A pastoral Response to the Identity Confusion of Young Children Confronted with a Family Secret after the Death of a Parent.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation/thesis submitted for the Doctoral degree (Practical Theology) at the University of Pretoria is my own work in design and execution, and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher education.

I further declare that sources cited or quoted are indicated and duly acknowledged.

Student: Mariri LMT____________________________

Date:_____________________

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Date:_____________________

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the people who have honored me by courageously sharing the sorrows and triumphs of their lives. You are truly the inspiration for this work.

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you. - Maya Angelou

This thesis is also dedicated to the memory of my late mother, Mantsulwana Christina Mariri, my late mother-in-law, Dimakatso Margaret Mabelane, my late grandmothers, Manthite Getrude Masilela and Ntebatse Dorothy Mariri, my late grandfathers, Percy Mampuru Masilela & Segwati William Mariri, and my granny in-law, Kokoni Elizabeth Mabelane. Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord. And let light perpetual shine upon them.
Acknowledgements

A famous writer tells of two classes of authorship. One kind will accumulate data, sort them and draw conclusions. The other, faced with the data, incorporates them into his/her life, and later is compelled to write by the urgency of a vital experience. This work has not just passed through the researcher’s intellect, but through the minds of many others as well. “Certain authors,” says Pascal, “speaking of their works, say ‘My book...’ They would do better to say: “Our book,...’ because there is in them generally more of other people’s than their own.” (Paul 1890:314) So is it with this work.

I brought a stone to an academic don. It was a chunk of boulder that I had carved out of the caves of my experience, challenges and struggles. Prof Maake J Masango, with great and careful kindness helped chip away at that rock until we were able to see a wonder below its face. Prof MJ Masango went out of his way to encourage me to work on this. The enthusiasm he brought in helped to refine the story and to prepare it to share with a wider audience. He bore the lion’s share of work in all the rewrites that brought this work to its final form, adding insights into the ways in which God works and keeping this research true to the co-researchers’ pain and the healing. He brought energy, creativity and skill to the writing and this quality of work is due in large measure to his gifts and sacrifice. I’m highly indebted to him.

“Iron sharpens iron, and one [friend] sharpens another” (Prov 27:17). Many have intersected this research and gave time and heart to sand the surface or etch a design or voice an opinion, encouragement or objection, leaving a piece of their life inside this research and how it has unfolded. Whatever sharpness there is in the pages that follow is a result, first of all, of discussions, challenges and suggestions among my friends with whom I study and among whom I continue to learn the craft of pastoral care. Thank you to colleagues whose critical reading of this thesis improved it immensely.

Thank you to my co-researchers, for letting me into your lives and making an indelible impression on mine. I am deeply indebted to you for generously sharing your stories with me and promoting their application to pastoral therapy. Most of us
have our own grief, broken dreams and damaged hearts, each of us with unique losses. I pray that you find grace there that I did, and that by abiding in the presence of the triune God, you will fill up your inside emptiness with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

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I am full of gratitude for the Mariri family. This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my late mother, Mantsulwana Christina Mariri and my late grandmothers, Manthite Getrude Masilela and Dorothy Ntebatse Mariri. I have no words to express my heart and love for Kgaogelo Sanna Charmaine, my wife and Otlotleng Christian Dimakatso, my son.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to a group of ladies from the Alexander’s Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, who saw to our needs during our group contact sessions over the years.

“Ad Majoram Deo Gloria – To The Glory Of God”
Summary:
Secrecy, by its very definition, remains a difficult topic to study. The presence of secrecy in all social organizations is universal and families happen to be one of the earliest forms of social organization that individuals encounter. Family relationships are shaped, in part, by what is shared and what is held secret by family members. Family secrets may accordingly serve as a stimulus for family functioning and the experience of an individual within the family. Secret is kept as a result of intimidation or shame. Secrecy compounds the trauma by ensuring isolation. Often, the victim comes to doubt his or her own experience of reality, which is at odds with the family's version of the truth.

The present study focuses on the disclosure of familial secrets and the impact thereof on adult children who are part of and the secret itself, and the dissertation will be teasing out pastoral care of such adult children. This research interrogates the haunting effects of family secrets on those who happen to be subject of the secret in question. The idea that an individual's behaviour might be traced to a secret kept by a family member in another generation is impressed upon in this study. From a methodological perspective it implies a shift in the analytic process, which does not aim to link co-researchers' indicators with his or her unconscious but to trace these indicators to a muted episode in the family's history.

Co-researchers found themselves haunted by someone else's secret, by the silence erected around a deed that took place decades ago. Thus they are held, individually and respectively, within a group dynamic constituted by a specific familial topology that prevents the individual from living life as her or his own. The unspeakable secret suspended within the adult is transmitted upon disclosure, to the child (now young adult) in “undigested” form and lodges within his or her mental landscape as an unmarked tomb of inaccessible knowledge. Concealing the true paternal and/or maternal identity from a child is a monumental setback in the history of childhood. There are a couple of issues that emerge in light of disclosure of such a secret and, therefore, a paroxysm of emotions that are experienced. Thus pastoral care seeks to bring about healing for the affected.
The study also looks at how the concealment of a family secret generates an obstacle to an individual who happens to be the secret and how this obstacle prevents him/her from becoming a holistic individual. The contention, especially among Africans, is that an unspoken family secret causes the affected individual’s puzzling behaviour. Co-researchers relate their own stories that may have been made enigmatic by secrets that have been muted over decades.

Following disclosure of such secrets, co-researchers are also dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in excess of the facts as they appear. Hence the haunting influence that exists on the co-researchers of element(s) missing. In their engagements following the pastoral and therapeutic alliance established, co-researchers and the researcher endeavour to reconstruct a hidden story. And, by reinterpreting the co-researcher’s story and together with the research, they journey pastorally and therapeutically to find a way to get beyond the enigma-laden silence that had dominated until disclosure.

The main focus of this research would be to pastorally empower the young adults to deal with the issues that come to the fore in light disclosing a secret that had been muted for decades. The key question that the thesis deals with is: What would it take to remove the obstacle to a co-researcher’s being and to reinstate the possibility of his/her existence?
CHAPTER 1
1.1 INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Grief that is expressed and experienced has a potential for healing that can, eventually, strengthen and enrich life. As a natural response to loss, grief is a personal and highly individual experience. The grieving process is much like a roller coaster—full of ups and downs, and highs and lows. It involves a variety of emotions and a mix of good and bad days. Even years after a loss, one may still experience, especially at special events, a strong sense of grief.

Bregman attests that mourning is not shameful (Bregman 1999: 122). Though unfortunate, death is a usual natural phenomenon. Grieving is an active process of relearning; of ongoing adjustment and accommodation to a world without the lost beloved person. This can prove not to be a simple process that could intuitively be learned. The researcher disagrees. The effects of grief are long-lasting and often destructive to the one who grieves and others; if they are not dealt with and addressed properly and effectively.

Dr Elisabeth Kübler-Ross has pioneered methods in the support and counselling of personal trauma; grief and grieving, which is associated with death and dying. Her ideas, notably the “seminal stages of grief” model are often used in bereavement work. The model is also applicable to many other situations where someone suffers a loss or change in social identity. A significant proportion of cases require outside expert interventions (Bregman 1999: 100)... Bregman suggest that grief work is “relearning the world”- an attempt to restore and, finally, letting go of the lost beloved within one’s psyche. It is also a struggle to rebuild one’s daily life, one’s other relationships, and one’s sense of self and future. (Bregman 1999: 105)

However, following the burial of the author’s mother, the brothers, in the words of Wimberly,

“...felt like refugees ourselves, suddenly ripped from our familiar surroundings and relationships.” (Wimberly 2000: 15).
Each family and each individual, ritualizes the loss, uniquely.

A motion picture soundtrack from the movie Titanic, assures us that even after tragic death, ‘the heart does go on’. There is still a connection with their mother, through memories, objects, and dreams. The relationship with their mother still persists; even if its terms are vastly different now that she is late. John S. Mbiti asserts,

“For the Africans, death is a separation and not annihilation; the dead person is suddenly cut off from the human society and yet the corporate group clings to him. This is shown through the elaborate funeral rites, as well as other methods of keeping in contact with the departed” (Mbiti 1970:46).

The relatives of the dead believe that even though the soul of their dead relative has gone up to the sky or near to God, it also remains nearer to them and can be approached through prayers, libations, and offerings. Africans conceptualize death differently. The term “transition” is used when referring to dying. It is very rare to hear people say a person has died. Saying that the person has transitioned, in the African context, means that she/he has gone to the next life. The term also implies that the person has not left us, that the person has simply changed form into a spiritual existence. The term “passed on” is also used, frequently, to express transition.

Schereiter contends that,

“Death is always a rupture of relationships, and grieving and mourning are a way of trying to re-establish relationships, albeit now in a different way. This is portrayed in a poignant fashion in [the Gospel of] John’s account of Mary recognizing that the stranger is Jesus. Jesus tells her not to cling to him – “Do not hold on to me.” One cannot hold on to the dead; a new kind of relationship has to be established. Much of what Jesus does in the healing stories...is to shape a new kinds of relationship with his disciples. The most important relationship of presence to combat absence will be in the Eucharist.” (Schereiter 2008:35)... However, there may be hindrances. What often makes the readjustment process after transforming change so unsatisfying is that old relationships have not been allowed to change” (Schereiter 2008:35).
This, consequently, has a potential to impact on relations with remaining relatives, friends, and peers, since it feels more like the ground beneath has, somewhat, moved. Remaking relationships becomes important in helping such people to find connections that they long for and desire. This is essential for,

“we live in a society that produces, at an alarming rate, relational refugees, people disconnected from significant relationships” (Wimberly 2000: 31).

Such a remaking requires a need for a safe place, which is not easily created. The safe place is necessary for the memory of the death to be revisited and for the emotions that relate to it to be sorted out.

Wimberly writes in his book *Relational Refugees* that human identity is formed in a matrix of relationships. We discover ourselves in and through our encounters with others. He also says that our sense of “me” is dependent on the existence of “you”. We can only see our own eyes in the reflection of another’s. Human identity is also not a possession but a process. We come to discover ourselves more fully throughout our lifetimes (Wimberly 2000: 63).

The crucial and disturbing side of the coin is such that children, who grow up without the knowledge of the identity of their biological father, experience a disconnection, which costs them dearly. Upon disclosure, the affected person is likely to feel an immediate loss of identity and purpose. Such affected people tend to want to go out into the world and seek out their own fortunes because they have no concept of the family inheritance. It requires mentioning here that, such affected people feel

“like a ship abandoned at sea without an anchor” (Wimberly 2000: 53).

Becoming a mature and competent adult involves the integration of two often-contradictory human desires for - communion, or the feeling of being included, connected, and related; and for agency, which entails independence, individuality, and self-fulfillment. One without the other is a denuded and impaired humanity, an incomplete realization of human potential.

Following the death and burial of the author’s mother, so many issues came to the surface in the new chapter of his journey of life. And this has subsequently, rendered the problem statement to be alive. Consequently, the author lacked a theory through
which he would address the questions that arose in light of the new developments following his mother’s death. Furthermore, several problems emerged, and this development added momentum to a quest for answers to questions that the researcher has not been able to riposte. Thus we move into researching this problem.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT QUESTIONS

• Why people keep secrets, how they affect relationships and the types of problems that emerge as a result of secrecy?

• Why does it seem that secrets do not, in themselves, cause as much damage, than their power to determine “who will know what” and the way they are shared?

• How does secrecy alter the attitudes of both the insider and outsider toward the thing concealed?

• What seems to be a powerful motive for keeping secrets in a family and from other family members?

• To what extent non-shared information is considered to be "private" or to be a "secret"?

• How does one deal with the trauma and anger following the disclosure of a child who has been kept as a secret, all along, from the rest of the family; while mourning?

• What would it take to remove the obstacle to a co-researcher’s being and to reinstate the possibility of his/her existence?

• How do the clergy help and what role do the clergy play in providing bridges to address the effects of the disclosure of secrecy and the variables attached to secrecy?

• What ways can family explore with regard to facilitating embracing children who have been kept as a secret from the rest of the family?

• Children, those born and raised in traditional two-parent intact families and those who grow up being kept a secret, are left with a gaping hole. How do clergy endeavour to help such children/persons to fill that gap?
1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

Across time and cultures, fathers have always been considered essential. However, concealing the true identity of the biological father from a child is a colossal obstruction in the history of childhood. There are a couple of issues that emerge and, therefore, inform the aims and objectives in this study. These are: the introduction of a young person following the death of one parent, the emotions that are experienced by the young person affected upon disclosure; and the pastoral element of healing such a young person and reconciling him with the surviving parent. These issues are extremely important and, consequently, inform the aims and objectives of this work.

The main focus of the aims and objective of this research would be to empower the young adults as to how to deal with the above three issues. The thesis will also be oriented around these problems.

Thus the aims and objectives of this research are to gather and interpret data and present findings. Those findings and contribution to the body of knowledge can then be used by practitioners to help and empower people.

In addition, the research aims to pastorally empower those who grow up concealed behind the veil of secrecy to be able to deal with their respective experiences. A caveat here is that the attributes of secrecy dealt with in this thesis should not be considered to be exhaustive. Other researchers and social scientists may see other attributes that are not employed in this research, and may even disagree with the ones employed. This research will, however, to some extent tease out these attributes.

A mentoring model will be employed which Wimberly (2000) interrogates and through which attention is focused on the needs of persons who feel alienated from family and community life – relational refugees. To that effect, Wimberly attests that “mentors can serve relational refugees as a bridge back into community, as a means to overcome their feelings” (Wimberly 2000: 32).

He supports that by adding that “mentoring includes the wider function of assisting relational refugees to overcome the emotional, relational, spiritual, and cognitive alienation that they feel in the world” (Wimberly 2000:33).
Ultimately, it is to enable the traumatized children to break the dangerous and painful link to their past.

The healing process should empower these children to become conscious contributors to the unfolding course of their lives; which can become dignified and meaningful. For,

“Christ never sanctified suffering but rather he alleviated it whenever and wherever he encountered it.” (Waruta & Kinoti 2005:135).

Schereiter supports this view when he writes that

“[Jesus] is the silent teacher who uses his own wounds to heal the wounded hearts of others”(Schereiter 2008:80).

By walking with those who have been hurt, we need to come to know their stories so well that we become freed from our own perspectives, and are able to enter into their worlds as fully as possible. In that way, we will able to repeat the acts of love which Christ, himself, carried out.

“[By virtue of walking with those who have been hurt, our being is reconciled and we are therefore enabled] to be ministers of compassion....Our compassion is deepened through the experience of our own sufferings. As we become companions of those who suffer, we develop a certain kinship in suffering. In uniting our own suffering to Christ’s, we become configured into his suffering so that our suffering too might become redemptive.” (Schereiter 2008:71-2).

1.4 Theoretical Framework
Two theoretical frameworks guided this study: family systems and social constructionism. Family as a system is a collection of parts interacting as a single entity (Davidson, 1983). A change in one person in a family changes the whole family system. For families to maintain relative constancy and internal functioning, families have a tendency towards stability or homeostasis (Jackson, 1965). This concept of family homeostasis implies that although families resist change in an effort to maintain its equilibrium, families must change to adapt to changing circumstances. Social constructionism may be defined as a perspective which believes that a great deal of human life exists as it does due to social and interpersonal influences (Gergen 1985). Social constructionism does not deny the
influence of genetic inheritance, but decides to concentrate on investigating the social influences on communal and individual life. The subjects that social constructionism is interested in are those to do with culture, and society: the shared social aspects of all that is psychological.

Social constructionism regards individuals as integral with cultural, political and historical evolution, in specific times and places, and so resituates psychological processes cross-culturally, in social and temporal contexts. Apart from the inherited and developmental aspects of humanity, social constructionism hypothesizes that all other aspects of humanity are created, maintained and destroyed in our interactions with others through time. This view emphasizes the importance of the acquisition, creation and change of emotional behaviour, therapeutic ability and ways of interpreting things and people. Because the genetic material of each race and region is different, as well as the cultural practice, then we say right from the start that there is no universal human nature. What social constructionism shows to be important are the ways in which socialisation and enculturation, amongst the people we have known, plus the current influence of those whom we now know, are the most active in shaping our mutual existence with others.

Cultural belief and action systems are all-embracing in providing reasons, understanding and explanations for the world as it is experienced and interpreted to be. Culture defines what is permitted appropriate, normal, conforming, desirable and expected. It also defines what is taboo, inappropriate, abnormal, deviant and not legitimate. In this definition, culture refers to actual occurrences and every day social reality. Society, on the other hand, exists in national and regional variations within a country, and is only known through representations and stereotypical essences. Social constructionism sees therapy as having multiple functions. Some of which are: a method of finding personal truth, problem solving, the reduction of anxiety and guilt, symptom removal, gaining relationship skills, reduction of alienation from self, others and society, finding reasons/causes and understanding others. The role of therapist is to facilitate clients in finding these qualities and providing as little extraneous material as possible, although they will always overtly and covertly influence clients. In general, therapy may be a means to providing ways of dealing with misfortune, bad luck and the way things are.
Family systems are living organisms that strive for and have the potential and inner strength to change (Bogdan, 1987). Individuals shape the world in which they live, thereby creating their own reality within a context of a community of others – a reciprocal connection (Gergen, 1989). Gergen’s reciprocal connection cites a family as one such context where members define themselves in their interaction with other members’ perceived understanding of them. Members of a family each construct their own reality about an experience based on their beliefs, maps, and premises about the world, or epistemology (Bateson, 1972) as they simultaneously co-construct meaning within the context of a family system. The process of constructing and understanding the environment based on one’s unique life experience leads to the existence of multiple ways of understanding a shared experience.

Families can, therefore, be viewed as meaning-generating social systems where members construct a sense of self that arises

“not only through their discourse with others, but is their discourse with others,” (Lax 1992:71).

The social discourse of interchange between individuals mediated through language leads to the unfolding of meaning and intention in human behaviour. It is in this space between people, in the realm of the “common world,” that knowledge evolves and where individuals develop a sense of identity or an inner voice (Gergen, 1985).

To fully embrace the lives of individuals, an inductive research methodology that calls for observing and conversing (i.e., personal contact with participants) was utilised. Through such qualitative examination, subjectivity and socially constructed meanings receive in-depth understanding (Merriam, 1998). Stories or narratives provide the dominant frame for life experience and for the organization and patterning of lived experience (Gergen, 1985). Lived experience is interpreted through these stories. Stories construct and impose meaning on the flow of memory, highlighting some and disposing others, making every story telling an interpretation by the storyteller. The focus is on the stories that determine directions in life, and in relationships. The first language from interviews employed in the research allow co-researchers’ perspective more directly rather than through the eyes of the researcher.
1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Research design

The introduction of the methodology of understanding pastoral care, will be accorded exhaustive considerations in Chapter 3. However, this section seeks to highlight the connection with the problem. The study will employ a qualitative approach methodology. The purpose will be to gather data which is relevant to meanings, perspectives and understanding of co-researchers; regarding the effects of secrecy and disclosure. In the light of the results, attention will be paid to patterns that are assumed to relate, respectively, to emotional and behavioural reactions. Age, gender and family dynamics, are to be taken into cognizance when focusing on the co-researchers’ reactions to their new knowledge about their family. The focus will be on both the effects of family secrecy and the pastoral care in reconnecting the family when faced with events such as the death of a parent and the disclosure of a sibling who has been kept a secret for a number of years.

It is noted that there is no way to allay the emotional pain of such trauma. However, dialogue becomes a mode to help those persons, who have been kept a secret, to make sense of the unfolding events in their lives, and forms part of the objectives. By beginning and documenting a dialogue with those affected, the hope is to shed light on a disclosure of a sibling that has been kept secret. This process will also serve as a catalyst in the process of healing for the one who has been kept a secret; as well as the new siblings. Therefore, through the study it is endeavored to enter into their world with grace and hold their world with integrity. This is done by metaphorically employing the gospel episode of the risen Lord and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The risen Lord Jesus appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and accompanied them on their journey. This act of accompanying the disciples is a powerful image that can become a model for our own pastoral praxis. Schereiter, rightly, writes that

“We do no walk ahead of people so much as alongside them, speaking with them, hearing their stories, comforting them, challenging them when necessary. Many of us need this kind of accompaniment on our journey to reconciliation. Those who accompany us may not be able to provide the definitive interpretation of our burdens, but they can become a means by which those burdens are lifted. They can create an atmosphere of safety
and trust that makes possible our finding the way out of our distress.” (Schereiter 2008:42-3).

Wimberly (2000) calls this mentoring-
“a formation process through which the learner develops character, identity, values, self-worth, and a way of being in the world. [It is a] holistic process encompassing all the dimensions of personhood.” (Wimberly 2000: 36).

The author’s main source is the Bible.
“The Bible is a pivotal sense-making document. It reveals the Story of God through Jesus Christ. We enter it with our stories and case studies to discover wisdom to guide us on the journey of life. From our linking with the Bible, we are challenged to see its impact on our lives and discern how to embody its message in our lives…We enter the Bible with our joys. We also enter with our struggles related to experiences of oppression… and other everyday life struggles that block and bind us. We view and respond to the Bible through the lens of all that makes up our identities, social contexts, interpersonal relationships, life events, life meanings and story plots.” (Wimberly 2005: 107).

Our biblical heritage not only illuminates and informs but also guides the practice of pastoral care. This practice brings to life the basic biblical trusts by allowing them to become incarnate and experienced in human relationships.

The biblical truths are illuminated by being applied and tested in the arena of human struggles and growth. Jesus’ purpose in coming to earth was that people could have “life... in all its fullness”(John 10:10).

“Scripture serves, among other things, as a collection of stories onto which we graft our own story.” (Wimberly 2000: 24).

Mbiti asserts that
“The Bible is very much an African book, in which African Christians and theologians see themselves and their people reflected and in which they find a personal place of dignity and acceptance before God” (Mbiti 1998:142).
It bears mentioning that Wimberly (2000) embraces this approach when he adds that,

“faith communities provide in their stories and role models support for our journeys toward relational homes and liberated selves.” (Wimberly 2000: 24).

The methodology employed in this thesis offers a way to move into the space of researching secrecy and disclosure that comes to light following the death of a spouse. Numerous other approaches that could be employed are noted and teased out in Chapter 3 (Research Methodology). The methodology employed will be bolstered by some other methods that will play a complementary role. The central methodology in use here draws from the shepherding model, which is discussed by Gerkin in his work *An Introduction to Pastoral Care*; while moving from the premise of being informed by Kübler-Ross’ seminal book, *On Death and Dying*. In this book the author explains her, now classically regarded, “five stages of grief”. The researcher will employ Kübler-Ross’s pioneered methods in the support and counselling of personal trauma, grief and grieving which are associated with death and dying.

Kübler-Ross’ ideas, notably, the five stages of grief model, also known as the ’grief cycle’, (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance), are also transferable to personal change and emotional upset resulting from factors other than death and dying. Reactions similar to those articulated by Kübler-Ross’s grief model, are observable in people who are confronted with far less serious trauma than death and bereavement. The grief cycle model is a useful perspective for understanding our own and other people’s emotional reactions to personal trauma and change - irrespective of cause.

Gerkin’s method of caring, focuses on the individual as well as the Christian community. Gerkin embarks on the shepherding model of caring ministry; which assumes and gathers momentum ‘with the coming of Jesus, who, according to John’s Gospel, identifies himself as:

“the good shepherd”’ (Gerkin 1997:27), and ‘the shepherding image takes its place as a primary grounding image for ministry.” (Gerkin 1997:27).
As intimated earlier on, the methodological theory, as employed by the author, will be buttressed by a few others that will play a complementary role. This includes: Anne Streaty Wimberly’s revised edition of *Soul Stories*; Waruta and Kinoti’s (eds.) work, *Pastoral Care in African Christianity* for an African perspective; and Edward P Wimberly’s *Relational Refugees* which points us toward the true route to church renewal, the building of loving and nurturing communities, where leaders and members feel secure enough to welcome the alienated and mentor them back into the community. He provides clear and ample examples of how such relational homelessness contributes to, *inter alia*, identity confusion and incapacity to thrive. In his book, *Moving From Shame to Self-Worth*, Wimberly (1999) engages us in a journey where he embarks to highlight that,

“pastoral counseling has always been thought as attending to relational and personal needs of the people through dialogue in one-to-one and interpersonal relationships” (Wimberly 1999:7).

Modern life leaves many people feeling that they are “relational refugees” (Wimberly 2000), who are alienated from one another and from a community. As we attempt to anchor ourselves in a world that seems to have us moving faster than ever and wherein we draw our values from multiple sources of authority – the least of which are our experiences. We also live in a world that seems smaller as our knowledge of one another and the diversity of our experiences. The researcher uses these sources in a harmonizing manner; in order for them to buttress each other and enhance the researcher’s quest. However, Gerkin’s work is central in this study given that with generative wisdom. He moves beyond the predominance of the psychotherapeutic paradigm in pastoral care to a dynamic, interactive process which balances faith, culture, community, and individual well-being.

In our struggle toward reconciliation, what is missing is often not that clear. It is challenging to find something that will help to overcome the pain, transform the memory, and allow us to get on with lives. A solution just does not seem to come. The way to interpret our story is, frequently, a gradual retelling of that story until it becomes a new story (Schereiter 2008:42). What happens in the telling and retelling of the story is the healing of the memory. So much of our identity is tied up with
memory. This becomes more and more apparent the older we get; when the greater part of our life lies behind us rather than ahead of us. The memory of persons and events that are important to us is stored in narratives. (Schereiter 2008:44). Chapter 3 (Research Methodology) will explore the methodology further and engage the aspects thereof.

