to get. Why did I have to tell so many times my story? Why couldn't I just get the healing I needed the first time?

(R1): Okay, do you think that our conversation that we've had now, you know, that we've had now in the last couple of sessions - do you think this is going to be the last time that you tell the story?

(P): No, I hope not. But, um, I, I don't have the need so large in my life anymore to tell my story. Where up to this point I - the need was so big I had to tell somebody. Where now - it's - now, I want to hear other stories.

In this discussion, it seems you experienced embarrassment because of the amount of times that you had to tell your story of abuse before you could experience healing. In this regard, every time a person tells their story they may re-author it (Epston & White, 1998; Speedy, 2000; White & Epston, 1990; White, 2000). Attaching meanings to experiences is not a static process but rather one

that is continually changing and developing (White & Epston, 1990; White 1995). By believing that a person needs to tell their story only a certain number of times before it becomes the way they want it to be, may restrict the movement of coping because it does not allow the story to develop and change beyond the way the person thinks it must be.

Nadine

4.10 COPING AND VOICE

To Anna,

When thinking back about our conversations you used your **voice** to discuss many different aspects that relate to your story of abuse. I think it is only fitting that I include in these letters, how 'having a voice' also appears to have helped you cope with abuse. Firstly, I would like to discuss how the voice may have been connected to your metaphor of the bicycle:

(Example 1)

(P): ...On the bicycle. On the bell now. Warning people, watch out! I'm going to talk.

(R1): Okay. So you are but flying past us at the moment, ringing your bell, warning us something's coming (laugh)...

(Example 2)

(P): ...I think the frame um... Oh ja, what can I say there,

(R1): Um,

(P): My voice,

(Example 3)

(P): Basically the brakes are saying 'no'. Okay So, it's still my voice.

Epston and White (1998) explain that at times the voice or ability to narrate experiences has been taken from people who have been abused. It seems that having a voice was important to you in that you have connected it to so many different parts of your bicycle. In the above examples, you explain that your bicycle has a bell (your voice) to warn people that you are going to talk. You also associate your voice with the bicycle's frame. Finally, your voice is heard in the brakes of your bicycle in that you are able to say "no".

The aspects that may help you to cope with the abuse that I would like to discuss further are hearing other people's perceptions, breaking the silence and attaining help by using your voice. Becoming empowered by deciding to use your voice also seems to have played a role. Finally, the quality of your assertiveness and relationships also appear to have been influenced by your use of voice.

The first aspect, that of hearing other people's perspectives, can be seen in the following extract:

(R1): Ja. So this - there is just no ways of keeping this voice quiet. It keeps popping up!

(P): Ja.

(R1): Isn't it, really. It keeps popping up even under such duressand, I mean under such threats of, you know, "I'll kill you". And, I'm sure that you really believed it.

(P): Ja, It's nice to hear it that way because in my mind it feels the other way. Why didn't I just tell her? Why didn't I just scream it out?

In this part of the conversation, the psychologist (R1) appears to experience your voice as something that cannot be kept quiet. On the other hand, it seems as though you experienced the opposite in that you did not tell or scream out. Thus, hearing other people's perspectives can help to change meanings that restrict coping in one way or another (Freedman & Combs, 2002; White & Epston, 1992, White 1997). You seem to have experienced a positive new perspective: you explain that it was nice to hear the psychologist's (R1) view that differed from yours.

The next aspect concerns breaking the silence. In the following excerpt you use your voice to break the silence by telling about the experience of abuse.

(R1): Okay, when did the fairy wheels come off?

(P): That time when I went to that teacher.

...

(R1): Um, what was it like for you to tell her your story. For, kind of like, I suppose, that was the first time you ever told somebody?

(P): ...Uh. But just the fact that I could tell her my story helped a lot...

(R1): Okay.

(P): But, ag, I mean it is was very nice. It was nice for me to talk about it. It was that first step of breaking the silence which I think was the most important step.

...

(R1): So looking back along the whole process. Your whole story: that has been the most important thing?

(P): Ja.

(R1): Breaking the silence.

(P): Yes.

...

(P): ...I mean, like I am saying, everything is in stages. That was just a little bit but I have come to the place now where my whole family knows and my (abuser) knows they know and that just broke the whole thing.

(R1): What did it break?

(P): The power hold he had over me. His powerful, my powerlessness changed around. Now I'm powerful and he is powerless.

In this part of your narrative you seem to make a big movement in your bicycle riding process in that you decided to tell someone your story of abuse for the first time. You also explain that this was an important step to take because you regained your power through using your voice by telling about your experience. When your whole family heard and knew what had happened to you a power shift seems to have occurred in your favour versus your abuser. Sharing your experience of abuse with others, may thus help in coping with the abuse because the outcome was that you regained some of the power that you lost as a result of the abuse.

You also appear to have attained help through using your voice:

(P): You know what I am getting out of this? Can I tell you what I am thinking of this? The fact that I never wanted to speak out about it - I never wanted - I was too afraid to tell my (family members). And, here is one place where I didn't keep quiet and then help came...

...

(R1): Um, do you feel you helped yourself back then?

(P): Yes! And if I am listening to this now: yes! If I did scream, yes, I did help myself. I want to pat myself on my back.

In this telling, you seem to have attained help by allowing your voice to be heard. In this way, your voice helped to create an opportunity to cope with the abuse through the help that you received.

Deciding to use your voice may have empowered you:

(R1): So. So it changed a little bit there. That voice, in terms of getting the fairy wheels off - as that, became your decision, not somebody else's decision.

(P): Ja, I wasn't, I wasn't forced to talk.

(R1) Ja.

(P): I just. Ja, that's the difference. Ja.

(R1) Okay. What was that like for you, to have to or to be able to make a decision for you?

(P) Well, thinking of it now, it gave me that first little bit of power that I wanted.

In this excerpt, you explain that there were times that you made the decision to talk - not because you had to but because you wanted to. You also explained that this decision to talk gave you some power. In this regard, talking or telling your story seemed to empower you in a way and helped you to cope with the abuse.

Your voice gave you the power to be assertive it seems:

(P): ... then I'm adding bricks there - brakes.

- (R1): Yes. Yes. Ja.
- (P): Um, and that is - the sort of - where I feel empowered, you know. Where my (abuser) came into the room. Where I couldn't say anything. Where I was too afraid in (place). Now, now I feel that I've got the power to speak up. What did I say? Um.
- (R1): Are the brakes on or off?
- (P): They will brake if I need. If somebody...
- (R1): If you find yourself in a situation where you're thinking it...
- (P): Basically the brakes are saying 'no'. Okay. So, it's still my voice.
- (R1): Okay.
- (P): But it's saying 'no' to my (abuser), you know. Telling him to get out of the room: "I am not feeling comfortable with you. Please leave".
- (R1): Okay, so your voice is standing up for you. Um, it's assertiveness.
- (P): Thank you.

In this discussion, it seems you gained assertiveness by using your voice and in so doing, you explain that you were able to say "no". Thus, you moved to a place where you had the strength to stand up for yourself in an abusive situation, which may have helped you in coping with the abuse.

Finally, having other people hear your story also seemed to play a role in the movement and thus coping with the abuse in your life:

- (R1): ...we spoke about the bicycle and your voice, um, in terms of the bicycle and perhaps a bit of the healing and your dealing with, in terms of the bicycle theme, baby bicycle fairy wheels... etc. Um, and at the moment you - you are riding on your own.
- ...
- (P): No, I'm not riding on my own because someone needs to hear me. You're hearing me now.
- (R1): Okay, cool, nice, yes, ja. Um, these people that are hearing you, how do they fit into the bicycle picture?
- (P): Well, some are pushing me from the back, helping me to go faster. Some are walking next to me pushing me and everything...

You explain that you are not alone in the process of your bicycle riding. In this regard, we, as people, are social beings and it is in our interactions that meanings are created (Gergen, 2001; O'Hanlon, 1994; White, 2000). In this way, the people who are with you in the coping process seem to have certain influences on your coping and dealing with the abuse which is evident in your words that some of the people were helping you go faster and others were walking next to you and helping you by pushing you.

Although these aspects seem to have helped the movement of your bicycle and thus the coping process, other aspects may have stood in the way of movement and your coping with the abuse. These aspects involve people, in your environment, who did not want to hear your voice and you who was not making your voice heard. When other people abuse your voice it also seems to have hindered movement. In relation to the first aspect you state:

(R1): Well, maybe - the, you know, this is - this is one of the nice examples of when you did call for help.