1.5.2 Sample
The young adults who as co-researchers in the study, come from nine different families and backgrounds. Among others, they include a set of twins, and members of two generations within one family. Two of them are related to the author – stepsister and cousin. In the light of their exposure to different circumstances, their situations are undergirded by the common thread of absent biological fathers. Some of the participants have had other men in their lives, men who had assumed the role of fathers. But their family set-up and their exposure to family life differ. The co-researchers, other than the next of kin, are members of the same community of faith as the author; hence their acquaintance.

The researcher sought the services of other clergypersons who, mostly, are part of the Mabopane Ministers Fraternity and are from various local churches, which include mainly the mainline and African Independent Churches.

1.5.3 Data collection
Data are links between the absolute truth and the researcher’s inquiring mind. Data contains pieces of truth, but are in a rather unrefined state. Data for this research was collected by means of narratives, which took the nature of unstructured interviews. Unstructured interviews, as a way of data collection, allow more freedom and flexibility. Since a complete picture of each co-researcher’s experience following disclosure was sought, data were collected through multiple interviews and observations. Interviews were semi-structured and guided with minimum direction to participants in telling their stories, and encouraged deeper levels of reflection and analysis without limiting or restricting their focus. Open-ended questions are central to this type of interview and they allowed the co-researchers to give their responses in whatever format they felt comfortable with. Interviews began with open-ended
questions that were intended to provide a broad structure for family members’ stories. As stories we elicited, further questions were developed using family members’ own language to garner additional detail and clarification of their meaning and intent. Multiple interview sessions allowed opportunities to ask additional questions and to get corrective feedback on previously obtained information. Repeated observations and gathering data over a period of time (3 months at the least) increased the study’s credibility.

In the case where responses that were given were not clear, questions were rephrased. The process of developing a therapeutic plan, involved steps that were to build on each other, much like constructing a house. The foundation of any effective treatment plan is the data gathered. Thus the researcher had to, sensitively, listen to and understand what the co-researchers struggled with; in terms of their current stressors, emotional status, social network, physical health, coping skills, and self-esteem. Social history was also sought. Data gathered was analysed, coded with themes identified. Interviews ceased when data collected became repetitive, indicating the arrival at a point of saturation where no new information was being gathered to develop properties of a new theme and co-researchers had exhausted their stories.

1.5.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of data was informed by the theoretical frameworks of family systems and social constructionism, the existing literature and research questions. Data were analysed with the goal of constructing themes that capture some recurring pattern that cuts across the greater part of the data. These themes are concepts indicated by the data and were constructed through the constant comparative method of data analysis developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967). The themes constructed had the following essential characteristics: they recur frequently in the data; they link the data together; and they explain much of the variation in the data. In developing the theoretical memo for co-researchers a number of themes were identified. They were: negative reaction; disclosure; identity struggles; change in family relationships; the search for acceptance and integration; struggle with religiosity and faith.
1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY
The research was only conducted in the Mabopane and the Winterveldt area. Furthermore, the study focuses on teens and young adults. This is the generation that asks: How could you do this to Mom/Dad? To the family? How does this relate to me?

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH
The research will focus on the experiences of young adults [born and raised in traditional two-parent intact families and those who were introduced later], following a disclosure, during the mourning period, of a child who has been kept as a secret from the rest of the family. This issue challenges quadrilateral nexus of tradition, individuals and family, community, and cultural context.

These young adults, aged between 21 and 28, need to be nurtured in order for them to become the people that God has ordained them to be as was the case with Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 1 5b). The area upon which the research focuses has a significant number of children who have been kept a secret. Their mothers had not entered into holy matrimony with their respective fathers. This research is a journey with the persons who grow up with social parent(s) – a journey into their experiences. Their experiences are best encapsulated through their stories. Ellen Kuzwayo once said something that is relevant in this study when she said

“Africa is a place of story-telling. We need more stories never mind how painful the exercise might be. Stories help us to understand, to forgive and to see things through someone’s eyes” (Bosman & Petersen 1996:7).

The researcher endeavours to come up with a way of caring for young people affected by the disclosure of a secret, in most cases by a surviving parent. Furthermore, through the model of pastoral care, the researcher attempts to provide tools to assist in providing answers to fundamental questions relating to children who have been kept a secret: “Who am I? Where am I headed as a person?” Thus the model will seek to help the researcher and co-researchers to work together, edify each other, and strengthen each other. Most importantly, the model seeks to draw nearer unto the likeness of our God.
The intention is to restore hope and to help create praxis for a possible better future and to also empower congregations. The pastoral work of the Church is thus to be seen in terms of healing, guiding, sustain and reconciling the people of God (Waruta & Kinoti 2005:85-6). This study would further provide the clergy with a tool to engage this issue. The author would make appropriate recommendations to the church; especially the clergy, on the methodology to be followed when caring for the children who have experienced this or those who are still experiencing it.

1.8 THEME OF THE STUDY
The study has afforded the author with an opportunity to listen to the previously unheard stories of children who are affected as a result of being kept secret while growing up. Two of these children are related to him. This also meant that the author had to learn about the experiences of those children, as they mourned the loss of a parent while also having to deal with the trauma of discovering siblings who share the same blood as them. Thus journeying with the two affected parties – like two sides of the same coin- and getting to know their stories well enough, will assist the author to also be freed from any narrow perspectives and be able to enter into their respective worlds as fully as possible.

1.9 LITERATURE REVIEW:
The researcher engaged in reviewing the theoretical literature in this area of research with a view of being able to answer questions such as:
- What is already known about this issue or the particular area in general?
- Which theories are used and discussed in this area?
- What concepts are used or disputed about?
- What are the theoretical or methodological debates or controversies in this field?
- What has not yet been studied?

1.10 THE KNOWLEDGE WE HAVE
Research and evidence on the subject of dealing with the secret after the death of a spouse, is far less abundant. Not many research papers and articles on related topics have been published and a practical theological perspective, in an African context, still requires much exploration and attention. Chapter 2 (Literature Review) will tap into available reviews and a few seminal works in order to form the premise
from which this research move. This entails looking, inter alia, at the historical account and the contemporary perspective. The chapter will explore Western literature, and from that premise, move on to African literature and then proceed to draw focus on South African literature. This exercise highlights that the effects of secrecy, post disclosure.

1.11 THE KNOWLEDGE WE NEED: RESEARCH GAP

The account of what we do not know is, primarily, a chronicle of the gaps in the research literature that receives meticulous review. Chapter 2 (Literature Review) will contain a section which will presents an overview of some general considerations. The chapter will also have a section that will be focusing on the discussion of the specific research questions that require attention. Recent research on secrecy issues that are clustered around areas of focus, shall be identified; and include the ideologies behind secrecy; and cultural interpretations as well as perceptions.

There is no readily available information on the effects of secrecy on those that life initiates into adulthood. This problem is confounded by massive intergenerational changes suggesting that societal values are independent of the micro family transitions. The best that can be said from the scant evidence, is that the effects are ambiguous. There is a need to accept the fact that not all effects have to be positive, and that there are tradeoffs.

A great deal has been written about various dimensions of secrecy, and there is still a lot to be learned. As social conditions shift, the dynamics of family formation also change, and the complex issues involved in these processes re-emerge to the forefront of other agendas. This above area provides further avenues for future academic work. The research gap that the author endeavours to address in this work is that literature has shown that the pastoral care model has not been used to address the effects that the disclosure of a secret has on children, with variables such as anger, shame, trauma, and challenges with adult attachment. The research gap that this research has identified is that this orientation to the problem overlooks the spiritual factors and imperatives.

The spiritual aspect of the problem is tied to the element of identity from the African sense of belonging. It seeks to address the fact that children are walking a fragile
road to adulthood without a full disclosure of who they are. The fact that their circumstances are being kept secret does them no favour. The final challenge here is of a contextual nature hence the need to address this issue from an African perspective - a South African perspective - through employing an African concept. No research has been done into efforts to, therapeutically, help children who, as a result of a distorted identity, have not realised their full potential as they journey through life. This includes both the children who are born and raised in traditional two-parent intact families and those who have been kept secret for a period of time. The church has not put pastoral tools in place to address such problems. This research attempts to provide a tool to help those who are affected. Some of the gaps in our understanding are described below, more specifically, in the form of research questions.

1.12 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A number of research questions need to be answered in order to better understand the topic. These touch on, among other things, the effects of secrecy and disclosure; including the spiritual effects and the consequences for children in a variety of family structures. Such family structures include not only the traditional intact families, but reconstructed families and non-marital unions. Such questions will inform the approach of this work.

The list of research questions is, by no means, exhaustive. It is restricted by the limited synthesis of the many pieces of the puzzle. Further, the order in which they are presented does not necessarily imply an order of salience, priority, or urgency. Flick describes the significance of research questions in this way

“Research questions are like a door to the research field under study. Whether empirical activities produce answers or not depends on the formulation of such questions. Also dependent on this is the decision as to which methods are appropriate and who (i.e. which persons, groups, or institutions) or what (i.e. what processes, activities, or lifestyles) you should include in your study. The essential criteria for evaluating research questions include their soundness and clarity, but also whether they can be answered in the framework of given and limited resources” (Flick 2009: 103).
The process of listening to person recounting the disclosure experience entails capturing as much of the whole story as possible. They are then confronted with post disclosure experiences and reactions that call for mechanisms of coping and eventually the reconstruction of their realities in light of new information about themselves (Gergen, 1989). This study explores the issues pertaining to the effects of the disclosure and the ways of reconciling the new information in light of disclosure.

The following research questions guided this study:

- Is keeping secrets the norm for family functioning?
- To what an extent is secrecy the organizing principle of family relationships?
- What would it take to remove the obstacle to co-researcher's being and to reinstate the possibility of his/her existence?
- What ways can the family explore with regard to facilitating embracing children who have been kept as a secret from the rest of the family?
- How do the clergy help those who grow up without biological fathers and address issues of identity?
- It is a unique cultural moment for the church to act as a family. How do we go about it?
- How does a clergy person acts, in persona Christi, (in the person of Christ) and as a shepherd of the flock, in filling the gaping hole created as a consequence of secrecy?
- What role do the clergy play in providing bridges to address the effects of secrecy?
- What is the proposed therapeutic model (way) of dealing with such affected persons; from a pastoral perspective?

1.13 ETHICS OF THE RESEARCH

All aspects of this research process, from deciding upon the topic, to identifying samples, conducting the research and disseminating the findings, have ethical implications.
The research is based on utilizing informed consent, as a precondition for participation. Research is both a cognitive and a moral enterprise. The research participants have agreed to partake in the research on the basis of the information given to them by the researcher. The researcher will avoid harming the participants (co-researchers), including invading their privacy and will not deceive them about the aims of the research. The research is meant to produce positive and identifiable benefits rather than simply being carried out for its own sake. The values and decisions of co-researchers will be respected at all times, doing justice to the co-researchers’ responses when analysing data. Interpretations are grounded in the data.

Persons, who are observed, questioned or who are involved in any other way in this research, will not be subjected to any disadvantages or dangers as a result of the research. All risks that exceed what is normal in everyday life, will be explained to the co-researchers. The anonymity of co-researchers shall be protected; and consequently, some details have been encrypted for the purposes of protecting the participant’s identities. Participation in this research is voluntary and it takes place on the basis of participants having been provided with full information regarding the goals and methods of this research.

1.14 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS
The following operational definitions and abbreviations are pertinent to the research:

**Bereavement**: ‘is the situation of a person who has recently experienced loss of someone significant through that person’s death...Grief is the primarily emotional reaction to the loss of a loved one through death, which incorporates diverse psychological and physical symptoms and is sometimes associated with detrimental health consequences.’ (Stroebe and Schut 1998:7)

**Grief** is not easy so to define. Marris sees grief as, ‘the psychological process of adjustment to loss. (Marris 1986:4). Whilst, Fahlberg suggests that, ‘grief is the process through which one passes in order to recover from a loss.’ (Fahlberg 1991: 141, cited in Howe 1995:58). Parkes has the following to say: ‘grief is a process, not a state...It is the reaction to loss, usually of a person.’ (Parkes 1996:7).
Mourning is not the same as grief, although it is associated with it. According to Stroebe and Schut, ‘mourning refers to the social expressions or acts of expressive of grief, which are shaped by the practices of a given society or cultural group.’ (Stroebe and Schut 1998:7). Oliviere and his colleagues summarise the differences between these three concepts as, ‘bereavement is an event; grief is the emotional process, mourning is the cultural process.’ (Oliviere et al. 1998: 121)

Child: here mean a person from birth and adulthood.

Trauma: Trauma is a deeply distressing or disturbing experience. Defined like that the events which can be considered traumatic are wide ranging - from what might be considered the stuff of ordinary life such as divorce, illness, accidents and bereavement to extreme experiences of war, torture, rape and genocide.

“Trauma occurs when a sudden, unexpected, overwhelming intense emotional blow or a series of blows assaults the person from the outside.

Traumatic events are external, but they quickly become incorporated into the mind” (Terr 1990:8).

It is not the trauma itself that does the damage. It is how the individual’s mind and body reacts in its own unique way to the traumatic experience in combination with the unique response of the individual’s social group.

Clergy: A collective term referring to those in holy orders of bishops, priests and deacons. Clergyperson mean anyone who is, episcopally, ordained.

Imago Dei: A Latin word for the image of God.

In persona Christi: latin for in the person of Christ

vade mecum: latin ‘for go with me’. This also means a referential book such as a handbook or manual.

Modus vivendi - a Latin phrase signifying an agreement between those whose opinions differ, such that they agree to disagree. Modus means mode, way. Vivendi means of living. Together, way of living, implies an accommodation between disputing parties to allow life to go on.

The most familiar English terms for father include dad, daddy, papa, pop and pa. Other colloquial expressions include my old man and baba.

Natural/Biological father - the most common category: a genetic connection with the man having legal or financial responsibility for his child
Non-parental father - unmarried father whose name does not appear on the child's birth certificate. He does not, therefore, have the legal responsibility on the child but continues to have financial responsibility.

Stepfather – a man married to a person’s mother and happens not to be the biological father.

Adoptive father - a father who has adopted a child

Foster father - child is raised by a man who is not the biological or adoptive father, usually, as part of a couple.

Social father - where man takes de facto responsibility for a child (in such a situation the child is known as a "child of the family").

Narrative in a research context: The Oxford Mini Dictionary defines narrative as ‘a spoken or written account of something’ (Hawker, 2002: 406). Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary is not specific about the written or spoken, with its ‘an account of any occurrence’ (Macdonald, 1972: 876) thereby including the possibility of other types of account – visual, aural, tactile and so on. This broader, inclusive definition is important because it acknowledges and allows the use of signing, Braille, and other communications systems/languages.

1.15 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

For a father to die honourably, while his child is young, is bad enough. But for a child to grow without a biological father, seems far worse. In numbers, as never witnessed before, men are not taking the responsibility of being fathers to the children they helped procreate. There is confusion and human suffering that reverberates through our culture; as a result of many children who grow up with the biological father not actively participating in their lives, and at times, the true identity of such a father is not disclosed. Thus; the role of the male in bringing children into this world has been so downplayed the notion that fatherhood is all but a non-issue.
Fatherhood has, in the recent times, become a social role that others can play, by assuming a role of a second father. Mothers and fathers bring unique strengths to their relationships with their children. Fathers, just like mothers, always matter. Through their fathers and mothers, children have access to a vast network; including community organisations, faith communities, and even personal histories. The parents provide 'bridges' to all the aspects of the outside world. The family is often equated with a sanctuary – a place where individuals seek love, safety, security, and shelter.

The High Priest of our faith and shepherd of our souls, Jesus Christ, has set us a challenge as we endeavor to follow in his footsteps. God’s liberating message of love, enfolds and encompasses the entirety of the human condition. Waruta & Kinoti goes further to highlight that

“...the church has an obligation to continue with the healing the ministry of Jesus Christ” (Gerkin 1997:96).

Fathers can make a major contribution to the health of the South African society by caring for children and producing a new generation of South Africans; where fathers will be significant by their presence rather than their absence. That connectedness will lead to the development of a particular kind of protective and respectful relationship between a younger and older person, as the term baba implies.

1. 16 EXPOSITION OF THE RESEARCH

CHAPTER 1: This chapter deals with the introduction of issues that will put the ultimate aim of this research into perspective. Issues that are dealt with, are the background factors, which are utilized, to highlight the significance and/or rational of the research, problem statement, research questions and aims and objectives of the study.

CHAPTER 2: This chapter deals with the Literature Review which focuses on the Western literature. From that premise, it moves on to African literature then proceed to draw focus on South African literature.
CHAPTER 3: This chapter deals with the Methodology; a specific plan on how the research is conducted. Areas of focus in this chapter are: research methodology, research design, sample, data collection, and data analysis.

CHAPTER 4: This chapter deals with the veil of secrecy, in an African context. It goes on to explore familial secrecy. Then, the chapter draws upon the experiences of the co-researchers.

CHAPTER 5: This chapter pays attention to the use of ritual in the pastoral care and support of families with an intention to demonstrate the symbolic significance of rituals for the family, to describe the use of ritual in the healing of families who are in the midst of change, and to lift up the shape of the Church as a powerful model for the shape of the family. Rituals help families recognize the value of the past and yet accept a new reality which enables family members to cope with change and loss (Laird 1990:114). Family rituals “serve as a window into a family's underlying shared Identity, providing special access to the behavioral and emotional tenor characterizing each family” (Wolin & Bennett 1984:401).

CHAPTER 6: The chapter deals with the Stories of the co-researchers. Stories are powerful means for shaping our identities. They weave together, in a narrative method, the events that have special significance to us. The chapter will also include the analysis of stories in an effort to source out data which is necessary for chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7: The chapter will focus on Data Similarities and Differences; with Literature and Pastoral Care. The intention behind this chapter is to draw from the similarities and differences; and to explore the aspect of living with a huge issue but doing nothing to, authentically, address or engage the issue; rather than buying a way out. Thus; a discussion of findings ensues, in this chapter, to assist in carving the wayforward; thereby, creating a therapeutic model of welcoming among siblings. The conclusion and recommendations follow, in light, thereof.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

THE OVERVIEW, PURPOSE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This work will essentially employ traditional review approach while being complimented by basic systematic review approach. It may be argued that both approaches are capable of aiding the researcher to provide answer(s) to a research question or problem. The expediency of the traditional approach is manifested when employed in exploring issues, and identifying research gaps, among others. The systematic review approach, on the other hand, becomes most beneficial when compiling evidence to answer a specific research question or problem, among other things.

“The sheer volume of new research studies published these days makes it hard for researchers, practitioners and policy makers to know what is currently useful. This is a knowledge management problem and the aim of systematic reviews is to help bring this problem under control.”(Jesson et al 2011:105).

This literature review will explore the key theories, concepts and ideas while paying attention to epistemological and ontological grounds for the discipline. Furthermore the main questions and problems that have thus far received attention will also be given due consideration. The literature review will also accord reflection to the matter of the origins and definitions of the topic; and the major issues and debates about the topic. Finally, the focus will be cast upon the manner in which the approaches to addressing these questions have increased understanding and knowledge.

This study of literature review is based on electronic sources, print sources as well as grey literature. Figure 1 (Jesson et al 2011:113) - Systematic searching: potential table - below illustrates the Media sources employed and graphically teases them out.
The existence of secrets is one of the most toxic problems confronting many families. That, consequentially, prevents open communication and has a potential to, ultimately, lead to serious health issues for family members. Eventually, some families are unable to maintain their cohesiveness because of the existence of family secrets.

“Revealing the secret [had] the potential to sever …relationship forever, but not revealing it carried the death sentence” (Wimberly 2000:53).

The purpose for the following literature review is 1) to discuss the existing research on family secrets; and 2) to provide a brief synopsis of the researches that have previously been undertaken.

### 2.2 BACKGROUND

The nature of the subject of secrecy necessitates the review of the literature, in this work, to be selective rather than comprehensive, to focus on major works and point out continuing gaps in the literature. This is caused by the vastness of the literature on secrecy and the presence of a number of recent reviews. The scope of the

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**Figure 1** Systematic searching: potential table

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literature review includes publications such as journals, books, and popular media. The goal is the one of achieving synthesis rather than comprehensive documentation. In order to delimit the review, the focus is on familial secrecy and its impact on children, and the kinship relationships in the light of the disclosure about someone who was kept a secret for ages. The research questions in this study, are aided by literature review; for defining purposes. And, the discipline that is focused upon, is pastoral theology.

Many issues that are surrounded by secrecy have been substantially exposed and elucidated only in recent years. The careful analysis by family therapists of secrecy itself is also relatively new. In 1980, Karpel published a particular clarifying article, defining key concepts and suggesting guidelines for actions. A few other important articles followed. Twelve years later, Imber-Black published a first wide ranging examination of secrets in the family therapy literature. Imber-Black and other contributors address the topic from multiple perspectives, covering virtually every clinical situation where secrets are vital and problematic.

Empirical studies of secrecy occupy a small but interesting place in the study of family functioning. An early work by Vangelisti (1994) found that individuals reported secrecy as serving several different functions within the family context. A maintenance function was noted that withholding the information helped, to keep family members close and to protect them from stressors. A bonding function was noted when individuals felt that their family secrets increased unity among family members. The study goes on to highlight that family secrets, primarily, served to help members in an effort to avoid negative evaluation by outsiders.

While the effects of keeping negative secrets is often assumed to result in poor adjustment, few studies address this question directly, considering how family secrecy and the family environment relate to the adult adjustment.

In this study, the author does not differentiate between individuals, who are come from a dysfunctional family and those who come from a non-dysfunctional family. It bears to mention that, within a dysfunctional family, secrecy serves a different or more intense function than within a non-dysfunctional family.
Researchers have been borrowing liberally from a wide range of theories in their efforts to guide their work on psychology, sociology, social-psychology, and child and adult developmental perspectives. Thus some of these approaches overlap to a large degree. Yet, no one theory stands out above the others. The key point about secrets is that they are not meant to be permanently closed-up from everyone except the secret-keeper.

2.3. THE KNOWLEDGE WE HAVE

Anthropologists have spoken of secrecy as social control, which could be tied to ideas about tactical power in shaping and controlling settings (Wolf & Adams). However, an interesting datum from recent anthropological research (Gable 1997; cf. De Jong, 2007; Kasfir, 2010) about secrecy is that secrets can help to build communal affect, and to reproduce the local in the face of the onslaught of globalization. That, of course, is not particularly useful for analytical purposes in certain quarters. Secrets also create boundaries and alliances. What seems true despite the institution or scale of the social unit in question is that secrets include some, and exclude others from their knowing. This creates a boundary and allegiance among those who are party to the secret. In the case of the researcher, the secret about the step-sister was known by and maintained as such, by four people.

In terms of secrecy as the power and social control, Wolf presents various conceptualizations of “power,” one of which he favours; being the power to shape the arena in which interactions take place. He describes this as the “power that controls the settings in which people may show forth their potentialities and interact with others” (Wolf 1990: 586). He credits Adams (1966, 1975) for this insight which deals with tactical and organizational power, that is, how one unit can constrain the actions of another (Wolf 1990:586).

Secrets have been seen as instrumental and situational, in community-maintenance. Kasfir (2010), when writing about De Jong (2007), with reference to a Senegalese community says
“despite the fact that secrecy is by definition exclusionary, it also produces a strong communal affect among those who share the secret” (Kasfir, 2010) [no page numbers, only the HTML version of the article was available at the time].

According to Kasfir,

Secrecy “creates a diaspora of shared experience which allows you to hold onto, and subsequently act upon, that aspect of the local which is commonly expressed in your self-perceived social identity” (Kasfir, 2010) [no page numbers, only the HTML version of the article was available at the time].

Gable goes on to say

“In a close-knit society, secrecy depends for the most part on convention. One should never look too hard. If one’s neighbors keep their thoughts to themselves, then a transparent sack or a roof of straw is as impenetrable as the thickest wall” (Gable 1997:227)

The point of interest, which is enumerated by Piot, is that

“the previous analyses of secrecy in African societies….are of four general types. The first, structural-functionalist, has regarded secrecy as enhancing the educational role of initiation societies or as helping to set up cross-cutting ties among political units (Fulton 1972; Little 1949, 1966; Watkins 1943). The second author, Marxist, has seen secrecy as a means of social control in a system of power relations, as a way in which elders maintain their privileged position by withholding esoteric knowledge from juniors (La Fontaine 1977; Murphy 1980). The third author, Freudian, has suggested that secrecy is a metaphor for sexuality and that secrecy cults facilitate a child’s ability to deal with the anxieties and mysteries of infantile sexuality and maturation (Ottenberg 1989). The fourth semiotic, has sought to analyze the role that is played by secrecy within systems of communication by describing its formal, narrative character and its use of figurative speech (Bellman, 1984). While all four approaches identify important aspects of the role of secrecy in the societies, they analyze none
Secrecy has been employed as everyday’s *linguistic practice*. Everyday life and discourse are permeated by hidden messages.

“Quotidian occurrences of secrecy are part of a larger style of communication” (Piot 1993:353).

For an example, Piot pays particular attention, in his work, to the largely neglected role of secrecy in the everyday life, through an analysis of a particular West African society, the Kabre (Kabiye) of northern Togo. The attention is on the aspect of a ‘language of secrecy,’ which encompasses the Kpelle ritual and non-ritual contexts (Piot 1993:353). When secrets are told, they are often discussed indirectly, through the use of language that metaphorically alludes to, but never directly reveals, the concealed information. For an example, Bellman suggests that the Kpelle culture consists of two realities—a ‘real’ one that many people know but collaborate in concealing, another, which is the realm of discourse about the real that indirectly refers to, through what Bellman calls ‘deep talk’ (allusive, metaphoric speech), to the real (Bellman 1984:76, 140).

“The existence of this second reality creates a field of varying, ambiguous, and often conflicting interpretations of the real. One never knows for sure as whether one ‘got’ the message or not” (Piot 1993: 357).

There is a reasonable body of literature that examines secrecy within families with a specific type of dysfunction, such as incest or alcoholism. Few studies focus on the more general issue of family secrecy across dysfunctional families. Nevertheless, secrets may also play a significant role in other dysfunctional families. This may be manifest to the extent that there may be more secrets in dysfunctional families than in normal families. There are studies that examine group differences between normal and dysfunctional families which engage the subject from diverse and respective perspectives.
There is a study that compares the secrecy of adult children of alcoholics (COAs) with that of other dysfunctional but non-COA families (Bingham & Bargar, 1985). Jahn (1995) examined the relationship between family secrecy and, later, adult psychological functioning among two groups: adult children of alcoholics (adult COAs), and non-COAs. Mason (1993), in her work, reports that addictions, especially alcoholism, are the second most frequently expressed family secrets after those of a sexual nature. This, she had noted in various workshops that she conducted on family shame.

A few studies compare different elements within and/or among adult children from different family setups – dysfunctional, alcoholic, normal, to name the obvious. Out of all those studies that were conducted, none of them addresses family secrecy explicitly.

Horowitz (1982) and Singer (1982) engage the issue of the ‘public and the private’ on the premise of a question: would “society” cease to exist without secrecy? They do so in two journals for legal studies. The assumption, therefore, is that the “public” (the state, its courts, the police) needs to constrain “private” choice (of individual citizens), in order to maintain social order.

Secrets are tied up with the power to make certain meanings stick, to create and uphold official versions of the truth (Conrad Arensberg).

“Secrecy is about control. It is about the individual possession of knowledge that others do not have, and from the psychological consequences of this privileged possession follow its effects in magical practice. Secrecy elevates the value of the thing concealed. That which is hidden grows desirable and seems powerful, and magicians exploit this tendency to give their magic significance. They can use secrecy to conceal their magic from scepticism and to give themselves a context in which their own scepticism may be muted. In other words, secrecy alters the attitudes of both the insider and outsider toward the thing concealed, and in magic, insiders seem to use this mechanism to bolster their ill-supported faith in magic’s value” (Luhrmann 1989:161)
Secrecy as magic,

“Secrecy also fosters a deferential attitude toward the contents of its secret knowledge. The concealment of magical names, words, images and gestures heightens the value of what has been hidden by implying that its power is too great to be lightly shared. Magicians make much of their moral responsibility in controlling access to magical knowledge” (Luhrmann 1989:142)

“Secrecy fills an essential function in diverting disconfirmation, but the appeal of magic lies in the way it makes its members feel, and its positive psychological help can be considerable. Insofar as magic fails, secrecy masks the failure and perpetuates the illusion. Insofar as magic seems effective, therapeutic secrecy initiates its potency” (Luhrmann 1989:162)

Black, Dillon & Carnes, in their 2003 work, Disclosure to Children: Hearing the Child’s Experience, focus on the following questions: what and how should children be told of their parent’s sexually addictive behavior? How does disclosure impact the parent-child relationship? Do children want to be told, and if so, what age is appropriate for the disclosure? Are there protective factors, such as a therapist’s presence, that promote healthy disclosure? How much information should be shared? These authors had been involved in ongoing research to investigate the impact of disclosure to children of the parent’s sexually addictive behavior. Participants of the study are males and females over the age 13 who have a parent who has acted out sexually and is in a recovery process. Due to the fact that this population has not been previously studied, the authors developed a survey from previously gathered qualitative data. While the research continues to be gathered and analyzed, the authors are using information from the survey to guide clinicians in assisting families that are struggling with this issue. The intent of this article was to offer practical suggestions for clinicians based on the comments that were made by children who have experienced disclosure about the parent’s addiction.

While Black, Dillon & Carnes recognize the advantages of disclosure, as it relates to the spouse, little has been offered in the professional field regarding the rationale and effect of disclosure on young and adult age children of addicts. The authors,
therefore, conclude that problems occur when disclosure is offered without thoughtful preparation.

“Keeping a secret is like sitting on a time bomb. Powerful events initiate the need to keep a secret, but once kept, the secret itself becomes an explosive device. When and where will the explosion take place? Will it happen in my home with all my family present, in front of the media, in the courtroom, or in my mind? Can I escape the explosion, move to some other place in the world, or into some other place in my mind? And will I survive the explosion? How deafening is the noise of silent secrets?” (Black, Dillon & Carnes 2003:1)

Sexual secrets were the least likely to be told to anyone as they carried the heaviest burden. “Sexual secrets not only dominate the quantity but also represent some of the most risky Secrets” (Norton, et al 1974:453). Cottle published his book *Children’s Secrets*, based on his observations of families, in 1980. While it was not his intent to study secrets, they became the focus of his study. Children repetitively told secrets to him and he would posit that the secrets that were kept in the family, were to perpetuate the myth of stability.

Corley and Schneider (2004, in press) embarked on a qualitative study which investigated factors that are related on the disclosure to children by parents who are self-identified as a sex addicts or by partners of sex addicts. In the study, data was analyzed; using grounded-theory methodology. Emergent themes included: circumstances surrounding the disclosure; reasons not to disclose; types of information disclosed; perceived responses of the children; changes people would make to disclosures; and special issues surrounding sexual misconduct/offending and sex offender registration.

Schneider et al, undertook a research (1998) that pointed out that the disclosure of sexual secrets is one of the most difficult and important therapeutic tasks for sexual addicts and their partners. In another work of a similar nature, Corley and Alvarez (1996) recommend the involvement of children in such therapy. Corley and Schneider (2002) take it further by including thoughtful and well planned disclosure to age-appropriate children. However, the disclosure to children generally remains
one of the least researched areas. Black et al., in their 2003 research study, have suggested that children want information. They also went on to articulate the datum that children frequently know more than what their parents think they know.

Children may suspect or know the secret that that parents believe they are hiding, but they may only be able to express their discomfort through disruptive behavior. This is supported by the work of Imber-Black (1998), where it is intimated that a child’s knowledge of a secret may distort the family power dynamics, alienate the child from one or both parents, and isolate him or her from siblings. Lerner states,

“In the shadow of secrecy, children are especially vulnerable to acting out or developing symptoms.” (Lerner 1993:151).

Earle and Earle when describing families of sex addicts wrote,

“The secrets of parents cannot help but prove destructive to the child. No matter how deeply hidden or repressed by their parents, these secrets affect children. Secrets creep into every aspect of family living, creating high levels of psychological stress, pressure, and tension. The energy focused on keeping secrets does not allow children to be fully present. Children may not even be consciously aware of the family secrets, but these secrets seldom escape the unconscious.”(Earle and Earle 1995:118).

Black et al. makes reference to Carl Jung’s 1969 work regarding disclosure when he wrote,

“The most important gift a parent can give a child is to tell them about their dark side. Telling children about your struggles helps them developmentally to have a realistic picture of what it means to be human” (Black et al. 2003:3).

Yet, precipitous disclosure has its own hazards. The challenge for parents is to consider, carefully, the context of the disclosure, its contents, timing, who should be present, and how to deal with the emotional responses of the children. Factors which dissuade parents from disclosing to children include: shame, anger, fear of alienating
the children, fear that the children might be harmed by the information, and concern that they might tell others.

Some disclosures, to children, are forced by circumstances and parents have very little time to reflect on their fears or concerns. But when disclosure is a choice, positive reasons for doing so include validating what the child already knows, disclosing before others tell, and for the child’s safety (Black et al, 2003). Respondents reported a variety of circumstances relating to disclosing to their children, as ranging from forced disclosure (threats by others to reveal, or insistence by the partner), to a well-planned event taking place in a therapeutic environment.

The Corley and Schneider (2002) work devotes a chapter to the nuts and bolts of how and when to disclose to children. The study by Schneider and Schneider (1999) also advises on age-appropriate disclosure to children and recommends careful preparation for the disclosure. They write,

“Telling older children about the addiction and recovery can validate the children’s feelings. Furthermore, it gives them permission to talk about what they may have felt and experienced during their parents’ acting out.” (Schneider & Schneider 1999: 168).

Disclosure is encouraged.

“Evasiveness with children is likely to continue the legacy of secrecy, which promotes addiction.” (Schneider & Schneider 1999: 174).

Corley and Schneider (2004, in press) designed a qualitative study to gather information, which is related to the experience of parents who disclosed or were trying to make a decision regarding disclosing to their child(ren) their sexual addiction or offending sexual behaviours. The study also elicited parents’ thoughts on the best timing and content of disclosure, under what circumstances not to tell, what they would change in hindsight, involvement in family therapy, helpful resources, and the impact of sexual addiction on their child(ren)’s behavior.

The motivation by Caldwell’s work, In and Out of the Closet: How Parents of Gay and Lesbian Individuals Disclose the Family Secret to Outsiders, examines how parents disclose of their child’s gay/lesbian identity to outsiders, as a signifier of true
acceptance of the child’s identity. The closet metaphor is applied in this work not only for gay and lesbian individuals who are hiding their homosexuality from those who perceive them to be heterosexuals, but also to the parents of gay and lesbian individuals. The secret is unique because literature on family secrets discusses the solidarity among secret-keepers. However keeping a secret about the child’s homosexuality may have detrimental effects on the child’s identity and self-esteem. This work also interrogates into the concept of self-disclosure.

Leyenhorst in his thesis, *Family Secrecy and the Adult Adjustment of Children from Dysfunctional Families*, acknowledges that previous research findings suggest that the presence of secrets within a family and their concealment from others, typifies many dysfunctional families (Brown-Smith, 1998) especially those with alcoholism (Bingham & Bargar, 1985). In the thesis Leyenhorst sought to differentiate dysfunctionalism and alcoholism as two factors that contribute to the lack of adult adjustment among children from families with alcoholism and/or with other dysfunctions.

The present study also focuses on the presence and role that is played by family secrets. Families as one of the earliest forms of social organization that individuals encounter are of specific interest in the study of secrets. It has even been suggested in this study that family relationships are shaped, in part, by what is shared and what is held secret by family members (Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997). Family secrets may thus strongly influence family functioning and the experience of an individual within the family (Joseph & Onek, 1999). The study acknowledges that secrecy has been identified as particularly problematic among families with alcoholism, and it goes on to compare secrecy among the adult children of alcoholics (COAs) to those from other dysfunctional families. As stated, it has been assumed, but not empirically assessed, that COA families differ from dysfunctional families, on secrecy. Leyenhorst hypothesized that COA families will report more secrecy than other dysfunctional families. Children in alcoholic homes, quickly learn not to disclose family secrets (Bingham and Bargar, 1985).

Although there is a modest body of literature that examines secrecy within families with a specific type of dysfunction, such as incest or alcoholism, Leyenhorst
established a few studies focus on the more general issue of family secrecy across dysfunctional families. Alcoholism, like incest, is a particular problem that is defined, in part, by its secrecy. Therefore it is understandable that particular attention would be paid by researchers on the role of secrets among such families. Nevertheless secrets may also play a significant role in other dysfunctional families – more so than in ‘normal’ families.

Leyenhorst investigated this possibility by comparing the number of children with secrets (asking: Did you or any member of your family have this experience?) to the number of discussions in relation to secrets (e.g. To what extent was this problem discussed outside of your family?) among families that were identified as normal or as dysfunctional, using a sample of university students. It is hypothesized in the study that individuals from dysfunctional families will report more family secrets and less discussion regarding secrets than individuals from non-dysfunctional families.

Denomy’s thesis Secret, silence and family narrative: Joy Kogawa Obasan and Sky Lee’s Disappearing Moon Café, is a highly personal narrative, which is directed at the silence imposed by family, society, and self-imposed forgetfulness. Joy Kogawa Obasan tells her story of loss and recovery; with special reference to female loss and recovery. Naomi Nakane, the novel’s protagonist, begins her narrative by tackling the latter, as a way of accessing a painful personal history which she has attempted to bury. Both Joy Kogawa’s Naomi Nakane and Sky Lee’s Kae Ying Woo, attempt to overcome the silence and secrecy in order to reconstruct their families’ histories, particularly, their matrilineal histories. Their task is problematic: Naomi has no mother, and Kae has too many maternal figures, who are all battling for control.

Both narrators approach their texts (and their searches for identity) with a degree of ambivalence. In Obasan, Naomi’s uncertainty over her family’s identity and her attempts to uncover this, manifests itself in the silence which pervades the text. Over the course of the novel, Obasan pushes silence aside, in the process highlighting two problematic issues that are at the centre of her work. Firstly, the adult Naomi who narrates the story must re-enter the experiences of her younger, silenced self; and secondly, Naomi must overcome an oppressive silence in order to tell the story which centres around and is driven by silence.
Whereas Naomi is reluctant to delve into her history, Kae is eager to recover what has been hidden from her. Instead of the numerous silences which pervade *Obasan*, Kae’s growing ambivalence surfaces as narrative unreliability. *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, is strongly mediated by Kae who acknowledges the extent at which her authority is problematic. When reconstructing her past she often reinvents it very well. This paper explores the parallels between Naomi’s and Kae’s searches for family, and the ways in which similar journeys find radically different narrative expressions. While the text of *Obasan* resists the tendency to inscribe the silences of the family narrative, *Disappearing Moon Café* battles with its desire to fill in the blanks, to romanticize and invent the story.

By examining Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan* and Sky Lee’s *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, Denomy sought to identify and analyze the processes that are used by the narrators to gather and reveal their families’ often unhappy histories. Both Joy Kogawa’s Naomi Nakane and Sky Lee’s Kae Ying Woo contextualize themselves in terms of race and gender, by reconstructing their family identities and concentrating on the matrilineal side. The thesis looks at *Obasan: Narrating Silence (Symptomatic Silence)* and *Disappearing Moon Cafe: Narrative Instability (Family Secrets: “There is power in silence”)*

*The ‘Not to be Opened’ Letter: Family Secrets, Hidden Knowledge and Violated Prohibitions*, an article by Crago (1997) focuses somewhat overwhelmingly, on the contents of the secrets and on their effects; rather than on what secrets actually mean, in systemic terms. The research presents a view of family secrets that is informed by the authors broader biological and cultural context. Crago employs two perspectives. Firstly, he engages the Bateson’s biologically-based concept of ‘sacred knowledge’, which tends to apply to human cultural practices. Secondly, the anthropological concept of ‘taboo’, as expressed in cultural practices, myth, and folklore, is used to provide insight into the mixture of awe and disgust; which surrounds secrets. From these two viewpoints, Crago explores why family members expressed such intensely polarized feelings by helping the professionals as well as family members. He also continues to make suggestions for therapists on how to
view secret keeping behaviour. This article is introduced as a therapeutic option regarding the wisdom of revealing a secret.

*Self-disclosure* is a topic that has earned the attention of many social science disciplines. Derlega *et al* (1993); Carpenter (1987); Cox (1989); (Cox, 1992); (Jourard, 1974); and (Griffin, Wirth & Worth, 1996;  Murphy, 1989) are among those who have given attention to the topic. However, self-disclosure in terms of family secrets has not been studied as extensively as self-disclosure in general, because of the extreme personal nature of the disclosures. Imber-Black, a leading scholar in the area of family secret research, when reflecting on the role that secret and disclosures play during communication in clinical family therapy says, “Until very recently in our field, secrets have remained a secret!” (Imber-Black 1993:1).

**2.4 THE KNOWLEDGE WE NEED: RESEARCH GAP**

The research gap that the author endeavours to address with this work is that literature has shown that pastoral care model has not been used extensively and profoundly to address the effects that disclosure following a death of parent, has on young adult children. Such an orientation causes spiritual factors and imperatives to be overlooked. The spiritual aspect of disclosure is tied, in this study, to the element of identity stemming from an African sense of belonging. It seeks to address the fact that children are walking a fragile road to adulthood.

The challenge is also of a contextual nature, hence the need to address it from an African perspective and a South African perspective, while employing an African insight. Surprisingly limited or little, if any, research has been done in a bid to, pastorally and therapeutically, help adult children as they journey through life hampered by distorted identities. The church has not made inroads in terms of putting pastoral tools in place, in an effort to address such a problem. This research attempts to provide a tool to help those who have been affected by some disclosure that has been made regarding a biological parent. The research will focus, largely, on the consequences that manifest during teenage years and early adult years; for their spiritual and holistic gains. Research questions seek to point to and highlight the research gap.
2.5 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

A lot has been written about various dimensions of secrecy, and there is still a lot to be learned. The author sought to engage key writers and the ideological agenda or perspective from which they work. As social conditions shift, the dynamics of family formation also change, and the complex issues involved in these processes re-emerge to the forefront of other agendas. The author, by relying mainly on traditional literature review approach, has drawn on quantitative and qualitative works, as well as research and non-research materials.

Regarding literature, an effort has been made to summarize, succinctly, what is known and what needs to be learned on the basis of an extensive research literature. The researcher has also attempted to delineate some broad research areas, as well as some very specific research questions. As the debate on the past and present state of familial secrecy continues, social scientists will, for the foreseeable future, continue to play a vital role in discussions. It is notable that no two sources, contexts, or instances of secrecy are alike, leaving an inescapable conclusion that there is a need to endeavour to comprehend the particular factors that stimulate and sustain secrecy in each individual circumstance encountered.

While social scientists’ contributions to this debate may be varied, the sum of their work will continue to provide the foundation for a scholarly discourse and for a learned social policy. This of course informs pastoral intervention and care. As Gerkin writes,

“the church is called out of itself into the world around it…to increase among all people the love of God and neighbor” (Gerkin 1997: 127).

Whether family members maintain a secret for their safety or disclose it for their liberation, great care (pastorally) is needed when engaging with such a family or members thereof. The chapters that follow will amply inform those efforts.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION
This chapter deals with the Methodology, which refers to a specific plan on how the research is conducted. Areas of focus, in this chapter, are, inter alia: research methodology, research design, sample, data collection, and data analysis.

The study employs a qualitative approach, the purpose of which is to gather data that is relevant to meanings, perspectives and the understanding of co-researchers regarding the secret that was kept about them and the disclosure thereof. In light of the results, attention will be paid to patterns that are assumed, respectively, with regard to emotional and behavioural reactions that relate to disclosure. Age, gender and family dynamics are to be taken into cognizance when focusing on participants' reactions to the well-guarded secret; and are central to the co-researchers' contribution. Differential perceptions of familial secrets pertaining to children who come to know about their biological parent, either maternal or paternal, contributed to the different reactions.

The researcher endeavors to enter into the world of co-researchers who experience such a disclosure. And he does so with grace and approaches their worlds with integrity. The researcher notes that there is no way to allay the emotional hurt of such trauma. However, helping those persons to find some meaning in the tragedy forms part of the objectives, and the researcher journeys with co-researchers as wounded healer.

The researcher uses the methodology that draws from the shepherding model which is impressed upon by Gerkin in his seminal work, *An Introduction to Pastoral Care*; while moving from the premise being developed by Kübler-Ross’ seminal book: “On Death & Dying”. In the book she explained her, now classically regarded, ‘five stages of grief’. Streaty Wimberly’s revised edition of *Soul Stories* is also employed in the research. *Soul Stories* link a persons' everyday life with Christian Scriptures. *Soul Stories*, in this revised volume, take on a cross-generational orientation with the emphasis on linking stories of family identities, events, relationships, and story plot with Bible stories and exemplary Christian faith stories that are found in the African Diaspora. The goal of Dr. Wimberly’s model is to enliven the values that are associated with the image of the "village", in order to empower and equip African Americans, today.
The Wimberly's four phase model compliments as well as buttresses Kübler-Ross' five stage model of grief. It is worth noting that the process should not only be limited to African American communities. The way Wimberly engages her own African American heritage, is insightful and instructive to other communities. Every person has a heritage to draw from in this process. There will, surely, be challenges in discerning the meanings in biblical stories; as there would be, with any study of the Bible, at the lay level. One potential danger is that the participants will simply source out biblical texts for images of themselves, rather than being challenged and convicted by them. There will, certainly, be hurdles in multicultural situations, but such hurdles may make the story-linking even more beneficial. The process may require some creativity from those who do not know much about their heritage. In the end, though, it is a process which is, seriously, worth considering for all sorts of educational contexts - and Wimberly’s book is a helpful jumpstart.

The process that Pollard employs is called, positive deconstruction. This is because it involves the dismantling of the worldview in order to identify areas of conflict within a Christian worldview. It is positive because the intention is not to destroy the person's ideas and belief system, but to build on areas of agreement between the two worldviews in order to argue for the truth of the Christian worldview. The process of positive deconstruction recognises and affirms the elements of truth to which individuals already hold, but also helps them to discover for themselves the inadequacies of the underlying worldviews they have absorbed. The aim is to awaken a heart response (Pollard 1997:44). The researcher, furthermore, draws from Waruta and Kinoti’s (eds) work, Pastoral care in African Christianity for an African perspective and from various works by Mbti.

3.2 Methodology

It is the unique property of pastoral work to combine two aspects of ministry: one, to represent the eternal word and will of God; and, two, to do it among the idiosyncrasies of the local and the personal (the actual place where the pastor lives; the named people with whom s/he lives). If either is slighted, good pastoral work fails to take place (Peterson 1992:5). The method of caring that Gerkin employs, focuses on the individual as well as the Christian community. Gerkin’s approach appreciates and embraces the individual and family and addresses each of their needs,
 accordingly. He embarks on a shepherding model of caring ministry which assumes and gathers momentum

“With the coming of Jesus, who, according to the Gospel of John ... identifies himself as ‘the good shepherd’. The shepherding image takes its place as a primary grounding image for ministry” (Gerkin 1997:27).

Pastoral counseling, as a ministry of the church, illustrates the contours of the paradigm in the field of pastoral care; and this has been evident in the prophetic, priestly and wisdom models of pastoral care. While focus may be, somewhat, different, the underlying common factor in the three models is such that, we are called to care not only Christianly but pastorally as well.

“The prophetic, priestly, and wisdom models of caring ministry we inherit from the Israelite community are not, to be sure, the only biblical images with which we pastors have to identify. Another, in certain ways more significant, model is that of the caring leaders as shepherd” (Gerkin 1997:27).

Gerkin’s shepherding model is central to this research as it highlights God’s care for Israel, His chosen people. This motif is manifested so well in the imagery that depicts God as the Good Shepherd; as encapsulated in the 23rd Psalm, as well as, in Ezekiel 34.

Attention will be accorded to other models along with shepherding such as Jesus and incarnational models of pastoral care. Following which, there will be a discussion of shepherding model of pastoral care. It bears to mention here that this is not a representation of all models or a full description thereof. Reference will only be made to particular aspects that give wing to the flight of a holistic pastoral approach. The models are also described without much critical reflection.

3.2.1 THEOLOGICAL IMAGES OF PASTORAL CARE.
Three theological images of Pastoral care are briefly examined with a view to highlighting their usefulness for the practical ministry and their complementary nature. The theological images to be focus on are Jesus himself, the Shepherd, and Incarnation as a model of pastoral care. Each of the paradigms discussed will be
compared to the definition of Pastoral care as laid out by Clebsch & Jaekle. They define pastoral care as:

“the ministry of the cure of souls, or Pastoral care, consists of helping acts, done by caring persons, directed towards the healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling of troubled persons whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns”(Clebsch & Jaekle1964:8-9).

The first theological images of pastoral care to be dealt with is Jesus own model. Jesus was first and foremost, a minister (Hebrews 8:2). Jesus’ model of ministry was characterised by three aspects: his authority, his ability to attract people to himself and his ability to meet people where they were. His conduct informed people that he was in control, therefore they could tell that he had power. Mark’s gospel attests to that where the people are amazed at his teaching because it was with authority (Mark 1:27). Being aware of his own relationship with God, Jesus knew that his authority was dependent on that relationship.

“It said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am [he], and [that] I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.” (John 8:28).

Compassion for people is a further characteristic of Jesus ministry. Jesus had empathy with those to whom he ministered. He often used the shepherd concern metaphor to describe his role. The Shepherd therefore can also stand alone as a paradigm for pastoral ministry. However, it was within the context of being a shepherd that Jesus expressed his compassion in such verses as Matthew 9:36. He compassion can be seen in Mark 6:34 and Luke 15:20. Jesus knew a proper expression of all human emotions and as such, he could act appropriately.

Jesus had a relational quality about him that was like a magnet to those around him (Mark 1:45). People sensed his warmth, approachability and his non-judgemental style. People came because they sensed that they would be accepted, loved and cared for without being judged. This is expressed by the type of people who sought him out, people of all descriptions. Jesus was prepared to talk with them; he was prepared to deal with their issues with great sensitivity.
The model of Christ is a paradigm of empathy, warmth and genuineness. It is a practical outworking of love which meets and deals with the problems of humanity. This model has an ability to transpose oneself into another’s situation. Jesus sense of ministry then was the ability he had to transpose himself to the situation of the people he met in order to bring others to wholeness and as a result of that see them achieve the ultimate relational lifestyle.

A metaphor of the Shepherd is the second theological images of pastoral care upon which focus falls. This is a model that Jesus continually refers to throughout his ministry and is identifiable with the element of courageous leadership. This image is not confined to New Testament times but it has roots back in the Old Testament. Psalm 23 for instance recalls the image of God being a shepherd and helper. In addition, 1 Samuel 17 highlights the image of a defender as a shepherd who has rescued the lamb from the clutches of the lion. Hiltner highlights two characteristics of the shepherd as concern (or acceptance) and clarification (or judgement) (Hiltner 1980:28ff). These, however are not the only characteristics of a shepherd and the skill of shepherding is not in itself the full function of a person in the Pastoral role.