(P): Ja.

(R1): Perhaps there were ears around this time.

(P): Ja.

(R1): And maybe there weren't other ears the other times and that is why it wasn't an option.

(P): There were ears but I just - I didn't raise my - yes, they didn't listen well and I didn't scream loud enough: both ways.

It appears as though you needed the people around you (the ears) to listen better but you also needed to express yourself better (scream louder) for them to hear. Thus, it seems that when people do not listen or do not make their voices heard about the abuse, it may stand in the way of movement and thus of coping in that help does not come.

Abuse of your voice may also hinder coping:

(R1): When the psychologist told your story, um, to your (family members) without your permission, um, what happened to your power and to your voice at that moment?

(P): It was lost in the pain and the confusion.

(R1): Okay, did the psychologist take over your voice in that moment?

(P): Um, (psychologist) did.

(R1): Or use your voice?

(P): (Psychologist) did (s/he) used my voice, yes!.

...

(P): Which I'm glad, I'm very glad (psychologist) did it now. I just wish (s/he) didn't... I wish (s/he'd) asked my consent because I probably would have given it to (her/him) and I wish (s/he) didn't tell all the things that (s/he) did say.

In this extract, the psychologist used your voice which, you explain became lost in pain and confusion. When Epston and White (1998) explain that a person's voice and ability to express themselves are taken over by the abuser in some situations, I ask myself to what degree can taking over another person's voice also be abusive? It appears that using another person's voice without her/his permission may restrict the movement of coping because aspects that s/he did not want to tell, were told by someone else.

Nadine

In this chapter, I have introduced aspects surrounding the letters that I wrote to the participant in a letter of introduction. In the letters (that followed) I discussed how anger, contradiction or conflicting stories, embarrassment, emotional connection, introspection, psychology, religion, telling and voice appear to be involved in helping the movement of coping as well as hindering the movement of coping with abuse.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, I revisit the problem of the political and statistical discourses. I also summarise the findings of the individual narrative and discuss alternative meanings. Finally, I make recommendations, and in the conclusion discuss what I have learned from this research.

5.1 PROBLEM OF STATISTICS AND POLITICAL DISCOURSES

As discussed in chapter 1, there seems to be contradiction between the political and statistical discourses. In this regard, the political discourse appears to grant rights to children by endeavouring to protect them from aspects such as abuse that can cause harm (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, Section 28 (1b)). On the other hand, the statistical discourse portrays a conflicting image wherein abuse and neglect are seen to be occurring (Fako, 1997; Montague & Pitman, 1996). In the light of this contradiction between the present situation and the way it should be in South Africa and other countries, a person can turn to a third source for different meaning and understanding about abuse. This meaning can be found in the personal narratives of individuals who have been abused. I will therefore shortly summarise the findings that have become evident in this research, in the next section.

5.2 FINDINGS OF THE INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVE

In attempting to understand how a female person who was abused as a child has coped with that abuse during her life, I have used the metaphor of a bicycle with regards to the movement that is an integral part of the bicycle riding process. In this metaphor, the bicycle became the participant's way of coping with the abuse that she had experienced. I focused on the main narratives that we discussed in

terms of allowing movement in coping with abuse as well as aspects that appear to stand in the way of movement and, as such, signify coping hindrances.

5.2.1 Coping and Anger

With regards to anger, the movement of coping may be seen when power is regained. Anger also seemed to be a movement of coping helper by being an 'embarrassment fighter' and by assisting in 'obtaining a voice'.

5.2.2 Coping and Contradiction or Conflicting Stories

Contradiction or conflicting stories that were found in the participant's narratives seem to have been accepted by the participant through her being open about the contradictions or conflicting stories. This acceptance then seems to have allowed for creation of new and different meanings. In this regard, movement, and thus coping, was discernible in her narrative. Movement and coping hindrances were also evident in the contradictions or conflicting parts of her stories, which may have led to confusion, feelings of guilt and restriction in the telling process. Furthermore, personal and cultural perceptions may have led to contradictions or conflicting stories, which created barriers to movement in the coping process.