It is unfortunate that history has not served this image well. A criticism of the paradigm of the shepherd and it’s implication for practical ministry is that it creates dependency. Those who are following in time, critic’s purports, become dependent on the shepherd and cannot function adequately without the shepherd. The negative aspect of this is that the shepherd is seen as having all wisdom and knowledge, while the flock is seen as naive or stupid.

The third theological images of pastoral care to be dealt with is Hiltner's metaphorical use of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). Hiltner engages the parable of the Good Samaritan as he employs the threefold act of pastoral encounter of healing, sustaining and guiding (Hiltner 1979:307-311) The Samaritan’s act of caring for the wounds (healing), of helping the poor victim to mount his beast once more (sustaining) and of taking the victim to the nearest place of care (guiding) suggests a holistic pastoral approach (Hiltner 1954:69)
Hiltner's contribution to pastoral theology was greatly enhanced by his pursuit of the principle of eliciting information, which is further proof of his holistic approach. Following this principle, the clergy is no longer the expert and clients have to make use of their inner potential to find a solution for whatever the problem is. The clergy has to elicit the solution from the client by means of questions, answers, narratives and other forms of interaction.

A fourth theological images for pastoral ministry is that of incarnation. The essence of this image of pastoral care lies in that the pastoral carers sees themselves taking with them the presence of Christ into each pastoral situation. The Dictionary of Pastoral care and Counselling defines the Incarnational Pastoral Care as

"a theologically descriptive term utilised by some pastoral care theorists to designate one or more of the following meanings: (a) the intentional effort of the Pastor symbolically to embody in the pastoral relationship to persons a relationship analogous to the incarnation of God in the human Jesus; (b) the recognition that pastoral care relationships may on occasion mediate the love of God to the recipient of pastoral care in that the pastor’s love speaks of the greater love of God; (c) the care of the entire faithful Christian community for one another and for the world as the response of the people of God to the admonition of Jesus to the disciples to carry on his work in his spirit; (d) pastoral care which seeks to engender in persons the capacity to be open to signs and symbols of God’s disclosure in the events of everyday life" (Hunter 1990: 573).

Likewise the incarnational model of Pastoral care is characterised by the taking of care to those in need, rather than waiting for them to seek help. The use of incarnational theology identifies the caregiver with Christ and as such serves to combine the paradigm of shepherd and paradigm of Jesus himself. Anderson (1984:241) and Hunter (1990:1164) both link the incarnational approach to Pastoral Care with shepherding and Jesus.

Exponents of this type of pastoral care see their own presence in any situation as embodying the presence of Christ into that situation. Among them is Macquarrie, who asserts that:
“In the central Christian Doctrine of the incarnation, it is a person who becomes the symbol of being, the revelation of God” (Macquarrie 1977:143).

This embodying means that the clergy literally becomes the means of grace to those whom they care. This personal identification with Christ adds both power and credibility to the clergy’s presence. The care giver then becomes the mediator of God’s presence, and this leads to one of the first difficulties with this particular paradigm. Herbert Anderson in his article, Incarnation as a Paradigm for pastoral care rightly points out that sometimes God uses absence as part of his methodology of strengthening God’s people. If then the presence of God is present whenever the clergyperson is present, then the only time God is absent is when the clergyperson is absent.

This raises another issue: There are many who work in Christian ministries who have few or indirect links with the church. For instance those who serve in a hospital chaplaincy role or those who work within the welfare portion of our society. If the incarnation of Christ is not through the church alone then incarnational pastoral care allows these pastoral carers a legitimacy which breaks the bounds of ecclesiastical barriers. Anderson sees a danger here:

“Incarnation as identification is in danger of becoming a privatistic approach to faith and ministry that is not consistent with the corporate image of the body of Christ from Scripture” (Anderson).

As a Pastoral Carer, it is possible to live a life that is not incarnational. However as a model, Jesus has given the examples of his own life and has himself embraced the title of the Good Shepherd. This means that the Pastoral Carer has like the Shepherd, the need to be with the flock. To be an effective paradigm for pastoral ministry any image needs to embrace this essential element. Incarnation is becoming one with the people.

The fifth of the theological images of pastoral care to which the focus turns is a convergent model. Louw calls his pastoral approach thus since he builds on the positive aspects of previous models, bringing them all together in his pastoral goal of salvation and healing (Louw 1999:28). In his explanation, the saving implications of
the gospel are not substituted but are expanded by a redemptive characteristic (Louw 1999:39-40). After presenting a carefully worked out pastoral anthropology, Louw describes human beings as God's creation and as a union of both body and spirit. To the three basic functions of human existence (cognitive, affective and connotative), he adds the functions of bodily existence (including sexuality) and moral responsibility. The pursuit for healing is guided by the humanity of Jesus Christ, who becomes the perfect image of faith maturity, which Louw contrasts with psychological maturity. During the pastoral encounter, the counselee is led to seek faith maturity. In so doing, the eschatological anticipation is made a reality in the present.

Any model should contain those elements found in the definition of Pastoral care given by W. Clebsch & C. Jaekle. Thus applying these to the three theological images of pastoral ministry of: Jesus, Shepherd and Incarnation, it should be possible to draw together both their individual and corporate value for effective ministry.

Looking firstly at Healing, it is immediately obvious that Jesus came to heal both spiritually and physically. The shepherd's role is, by continual care of the flock, to heal any sickness that might be contracted. Incarnation of the carer's presence into pastoral situations bring the healing presence of God. All three paradigms satisfy this element of pastoral care. Secondly the element of Sustaining is by nature commensurate with the model of Jesus. Jesus came to sustain those to whom he ministered, as per the example of the spiritual feeding he gave through his words and the physical feeding he gave to those involved in the feeding of the four thousand in Mark 8. The Shepherd is by definition someone who is responsible for sustaining his flock and again it can be seen why Jesus claimed this title for himself. The Incarnational model of ministry, because it leads to the imputing of Christ into the caring situation has also the potential to sustain. Thirdly, all three paradigms are about guiding people to Christ and hence ultimately to God. Jesus become the guiding light of the world, the Shepherd is forever a guide to his flock, and those involved in an incarnational model of ministry are attempting to bring both of the former onto the stage of life. Finally, the element of reconciliation is again to be found with each of the three paradigms. Jesus reconciled people to God, the
shepherd reconciled the lost to the herd and to himself and because the incarnational model is a reflection of both Jesus and the Shepherd its purpose is to embody the tasks of both.

In conclusion it must be said that each of these paradigms are not only exemplar models of how the pastoral carer can carry out their ministry but that they if taken together, provide a most effective means by which a clergy can emulate the ultimate caring God.

3.2.2 THE SHEPHERDING MODEL OF PASTORAL CARE.

Pastoral care has been a core activity for clergy of the Christian church since its inception by Jesus Christ. Campbell goes on to allude that,

“No image has influenced the practice of pastoral care more than its chief metaphor, the good shepherd caring for the vulnerable flock amid a perilous world. This central matrix of imagery has served as the foundation for other images of the pastor - guardian of tradition, guide through hazard, and physician of the flock. It is only on the basis of this axial metaphor that the pastor can reflect rightly upon due authorization to ministry and upon *diakonia*. It constitutes an important link in the correlation of Christ’s shepherd with contemporary shepherding.” (Oden 1987: 41)

Oden adds that,

“The shepherd metaphor conflates several helping images: birthing, nurturing, feeding, guiding, and healing. In all of these it connotes radical responsibility for others” (Oden 1987:43).
This shepherd metaphor also conveys a broader interpretation of ‘helping acts’ to include birthing, nurturing and feeding, protecting and guarding, leading and guiding, and healing the flock. Shepherding involves protection, tending to needs, strengthening the weak, encouragement, feeding the flock, making provision, shielding, refreshing, restoring, leading by example to move people on in their pursuit of holiness, comforting, guiding (Psalms 78: 52, 23).

The fourfold act of pastoral encounter manifest in healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling and the maintenance of balance among and between these elements so that there is a holistic approach to caring for the flock. The primarily focus is on the spiritual well-being of the troubled person in spite of the difficulties that he or she is facing, so that the end result is one who is a mature disciple of Jesus.

“Biblically based counselling is an extension of traditional pastoral ministries of healing, sustaining, reconciling, and guiding.” (Rabey 1996:78)

One of the most powerful biblical images for one who cares for the souls of others is the image of the shepherd. Shepherds lead their sheep to places of nourishment and safety, protect them from danger, and are regularly called upon for great personal sacrifice. They are characterized by compassion, courage, and a mixture of tenderness and toughness. The prophet Ezekiel presents the soul shepherd as one who leads and guides the sheep, arranges for their food, ensures their safety, heals the sick, binds up the broken, and seeks out and finds the lost (Ezek. 34:2-16). At the heart of the image is care. To care, the shepherd has to know his sheep. The faithful shepherd, contrary to those condemned in Ezekiel 34, is to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind-up the injured, bring back the strays and search for the lost. That is what Christ did and that is what he calls the shepherds of his flock to do and be.

In the biblical image, the shepherd watched over the flock as a group and as individual sheep. He would risk his life to defend his sheep and leave the flock to rescue the lamb that strayed (Matthew 18:12). The book of Acts of the Apostles develops this further,
“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

Borden looks at the biblical metaphor of the shepherd and sees a misunderstood image. Whereas the classical image of the shepherd was of a caregiver and physician, Borden suggests that the biblical shepherd “took care of the sheep, not for the sheep’s benefit but for the shepherd’s needs” (Borden 2003:23).

Spader & Mays cast focus on the image of a shepherd seeking the lost “What about the people Jesus taught and spent time with? Although we have a tendency to view each episode in Jesus’ life as an independent event, an interesting pattern is evident when you look at the whole. In every circumstance Jesus’ habit was to go where the people were. Do not miss this! His emphasis on going to people, as opposed to waiting for people to come to Him, is a crucial aspect of His strategy. He was reaching out to anyone and everyone with whom He came in contact. He was trying to build relationships with as many as possible”(Spader & Mays 1991:91).

The emphasis rests on the importance of human relationships in ministry.

3.2.2.1 The biblical background of the shepherding metaphor.
A consideration of some key leaders of Israel seeks to establish both the use of the shepherding metaphor and its importance in the overall biblical message. This will also show the canonical link that exists between the Old and New Testament. Attention will fall upon Moses, David, Ezekiel, Jesus and Peter. The selection of Moses is natural due to his role in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and his place in history as the formational agent in Jewish law and faith. Likewise, many Christians see Moses as a forerunner of Christ and point to the numerous messianic images found in the Pentateuch. Deuteronomy (34:10) attests to the Moses as the greatest of the prophets. Jesus himself makes clear links between his ministry and that of Moses. David fulfills the role as the progenitor of the messianic line for in him we find the establishment of the messianic throne. As a prophet, the message of Ezekiel provides the direct link between the shepherding metaphor and the promise of the Messiah, as well as God’s rebuke toward shepherds who fail to care for the flock.
Jesus’ life is examined for his implicit and explicit connections to the shepherding imagery. Jesus used the metaphor to direct the establishment of the church and Jesus identified himself as the Good Shepherd. This, then, leads to Peter and his understanding and dissemination of the shepherding model.

Driven from Egypt by fear of Pharaoh’s retribution, Moses travelled to Midian (Exodus 2:15). Moses went from a life of privilege to a life of hardship, caring for the flocks of his now father-in-law Jethro. For forty years Moses tended sheep in the expanses of Midian (Acts 7:30). Over time, Moses had a change in perspective and his vocation became one of service. Moses had accepted his role as a shepherd and cared for the flock under his care. Each day he would tend the sheep. The flock did not belong to him but the responsibility did.

Exodus 3:1-10 speaks to the call and commission of Moses, who had by then himself to a shepherd’s life. God called the shepherd to be the deliverer. The shepherd who guided the flock of Jethro to good pasture would now guide the people of God to the Promised Land. As Psalm 77 speaks to the exodus, it further highlights how the shepherding God had been with and ahead of God’s people and the concluding verse of the psalm highlights the activity of the shepherding hand of God. Furthermore Isaiah 3:11 highlights Moses’ role as the earthly shepherd engaged by God in the unfolding of the exodus. Moses learnt leadership skills from the best in Pharaoh’s courts and went on to be schooled in the art of servant leadership during the 40 year period of tending and keeping the flock in the wilderness. Upon his calling this shepherding role – leading, guiding, sustaining and reconciling the people of God en route to the Promised Land – proved very instrumental.

David was also a shepherd from an early age. 1Samuel 16: 6-13 attests to the description of how the sons of Jesse had to pass in review before the prophet Samuel. Each one in turn is rejected by the Lord until when David is called in from tending the sheep. Given that David was still a teenager at the time of the prophet’s visit, he seemed an afterthought and his father had not yet noticed any leadership potential in the youngster but a shepherd. However God
“chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them” (Psalm 78:70-72).

God could have chosen anyone to fill the role of the king of Israel. Nevertheless God chose one shaped by the tasks of shepherding.

1 Samuel 17: 20-37 gives an account of David's encounter with Goliath and as he goes on to defeat Goliath. When called to state his case before king Saul, David tapped into his experience as a shepherd to make a compelling argument.

“Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:34-37).

David had risked his life protecting the flock. Besides, David understood that God was in control. Not only did he trust God's promises, but he also trusted God's provision. The twenty-third Psalm is testimonial to David's understanding of who God is and what God is capable of. Furthermore he shows his understanding of the responsibilities and duties of the shepherd. And that made it easier for David to see and articulate God as a Divine Shepherd who cares for the flock. David had personally experienced God's care. David's early duty to feed his father flocks (1Sam 17:15) is followed by his later task of shepherding God's flock (Ps 78:71).

As a shepherd, David learned more than leading and protecting, and as was with Moses, the shepherding role and responsibilities prepared David to serve as a leader among God's people. Ezekiel moves to the image of a shepherd in chapter thirty-four. The broad context of the chapter denounces the leaders of Israel as unfaithful to the shepherding role. The king, prophet and priest as shepherd was an ancient image. The king had the responsibility to supply food and water for his flock, to defend the rights of the weak and voiceless, and to protect the flock any harm.
Instead of looking after the flock Israel’s kings failed God and the flock. They did not care for the flock but rather exploited the flock. Therefore God will intervene and gather the scattered sheep as the Good Shepherd. And God will place God’s servant David over them as a shepherd (Ezekiel 34: 1-31). Ezekiel 34:4 details the role of the shepherd: the shepherd is supposed to care for the flock. Care includes strengthening the weak, healing the sickling, binding up the broken, bringing back strays and finding the lost. The parable of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:10-14/ Luke 15:1-7) provides a parallel here. The list is not exhaustive.

Centuries passed prior to the fulfilment of prophecies regarding the birth of an everlasting king from the line of David (Isaiah 11 & Ezekiel 34). There is, however, a canonical link between the image of the shepherd in both the Old and New Testament. Jesus declared himself the Good Shepherd who has come

“That they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly”
(John 10:10).

The Prophet Isaiah had intimated to the impending coming of the Lord and of the deeds to unfold upon arrival and

“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry [them] in his bosom, [and] shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isaiah 40:11).

Ezekiel, a priest, probably of the Zadokite family, articulates the vision of the Lord God as the divine Shepherd who gathers God’s scattered flock. The figure evokes images of Jesus as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-16)

Jesus maintained not only his role as the shepherd, but he equated that role with power, authority and care. Unlike the shepherds of Ezekiel 34 who were not faithful to the shepherding task, Jesus claimed to be the good shepherd, one who knows the sheep and whom the sheep know. John 10:9 indicates that through Jesus the flock would find freedom and pasture. There is a clear allusion to Jeremiah 23:3 where the unfaithful shepherds allow the flock to be scattered, but the good shepherd gathers the flock and returns them to fruitful pastures.

Jesus also makes a contrast between himself as the good shepherd, and the hired hand. He states that the hired hand does not have a vested interest in the sheep.
When trouble or danger comes, the hired hand “abandons the sheep and runs away” (John 10:12). The illustration of wolves attacking the flock while the hired hand runs away may have brought to mind the story of David defending the sheep against the lion and the bear (1 Samuel 17:34-37).

The good shepherd knows the sheep and is known by them. The good shepherd provides pasture and security for the sheep, and in the ultimate act of care, the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:15). It is the act of selfless service that allows there to be “one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16). Of all the metaphors that Jesus could have used to identify himself with the messianic promise, he chose the shepherd. The image of the shepherd provides the picture of faithfulness, care, service and love.

As the New Testament narrative progresses, Peter and six other disciples are fending for their livelihood by the Sea of Galilee. They had already witnessed Jesus’ resurrection and they had been given audacious promises by him. They had again been called to high service for him and the world. Yet days past and nothing happened and they did not know what to do. Thus the old profession was there for consideration as contemplation naturally set in and then Peter told his friends that he would go fishing and the rest fell in with the suggestion. The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus appeared at the seashore after a long unsuccessful night for the fishermen and bade them to cast their net once more. The once empty net was now ready to break under an immense load of fish (John 21:1-6). Once they had their meal which Jesus had prepared, Jesus’ focus turns to Peter, as John 21:15-17 has it. The emphasis is on Jesus’ command that Peter go about feeding and taking care of the flock of the Good Shepherd. In imagery consistent with Ezekiel 34 Jesus defines the shepherd. He calls Peter to feed and care for all of the flock. Peter’s remaining years were faithful to God’s command and when the time came for Peter to pass on the mantle of leadership, he too passed along the task of the shepherd: (1 Peter 5:1-4)

Peter calls on his fellow elders of the church to be shepherds. He exhorts them to care for God’s flock, not out of compulsion, but out of love. The words of Jesus resonates with Peter’s exhortation,
“I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15).
The shepherd is to be an example of Christ for
“Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (1 John 2:6).

Shepherding, by definition, means to tend, to guard, and to lead, much like a shepherd takes care of his sheep. For a clergy, shepherding God’s flock is providing loving care to those in need of spiritual guidance, emotional support, financial assistance, and even physical aid. They seek the quality of care from the church that is described in John 10, John 21, and Psalm 23. This basic need remains constant but the methodology for fulfilling the need is dynamic: ever-changing with time. Jesus in referring to himself, said he was the "Good Shepherd" (John 10:11). The writer of Hebrews called him the "Great Shepherd" (Hebrews 13:20). As already alluded to, pastoral theology is rooted in the Old Testament descriptions of God as a shepherd and the nation of Israel as the sheep of God’s flock (Ezekiel 34: 30-31). In Jeremiah 4 and 9:19, the people are called sheep.

When the Bible speaks about the leaders of God’s people as shepherds, it envisions leaders who feed, protect and feel with the people as a good shepherd does for his flock. The shepherd’s role is, among others, one of service. The shepherd sets directions, enables the community to function smoothly and tries to create conditions that will enable people to live with dignity. The title “shepherd” in the Hebrew Bible refers, primarily, to God-who shepherds God’s people. One of the distinctive understandings of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures is that God who created us in love continues to reach out to us and to care for us as a shepherd does with the sheep that are entrusted in his care. This is brought out in Psalm 23: “The Lord is my shepherd”. In the 23rd Psalm, the psalmist compares God’s love and care for humanity to that of a shepherd's love and care for his sheep. In his opening statement, the shepherd-king is admitting and relishing the shepherding of the Lord his God. "The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1a). Here, God is portrayed as a faithful and good shepherd. God leads God’s flock into well-being and abundance (“green pastures”) and keeps them safe from every danger (“valley of darkness”).
Believers often find themselves in situations that cause fear and worry. It is then they find courage and strength in the knowledge that their Heavenly Shepherd and a multitude of his under-shepherds are with them.

"Your rod and staff protect and comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). Though scriptures indicate that David added to his arsenal, a sling, the ancient shepherd carried mainly a rod and staff. Keller mentions several usages for the rod:

"It was used as a weapon and symbol of authority; it was used in general to gently discipline a sheep; another common usage for the rod was to examine and count sheep. Ezekiel refers to passing 'under the rod' (Ezekiel 20:37); the shepherd's rod was also an instrument of protection for sheep and shepherd alike" (Keller 20).

The use of the staff by the shepherd was to reach out and catch an individual sheep for examination, for comforting, or to rescue it from briers. The staff was also used for guidance—to gently redirect or encourage the sheep along a difficult or dangerous path.

The parallel for the Christian is found in Christ, the Good Shepherd (John 10:14), who has gone on before us in every situation that we are liable to encounter. "He faced all the same temptations we do, yet he did not sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Yet again, "He has personally known our struggles, suffering and sorrows that weighed Him down ... he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped and we were healed" (Isaiah 53:4, 5).

The Good Shepherd has gone ahead of his sheep to prepare a feast for every believer.

The 23rd Psalm presents a formidable list of benefits and caring acts of a good shepherd. Pastoral care, in owning these characteristics, provides then a relationship for the sheep's needs for rest, refreshment, renewal and restoration, guidance in righteousness, courage, companionship, protection and comfort, food, acceptance and healing, blessings, unconditional love, and hope now and in the eternal future.
The shepherding motif is also carried into the New Testament. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, compares his leadership among his spiritual children to that of a shepherd among his sheep. In the tenth chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus calls himself the "Good Shepherd." In describing himself as this Jesus said that he was the Great Shepherd for his sheep and that his purpose was to give life in its fullness to all who enter through Him.

Models of good and bad shepherding are given in scripture. Our purpose is to describe good shepherding and to emulate the "Good Shepherd." In the New Testament gospels, Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep in Luke 7:13-16, chose 12 of his disciples to be apostles. The mandate he gave to Peter in John 21:15-17, was not limited to Peter, but was accepted by all who were chosen to be shepherds of God's flock. That mandate calls us to "feed my lambs ... take care of my sheep ... feed my sheep." In Acts 20:28, when saying goodbye to the church at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul called the elders together and commanded them to shepherd the flock of God: "Be sure that you feed and shepherd God's flock." Peter also writes in his epistle to the elders:

'To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's suffering and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you clothe yourself with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble' (I Peter 5:1-6).

In seeking a method of caring for sheep, Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34, John chapters 10 and 21, and Matthew 18 contain summaries of the scriptural expectations of shepherds.

The responsibility of the shepherd is to ensure the well-being of the flock of God. A clergyperson acting on the mandate of and representing the Good Shepherd locates
“pastoral care in the center of the dialogue between the Christian story and life stories suggests that its most fundamental caring purpose is to facilitate the process of connecting life stories to the Christian story and vice versa” (Gerkin 1997:112).

The other side of shepherding, is the place of the sheep. They require constant care of a dedicated shepherd. The shepherd provides for all their needs, leads them to good pastures and to water. The shepherd rescues them from dangers, searches for them when they are lost, and protects them from predatory animals. For this, he has his rod. The shepherd will guide and direct with his staff, and also use the rod to protect the sheep. Jesus declared himself as the Good Shepherd, who has come, “that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). He is the Good Shepherd, who lays down his own life to protect his flock. In days gone by, shepherds watching their flock by night would gather them into an enclosure. They would sleep, literally, by lying across the entrance of the enclosure so that before a wild beast would attack the sheep, it would have to attack them first. The Shepherd is committed to protecting the sheep. He is described as the one who has concern for the sheep.

The Shepherd denies himself for the benefit of the sheep.

“With the coming of Jesus, who, according to John’s Gospel, identifies himself as “the good shepherd,” the shepherding image takes its place as a primary grounding image for ministry. Applied to Jesus’ ministry, the shepherding image incorporates not only the wisdom expressed in certain parables and the Sermon on the Mount, not only his priestly leadership in relationship to his followers but also the elements of prophecy such as are found in the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple and his confrontations with the Pharisees and Sadducees.” (Gerkin 1997:27)… “More than any other image, we need to have written on our hearts the image most clearly and powerfully given to us by Jesus, of the pastor as the shepherd of the flock of Christ.” (Gerkin 1997:80)

Three main aspects of shepherding are provision, protection, and presiding over. Although there is a lot that is involved in shepherding, the labour of the shepherd
always involves these three aspects. By provision, the inference is on feeding the flock, and taking care of the flock so that it is well nourished. By dint of protection, the shepherd watches over the flock, keeping the flock safe from outside threats and from any problems that may arise among the flock. The shepherd takes the flock somewhere by means of presiding over or guiding, directing and leading the flock. These three responsibilities always blend together in a faithful and biblical shepherding ministry. They furthermore find manifestation and identity in the three roles of prophetic, priestly, and wisdom models of caring ministry which informs Gerkin’s shepherding model.

Gerkin taps into Luther’s pastoral care model which concerned itself with the care and protection of those who were victims of the uncaring practices of their society. According to Gerkin,

“Luther’s conception of pastoral care involved a primary concern in special need, including the victims of “the evils of the present time” (Gerkin 1997: 42).

Gerkin further reiterates that pastoral concern has suffered due to the shift toward individualism and has thus been left solely for clergypersons. Gerkin’s work is central here given that with generative wisdom, he moves beyond the predominance of the psychotherapeutic paradigm in pastoral care to a dynamic, interactive process which balances faith, culture, community, and individual well-being. Secrets are built into human life. And

“Secret keeping has become the relational modus vivendi” (Imber-Black 1993: 9).

Secrets creep into personal relationships and into professional relationships. They also permeate the cultures in which people live.

“The content of any given secret will have various meanings to different families, family members... Such meanings generally flow from social constructions in the culture.” (Imber-Black 1993: 11).

Any given secret may have multiple meanings within a family. Parents may define a particular secret as having a protective meaning, as for instance, when a child is not told that his father is actually a stepfather. This same secret may carry the meaning of deception for the child. Further the secrets of parents have a potential of being
destructive to the child. When a secret enters the reservoir of shame it becomes maintained through family dynamics. The key emotions that evoke shame are inter alia, hurt, failure and helplessness, which create anger that when encompassed, create shame. With shame one experiences a sense of painful self-diminution. One’s sense of worth, importance and sense of who s/he is as a person is painfully reduced.

“Secrets innervate the rules of shame – rules that perpetuate the shame and bind family members in confusion, chaos, and growth inhibiting relationships” (Imber-Black 1993: 37).

Secrets have a way of taking a profound toll on a person’s well-being and have a potential of leaving all family relationships tied in painful knots.

God as the Father of the Cure of Souls, has always been involved in healing wounded souls. It is characteristic of the loving God’s heart that God desires for God’s children to walk in wholeness and completeness. God seeks out the injured souls, and continues to reach out to the objects of God’s love. Jesus Christ as the Curator of our souls also sought for such wounded souls: “For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25). Jesus ministered about healing of the soul to all who would receive Him. He gave a model to be followed by his disciples. The disciples multiplied this model and spread its message to the world, and it has been passed down from generation to generation. The “cure of souls” is what pastoral work has been called through history. Thus Gerkin takes the baton is deeply sensitive to both individual and community dimensions. Through his quadrilateral nexus of tradition - individuals, family, community, and cultural context - he offers a solid bridge to the 21st century in his work, An introduction to pastoral care.

The positive attributes of the good shepherd are given prominence and used to express the loving leadership of God and of the promised Messiah. The shepherd leads, guides, nurtures, heals, seeks out the lost, brings the scattered flock back together and protects it from harm. The image occurs frequently in Psalms and the exilic prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Deuteronomy and Isaiah. Isaiah 40:11(KJV) highlights, quite vividly, the image of tenderness and hope that is found in the good shepherd: “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his
arm, and carry [them] in his bosom, [and] shall gently lead those that are with young.” While Ezekiel 34:16a (KJV): “I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up [that which was] broken, and will strengthen that which was sick”, portrays the element of concern and skills of the good shepherd.

The 23rd Psalm speaks about, inter alia, the healing skills of the good shepherd.

“The Lord God is depicted as the good shepherd who leads the people in paths of righteousness, restores the souls of the people, and walks with the people among their enemies, and even into the valley of the shadows of death” (Gerkin 1997: 27).

The parables such as the lost sheep and the good Samaritan are used to illustrate the meaning of care and concern.

“Many of the parables, with some exceptions, are stories that challenge honor and shame culture of Jesus’ day. They can also be used in similar ways today. Knowing that we are loved despite our being unacceptable is very critical to most of us, and the parable can be used to convey this message today. When the parable is used in pastoral counseling and in preaching, the negative convictions about ourselves can be challenged and new ideas can be introduced.” (Wimberly 1999:117).

The shepherd has to have the compassion of Christ in order to tend Christ’s sheep. This is so; since the shepherd is an expression of Christ’s compassion. He has concern for the sheep and this involves the responsibility of seeking out a sheep that is meandering off, wandering away, vulnerable and in possible danger. Before Jesus left the world he commissioned Peter to feed his lambs and tend his sheep (John 21:15-16) and thereby, commissioning the Church. The work of shepherding God’s flocks is an ongoing task that is entrusted to the whole church. Our ministry as shepherds is to be patterned after the Good Shepherd himself, Jesus Christ, who describes his shepherding ministry in the gospel of John in chapter 10.

Gerkin’s work is central here given that with generative wisdom, Gerkin moves beyond the predominance of the psychotherapeutic paradigm in pastoral care to a dynamic and interactive process which balances faith, culture, community, and
individual well-being. Wimberly (2005) proposes a method of the story-linking process, and pays attention to the importance of connecting narratives in what she calls “story-linking.” She applies it specifically to life’s experiences, history, and the evolving liberation of African American Christians who are encouraged to see the connection between biblical stories and their own personal stories. Soul Stories link the persons’ everyday life with Christian Scriptures. It is worth noting that the process need not only be limited to African American communities. The way Wimberly (2005) engages her own African American heritage is insightful and instructive for other communities. Soul Stories, in this revised volume, takes on a cross-generational orientation with the emphasis on linking stories of family identities, events, relationships, and story plot together with Bible stories and exemplary Christian faith stories that are found in the African Diaspora. She believes that every person has a heritage to draw from in this process.

There will be challenges in discerning the meaning in biblical stories as there would be with any study of the Bible at a lay level. One potential danger is that the participants will simply mine biblical texts for images of themselves rather than being challenged and convicted by them. There would certainly be hurdles in multicultural situations but such hurdles may make the story-linking even more beneficial. The process may take some creativity for those who do not know much about their heritage. In the end though, it is a process seriously worth considering for all sorts of educational contexts and Wimberly’s (2005) book, is a helpful jumpstart.

As with a lot of other brilliant pioneering work, the Kübler-Ross model is, elegantly, simple. The five stages of grief, also known as the ‘grief cycle’, were not intended to be a rigid series of sequential or uniformly timed steps. It does not assume nature of a process as such. It is to be understood as a model or a framework and is not fixed and consistent but it serves more as a guide. People do not always experience all of the five ‘grief cycle’ stages. Some stages may be revisited. Some stages may not be experienced at all. Transition between stages can be more of an ebb and flow rather than a progression. The five stages are neither linear nor are they equal in their experience. A person’s grief and other reactions to emotional trauma are as individual as a fingerprint. The model acknowledges that there is an individual pattern of reactive emotional responses which people feel when coming to terms
with great loss or trauma. The model further recognises that people have to pass through their own individual journeys of coming to terms with great loss or trauma. After which there will generally be an acceptance of reality which then enables the person to cope. The model is perhaps a way of explaining how and why 'time heals' or how 'life goes on'. While Kübler-Ross's focus was on death and bereavement, the grief cycle model is a useful perspective for understanding our own and other people's emotional reaction to personal trauma and change, irrespective of the cause. What follows is an analysis of the stages – Figure 2 Five stages of grief.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EKR stage</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – Denial</td>
<td>Denial is a conscious or unconscious refusal to accept facts, information, reality, etc., relating to the situation concerned. It is a defence mechanism and perfectly natural. Some people can become locked in this stage when dealing with a traumatic change that can be ignored. Death, of cause, is not particularly, easy to avoid or evade indefinitely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – Anger</td>
<td>Anger can manifest in different ways. People who are dealing with emotional upset can be angry with themselves, and/or with others; especially with those who are close to them. Knowing this, helps keeps the counselor to remain detached and non-judgemental when experiencing the anger of someone who is very upset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - Bargaining</td>
<td>Traditionally, the bargaining stage for people who are facing death can involve attempting to bargain with whatever God the person believes in. People who are facing less serious trauma can bargain or seek to negotiate a compromise. For example &quot;Can we still be friends?..&quot; when facing a break-up. Bargaining rarely provides a sustainable solution; especially if it is a matter of life or death.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 - Depression

This is also referred to, as preparatory grieving. In a way, it is the dress rehearsal or the practice run for the 'aftermath' although this stage means different things depending on whom it involves. It is a sort of an acceptance; with emotional attachment. It is natural to feel sadness and regret, fear, uncertainty, etc. It shows that the person has, at least, began to accept the reality.

5 - Acceptance

Again, this stage, definitely, varies according to the person's situation, although, broadly, it is an indication that there is some emotional detachment and objectivity. People, who are dying, can enter this stage a long time before the people they leave behind, who must necessarily pass through their own individual stages of dealing with the grief.

The Extended Grief Cycle can be shown as in the chart below, which indicates the roller-coaster ride of activity and passivity as the person wriggles and turns in their desperate efforts to avoid the change.

![The Extended Grief Cycle](image)

**Figure 3:** The Extended Grief Cycle

The initial state before the cycle is received is stable at least in terms of the subsequent reaction on hearing the injurious and disturbing news. Compared with the ups and downs to come, even if there is some variation, this is indeed a stable state. And then, into the calm of this relative paradise, a bombshell bursts... .
Shock stage: Initial paralysis at hearing the bad news. [This model is extended slightly from the original Kubler-Ross model, which does not explicitly include the Shock and Testing stages. These stages however are often useful to understand and facilitating change.]

Denial stage: Trying to avoid the inevitable.

Anger stage: Frustrated outpouring of bottled-up emotion.

Bargaining stage: Seeking in vain for a way out.

Depression stage: Final realization of the inevitable.

Testing stage: Seeking realistic solutions.

Acceptance stage: Finally, finding the way forward.

Reactions similar to those articulated by Kübler-Ross are observable in people who are confronted with far less serious trauma than death and bereavement. This is somewhat a 'change model' for helping the pastoral caregiver to understand and deal with personal reactions to trauma. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and her ideas have become synonymous with emotional response to trauma, grief support and counseling.

Wimberly's (2005) *Soul Stories* link the persons' everyday life with Christian Scriptures. *Soul Stories*, in this revised volume, take on a cross-generational orientation with the emphasis on linking stories of family identities, events, relationships, and story plot together with Bible stories and exemplary Christian faith stories that are found in the African Diaspora. On one hand this orientation builds on the awareness of the continued fragmentation of Black family life and the disconnect between generations. Yet on the other hand, it builds on the profound yearning of Black people for a common family history. The goal of Wimberly's (2005) model is to enliven the values which are associated with the image of "village" in order to empower and equip African Americans today. The Wimberly's four phase model compliments as well as buttresses Kübler-Ross' five stage model of grief.

The first phase of the story-linking process is somewhat autobiographical and introspective. The participant considers his/her identity, his/her social contexts, his/her relationships, key events in his/her life, and the basic meanings that she/he assigns to his/her life. In the second phase the leader guides the participants through biblical passages, engaging them in ways that help them to “enter into a partnership”
with the biblical characters. They also begin to envision God’s action today in light of the passage and their ongoing response to God. Phase three is what makes this approach somewhat different to the typical “Bible study” of a traditional Caucasian church. This is where participants engage in exemplars of the past, both widely known and local heroes of faith in action, with whom they can identify. Finally, phase four is when the leader helps the participants to gather all of these stories and develop them into a way of discerning God’s call for ethical decision making today.

3.3 NARRATIVE THERAPY

Human beings are storying creatures. We make sense of the world and the things that happen to us by constructing narratives to explain and interpret events both to ourselves and to other people. The narrative structures and the vocabularies that we use when we craft and tell our tales of our perceptions and experiences are also, in themselves, significant, providing information about our social and cultural positioning.

Narrative therapy is a postmodern approach defined within the social constructionist worldview that truth and reality are socially constructed or shared perspectives bound by history and context. Within a narrative therapy framework, meaning is generated through stories in different contexts and problems are manufactured within these contexts (Lambie & Milsom, 2010). Solutions, therefore, are focused on altering the stories. This, in turn, changes meaning and redefines problems (Fernandez, 1999c; 2002b).

Narrative therapy is a method of therapy that separates the person from the problem and encourages people to rely on their own skill sets to minimize the problems that exist in their everyday lives. It is a way of working that considers the broader context of people’s lives particularly in the various dimensions of diversity including class, race, gender, sexual orientation and ability. Throughout life, personal experiences are transformed into personal stories that are given meaning and help shape a person’s identity, and narrative therapy utilizes the power of people’s personal stories to discover the life purpose of the narrator. Narrative therapy was created as a non-pathologizing, empowering, and collaborative form of therapy that recognizes
that people possess natural competencies, skills, and expertise that can help guide change in their lives. As people are being viewed as separate from their problems, this process can help externalize sensitive issues. This process of externalization can help a person develop greater self-compassion, which, in turn, can help him or her to feel more capable of change. Some psychologists have identified a process termed "posttraumatic growth" to account for the positive personal change that can occur to people who have experienced a traumatic event. Posttraumatic growth (PTG) is defined as “the experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises” (Tedeschi & Calhoun 2004:1), and is one of the topics emerging from the new field of positive psychology. This objectification dissipates resistance and defenses and allows a co-researcher to address this issue in a more productive manner. Rather than transforming the person, narrative therapy aims to transform the effects of the problem. The objective is to get some distance from the issue, and in this way, it is possible to see how a particular concern is serving a person, rather than harming him or her.

This approach also helps in viewing problems within the context of social, political, and cultural storylines that influence the way we view ourselves and our personal stories. These stories both describe and shape people’s perspectives on their lives, histories and futures. At a time of engaging with co-researchers their stories had been completely dominated by problems. These narratives on a timeline have been referred to as ‘problem-saturated’ stories, which can also become ‘identity stories’. Such identity stories can invite a powerful negative influence in the way people see their lives and capabilities. Thus within a narrative framework, people's lives and identities are seen as multi-storied versus single-storied. Moreover the focus is not on ‘experts’ solving problems. It is on people co-discovering through conversations, the hopeful, preferred, and previously unrecognized and hidden possibilities contained within themselves and unseen story-lines. To this end, those interested in narrative practices collaborate with people in ‘re-authoring’ the stories of their lives.

Narrative therapy can be used for individuals and families. In a family setting, the technique of externalizing problems sets the stage for creating positive interactions and transforming negative communication or responses into more
accepting, nonjudgmental, and meaningful exchanges. Seeing a problem objectively helps families to reconnect with the heart of their relationship and address the ways in which the problem has challenged that core strength. Telling one’s story of a problem is a form of action toward change. Thus problems are objectified and framed within a larger sociocultural context, therefore making room for other stories. Then “alternative” or “preferred” storylines that exist beyond the problem story are identified and build upon; these provide contrast to the problem, reflect a person’s true nature, and offer opportunities to rewrite one’s story.

In this way, people move from what is known (the problem story) to what is as of yet unknown. During the unfolding of the process the affected person is helped to see what is “absent but implicit” in the presentation of a problem. By exploring the impact of the problem, it is possible to identify what is truly important and valuable to a person in a broader context, beyond the problem. This can help a person identify a common thread to connect his or her actions and choices throughout life. In other words, all the “other” experiences and values from life are “absent but implicit” as people navigate new terrain. This process can help a person better understand his or her experience of life and gain personal agency for addressing problem scenarios in the future.

Narrative therapy emerges from social constructivism which assumes that events in life are inherently ambiguous and the ways in which people construct meaning are largely influenced by family, culture, and society. Narrative therapy assumes that people's lives including their relationships, are shaped by language and the knowledge and meaning contained in the stories they hear and tell about their lives.

Parker and Horton argue that

"Studies in a variety of disciplines have suggested that all cognition is inherently metaphorical" and note "the vital role that symbolism plays in perception" (Parker & Horton 1996:83).

The authors offer the

"perspective that the universe is made up of stories rather than atoms" and suggest, "Myth and ritual are vehicles through which the value
impregnated beliefs and ideas that we live by, and for, are preserved and transmitted” (Parker & Horton 1996:82).

From this perspective narratives reveal a deeper truth about the meanings of our experience than a factual account of the events themselves. And Feinstein & Krippner notes,

"Personal mythologies give meaning to the past, understanding to the present, and direction to the future" (Feinstein and Krippner, 1997:138).

When people tell and retell their life stories, the stories evolve into increasingly meaningful and healing constructions. Listening to the stories co-researchers tell, the process of identifying alternative ways of understanding events in their lives unfolds which provides for alternative meaning, especially a positive one. As a result, the intention is to help co-researchers to assume authorship of their lives in order to rewrite their stories by breaking patterns and developing new solutions.

Resolution of problems is meant to help co-researchers become aware of how events in their lives have assumed significance allowing co-researchers to distance themselves from impoverishing stories by giving new meaning to their past helping co-researchers to see the problem as inherited as a separate influential entity rather than an inseparable part of who they are; collaboratively identifying exceptions to self-defeating patterns; encouraging co-researchers to challenge destructive cultural influences they have internalized, and; challenging co-researchers to rewrite their own lives according to alternative and preferred scripts. This approach to the resolution of problems makes reframing of stories and the process of positive deconstruction. Furthermore, this approach helps co-researchers to describe their lives and provide them with opportunities to gain insight into their life stories and to change those "scripts" they find lacking. Storytelling is a way of articulating a subjective, experiential truth and the story told bears significance and potential therapeutic value.

Contemporary approaches to narrative therapy recognize the importance of understanding how human experience becomes meaningful. A person’s life is influenced by the narratives she/he constructs, which are in turn influenced by the narratives of those around him/her. Thus this becomes a collaborative attempt to increase co-researchers’ awareness of the ways in which events in their lives
become significant. Questions posed in this regard always highlight the problem is an external influence.

“When the problem is externalized, it's as if the person can peek out from behind it” (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998:412).

Questions such as, "How has the disclosure influenced your life?" can help identify positive aspects and potential resources occurring in people's narratives that can be enhanced, as well as deficits that must be overcome. Pollard's positive deconstruction theory and Capps' reframing methods are pivotal in this regard. The unique influences (positive and negative) of the co-researcher's specific cultural experiences and identity are embraced. Through storytelling - as oral history - values, expectations, hopes, and fears are revealed. A story provides insight into the co-researchers' responses, their need to act on the responses, and their desire to be heard or understood. A story can become a way for a co-researcher to become both participant and observer in order to find new solutions or break down barriers.

Co-researchers may initially be asked to describe some of the important transitional moments in their lives. These may include examples of early life, their experience of school life, the experience of being supported or lack thereof, and internal resources that enabled them, respectively, to seek help. Questions about expectations co-researchers felt from family and community would be asked. Questions like, "How did disclosure interfere with your attempts to achieve goals you had set pre-disclosure?" or "How has fear contributed to your feelings of hopelessness?" may be asked. Positive aspects of a story and exceptions to destructive aspects of a narrative could be identified by asking questions like, "Were there times that you didn't allow news of disclosure to make choices for you?" and "How has your ability to accept love and support from others helped you?" The focus of therapeutic dialogue could then shift toward developing alternatives to hopeless aspects of personal and cultural expectations. Positive deconstruction and reframing would be employed complementarily with the use of therapeutic and integration rituals.

Other important questions can help co-researchers to begin to create an alternative story. Questions such as, "As you begin to understand the positive and negative influences in your life, what qualities must you possess in order to develop better relationships with your ‘new’ father and siblings?" are central here. Co-researchers
need help to replace these stories with more positive narratives about themselves. As they talk about the people and events in their lives, such as their childhood, co-researchers can discover some of their feelings as well as the personal meaning in their respective stories. Questions and feedback that uncover the desires and emotions beneath stories told by co-researchers have the ability to aid and facilitate healing. Reframing and positive deconstruction follow. Participants may experience a great deal of healing through the therapist’s feedback and questions that uncover the desires and emotions beneath their stories. A continued focus on identifying, practicing, or even imagining changes in a story could begin the process of developing new ways of living.

3.4 CULTURAL ISSUES

It is important to understand the family's ethnic and cultural background. This will facilitate reviewing and implementing proposed alternatives and possible rituals that affect family systems in light of impending integration of a ‘new’ sibling and child, and reciprocally, integration of a ‘new’ father and siblings. Family permission is imperative here thus has to be sought, in order to successfully promote change within a family system. Furthermore, the family's permission to share their intimate issues is to be sought. The approach however, must vary according to the cultural background of the family while the language used to describe dynamics within the family system must be charged with specific cultural meaning. Advice offered should not alienate co-researchers. Thus where co-researchers’ cultures fosters and values interdependence among family members, it would be defeating to encourage independence from family. However effectiveness within the family might be encouraged and explain ways that would allow some freedom within the cultural parameters of the family. Respect befitting has to be accorded the family to open up and to be entrusted with what they hold dear and to subsequently be trusted enough to consider proposals to promote positive change.

In case where shame has had an immobilizing effect there is a need to frame the situation so that the family could face the problem/issues together and find a solution. McGoldrick et al., 1996; Sue and Sue, 1990 sheds light on family therapy for those from unfamiliar cultures.
People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative research is a research methodology that is used to “inquire” into - or asks questions about and looks for deeper understanding of - particular aspects of life experience. Narrative research is unique in that in its study of life experience it places emphasis on narrative or story. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. (Connelly & Clandinin 2006: 375). Interviews, for example, often elicit “narrative data” or the co-researcher’s story. Narrative data may take such forms as: a) a personal experience story that relates the co-researcher to some significant encounter, event, or personal experience; or b) a personal history or reconstruction of an entire life, from birth to the present (Chase 2005: 652). The narrative accounts collected in search for information constitute data, either from co-researchers or from other sources, for example written in questionnaires; interviews, and; observation reports made by researchers themselves, among others. Being social constructions, narratives cannot be independent of their contexts. Storylines and genres arise out of, are associated with, and locate narratives within, specific cultural and social milieu.

“Stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell our experience. A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history…. People live stories and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994: 415).

Narrative inquirers attend to both personal conditions and simultaneously to social conditions. By personal conditions, “we mean the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions” (Connelly & Clandinin 2006: 480) of the researcher and co-researcher. Social conditions refer to the milieu, the conditions under which people’s experiences and events are unfolding. These social conditions are understood in part, in terms of cultural, social, institutional and linguistic narratives. A second dimension of the sociality commonplace directs attention to the inquiry
relationship between researcher’s and co-researcher’s lives. Narrative inquirers cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship. There should be no confusion between narrative and narrative inquiry (research). Narrative inquiry is a methodological approach that investigates narrative and/or employs narrative to present a vista of events and experiences. A narrative, in the context of narrative inquiry, is often a story about a significant event or experience in an individual’s life. Narrative implies listening to and telling or retelling stories about people and the problems in their lives. In the face of serious problems, the idea of hearing or telling stories is not a trivial pursuit. Rather it gives credence to the fact that conversations have the ability to shape new realities. The bridges of meaning build through stories help healing developments flourish. Language has the competence to shape events into narratives of hope.

At the core is the belief that the problem is separate and distinctly apart from the person and that the problem does not define a person. A problem is something that a person has and not something that a person is. The goal is not to transform who the person is but rather to transform the effect that the problem has on a person’s life. To discover the life purpose of the co-researcher, the power of the co-researcher’s story is employed. The co-researcher is encouraged through a respectful and cooperative relationship to address the problems in his/her life that exist amidst social, political, and cultural storylines.

The co-researchers will be guided through the narrative in a way that allows them to separate the problem from the individual. The technique of externalizing sets the stage for creating positive interactions and transforming negative communication or responses into more accepting, non-judgmental and meaningful exchanges. The linguistic practice of externalization which separates persons from problems is a way to motivate co-researchers to face and diminish difficulties (White & Epston, 1990a).

In a family, blame and shame about a problem tend to have a silencing and immobilizing effect. Moreover when a person thinks of a problem as an integral part of their character or the nature of their relationships it is difficult for them to change as it seems so "close to home." Separating the problem from the person in an
externalizing conversation relieves the pressure of blame and defensiveness. No longer defined as inherently being the problem, a co-researcher can have a relationship with the externalized problem. This practice lets a co-researcher enter into a more reflective and critical position vis-à-vis the problem. In the space between co-researcher and problem, responsibility, choice, and personal agency tend to expand. Externalizing conversation offers freedom to a person concerned in order to take a lighter, more effective and less stressed approach to serious problems.

Standing as an alternative to the diagnosis and treatment of pathology, the focus in an externalizing conversation is on expanding choice and possibility in the relationship between the person and the problem. Roth and Epston writes:

“In contrast to the common cultural and professional practice of identifying the person as the problem or the problem as within the person, this work depicts the problem as external to the person. It does so not in the conviction that the problem is objectively separate, but as a linguistic counter-practice that makes more freeing constructions available” (Roth & Epston 1996:5).

When a problem is externalized the attitude will most likely shift. When they realize that the problem, instead of them, is going to be put on the spot or under scrutiny they enthusiastically join in the conversation. They are then in a position to acknowledge that the "problem" happens to be making them miserable and to discuss matters with, at times, remarkable candour.

This method of externalization is applied to behaviours, values, beliefs, and ideals. Through objectification a co-researcher can view problematic situations from a new perspective. Although the narrative is intact, the character dynamic has shifted. Each component of a story can be employed and altered as to create a new ending to the narrative. Narratives are definitive at first glance but are pliable and fluid when offered in the therapeutic environment. Each narrative is multi-dimensional and oftentimes a co-researcher will not be aware of certain plots, themes, or even characters until the narrative has been fully explored. Credibility is given to emotions by naming them and simultaneously placing them in the desired place on their co-researcher’s landscape and externalizing it. Viewing the co-researcher as facing
rather than being a problem is a helpful start to preserving the fluidity of identity formation. This fluidity allows the co-researcher to explore variations of attitude, identity and behavior even more importantly to try out the emotional flavour of the moment or day.

Practicing the language of externalizing conversations is not so much about learning a technique as about developing a particular way of seeing things.

“Externalizing is not a technical operation or a method. It is a language practice that shows, invites, and evokes generative and respectful ways of thinking about and being with people struggling to develop the kinds of relationships they would prefer to have with the problems that discomfort them” (Roth & Epston 1996a:149).

This method encourages people to rely on their own skill set to minimize the problems that exist in their everyday lives. It holds the belief that a person’s identity is formed by our experiences or narratives. Because the problem is seen as a separate entity from the person, a researcher will endeavour to help co-researcher externalize sensitive issues. This objectification dissipates resistance and defenses and allows a co-researcher to address this entity in a more productive manner. In light of this, stories are powerful means for shaping our identities. They weave together in a narrative of the events that have special significance for us.

By moving persons as actors and actresses along the story line, they allow different aspects of personalities and characters to emerge. The drama of the story helps us to remember its content more easily than if that content were stored in concepts. Schereiter asserts that

“our identities are based strongly on the stories we tell about ourselves, our families, our communities, our countries. In these collections of stories, stories about origins hold a special place” (Schereiter 2008: 19).