5.2.3 Coping and Embarrassment

Embarrassment, which was experienced as a negative aspect in the participant's life, was minimised by her when she appeared to have determined who should own the embarrassment and through anger she may have obtained new and different meanings. These aspects appear to have helped the movement of coping with abuse. When looking at movement hindrances, embarrassment seems to be restricting in itself, but also appears to silence the participant's voice and thus prevents the participant from receiving help. Furthermore, embarrassment seems to hinder the movement of coping because of the perceptions that she had created

for herself; and her embarrassment seems to have increased as a result of some socialization factors and because of her fear of being rejected.

5.2.4 Coping and Emotional Connection

The emotional connections that the participant seemed to value appear to have assisted the movement of coping by allowing her to work with her story of abuse. Transparency, climate, openness and honesty, and being open to suggestions seem to have been aspects that allowed emotional connections to be created. Coping hindrances may be seen in the participant being afraid to lose emotional connection. Not knowing how to create emotional connection may also hinder coping with abuse.

5.2.5 Coping and Introspection

Introspection appears to have helped the movement of coping with abuse. In this regard, questioning herself, being honest and truthful, and having integrity seems to have allowed introspection to enter the participant's life. Furthermore, applying active introspection and reflection, where the participant was able to be actively involved in coping with the abuse, seems to have assisted in the process of movement and thus coping.

5.2.6 Coping and Psychology

The forward movement resulting from the participant receiving help, being able to vent anger and breaking the silence, which led to empowerment, seem to have been aided through the workings of psychology. Thus, psychology appears to have played a role as movement and coping helper. Psychology, however, also seems to have restricted the movement of coping when it took the stance of being expert knowledge and also when it took decisions concerning the participant's life without her permission.

5.2.7 Coping and Religion

Religion through prayer, faith and adherence to the religious expectation of inner healing may have resulted in movement and coping. Religion also appeared to be a movement and coping helper by allowing the participant to be actively involved in her coping process as well as allowing her to express different emotions and feelings relating to the abuse. Movement hindrances in the participant's religious narrative may have occurred in the forms of contradictions and an authoritative stance. Not allowing negotiation, having to adhere to certain religious requirements as well as attaching labels to a person may be seen as movement and coping hindrances.

5.2.8 Coping and Telling

The telling of narratives or stories seems to have allowed the participant to gain help and alternative stories to be created. Hearing the tellings of other people's narratives or stories also may have assisted the participant in her coping process. Furthermore, the participant appeared to want to tell her story to others so as to help them cope with abuse. These aspects then appear to have assisted the participant to move on in her coping process. Movement and coping hindrances became evident in her embarrassment that seemed to stand in the way of her telling and moving on.

5.2.9 Coping and Voice

Having a voice appears to be important to the participant and thus seems to have been a movement and coping helper. In this regard, hearing other people's perceptions about the participant's voice seems to have been a positive aspect to the participant. Having a voice also may have assisted in breaking the silence and attaining help with regards to the abuse. The participant also appeared to have gained power by making decisions to use her voice. Finally, assertiveness and

having other people, in the participant's environment, listen to her voice may also have played a positive role in her narrative of abuse. Accordingly, these aspects were interpreted as movement and coping helpers. Hindrances in the movement of coping seemed to have occurred when people, in the participant's environment, did not listen to her voice as well and when she did not make her voice heard. When the participant's voice was used by another person, it also appeared to be a coping hindrance.

From these findings, it becomes evident that the participant had many different aspects in her life, which either helped or hindered the movement of coping with abuse. Single definitions seem not to be of significant value to her as she appears to create her own meanings and understandings of what had happened to her and how it had influenced her in coping with the abuse. I will now discuss how these meanings can be understood in relation to the political and statistical discourses.

5.3 ALTERNATIVE MEANINGS

In my mind, the political and statistical discourses appear to be dominant discourses in that they seem to carry a lot of power. However, an alternative discourse to these two discourses can be found in the individual narratives of a person who has been abused. The research findings show that the narrative of experienced abuse differs in not being a factor of the law and by being more than a statistic. It also becomes apparent that meanings in an individual narrative can be rich with description and thus is not a single definition or a numerical symbol. Thus, these new and different meanings generated by the narrative of the participant can be seen as alternative sources of meaning and understanding concerning abuse.