Schereiter goes on to maintain that they often embody the fundamental values that we see unfolding in the rest of our history. For Christians the stories are a special window into God’s activity in the world. They give us clues as to who God is and what God is trying to communicate with us (Schereiter 2008: 20).
Understanding what it is that the people in question believe is imperative here. To engage effectively with this, the researcher has to understand their worldview. That premise will inform the kind of questions to be raised with them. Pollard terms that engagement and the entire process *positive deconstruction*. The process is engaged for the purpose of helping those who are affected to rethink their beliefs which are shaped and are in the light of respective personal experiences. However the initial step would have been learning about their background and their worldview. It is a process that provides the basis for the author to help them to turn from held beliefs to the truth which is found through Jesus the Good Shepherd.

“One danger is to assume that it isn’t needed. It’s very simple to say, ‘All we need to do is pray for people’, or ‘All we need to do is love people’. It’s simple – but it simply isn’t true” (Pollard 1997: 45).

This is a process that will take time and effort. Positive deconstruction is a process that is employed to ‘dismantle’ the worldview in order to identify areas of conflict which are based on a Christian worldview. It is positive because the intention is not to destroy the person’s ideas and belief system, but to build on areas of agreement between the two worldviews in order to argue for the truth of the Christian worldview.

The process of positive deconstruction recognises and affirms the elements of truth to which individuals already hold, but also helps them to discover for themselves the inadequacies of the underlying worldviews they have absorbed. The aim is awaken a heart response (Pollard 1997: 44). The process of positive deconstruction involves four elements: identifying the underlying worldview, analysing it, affirming the elements of truth which it contains, and finally, discovering its errors. Pollard believes that there is a need for a response at a far deeper level. That is,

“we must address the changes taking place in their underlying worldviews” (Pollard 1997: 30).

When dealing with the co-researchers’ stories and their meaning it becomes clear how the co-researchers see themselves and the world in which they live.

Wimberly (2000), in Relational Refugees, focuses upon another historical aspect of the African American soul care: mentoring. He endeavours to help hurting people through mentoring by modeling new modes of living through living examples. When introducing mentoring as a model for pastoral care, Wimberly (2000) focuses
attention on the needs of relational refugees - the persons who are alienated from family and community life. Wimberly recognizes that social ills first start with personal ills. And those personal ills begin with alienation from God, others, and self. Real life relational mentoring not only provides the cure but also offers the care that Jesus exemplified.

This work is dynamic in that it is not only for African American churches. But it fits the feet of all congregations in our post-modern alienated world. Although Wimberly speaks directly to the African American churches and community his words are not exclusive but they address all churches in today's society. He provides clear and ample examples of how such relational homelessness contributes to, among other things, identity confusion and the incapacity to thrive. This is relevant for all those who are relationally disconnected. This can be traced to the new sister, who was introduced after the death of the mother (relational refugee).

While *Relational Refugees* (Wimberly 2000) focuses upon historical aspect of African American soul care, Waruta and Kinoti's *Pastoral Care in African Christianity*, highlights the essence of the communal element while acknowledging the importance and the place of individual counselling. They assert that the church has a mandate to confront human suffering and the conditions that cause it by looking up to Jesus Christ as the model example. On the other hand, Wimberly (2000) challenges the church to provide the kind of relationships and relational environments that can retrieve relational refugees and thereby re-create strong families and communities.

“The church in its role as ‘shepherd of God’s flock must address herself to this situation by alleviating suffering and enabling the realization of God’s Kingdom. She must administer healing that will resolve harmony in the lives of individuals, community and the environment…The pastoral work of the Church is thus to be seen in terms of healing, guiding, sustain and reconciling the people of God” (Waruta & Kinoti 2005:85-6).

Pastoral care therefore exists in that space between stories of the Christian community and individuals within that community. And the four pastoral functions
namely healing, guiding, sustaining, and reconciling, find expression within the space where pastoral care unfolds.

Schereiter provides a further fundamental characteristic of a good shepherd, whereby pain is transformed into joyful and fulfilling life. The risen Lord

“Jesus appears [to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus] in the story as someone who overtakes the disciples on the road and falls in with them, accompanying them on their journey. This act of ‘accompanying the disciples’ is a powerful image that can become a model for our own pastoral praxis. We do not walk ahead of people so much as alongside them, speaking with them, hearing their stories, comforting them, and challenging them, when necessary. Many of us need this kind of accompaniment on our journey to reconciliation. Those who accompany us, may not be able to provide the definitive interpretation of our burdens, but they can become a means by which those burdens are lifted. They can create an atmosphere of safety and trust that makes possible to find the way out of our distress” (Schereiter 2008:42-3) [italics added]

In the Emmaus story in Luke, what was missing was faith. In our own struggle toward reconciliation what is missing is often not that clear. We struggle to find one thing that will help us to overcome the pain, transform the memory and allow us to get on with our lives. But it just does not seem to come. The struggle to find the way to interpret our story is frequently a gradual retelling of that story until it becomes a new story (Schereiter 2008:42).

“What happens in the telling and retelling of the story is the healing of memory. So much of our identity is tied up with memory. This becomes more and more apparent the older we get, when the greater part of our life lies behind us rather than ahead of us. The memory of persons and events important to us is stored in narratives” (Schereiter 2008:44).

The researcher uses these sources complimentarily and interchangeably in an effort to buttress each other and enhance the researcher’s quest.
3.5 Preliminary Conclusion:
The image of the shepherd is a powerful metaphor on God’s care for God’s people and it can be quite useful in pastoral care as an example of the character and nature of the compassionate and a just God: who intimately cares for His people. Psalm 23 and Ezekiel 34 contribute, significantly, to this motif.

Pastoral care in its very nature is God’s work and it is God who invites God’s-people to partner with Godself in accomplishing God’s work of pastoral care. Thus the clergyperson draws upon on the character and nature of God the ‘one Shepherd’ (Ezek. 34:23; 37:24) of the Old Testament who was revealed in the person of Jesus, the ‘one Shepherd’ (Jn. 10:16) of the Gospels. The ministry of pastoral care is shaped by the gospel and the God of the gospel and is grounded in the person and work of Jesus while partnership with the Father and the Holy Spirit as well as those Christians who are called to serve him. Pastoral care takes its mode from the metaphor of the shepherd and his sheep and shepherding is basically to deliver pastoral care. It interfaces with biblical preaching often growing out of it and is enhanced by an ability to listen deeply and confidentially.

The next chapter examines familial secrecy and the impact thereof. The chapter also analyses and explores the experiences of the co-researchers which brings to the fore questions around their identity, place and purpose in the world as their life’s struggles unfolds.
CHAPTER 4: FAMILY AND SECRECY

4.1 Introduction:

The author explores the co-researchers’ experiences with the hard disruptions that occur when one is confronted by others in ways that lead teen and young adult children (the co-researchers) to question, at times, the very ground of their being, their identity, and their place and purpose in the world. Finding a nexus for understanding these disruptions in interruptions, a story of their respective life struggles unfolds as a series of passages through gateways to transcendence. In the end, these interruptions, as harsh as some of them may seem, are proposed as necessary “moments of rupture” that allow for the eruption of infinite possibility, joy, and a spirited life.

4.2 A brief synopsis of what Identity formation, family identity, family is and the concept of Children:

The concept of identity has never been a unified and a stable phenomenon as it got a variety of meanings and interpretations. A comprehensible definition can best explain what identity is. According to Weeks,

“identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic, it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality. But it is also about your social relationship, your complex involvement with others” (Weeks 1990: 88).

If we conceptualize identity as the way in which we more or less self-consciously locate ourselves in the social world as observes Hall (1996), then we can consider the formation of identity from a ritualistic point of view. Identity formation in traditional societies does not entail the current problems of identity formation in modern societies. Modern society can be characterized by ever-changing individuals, including social statuses unlike in traditional societies where social status is almost fixed (Golubovi 2004).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) argued that the gradual process of becoming a person in a society should be in conformity with your relationship with the environment. They argued that
“developing human being not only interrelates with a particular natural environment but with specific cultural and a social order which is mediated to him by the significant others who have charge of him” (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 66).

Situation of interaction can only exist with the presence of others. From the moment one is born, she or he is introduced into the world through socialization. Through socialization she or he is being thought and learned assigned behavior and values accepted by the environment. Berger and Luckmann (1966) asserts that “the shape into which this humanness is molded is determined by those socio-cultural formations and is relative to their numerous variations” (Berger and Luckman 1966:67).

This period of formation into humanness is the time when the organism (individual) and its environment turn to be harmonized with each other and it is this period that the individual turns to adapt to its environment. The period of formation is also possible through the “typification and the reciprocal"interaction of both actors (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

However, it should be made clear here that “for a particular type of reciprocal typification to occur there must be a continuing social situation in which the habitualized actions of two or more individuals interlock” (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 75).

This is similar to Collins’ concept of interaction – situational encounter of actors.

It is the nature of a family that its members are connected emotionally (Bowen, 2003). Family systems theory, according to Broderick (1993) views the family as a functioning whole with integrated parts that work to maintain a state of equilibrium.

“The theory considers communication and interaction patterns, separateness and connectedness, loyalty and independence, and adaptation to stress in the context of the whole as opposed to the individual in isolation” (Christian 2006: 2).

It requires a holistic orientation rather than linear orientation to understand fully the dynamics of a family. Roberts (2002) lists five core assumptions of the family systems theory as follows:
1. A system must be understood as a whole instead of by its component parts: Family systems theory views the family as a whole, with the primary focus on the interaction among family members (Whitchurch and Constantine, 1993). So, the functioning of the family members is interdependent.

2. Systems are multilevel and can be applied to all levels of the social world: According to Fiese et al, (2002) the study of family systems lies at the intersection between individual-level and family-level factors, thus helping us to understand the reciprocal relationship between the individual and the family system. Additionally, every family system contains a number of small groups within itself which are usually made up of 2-3 people.

3. Systems are self-reflexive: Human systems are characterized by their ability to make themselves and their own behavior the focus of examination; this is self-reflexivity (Whitchurch and Constantine, 1993). According to family systems theory, the goal of a family system is to maintain equilibrium (Cheal, 1991). The tendency of systems to keep doing things as they have already been done is known as the system’s equilibrium. This equilibrium could be maintained through feedback loops, boundaries, family rules, and family rituals and traditions (Bradshaw, 1988). The interactions that take place within the family system are reciprocal.

4. Systems are inherently integrative: The family is one element of human life. Just like any other social institutions, it is an integral part of the society. Slesnick and Prestopnick (2005) and Henggeler and Borduin (1995) suggest the individuals are nested in a social ecology within a complex of interconnected systems. These systems include individual, family, and extra-familial (peer, school, and neighborhood) factors which are related with each other.

5. All open, ongoing systems consist of patterned, interactive processes with emergent properties: Family systems have boundaries and can be viewed on a continuum from open to closed systems (Morgaine, 2001). Boundaries are related to the limits of any system and they are used to identify what or who is “in” or “out of” the family (Walsh and Giblin, 1988). Slesnick and Prestopnick (2005) argued that the family systems theory sees the family as an open system. Researchers have found that families who are receptive to outside information while continuing to maintain their boundaries will continue to evolve and adjust to changes in the environment (Cheal, 1991).
Gunn (1980) expresses family identify as follows

“Our concept of family identity [has] two polar aspects. On the one hand, the family’s identity looks back to its history and forward to its future – and to its mythology composed of “patterns, themes, motifs by which [it] recognizes the unity of [its] life”. On the other hand, the family’s identity is involved with the larger community in which it lives – the formulation of the family story which embodies a family’s identity must set it into the context of the wider community in a way which will be acceptable to the family members themselves. In other words, a sense of family identity creates a symbolic image of the “the family” in the minds of family members. … The symbolic entity created by a sense of family identity gives a context to family life from which meaning can be derived and personal satisfaction obtained from the family experience. … If families are to exhibit strengths, if they are to be capable of pulling together and collectively overcoming difficulties, it would seem that they … need an awareness that their cooperate [sic] lives and endeavors make sense, and that family life is meaningful in the context in which the family lives (Gunn 1980:20-21).

Gunn argues that family identity

“lies at the very heart of what it means to have family strengths as distinct from strengths accruing to the individuals who happen to be living in families” (Gunn 1980: 18).

He then identifies four activities that assist in the formation and maintenance of family identity (Gunn 1980: 26-29): **Telling the Family Story** - There is a need to piece together and transmit the story of each family to other members of the family, so that the entire system shares the common oral tradition of where the family came from; **Photographing the Events of the Family** - family activities and members serve to preserve the history of a family. Photographs linked with the family story are meaningful and of value in developing family identity. Families with strong family identity preserve photographs, along with stories, for future generations; **Preserving and Perpetuating Traditions, Rituals and Distinctive Ways of Doing Things** - When a new family is formed, former traditions of participants merge while in the process certain aspects of both traditions will be discarded and others embraced.
“Of course, these efforts can also mire the family down in endless functions and meaningless repetitions if they become separated from the family story or if they merely become a burden upon one or a few members of the family” (Gunn 1980:28);

and, Preserving Mementos of the Past - Family identity is able to provide families with strength and dignity:

“The key to such family identity lies in transforming the bric-a-brac of the past – the genealogies, the boxes of photographs, the mementos, the rituals, the anecdotes – into a family story which has the power to unite the present generation with its past, and which reveals patterns, themes, and motifs by which a family can recognize the unity of its life.” (Gunn 1980:30)

Gunn speaks to the verity that where a strong sense of family exists, traditions and ritual are abound and this informs related concepts of family identity and family ritual. When dealing with the concept of family identity Wolin & Bennett introduces the theme of family rituals,

“We define family ritual as a symbolic form of communication that, owing to the satisfaction that family members experience through its repetition, is acted out in a systematic fashion over time. Through their special meaning and their repetitive nature, rituals contribute significantly to the establishment and preservation of a family’s collective sense of itself, which we have termed the “family identity”. Rituals stabilize this identity throughout family life by clarifying expected roles, delineating boundaries within and without the family, and defining rules so that all members know that “this is the way our family is.” (Wolin & Bennett 1984:401)

Family rituals provide one mechanism through which family boundaries are established and maintained (Broderick, 1993; Pipher, 1996). Family rituals have the potential to bind family members to each other and to connect the family to the outside social environment (Wolin and Bennett, 1984). When there is change in the family, rituals often keep a family together during times of change and stress Fingerman and Bermann (2000). Cheal (1991), on the other hand, suggests that family rituals provide a communication mechanism through which families express their feelings about one another. Families are not free from rituals and there are
many reasons for performing rituals. A family ritual is seen here as something that includes a recurrent event taking place with the members of the family as participants with prescribed behaviors and with a sense of historical continuity and meaning through repetition. Fiese et al. (2002) sees the study of family routines and rituals as important for three basic reasons. First, such study represents a focus on the whole family process as a group involving multiple family members not only the individuals. Second, family life provides the cultural environment for the family routines and rituals that can help in understanding cross cultural differences. Third, these rituals and routines are at the intersection between individual-level and family-level factors which help to broaden the understanding of the reciprocal relationship between the individual and the family system.

Researchers also recognize specific dimensions of family rituals. Kiser (2007) listed six dimensions of family rituals and they are: ritualization; routine practices or structure; ritual importance or meaning; deliberateness or persistence; adaptability or flexibility; and, preparatory events. However, two of the dimensions of family rituals, routine and meaning, have received considerable attention across a number of studies (Fiese & Tomcho, 2001). In her study Roberts (2002) reported that it was the meaning and not the routine of family rituals that indicate whether they serve a positive or negative function for adolescents. For example, meaningful family rituals have been associated with positive outcomes including greater marital satisfaction (Fiese & Kline, 1993), higher adolescent self-esteem (Fiese, 1992), and better adjustment for boys in single-parent families (Brody & Flor, 1997).

According to Marshall (2002) social integration and a sense of unity are among the most noted outcomes and functions of rituals. Familial rituals help us understand the degree of cohesiveness within this social unit.

“Family rituals often involve the coming together of family members who live apart, and this may provide the opportunity for messages reflecting the availability of support by others in the family” (Howe 2002:128).

There are fundamental differences between family value systems of both Eurocentric and African societies. Whereas the former is atomic, individualistic, modernised and compatible with capitalist objectivised ideals, the latter is still very much trustee,
communalistic and traditional akin to socialised ideals. The Western family also has materialistic, scientific and secular values whereas the African values are communal, socialistic, sacred and magical. The sense of community and humane living are highly cherished values of traditional African life. The community is basically sacred rather than secular and surrounded by several religious forms and symbols. Communities are mostly based on clan or ethnic descent or church affiliation. The African society has been informed by the traditional communal humane values. And Mbiti declares

“The individual finds his or her identity best of all in relation to other persons - in the family, in the community, and through one’s own (physical or social) descendants. It is within the community that people learn, experience and practise moral and spiritual values. These values include: love, friendship, hospitality, helpfulness, support, generosity, sharing, respect (especially from ‘junior’ to ‘senior’ status through blood, social relationships and age), comforting and caring (in time of infancy, sickness and bereavement), celebrating and laughing together. That way, people share both their joys and their sorrows. Individualism is apportioned a minor role.” [An Exploratory Paper at the first Meeting of the Standing Committee on The Contributions of Africa to the Religious Heritage of the World: John Mbiti].

Mbiti accentuates the important belief and sense of the community among traditional Africans. In traditional Africa the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. A person owes his or her existence to other people including those of past generations and his/her contemporaries.

Given the presence of the divine, primarily within people, it is in relation to other people that the African person attains his or her full humanity. Accordingly whatever happens to the individual, it is believed to be happening to the whole group and whatever happens to the whole group, happens to the individual. The individual can only say

"I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am. This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man[sic]" (Mbiti 1990: 106).
The African humanism as encapsulated by the adage of *Ubuntu/Botho* (Ubuntu is a Zulu word while Botho is a Sotho/Tswana equivalent thereof) which means the essence of being human. It speaks about humanness gentleness, hospitality, putting oneself aside on behalf of others, being vulnerable. It recognises that one’s humanity is bound up in that of others – for we can only be human together. In African philosophy Botho/Ubuntu is well summed up in Mbiti’s words, "I am, because we are and since we are, therefore I am." Mbiti’s summary of the African philosophy is sharply opposed to "I think therefore I exist" by Rene Descartes, the French Philosopher who can be said to have summed up the Western philosophy (Mutugi 2001: 21). The above concept approaches a human being from different perspective: the western, from an individualistic role while the African is all inclusive.

As a spiritual foundation of African societies African humanism (Ubuntu/botho) is a unifying worldview which is enshrined in the Zulu Maxim: Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu, which means, "a person is a person through other persons." This Ubuntu concept is also found in other African communities even though there are different vocabularies and phrases that are used to describe it and it will suffice to illustrate it by a few examples. The Kikuyu idiom which says: *Mundu ni Mundu ni undu wa andu* means that a human being is a person because of the other people. The same can be said from the Sotho whose idiom says *Motho ke motho ka batho*, with a similar translation to those of other African communities. This African aphorism articulates a basic respect and compassion for others as its premise. It can be interpreted both as a factual description and a rule of conduct or social ethic. It describes human being as ‘being-with-others’ and prescribes what ‘being-with-others’ should be all about.

Whereas Western humanism tends to underestimate or even deny the importance of religious beliefs, African humanism is resiliently religious. To the Westerner, the maxim ‘A person is a person through other persons’ has no obvious religious connotations as this can be interpreted as nothing but a general appeal to treat others with respect and decency. The maxim however, has a deep religious meaning in African tradition. When Julius Nyerere coined his Ujamaa concept (from *Jamii*—meaning family), he was talking from this Botho/Ubuntu backcloth. He saw Africa as one family and the whole world as an extended family. It is in this same spirit that the whole clan is seen as a family. Mugambi articulates this by saying that

Furthermore, a number of African authors have sought to scrounge on the maxim. “I belong, therefore I am”. An African is a benign-community (Ndungane 2003:102; cf. Setiloane 2000:21; Tutu 1999:35). This belief in the community often contradicts Western notions of individuality. Thus the Basotho (of Lesotho) observe that: "Phakoe e ja ka balisa = A hawk eats through the help of the shepherds." This means that: "Success has come because of the contribution of others." Families and members of kin-groups, from minimal to maximal lineages, generally live together and form communities.

While the western family is atomic, individualistic and monogamous, most African families in the Southern African region (Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, Xhosa, Ndebele, Shona, etc), are extended, trustee and polygamous. Although the notion of an extended family exists in the western society, it is perceived differently in the African context. Whilst an extended family is perceived in terms of including the grandparents and grandchildren and close persons of kin at the domestic level in the western context, the extended family in this region goes further to include those who are dead (ancestors) and those who are conceived. True botho/ubuntu however, requires an authentic respect for individual rights and values. It is also an honest appreciation of diversities amongst the people.

Ubuntu has a certain Africanness and religious commitment in the welfare of fellow human beings that is manifestly African in essence.

“My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.”... “A person is a person through other persons”..."I am human because I belong. I participate. I share.”... knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are"(Tutu: 1999:31)

This utterance by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, highlights what many be called a communal personhood. He goes on to infer that God’s household connotes an in-person, communal environment and calls for such *ubuntu* where a person does...
not exist as fully human alone but rather through other people. This is where all are welcome in person, where there are no foreigners and no relational estrangement. On this basis household living embraces hospitality that includes caring for others and extending one’s efforts for the sake of others. In such a household the estranged finds re-connection and those who have experienced brokenness, oppression, rejection, and victimization, find restoration.

Of note here is

“These wise proverbs highlight a ‘we’ orientation to life and suggest that liberation and vocation evolve from communal awareness and demonstration of celebratory and caring kinship. …the African ancestral “we” became connected with the Christian faith. It was informed by divine love attested to in Scripture and generated by an understanding of relationships based on communal love and caring” (Wimberly 2005: 61).

Every human being has a need and a right to the facts about their personal life journey, heritage, as well as, ancestry.

“Like all human beings, [there is a] need to be connected and related significantly to others. Only by living in relationship can we discover our true identities, our roles, and the purpose and the meaning of our lives” (Wimberly 2000:35) [italics added].

Children who are deprived of knowledge of or contact with their genetic origins are exiles from the kinship network. They may in fact have unknown half-siblings, cousins, aunts, grandparents, but they will never meet them. Of course there is every chance that they will be provided with an alternative family network that will provide love and security but the subtle similarities of genetic relationships may come to haunt them in the future, particularly when they have children of their own and start to look for such things as shared resemblances, attitudes, interests, tendencies, qualities of character and physical features in their own offspring. There is something very powerful about a desire to look back – to understand one’s own past, as a Chinese proverb would have it: ‘To forget one’s ancestors is to be a brook without a source, a tree without a root.’

It bears to mention that African societies are visibly in a state of transition, a stage of betwixt and between with the attendant anxiety, tension and confusion felt in virtually
every facet of life of the people. The forces that precipitate and sustain radical change in the continent including Western culture and socio-political systems now largely provide new framework and elements for community-living and harmony among most societies of Africa. Consequently the diffusion of western values became associated with development. Thus under the control of the world’s dominating values the African society has been transforming helplessly from its traditional, communal, humane (botho/ubuntu) values, into the adoption of global dominating Eurocentric values. It is also disheartening to note that African humanism (botho/ubuntu) in our modern times is undermined by the ethnic and political conflicts that have plagued sub-Saharan Africa.

In addition the concept of children is defined differently in African societies thus highlight the way in which this concept is socially constructed. Whilst a child in the western society categorically falls below a certain age (e.g. eighteen years), the status of being a child takes a lifetime in most African societies. For an example, at a domestic level, every parent is a father or mother of every child. This situation exists, inter alia, among the Zulus, Northern Sothos, Tswanas and Baganda of Uganda where children are considered a blessing from God and for the whole community. Thus the Sukuma (Tanzania) proverb articulates this concept clearly: "One knee does not bring up a child" and the Swahili (East and Central Africa) proverb says: "One hand does not nurse a child." While Igbo and Yoruba (Nigeria) Proverb states: “It takes a whole village to raise a child.” These proverbs, especially the Nigerian proverb, convey the African worldview that emphasizes on the values of family relationships, parental care, self-sacrificing concern for others, sharing, and even hospitality. This is very close to the Biblical worldview as seen in scripture texts that are related to unity and cooperation (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 12). This also highlights a mother’s self-sacrificing love (Isaiah 49:15-16). Along these lines children need their heritage - the good, the not so good, the fun, the painful, the easy, and the difficult.

As children grow to become adults they learn from their caregivers and culture what relationships are all about. They learn that they acquire theories or knowledge structures about relationships and how they work through relationships. Such orientation is a responsibility of the entire community and not just immediate parents.
Wimberly (2000) calls it mimetics - a process where acts of caring, which have to do with to do with the process of social formation, are repeated.

“Mimetic theory allows us to expand our definition of mentoring. Connecting familiar forms of teaching with a larger discussion of social formation, we begin to see mentoring as a form of learning that can heal those who find themselves relational refugees... Mimetic theory outlines some of the specific forms in which this growth takes place” (Wimberly 2000:34).

Mentors and the traditions that they draw upon provide a new understanding of self, in relation to a social order that welcomes the refugee back into community. There are several levels on which this learning takes place simultaneously. These include: myths and stories that contain plots, with these in which the refugee can locate him or herself, roles that offer new patterns of behaviour, scenes that convey how the refugee may respond in various social situations, and the attitudes that can make alternative responses to various circumstances, possible. Through stories, we learn to be selves and to act in certain ways. Through roles, we discover healthy ways to interact with others. Through repeating scenes, we rehearse our response to new situations. Through internalizing the attitudes of others, we grow in emotional maturity. To be a mentor is to teach by example. To be mentored is to follow an example and to imitate (Wimberly 2000:33).

“Mentoring is a form of practical rationality, in which the mentor teaches by example, in addition to advising and questioning” (Wimberly 2000:34). He goes on to say mentoring is, in fact, a model for transforming life skills. (Wimberly 2000:32). Mentoring is about the qualitative and subjective parts of lives and it involves, among others, dealing with frustrations, giving constructive criticism, handling disappointment, and behaving with humility and compassion. It also takes an emotional commitment that is very much like parenting in its drive, to help teach a child in order for him/her to be successful.

Thus in African humanism, every adult person is a parent to every child and has an obligation to contribute in making the child a better person since the child belongs to the community. As intimated earlier, children learn from their caregivers and culture;
and such orientation is a responsibility of the entire community and not just immediate parents. In an African community, the individual is attached to the society through ritual interaction. The social (mechanical) solidarity that is produced through ritual performances holds the society together. Family’s rituals serve as a window into those needs. As family members describe rituals, they reveal secrets and modes of interaction which otherwise they may deny or hide. This strong connection between rituals and the underlying family system suggests that changes in a family’s ritual life might actually impact the shape of the family system. The symbols that are generated during this period are being inculcated into the individual’s mind and memory. The respect for these symbols by members of the society provides a peaceful environment for the society. Ritual can be interpreted as a representation of social structure, thus a means by which individuals are brought together as a group. Rituals are the major component in determining, shaping, revising and maintaining a family’s identity (Wolin & Bennett 1984: 401,403,407).

The role or the function of ritual in the transformation of persons from one stage of social life to another cannot be underestimated. Van Gennep argues that through a sequence of activities – separation, transition and incorporation,

“ritual effects the person’s removal from one social grouping, dramatized the change by holding the person in a suspended ‘betwixt and between’ state for a period of time, and then reincorporate him or her into a new identity of status within another social grouping” (Van Gennep 1960: 3).

In these three stages of ritual initiation – separation, transition and incorporation, a person assumes a new identity after undergoing a transformation from an old identity to another one. Identity and contours of memory can never be reified. They are neither static nor inherently given. They emerge as part of a social construct, in dialogue and encounter with identity, stories, and memories of others. Thus a change of identity is also a change of social status. The logic of ritual movement is extremely influential in identity formation. For example, young men are initiated into a ritual group and end up with a new identity. Chapter 5 will give further attention to the subject of rituals.

The study will now briefly focus on family structures and family dynamics in light of the foregoing discourse of family drawing from comparison between African and
Eurocentric societies and concept of children. This is in order to establish a link with familial secrecy.

4.3 Family Structures and Dynamics

Family systems are inherently complex. And it bears to mention here, as alluded to above, that changes in the structure of African families reflects the enduring tensions between traditional and modern values and structures. While families abandon key traditional practices in favour of modern ones, the major trend remains the creation of systems of family organization that draw on both traditional and modern norms. There are different types of family structures and despite the changing lifestyles and ever-increasing personal mobility that characterizes modern society, the family remains the central element of contemporary life. Families offer companionship, security, and a measure of protection against an often uncaring world. But family structure, like society at large, has undergone significant changes. Each family has its own patterns of relating to each other. These are their family dynamics. They are influenced by things like the structure of the family, the personalities of each family member, cultural background, values, and personal or family experiences.

The value system a family holds is also part of their family culture. Such things as attitudes to education, employment status and the importance placed on family loyalty and defending each other, all constitute family values. The seen and unseen patterns of power, control, communication, love, risk-taking, money and trust are just a few of the dynamics that can become unconscious drivers through which families organize themselves and their actions across generations. Family dynamics impact on family members and inform how family dynamics are essential to address family systems issues. The importance of family dynamics cannot be underestimated and have serious impacts on society as a whole. There are things which may have a severe impact on family dynamics. Perhaps one of the most important of such things, which continues to grow in importance and in prevalence, is familial secrecy.

Many families strongly value privacy and are secretive about things they consider shameful. They believe speaking to anyone outside the family about their difficulties constitutes disloyalty and/or will invite interference. In addition, there is an image of a perfect family to be upheld. Therefore secret(s) have become, however seemingly
benign, part of the family fabric. And it is all about protecting the family and continuing the façade of "everything is fine." Whether a traumatic situation strikes just one family member or the whole family, the entire family experiences the aftermath. Traumatic events can disturb vital functions within the family. Secrets are a minefield in families especially between parents and children. Family secrets can create walls of silence within the family, walls that are difficult to tear down when solidified over time. When facts about a secret are hidden from parts of the family system this can greatly affect family trust and stability over time.

4.4 Familial Secrecy:
Secrets in the broadest and deepest sense are built into human life and undeniably, into all life. Notions of morality do not belong to them any more than moral judgements can be applied to the behaviour of living systems when considered at the level of process. Secrets in this broad sense are neither ‘good’ nor ‘bad’, they just are. There are some secrets that the family is deeply invested in keeping locked inside. They represent the most painful, shameful and traumatic of the family storyline. In consequence, as intimated earlier, such family secret(s) become part of the family fabric and hence are carefully guarded. This aids in shedding light on why families cling to their secrets and feel so intensely about them. Every family’s secrets (for those family members who possess it) are a ‘mystery’. The revelation of these secrets may result in the loss of some hard-to-specify ‘power’ that the exposure may even lead to paralysis: the family will no longer be able ‘be itself’ (Crago 1997:101-2).

Furthermore in some instances,

“the content of secrets is often known by those who are not supposed to know” (Piot, 1993:357).

Secrecy implies the concealment of something that may be negatively valued by those who know the secret and those who do not (Brown-Smith, 1998). Imber-Black comprehends secrets as systemic phenomena. She continues to mention that they are relational, shaping dyads, triangles, hidden alliances, splits, cut offs, defining boundaries of who is “in” and who is “out,” and calibrating closeness and distance in
relationships. Certainly the questions, is: “Who knows the secret?” and, by implication,

“Who does not know the secret?” orient us to the ways that secrets affect relationship possibilities. (Imber-Black 1993: 9).

The contents of the secrets do not cause as much damage. Rather, it is their power to determine “who will know what” that is damaged and that they are being “betrayed” from the inside.

“Secret keeping has become the relational modus vivendi” (Imber-Black 1993: 9).

Imber-Black infers that the content of any given secret will have various meanings to different families, and family members… Such meanings, generally, result from social constructions within a culture (Imber-Black 1993: 11). Any given secret may have multiple meanings within a family. Parents may define a particular secret as having a protective meaning. For instance, when a child is not told that father is actually a stepfather. This same secret may carry the meaning of deception for the child. Similarly, a secret affair may mean differentiation and autonomy to one partner and relationship betrayal to the other partner (Imber-Black 1993: 12). A case in point is that of a scenario of an extramarital affair that may be considered a “private” matter to one spouse, whereas it may be considered a hurtful “secret” to the other (Imber-Black 1993:19).

The definition of secrecy ultimately involves the definition of privacy because the two are closely related, often overlap, and are frequently misconstrued. However defining either is difficult because social norms dictate what is considered private and what is considered a secret. Bok defines secrecy as

“Intentional concealment” and privacy as “being protected from unwanted access by others” (Bok 1983: 10).

However, ethical struggles become apparent regarding the overlap of secrecy and privacy and on who is doing the defining.
While Sanders (1993) defines a secret matter as the information that is necessary to keep to oneself and a private matter as a situation where a choice exists, the question that arises is: When does the withheld information become a “Secret” and when is it simply one of the private things that one chooses never to discuss with others? “There is a fine line between secrecy and privacy, and families will draw the line differently, depending on their cultural values and personal judgement... One way to distinguish between secrecy and privacy is to determine the relevance of the information for different family members” (Imber-Black 1993: 67).

Definitions are regulated by whoever makes decisions about them. And of course, they shift around across time, cultures, and socio-political circumstances.

“Socially constructed definitions of secrecy and privacy change by what a given culture stigmatizes or values” (Imber-Black 1993: 19).

What is kept secret often engenders shame while truly private matters do not. Secrets are often connected to fear and anxiety regarding the disclosure while privacy implies a certain zone of comfort that is free from the unwanted entry of others (Imber-Black 1993: 19). Secrecy and privacy often exist in a paradoxical relationship with one another, largely because different and sometimes conflicting definitions of secrecy and privacy exist at various levels in a macrosystem. When areas of personal privacy are redefined by government, individuals and families, people may respond with secret-keeping. (Imber-Black 1993: 19-20)

Imber-Black cites Karpel (1980) who describes three levels of secrets by saying:
“The first one he calls individual, where one person in the family knows a secret and keeps it to herself (e.g., having AIDS). Another level is internal, where some people within the family share a secret and keep it from others (e.g., daughter had an abortion, mother knows about it). The third level is shared family secrets, where the whole family knows something but does not share it with the outside world (e.g., family violence where all are aware of it)” (Imber-Black 1993: 399).

Caldwell cites Roberts, Imber-Black, and Karpel (1993), and takes this further by describing eight locations of secrets. He names them as
“individual (e.g. contemplation of abortion), dyadic (e.g. a father and his mistress), subsystemic (e.g. incest only known to father and daughter), sub-systemic/macro-systemic (e.g. falling grades that are only known to mother, son, and school), whole family (e.g. job loss, alcoholism, or family violence), whole family/macro-systemic (e.g. probation, IRS fines), macro-systemic (e.g. diagnoses of illness unknown to family members), and community secrets (e.g. African-American slave songs that were sung to communicate escape plans). These separations are important when stressing the complexity of family secrets. Roberts (1993), further, suggests that secrets are always located in a larger societal context where what is considered a secret fluctuates with societal values, shapes how behaviors are viewed, and defines the consequences of those behaviors” (Caldwell 2004: 11).

One of the characteristics of a secret is power. Those who know something that others do not know feel powerful and a privileged as well as advantageous position. There is also a feeling of powerlessness and isolation when left out of the secret. The threat of exposure of a secret may result in the secret-keeper(s) viewed in a bad light. In light of such manipulation, the secret keeper(s) become mute. Secrets contribute to building “unholy alliances” among or between select members of the family.

“Secrets can become powerful weapons in the politics of the family, used to create boundaries or alliances in order to manipulate relationships” (Imber-Black 1993: 68).

There is a potential for secrets to subject family members into a double-bind situations or even give rise to possibilities of blackmailing situations.

“For the person who is doing the blackmailing, the secret functions as a tool for wielding power” (Imber-Black 1993: 68).

Secrets can be more than that.

“Secrets can serve as a shield, where the secret plays the role of protector. Here, secret-keepers hide the information because they believe that disclosure will harm others” (Caldwell 2004: 13-14).
In the case of the co-researchers it was decided by parent(s) and, in some cases, some members of kinfolks, not to disclose the secret to protect the children as that information may have had a potential to harm the children. Thus conditions are sometimes set for disclosure, for instance that in case a spouse passes away, the remaining spouse will then disclose the secret. A boundary is consequently erected around the family which is closed when the secret is shared only among family members and opened when one or more members disclose the secret to someone outside the family. The concept of boundaries between the family and the outside world is, to a certain degree, adaptive and is definitive of the family as a separate and distinct unit. To that end, boundaries in families can be seen as the

“relative barriers to the exchange of material, energy, and information” (Wood and Talmon 1983:348).

Focusing on information, all families have a certain amount of information that they consider private and inappropriate to share with the outside world. Thus a boundary is set up between those who know and those who are not privy to that information. Intergenerational family loyalties are often shaped by secrets. Such loyalties may appear as unexplainable behaviour that repeats across generations (Imber-Black 1993: 9)

Given that families are one of the earliest forms of social organization that individuals encounter, family relationships are shaped, in part, by what is shared by family members. Moreover the secret which is kept by family members shapes relationships. In light thereof family secrets may thus to some extent influence family functioning as well as the experience of an individual within the family. Work that was published in 1997 by Vangelisti and Caughlin suggests that keeping secrets can be thought of as a form of information control. A communication system within families defies modern technology. It is the system of communication of with which members of the family can relate to 'feeling' what is going on in the family without having to discuss it. The emotional investment makes open communication within a family somewhat a rare commodity. There are some secrets that the family is deeply invested in keeping locked inside. This is so as they represent the most painful, shameful and traumatic of the family storyline. Thus families can also, collectively, keep secrets from others outside the family. When families act collectively to keep a secret, they agree whether implicitly or explicitly to hide information from outsiders in
order to create a certain social appearance, both for themselves and others (Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997).

Family secrets, as already hinted, grow into being a component of the family structure and become prudently watched over. The author is of the view that it will take a very healthy family to be open minded and non judgemental and to actually let go of a secret upon disclosure, if at all such is possible. Conversely, families continue to agree on some unspoken level to paint unfortunate or potentially embarrassing events with a non-threatening whitewash, acceptable to the community at large as well as themselves.

“We live with a myth of social conformity from which we are not to deviate we live with an ‘addiction to social conformity’. Family members, who are loyal to sociocultural community standards, experience a sense of shame when they violate social laws or the moral codes. We live with a perceived image of some perfect social self; who is to be admired for upholding external social standards. Often, we are admitted not for personhood but rather for the status, titles and the ‘image’ of success” (Imber-Black 1993: 31).

This shared knowledge strengthens the bond among members while widening the gap between the family and the outside world (Brown-Smith, 1998).

“Every family secret, however seemingly petty to an outsider, constitute a micro-taboo, the breaking of which is terrifying and loathsome for the family to contemplate.” (Crago 1997:107).

When relationships are bound up by a secret the family’s overall communication style may become one that is marked by secret-keeping in areas including those that are totally unrelated to the initial secret. Both deliberate lies and withheld information may erode interpersonal trust and relationship reliability. (Imber-Black 1993: 14)

Keeping the secret may also become an important part of intimacy and relational development because it helps to foster a unique bond between those who are keeping the secret. Withholding information can thus sometimes serve as very positive and enhancing functions for close relationships and they can be an important part of intimacy and relational development. However the present study
focuses on secrecy and the adjustment of young adults who are ‘part of’ and ‘in part’ the secret. Hence the discussion will be limited to family secrets that have a negative impact upon disclosure and beyond. In this way such secrets serve relatively negative functions for family members and family relationships. Consequently the family actually ends up burdening its progeny far more by suppressing information.

The 1994 Vangelisti study found that individuals reported that secrecy serve different functions within the family context. A maintenance function was noted when withholding the information helped to keep family members close and protected them from stressors. A bonding function was noted when individuals felt that their family secrets increased unity among family members. In other cases, people reported that family secrets primarily served to help members of the family in avoiding a negative evaluation by outsiders. Family members also noted that keeping information a secret served as a form of defense. When secrets served this function they were kept because members felt that outsiders might use the information against the family.

Finally, some individuals reported that the primary reason that their family kept the information a secret was due to a lack of open communication among members. In the co-researchers’ family contexts, the secrecy was, initially, for purposes of protecting children from potential stressors and for keeping the family intact. Disclosure could, it is believed by some elders in such contexts, have proven disastrous. Thus it also had a bonding function for parents. The ‘more-than-two-decades’ old secret (co-researchers are all over 20 years) was maintained to avoid negative evaluation by those beyond immediate family boundaries. Had such a secret been disclosed at any given time in the past it could have had, to some extent, disastrous consequences for the two families that were involved. Even with the disclosure at a point when it happened, it still proved ruinous and devastating. Therefore it is believed by some elders that this secret was kept this long in maintaining family integrity for families involved.

The various functions that are served by family secrets may play an important role in the family members’ decisions whether to reveal or not to reveal that particular secret to those outside the family. While many families see the function of family secrets as
a mechanism to avoid negative evaluation from others, this function may assume vital importance in a dysfunctional family as they strive to preserve a façade of normality. When a family secret contain information that contradicts with its desired public appearance, revealing such a secret could demonstrate inadequacies within the family – therefore run a risk of being adjudged a dysfunctional and not normal family.

“Secrets innervate the rules of shame – rules that perpetuate the shame and bind family members in confusion, chaos, and growth inhibiting relationships” (Imber-Black 1993: 37).

Negatively “self-conscious” emotion of shame, along with others, perpetuate secrecy. Aversive feelings of shame are likely to ensue when one has erred or transgressed.

“Shame undermines self-confidence, and shame holds on in our lives tenaciously. Like a satanic force it tries to prevent us from moving constructively within our lives and seeks to draw us back into the shame-based world” (Wimberly 1999:35-6).

A section below will pay attention to the aspect of shame and its relation to secret.

4.4.1 The Shame Factor

Imber-Black states that

“Shame is an engine that drives secrecy, forcing our stories underground and banishing our traumas to dissociated obscurity. Shame and secrecy may destroy lives in one generation and pass like an invisible cursed heirloom to the next, creating traditions of deception and evasion that no longer have a discernible origin” (Imber-Black 1993: viii). Shame is essentially a threat to a person’s self-worth and when shame “sticks”, it can be debilitating. Shame is a powerful motive for keeping secrets. Shame forms an undeniable link with character formation and the essence of self-definition such that every time an episode of shame is triggered, a predictable affect management script ensues. Shame’s tentacles have the ability to strangle the human spirit and its power has the potential to crush the sense of worth and value; and the fear engendered by its presence can lock a person in perpetual bondage. Four major defensive scripts/strategies govern people’s reactions to shame. These are four basic ways to
respond when confronted with shame. The first is by modifying behavior to avoid it; second, by withdrawing from it; third, by becoming angry at others, often blaming them; and/or fourthly, by turning our anger against self. This Nathanson (1992) identifies as *compass of shame*. The Nathanson’s compass of shame will revisited later.

Shame is a form of pain that directs attention to the disorienting effects of pain and challenges to deepen the understanding of the clergy’s role as personal comforter. “Shame has a psychological cause, so its painfulness is often less observable than severe forms of physical pain. Moreover, shame is a type of painful experience that we desperately want to disguise from others, so it becomes a peculiarly private form of suffering. But this only underscores how disorienting shame can be. Together with doubt shame is the negative pole of the second stage of the life cycle” (Capps 1983:81).

Shame is the deeply held belief that one's being is flawed. Shame can manifest as a core feeling of not being good enough, of not deserving, of not feeling worthy, and of not being lovable. Deep feelings of shame have the ability to disrupt people’s lives in profound ways. It affects human identity (a sense of who one is), intimacy with others, and self-esteem. Shame can affect self-esteem in markedly different ways. It may be felt either better or worse by one person and not the other. Shame is not one’s true identity, it is a learned belief about self. This faulty belief underpins the development of a false or adapted self. Shame comes in many forms and is directed towards the developing self in countless verbal and non-verbal ways. The 'lesson' of shame is all the more indelibly learned if the messages are repetitive and if there is no opportunity to talk about the experiences. Each individual is born with a sense of personhood which, if properly nurtured, will instinctively help him or her make the right life choices. Some, however, have needlessly been shamed and go through life with a sense of loss about their personhood. Such are sometimes stigmatized by society and go through life with a spirit of rejection, feeling unwanted or illegitimate.

Even as adults they often feel loss because they do not know their biological parent(s). Shame relates to a sense of status and is intimately linked to a need for recognition. It is generally agreed that shame is one of the most powerful, painful and potentially destructive experiences known to humans. In recent years there has been
an explosion in research and theorising about shame. Authors such as Harper, J.M. and Hoopes, M.H. (1990); Lewis, H.B. (1987); Lewis, M. (1992); Kaufman, G. (1989) Nathanson, D.L. (1994). Fossum, M.A. and Mason, M.J. (1986) explore family dynamics of shame and how to recover. Scheff, T.J. (1988) explores shame in relationship to approval and conformity. What is shaming in one culture may not be in another. But the potential for shame is universal. Although shame is often considered a self-conscious emotion, shame also often depends of social comparison. Shame can be positive when it motivates one to do the right thing—modifying ones behaviour. Nevertheless shame is essentially a threat to self-worth and when shame “sticks” to a person, it may have a debilitating effect.

Capps speaks to three major characteristics of shame: the phenomenological experience of shame; the personal effects of shame; and the effect of shame on our world view. The premise for the phenomenological experience of shame is

“How does shame feel to the person who is experiencing it? A common reaction to shame is that we have been exposed to the view of others. Shame is often described as feeling that “everyone was looking at me” or wishing it were possible to “sink through the floor”. But being exposed to others is only part of the experience of shame. There is also self-exposure. Shame forces us to “see” ourselves. It makes us conscious of ourselves—“self-conscious.” Normally, we can go about our lives without much self-awareness, but the experience of shame suddenly forces us to be aware of ourselves. And, invariably, the self that shame reveals to us is one we would prefer not to see.” (Capps 1983:82)

This work by Capps highlights that

“the exposure to oneself is at the heart of shame. Also the feeling of being exposed to other people is not necessarily limited to those who are literally present. Sometimes we are alone but experience shame because we feel “watched” (Capps 1983:82-3).

The watchers may be any or those persons associated with us in some way who may not be in favour of what is taking place. This of course may go as far as referring to God from whom no secrets are hidden. An exposure such as this is never expected from a perspective of shame as choice, foresight and awareness are
not elements associated with shame since shame experiences are not premeditated nor is there a prior warning.

“Shame is the experience that we cannot anticipate in advance. Also, most experiences of shame happen in a moment...There is no opportunity to anticipate the experience and no way to adjust oneself to it. The full impact of exposure is felt at once. The exposure of shame is immediate and complete." (Capps 1983:83) “Besides the feeling of exposure there is the sense that the whole experience is inappropriate or incongruous. The experience of shame feels out of place, as though an element of absurdity has been injected into a normal and ordinary state of affairs.” (Capps 1983:83).

Those who have experience shame may have challenges articulating their experiences without thinking it may seem trivial yet,

“this experience may exert far greater influence on our lives.” (Capps 1983:83)... “Shame experiences are anomalies, and while we cannot deny that they are part of our experience, they seem alien to it. In fact, the same experience can happen to other persons and not cause them to feel shame at all...Shame’s incongruity results not from the objective event itself but from the fact that it is incongruous for this individual” (Capps 1983:84).

The second of the three major characteristics of shame that Capps engages is the personal effects of shame, and he has the question “What effect does shame have on us as persons?” becomes the basis from which to move on (Capps 1983:84). The issue that shame is a threat to trust informs the earlier question.

“To experience shame is to find that one’s trust in the world is not always warranted. Our expectations of how the world functions or hangs together are violated. We discover that we trusted ourselves to a situation that was not really there... We still are there, but the anticipated context is not...experiences of shame from time to time bring us to a vivid, unpleasant awareness that we have misperceived our real situation ” ... Shame “is an assault on the basic trust (Capps 1983:84)”. Shame always carries with it the sense that there is nothing one can do to purge its burdensome and toxic presence. Shame is the worst possible thing
that can happen, because shame, in its profoundest meaning, conveys that one is not fit to live in one's own community.

“Shame is only one of a vast experience that causes pain.” (Capps 1983:94)

Shame tears at the very sense of who we are in a way that other feelings do not. With shame one experiences a sense of painful self-diminution. Their sense of worth, importance and sense of who they are as a person is painfully reduced. When people feel shame there is a strong desire to withdraw or change the topic. The person wants to go into hiding in some way.

“We can endure a few assaults on our basic sense of trust. But many such experiences, or a few especially devastating ones, can lead to mistrust of virtually every situation we encounter. Then we anticipate that the arms will not reach out to save us, and we even wonder if the floor will sustain us...Since shame is often associated with the feeling of sinking through the floor, severe experiences of shame threaten this fundamental assurance. This is why we associate shame with “fallenness.” And this is why shame experiences cause us to be a little less trusting and a little more cautious and calculating the next time around” (Capps 1983:85).

Shame is also “totally self-involving.” Capps brings to the fore the difference between “guilty actions which we do, and shameful experiences which we are. An act of wrong doing, even one of serious consequences, need not undermine our sense of who we are because we can explain or rationalize the action as not characteristic of us. In this way guilt is externalized. But shame involves our whole self and cannot be externalized. ...shame experience involves exposure to “peculiarly sensitive, intimate, vulnerable aspects of the self” (Capps 1983:85). Therefore in light of the former, there is a connection between shame and identity. The central task in finding one’s identity is to acquire a sense of “I” or a coherent sense of self. We want to dissociate ourselves from the “self” revealed in shame....Our “shameful self” is most likely to be relegated to our “negative identity.”

“Attempts to dissociate ourselves from our shameful self usually take one of the three forms. The first and most common is to ignore our shameful self as being unimportant. We focus our attention instead on our more positive and satisfying selves and tell ourselves that our shameful self is
insignificant. The experience of shame itself lends support to this view, because many shame experiences are incongruous and inappropriate. Since our shameful self became evident to us through seemingly trivial experiences, we conclude that it has no relevance to our emerging identity” (Capps 1983:85).

The second approach is to recognise that our shameful self is an important part of us but to renounce it. In this case we acknowledge that it is part of who we are but we are determined that it will not be part of our positive identity. Sometimes individuals renounce their shameful self through a religious conversion. The third approach is to continue to engage in experiences that originally led us to experience shame but at the same time seek to eliminate feelings of shame from these experiences. The hope is that in time we can dissociate shame from experiences that we do not or cannot renounce (for example, sexual experiences).

All three approaches are unsatisfactory as a response to the problem of our shameful self. In one way or another they all counsel a denial of our shameful self. We need rather to take a diametrically opposite view of this self that is disclosed to us through the experience of shame. From a Christian point of view the shameful self is neither peripheral nor expendable but is absolutely central to our identity. (Capps 1983:86) The third major characteristics of shame Capps concentrate on is the effect of shame on our worldview. The first effect of shame on our worldview that Capps articulates

“brings us in touch with tragedy, especially the tragic dimensions of the relationships between generations” (Capps 1983:86).

He goes on to say,

“…whenever shame plays a role in the relations between generations it is likely to be a tragic role” (Capps 1983:87).