When the political and statistical discourses are looked at they reflect not only their own unique respective meanings but also their composite meanings concerning abuse. When the unique meanings in the narrative of an individual who has been abused, are added to the whole scenario of abuse, a picture that is even richer in

meanings emerges. This new meaning that can be created through the interlinking of the different meanings seems to allow for different understandings regarding abuse.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Limitations

Limitations of this study can be seen in the following aspects:

- As narrative theory tries to steer away from other, traditional perspectives, it becomes a perspective in its own right and thus can become limited in its usefulness and application.
- Narrative research explains that the researcher is part of the process in developing meanings. Consequently, this research is certain to be influenced through the meanings that I have concerning abuse.
- There is only one participant in this research. This places limitations on the research findings, as no comparisons can be made.
- The gender of the participant is female and thus aspects relating to the meanings that abused males have concerning their experiences cannot be considered.
- The information concerning abuse is extensive and only some authors who address abuse were referred to.
- As abuse can be a sensitive issue, individuals who were abused may find it difficult to discuss their experience honestly and openly.
- Six one hour sessions with a therapist may have been too little time to gain sufficient information from the participant.
- The participant may have felt threatened by one or more factors in the research situation such as the co-therapist (researcher), the video and tape recording of the narrative and therefore may have held back on certain aspects of the abuse.

5.4.2 Further Research

Recommendations for further research are as follows:

- As a person's narrative on abuse can hold much richness in descriptions, much research is possible. Further research, therefore, is recommended. In this research, only some of the aspects that became evident were discussed yet there is room for much further interesting research.
- Giovanni and Becerra, (1979) explain that defining abuse is a difficult task. In this regard, by researching the meanings and understandings that people have concerning their abuse new and different definitions can be created.
- Research into the meanings and understanding of abuse by the abuser can shed a different light on to the political, statistical and individual narrative of the abused person.
- Likewise, the meanings and understanding of males concerning their abuse can also be researched to shed more and different light on the political and statistical discourses.
- Research into the meanings and understanding of abuse by other people in the environment of the abused person can bring into focus different dimensions thereof.
- Research involving a larger number of participants can create opportunity for comparisons of meanings and understandings.
- Follow up research can generate understanding of how an abused person's meanings and understandings may change over time.

5.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, this research has increased the volume of my training in psychology as I have learned to listen to people's narratives in a different way. The change in me lies in being able to listen for aspects that may allow, as well as restrict, the person from gaining alternative meanings, which can lead to different ways of

being in life. I have also come to the conclusion that there are two sides to a coin, when I discovered in the narrative of the participant, the helpers and the hindrances that her telling revealed. I believe therefore that assumptions about the meanings that other people have may cause restrictions in developing new and different meanings or understandings. As I have stated, the politics and statistics concerning abuse are dominant discourses that detract from and divert the meanings that individuals have concerning abuse. In this way, the political and statistical discourses can be hindrances in that alternative meanings and understanding regarding abuse may become difficult to obtain which can prevent better understanding for the purposes of healing in the abused. Thus, I believe that by gaining different understanding and meaning concerning abuse, the problem of abuse can be better dealt with.

As a final remark, I have had the privilege of sharing six hours of time with the participant in this research and her meanings concerning abuse. In this regard, I have the understanding that there has been much change and development regarding her meanings of coping with abuse but that her story about abuse will still change in the future. Thus, once upon a time she had an experience of abuse; here and now she has shared the narrative about abuse; and forever after she will reveal how her story of abuse will look in the future.

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Appendix A

Letter of Confidentiality: Participant

Letter of Consent

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Nadine Kerr, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of the research: Once Upon a Time, Here and Now and Forever After: A Narrative on Abuse. I understand the information given about the research and its purpose.

In this regard, I understand that the purpose of the research will be to try and understand how a person (female) who was abused as a child, copes with that childhood abuse in present day living.

I also am aware of the fact that I will have to attend six sessions, once a week, for an hour. The researcher (Nadine Kerr) and a counselling psychologist (Melissa Brokensha) will be undertaking the interviews, which will be audio/visually and audio-recorded. In the first session, my Power Point presentation will be viewed and then discussions will be about my experience of abuse and present coping with the abuse. I fully understand that the interviews will be made public through transcripts but that any information leading to the identification of myself or other individuals that I may refer to, will be changed. I also understand that the Power Point presentation will not be made public. In this regard, it was explained to me that confidentiality will be maintained.

I understand that Lourens Human (Nadine Kerr's supervisor and counselling psychologist) and Melissa Brokensha (counselling psychologist) will have access

to my full personal details. In this regard, I also understand that they will keep all information strictly confidential.

I declare that I have received all relevant information pertaining to the research, including the personal details of the researcher's name, qualification, and contact details. I will not hold the University of Pretoria or the researcher (Nadine Kerr) liable for any damages or injuries that may occur or be sustained by myself during the undertaking of the research.

I may at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the research. If I should withdraw, all data pertaining to the research will be destroyed immediately. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and of my own free will declare myself prepared to participate in the research.

Participant's name _____ (Please print)

Signature _____

This document was signed on the _____ day of _____ month of 2004 at _____.

Nadine Kerr
Intern Psychologist

Lourens H. Human
Supervising Psychologist

Melissa Brokensha
Counselling Psychologist

TO BE RECEIVED BY THE PARTICIPANT

NAME	NADINE KERR
QUALIFICATIONS	Masters in Psychology (2years), B-Psych (2years), BA (3years).
CONTACT DETAILS	Tel: 073 619 7282 PO Box 73792, Lynnwood Ridge, PRETORIA, 0040

Appendix B

Letter of Confidentiality: Psychologist

Nadine Kerr
PO Box 73792
Lynnwood Ridge
0040

Letter of Confidentiality

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Nadine Kerr, about the nature of the research: Once Upon a Time, Here and Now and Forever After: A Narrative on Abuse.

I understand that I will be acting as a researcher and counselling psychologist during the research. I further understand that the purpose of the research will be to try and understand how a person (female) who was abused as a child, copes with that childhood abuse in present day living.

I also am aware of the fact that there will be six sessions, once a week, for an hour. The researcher (Nadine Kerr) as well as myself will be undertaking the interviews and these interviews will be audio/visually and audio-recorded. In the first session the participant's Power Point presentation will be viewed and discussions will be about her experience of abuse and present coping with the abuse. I also have the knowledge that the transcriptions of the interviews will be made public but that any information leading to the identification of the participant or any other individuals that she may refer to, will be changed. I understand that the Power Point presentation will not be made public.

I hereby declare that I will maintain confidentiality concerning the content of the research interviews with specific reference to the participant and other individuals that the participant might identify.

I declare that I have received all relevant information pertaining to the project and am willing to act as a researcher and counselling psychologist in this research. I will not hold the University of Pretoria or the researcher (Nadine Kerr) liable for any damages or injuries that may occur or be sustained by the participant, the equipment used and to myself, during the undertaking of the research.

I have the understanding that I will receive remuneration in the amount of R250.00 per session from the researcher (Nadine Kerr) for services rendered. I will also continue to see the participant if she were to feel the need for further therapy concerning the abuse that she endured but also understand that any payments after the completion of the research will be the responsibility of the participant.

Psychologist's name _____ (Please print)

Signature_____

This document was signed on the _____ day of _____ month of 2004
at_____

Nadine Kerr
Intern Psychologist

Lourens H. Human
Supervising Psychologist

Appendix C

Letter of Consent: Psychologist

Nadine Kerr
PO Box 73792
Lynnwood Ridge
0040

Letter of Consent

I hereby confirm that I have granted Nadine Kerr (Intern counselling psychologist) the permission to make use of the facilities at our practice named “The Associates”, for her research: Once Upon a Time, Here and Now and Forever After: A Narrative on Abuse.

As I will be undertaking the interviews with the researcher (Nadine Kerr), I have the knowledge that there will be six sessions, once a week, for an hour. I also understand that the sessions will be audio/visually and audio-recorded, meaning that a video camera as well as a tape recorder will be used. As a Power Point presentation will be viewed, a computer will also have to be made available. In this regard, the researcher will bring with her, to our facilities, any of the above-needed equipment.

I will also not hold the University of Pretoria or the researcher (Nadine Kerr) liable for any damages or injuries that may occur or be sustained by the participant, the equipment or to myself during the undertaking of the research.

Psychologist's name _____ (Please Print)

Signature _____

Name of facility _____ (Please print)

This document was signed on the _____ day of _____ month of 2004
at _____.

Nadine Kerr
Intern Psychologist

Lourens H. Human
Supervising Psychologist

Appendix D

The Bicycle Metaphor drawn by the Participant