The second effect of shame on our worldview brings about the awareness

“Of the difficulty of human communication. Shameful experiences are hard to talk about; they are also hard to listen to…They are difficult to talk about because, when we tell the story as it really happened, we re-experience the shame and the pain that goes along with it. So we leave crucial details out, and when we do this, we fail to gain the relief we sought in the first
place. There is also the problem that the persons to whom we tell the story often consider it trivial and treat it as unimportant” (Capps 1983:87).

Capps continues,

“Shame experiences are also difficult to listen to if they fully and heard for what they are. Often this is because other persons would rather not be drawn into our private life. The same exposure that was painful for us when the vent occurred is painful for others when we expose them to this recounting. …“The effect of these communication difficulties is that shame experiences isolate us from other people. They isolate us when they occur, and they isolate us when we relate them to others. Thus shame often makes us feel alone in the world. There is some aspect of our lives that will never be known to others, a deep pain that others, no matter how sympathetic, cannot feel” (Capps 1983:88).

Shame is the inner experience of being "not wanted." It is feeling worthless, rejected, cast-out. Guilt is believing that one has done something bad and shame is believing that one is bad. Shame is believing that one is not loved because one is not lovable. Shame can also be seen as injury to self,

“Shame is an assault on our dignity because it makes us feel humiliated or embarrassed, and it results in loss of self-esteem or because it makes us feel ashamed of ourselves. Our first reaction to this inflicting of injury on self is to seek escape (make a quick exit, make ourselves invisible, convince ourselves it’s all a dream). When escape proves impossible we try other alternatives. We may defend our injured self through anger, putting the blame on others for getting us into this painful situation or for failing to prepare us adequately for it, or becoming angry with ourselves for getting involved in something we should have avoided. Blaming ourselves or others for this self-injury may be a useful coping mechanism. But this is hardly an adequate interpretation of the experience. There is more at stake than assigning blame.” (Capps 1983:88-89)

The three approaches dealt with earlier regarding ‘personal effects’ are attempts to interpret the experience of shame and to understand what it entails for one’s identity. But in each of the three we try to dissociate ourselves from the pain of shame and
from the injury that shame does to our sense of “I.” These three approaches are based on pain avoidance. The understanding and interpretation of shame employed here is diametrically opposed to this. This informs the approach that the painful experience of shame is not to be avoided or renounced but instead made the core of our identity as Christian. This is to be considered as informing the core of Christian identity. Because in shame we experience the pain of self-exposure, and the core of Christian identity is to be “exposed before God.” The point of Christian identity is not to put our shameful self behind us but to allow it to be exposed, again and again, to God. Capps contends that key question here to answer is,

“How may God become known to me?” And the answer is that as we cross the boundary from avoiding shame to embracing it, accepting it as the most intimate part of ourselves, we create the inner climate in which God becomes revealed to us” (Capps 1983:91); ...“But he needs to recount them, in spite of the pain, because he knows that as he exposes his shameful self, God is being revealed to him.” (Capps 1983:92)

Following the discourse on three main characteristics to which Capps spoke Nathanson (1992) then focus on and identifies four major defensive scripts/strategies that govern people’s reactions to shame and collectively constitutes the compass of shame. These are four basic ways to respond when confronted with shame. The first is by modifying behavior to avoid it; second, by withdrawing from it; third, by becoming angry at others, often blaming them; and/or fourthly, by turning our anger against self. Nathanson has described the four major sets of scripts which individuals employ dealing with an experience of shame. He goes on to arrange the four major sets of scripts as the poles on the Compass of Shame (figure 4). At each of the four poles of the compass are sets of scripts, which speak to the ways of behaving in response to the experience of shame. And they range from the ‘normal’ through to more serious or pathological behaviours. Below is the Nathanson Compass of Shame (Figure 4)
The sets of scripts found at each of the four poles of the compass can be described as follows:

1. **Withdrawal:** At this pole of the compass are those scripts that alleviate the negative affect by severing the connection with others so as to avoid their presumed scrutiny and judgement. The withdrawal scripts alleviate the negative affect by removing the person from the supposed glare of others.

2. **Attack Self:** Sometimes, people respond to an experience of shame with scripts that range from self-deprecating humour through to masochistic, self-destructive behaviours. This is the set of scripts Nathanson describes as the Attack Self-pole of the compass – where the person attempts to regain control of the situation by at least controlling the self-condemnation.

3. **Avoidance:** The set of scripts here draws attention away from the cause of the shame experience and onto some aspect of the self that is not defective, that restores some status to the individual. We all have numerous opportunities to deny or avoid shame by drawing attention to some aspect of the self that can be a source of pride – be it through enhanced body image, possessions, or achievements attained through risk-taking. Another common way in which we avoid examining what the spotlight of shame has highlighted is the use of alcohol or drugs. Each of these scripts alleviates the negative affect of shame by diverting our attention to a competent, positive image of ourselves.
4. **Attack Other**: The final pole of the compass hosts a set of scripts that enable us to feel better by shifting the blame or by making someone else smaller. This set of scripts range from seemingly harmless banter and good-natured teasing, through to malicious and hurtful insults and even physical aggression. In each of these scripts the painful experience of shame is lessened through making someone else the target in order to enhance our own status.

Each of the four sets of scripts described in the Compass of Shame is maladaptive because it doesn’t enable or require us to examine and address what the spotlight of shame has highlighted about us or our behaviour. They are common responses to the experience of shame because, acknowledging fault with, and addressing some defect of, the self is a daunting task. The self is who we are, and all we have. As Nathanson (1992) noted that, the positive affects are often experienced through one’s communion with other people, therefore the *Shame – Humiliation* affect is often experienced as an interruption to this pleasant communion or connection with others. It is therefore a particularly social affect. Nathanson points out that shame is often confused with guilt, which is a related but quite different discomfort. He explains that

"whereas shame is about the *quality* of our person or self, guilt is the painful emotion triggered when we become aware that we have acted in a way to bring harm to another person or to violate some important code.

Guilt is about *action* and laws" (Nathanson 1992:19).

Disclosing family secrets can be difficult. Both telling and not-telling can have strong consequences. Most actions will have emotional and relationship consequences. Sometimes there's no easy way out.

Doing nothing or pretending to forget may seem the safest and easiest course of action, but suppressing emotions can have toxic consequences. Secrets can motivate obsessions, compulsions or fixations. Some people put their lives on hold or avoid further relationships. Clarity may be painful, but it can help avoid depression and help manage grief and loss.
Mason notes that individuals maintain their shame and guilt by adhering to the interpersonal process that they have learned through their families. She states: “Our childhood sense of our families is built not only from limited tools and incomplete data but also from a non-systemic perspective. The child acts as the center of the universe and absorbs events very personally ... Our childhood perceptions are the birthplace of our process, that is, how we learn to be in the world, to see ourselves, and to be in relationships ... they shape our interpretations of our life experiences and the meaning system we live with as adults” (Mason 1993:39).

When a secret enters the reservoir of shame, it becomes maintained through family dynamics. The key emotions that evoke shame are, *inter alia*, hurt, failure and helplessness which creates anger and when it is encompassed creates shame. With shame, one experiences a sense of painful self-diminution. One’s sense of worth, importance and sense of who s/he is as a person is painfully reduced.

“Shame involves the total self...It deals a severe and devastating blow to our sense of self-worth.” (Wimberly 2000:45).

“This concerns the fact that shame is painful because it simultaneously exposes and isolates us. Thus pain reveals things about ourselves which we would prefer not to acknowledge (our weakness, vulnerability, or previous errors in judgment) and it creates barriers between ourselves and others (our inability to communicate what we are going through and their inability to understand and respond meaningfully). “(Capps 1983:94)

Children become participants knowingly or not and willingly or not in the family concealment of the truth regarding parental infidelity. Thus in that regard non-disclosure of such parental acts to children is motivated by shame and guilt. Consequently, shame has a potential to be “the most powerful motivator of human progress” (Imber-Black 1993: 31). Shame is further perpetuated when such familial secrets are seen to violate social norms. Secret holders naturally experience anxiety in their fear of disclosure. These anxious feelings could perpetuate feelings of shame and guilt since secret holders are unable to reveal or explain these feelings to others. Shame is directed toward one’s moral integrity and self-worth and/or past actions and how they are perceived while guilt is directed on one’s actions. However, they
are difficult emotions to deal with during in healing process following a traumatic event. They both have the potential to eating away at the person.

Shame leads to a person’s self-perception and self-understanding being determined by the internalized message that she or he is of little worth or value. This shame-based identity is a socialized condition whereby the person picks up messages from the environment that there exists an anomaly about him or her. The cumulative effect of these messages and perceptions makes the person see him/herself not only as one who makes mistakes (guilt) but as one who is a mistake (shame). shame-based identity precludes them from appropriating the words of grace. These internalized messages and perceptions make the individual feel so unlovable and unacceptable, that it makes efforts to break through the barrier of self-denigration hard to succeed.

Since shame is considered the deeply held belief that one’s being is flawed, it can manifest as a core feeling of not being good enough. This may bring about the disruption of one’s life in overwhelming ways. Shame would consequentially affect self-esteem. Capps writes,

“What is the basis for the claim that one comes to know God through disclosure of one’s own shame? …because the death of Jesus was by all accounts a shameful experience. Crucified as a common criminal in full public view, Jesus experienced shame of the most excruciating kind. Its injury to self was incalculable. Thus to view life from the perspective of the cross, as Christians do, is to embrace our shameful selves, for Jesus’ experience on the cross is the paradigmatic shame experience for Christians. For him the cross entailed self-exposure and incongruity, threat to trust and total self-involvement, tragedy and isolation; …To put our shameful selves aside is to dissociate ourselves experientially from the shame of the cross. On the other hand, to embrace our shameful self is to identify with Jesus and thereby experience God as no longer hidden.” (Capps 1983:92)
4.4.2 Ministering to Shame

Capps believes ministering to shame needs an approach that engages robustly. Thus:

“The Christian response to pain is to seek to intensify our sense of exposure, for this is the way for us to overcome the isolating effects of our pain.” (Capps 1983:97)

Thus Nouwen is of the same mind when he alludes that “A minister is not a doctor whose primary task is to take away pain. Rather he deepens the pain to a level where it can be shared.” (Nouwen 1972: 92)

In providing pastoral care for people who find themselves in this labyrinth of thoughts, perceptions, and feelings, one must acknowledge that appropriation of anything else would prove futile. Co-researchers had to first deal with shame.

Co-researchers felt that they did not fit in or somewhat belong. From time to time, as they recalled, the attitudes and actions that had been conveyed were suggestive. Then in light of the disclosure their recollections were affirmed. In this environment, subsequent to the disclosure of the secret about them the co-researchers, respectively and in their own way, developed a shame based identity. As a consequence of this social conditioning, negative feelings had ensued about and how they then saw themselves. Shame becomes a feeling tone identified as a sense of self or who I am. In children, these feelings of shame become confusing and often lead to a lack of building a solid identity which affects all aspects of functioning from academic to interpersonal relationships. Shame became a barrier to co-researchers’ internalizing any positive attributes. The potency of secrets and shame are destructive to the very fabric of well-being, being well adjusted and living a life full of potential. For them, pastoral care had to deal with their respective shame factor before speaking about any other matter in a way that they each and respectively could appropriate. Pastoral care for co-researchers had to start with “acceptance” thus informed by Kubler-Ross’ stages of grief. As intimated earlier in this work, the stages also known as the ‘grief cycle’, were not intended to be a rigid series of sequential or uniformly timed steps and do not assume nature of a process as such. But rather it is to be understood as a model or a framework and is not fixed and consistent as it serves more as a guide. This is so since people do not always
experience all of the five ‘grief cycle’ stages. Some stages may be revisited. Some stages may not be experienced at all. Transition between stages can be more of an ebb and flow rather than a progression. The five stages are neither linear nor are they equal in their experience. A person’s grief and other reactions to emotional trauma are as individual as a fingerprint. The model acknowledges that there is an individual pattern of reactive emotional responses which people feel when coming to terms with trauma. The model further recognises that people have to pass through their own individual journeys of coming to terms with trauma. After which there will generally be an acceptance of reality which then enables the person to cope. The model is a useful perspective for understanding our own and other people’s emotional reaction to personal trauma and change, irrespective of the cause.

The fear of disclosure results in anxiety among secret-holders. The anxiety is manifested when the secret-holder(s) gets uncomfortable as a result of relevant topics which relate to the topic being discussed. Furthermore, anxious feelings are capable of perpetuating feelings of shame and guilt. Consequently secret-holders cannot bring themselves to reveal or explain these feelings to others. This leads to them not being able to bring themselves to depend on others. Barriers are erected to keep the information from leaking out which is potentially threatening to the family. As a result the family resorts to putting up a public presentation of the family that is tailored for social acceptance.

4.5 DISCLOSURE, SECRECY AND PRIVACY

Derlega defined disclosure loosely as

“what individuals verbally reveal about themselves to others” (Derlega et al. 1993: 1).

However disclosure involves much more than the communication of a secret. It happens to be

“a critical variable to all of us as individuals in relation to the world around us” (Steele 1975:3).

Thus the area of disclosure really deals with many aspects of the larger field of communication. As such disclosure has a big impact on every life, thus

“We are rewarded and punished for what we disclose, not for the absolute realities of what we are and do” (Steele 1975:5).
Many people advocate openness and free discussion but disclosure goes farther than this. It concerns not only the communication style but also the individual’s lifestyle.

Disclosure has its costs and its gains. Generally individuals develop behaviour patterns of disclosure to maximize the gains and minimize the costs of disclosure. Every individual chooses what he or she discloses and what he or she, for one purpose or another, neglects to disclose. The selection of this especially among professionals becomes an ethical issue.

Information may be classified broadly into three kinds, namely (1) free and open information, (2) judicious information that is free to a special public but that may be used with digression in a general way, and (3) secrets that are not to be communicated to others except those meant to receive them. Another way of stating it is in reference to low, middle, and high disclosure. In this case, low or very low disclosure is secrecy, middle disclosure is judicious use and high disclosure is open free communication of all information. This work focuses on the third kind or the low disclosure.

Steele presents three threats that he considers the underlying causes of low disclosure. The first threat concerns the evaluation of the information. That is the threat that the person disclosing the information will be rejected or harmed by the disclosed information. Secondly, the person receiving the disclosure may be angered or alienated by the disclosure. Then there is the threat of social loss. The third threat concerns the loss of control. Once a disclosure is made the person disclosing it has given up various problem-solving strategies (Steele 1975:9, 10).

In evaluating disclosure, just like in all communication, these four aspects may be considered, that is the content, the sender, the receiver, and the climate. Disclosure takes time. The sender needs the personal security to open up the information. The receiver must have a high commitment to relationship maintenance. Furthermore only a climate of trust can stimulate a move toward a higher disclosure level. Thus the proper level of disclosure is situational. In some circumstances a low level is appropriate in others a high level of disclosure may be possible.
Facts may be considered as either being friendly or unfriendly. Moreover information may be disclosed in a responsible way or in an irresponsible one. Irresponsible disclosure is a kind of manipulation that generally does more harm than a low disclosure level. There are other limits to disclosure.

“A society in which everyone somehow had to disclose everything about his or her self to everyone would be psychologically unlivable. People would have no way of establishing or maintaining an identity or boundary sense of where they leave off and others begin” (Steele 1975: 7).

This desire for privacy, private rights and public trust calls for a low disclosure level in some life areas.

The decision to disclose or not to disclose must often be made by one individual since the sharing of information in the disclosure decision-making process itself is already a disclosure. Accordingly each individual must judge by himself or herself if disclosure is relevant or irrelevant. At times it may be appropriate to bring another individual into this decision-making process in this way limiting the initial disclosure to one individual. These two or in some cases more individuals then decide the relevancy or irrelevancy of further disclosure.

Disclosure may be motivated either by the holder or the prospective receiver of the information. The prospective receiver of the information may have just a desire to know or she or he may have a need to know or she or he may have a right to know. The level of the prospective receiver’s desire for information influences the disclosure process.

According to Steele,

“Every disclosure act provides some person with an opportunity for learning, action, or control that was formerly held only by the discloser” (Steele 1975: 113).

Thus disclosure is related to control and power. Disclosed information has the ability to strengthen both the hearer and the discloser and this is dependent upon the wise usage thereof. The hearer is enriched by the information and the discloser is enriched by the hearer’s reaction and response to his/her disclosure. Thus low
disclosure attempts to control people whilst high disclosure involves all people in concerted control of events.

Disclosure, in one sense, is expensive and demands time and effort. Thus the value of nondisclosure of a certain issue as compared to the value of beneficial by-product of disclosure must be constantly studied.

“A system that consistently suppresses information about the consequences of the actions of its members will be unable to really learn from either its success or its failures.” (Steele 1975:140).

Many restraining and driving forces act on every disclosure situation. Restraining forces include such forces as fear of failure, desire for unilateral control, lack of disclosure skills. Driving forces may include desires to collaborate and inform. The clergyperson, in many ways, would be effective because she or he is able to deal with confidential information without increasing the circle of people in the know. Both disclosure and secrecy are being used and misused. While there are justified purposes of disclosure and secrecy there are also unjustified ones. Among the latter ones are calculated disclosures for the purpose of hurt and secrecy for the purpose of deceit. Self-disclosure has been defined as the communication act of revealing personal information to others (Grove, 1991). Some of the functions of self-disclosure include: 1) controlling the pace at which relationships are developed or dismantled; 2) reflecting the current state of the relationship; 3) suggesting the intimacy level that parties seek to establish or maintain for a given relationship; 4) signaling change in the relationship as a whole and; 5) negotiating one’s relationship without talking about it.

Four considerations are taken into account when deciding to disclose: 1) the recipient and whether disclosing to that person is a big or small risk; 2) the kind of information disclosed; 3) when to disclose and; 4) the possible outcomes of disclosure (Braithwaite & Wood, 2000). There is a model of disclosure decision making in a single episode, as illustrated in Figure 4 below, that also speaks of and to such factors and incorporates concepts from Derlega & Grzelak (1979), Greene et al. (2003), Omarzu (2000) and Petronio (2002). It includes both distal and proximal factors that contribute to disclosure or non-disclosure. Distal factors include cultural
criteria, social network, and individual differences such as personality and individual differences of the discloser and the disclosure target. And proximal factors includes self, partner and relationship-linked reasons for and against disclosing, and assessment of the current situation. The prospective weighs whether to disclose to significant others in the context of cultural attitudes about self-disclosure, access to a social network of family, friends and co-workers, and individual difference variables such as gender, self-esteem, and attachment style. Then the prospective discloser, in coordination with the potential disclosure recipient, would likely assess the appropriateness of the situation. And this assessment would be informed by questions such as, is there a private space to talk? Does disclosure fit into flow of the conversation? Is there enough time available to talk? Are the prospective discloser and disclosure recipient “getting along”? Is the disclosure recipient being attentive and asking questions? Is the response to the disclosure input likely to be positive or negative?

If a decision is made to disclose, then self-disclosure occurs (including to a particular target person, about specific content, at a particular level of disclosure intimacy, in a specific location, in person or by phone, e-mail, letter). The personal reactions of the discloser and the recipient (for example, inferring mutual trust or mistrust, co-ownership of sensitive information) may in turn, influence the outcomes experienced by both individuals (for example, partners in the relationship may click as friends; they may decide to meet at a future time to talk again; they may feel “intimate”). The model also includes feedback loops. For instance, the immediate reactions of the discloser and the target (for example, feeling emotionally close and labelling one another “close friends”) may affect antecedent variables in the model (including perceptions about “who” in one’s social network is a confidant, reweighing reasons for and against disclosure by the discloser as well as reassessing the suitability of the situation for enacting disclosure) that predict subsequent disclosure or nondisclosure in the same and in the future episodes.

The model focuses on self-disclosure and nondisclosure in one episode, but self-disclosure (including “who” discloses, “what” is divulged, “how” is the discloser influenced either disclose or not, and “when” and “where” disclosure occurs) is a process that unfolds over time – within a single conversation as well as across days,
weeks, months and even years of personal relationship (e.g., Dindia, 1998, 2000; Greene et al., 2003). For instance, the responsiveness of the recipient of what is disclosed in a single episode (expressions of social support, asking questions, showing interest) as well as the potential discloser’s own input, for example, hinting about what one wants to say, may influence what is said at the time and influence disclosure decision making in future conversations. The responsiveness of the recipient will be dictated to by factors such as expressions of social support, asking questions, and showing interest, among others.

A key feature of disclosure decision making (according to figure 5 below) addresses people’s self-reported reasons for why they disclose or do not disclose. Reasons for disclosure as well as nondisclosure reflect a self-focus, an other-focus, an interpersonal focus and a situational-environmental focus (Burke et al., 1976; Derlega & Winstead, 2001; Derlega et al., 2000). Since disclosure is an intentional process (Petronio & Martin, 1986 as cited in Petronio et al., 1993), the outcomes of disclosure are well-thought-out. Consequently there is regulation of the amount of information disclosed by individuals. The regulating mechanism used has been posited to be the boundary management process which includes considerations of not only the discloser but the recipient as well. Regulating variables for the discloser include: 1) need to tell; 2) predicted outcomes; 3) riskiness of revealing this information; 4) privacy level of the information; and 5) his or her degree of emotional control. On the other hand, the regulating variables for the recipient include: 1) evaluation expectations; 2) attributional searches; and 3) determining a message response (Petronio, 1991 as cited in Petronio et al., 1993). Given the functions of and the benefits obtained from self-disclosure in intimate relationships, a common observation would be that the mere fact of withholding information may cause someone to get hurt.

Questions about identity begin to form in the heads of the participants in light of these feelings. The question of the influence of nature (inherited traits) versus nurture (acquired traits) become very real to the affected person who is trying to determine the impact of all of these influences on his or her own identity. Such identity issues may continue into adulthood. Finding meaning is related to less intense grief (Schwartzberg and Janoff-Bulman 1991), higher subjective well-being
(Stein et al. 1997), and more positive immune system functioning (Bower et al. 2003).

4.6 Disclosure to Children: Impact of Familial Secrecy

Goodall asserts “all families have secrets” and that “most people live double lives” (Goodall 2005: 503).

Many families throughout their history have held many secrets close to their heart. It is purported to be done generally to protect others from the pain of the truth about some less than pleasant matter. Those secrets cause more pain and suffering than ever anticipated or imagined.

The generation affected by the disclosure is still reacting to a disclosure of an initial secret kept to protect them and it has become the bane of the existence of those affected.

Like a boil that has been festering in space and time, such secret became more negative and toxic while outliving the age of its usefulness. Nevertheless, it can never be seen as an anachronism of events that have long since vanished from the family’s collective memory of those who have been party to the secret and maintenance thereof. The present generation is burdened by the past of those who came before since such a secret that has been a charade for many decades.

Self-disclosure has also been described as a process that is characterized by conditions or dimensions. Caldwell alludes to Carpenter (1987) who found that self-disclosure occurs in response to three conditions namely: motivation, opportunity, and relational competence. He contends that a motivation must exist for someone to self-disclose (for example, uncertainty reduction, relationship maintenance, or fulfillment of habits). Secondly, the discloser must perceive an opportunity where disclosure is either possible or expected. Finally, self-disclosure occurs when someone has the skills to reveal information.
FIGURE: 5 A Model of Disclosure Decision-Making in a Single Episode
This “concept incorporates for an example, characteristics such as assertiveness, lack of social anxiety, need achievement, and lack of shyness” (Caldwell 2004:5).

The disclosure, in the co-researchers’ circumstances, came following a parent’s death. The parents had apparently covenanted that upon the death of either spouse, the remaining spouse will disclose the secret to the children. The event or time of disclosure differed for co-researchers.

Cox’s (1989) three dimensions of self-disclosure which relates to time, depth, and mutuality, buttress well with Caldwell’s allusions and the researcher’s take. Here Cox suggests that the more time spent with another person, the higher the likelihood that self-disclosure will take place. Depth refers to how meaningful and variegated the disclosures may become as relationships develop. Finally, mutuality or reciprocity refers to the concept that Jourard highlighted when he said that a relationship begets self-disclosure (Jourard, 1974). Self-disclosure is a process which entails emotional and behavioral phases that are experienced to complete disclosure which is associated with acceptance.

The subject of self-disclosure in terms of family secrets has not been studied as extensively as self-disclosure in general give the extreme personal nature of the disclosures. Disclosing family secrets of all types to children and family is one of the most difficult tasks that parents encounter. Traditionally, the typical solution has been to simply avoid talking about sensitive subjects to children. Family therapy literature, however, is replete with discussions on how non-disclosure has harmful consequences to children. For an example, Lerner writes,

“The negative effects of secrecy on children may stay underground for years, even decades, until the child reaches a key anniversary age or a particular stage in the family life cycle” (Lerner 1993:147).

As stated to by Black et al, earlier,

“the most important gift a parent can give a child is to tell them about their dark side. Telling children about your struggles helps them developmentally to have a realistic picture of what it means to be human.” (Black et al 2003:3)
Secrecy cannot be maintained and the trauma of learning about the secret later in life is compounded by the sense of betrayal to find out that others had this information and had withheld it from you. Thus silence, secrecy, and shame result in trauma where it need not have happened. The author believes that the trauma of finding out in whatever stage in life, is equally intense. With relation to the author’s experience, the disclosure tore the family apart, for some time. Accusations were thrown to and fro; and mistrust dominated which was followed by the ‘elephant in the living room’ approach. The disclosure has the ability to shake the core foundation relating to everything that was known and embraced by the family. Coming to terms with the death and the disclosure, paved the road to acceptance and learning to deal with the new development as a family and as individuals within a family. Also, being allowed time and space to deal with the issues collectively and individually helps in the healing process.

For the one who has been kept a secret, the struggle to re-make one’s core identity is traumatic. Such trauma is often referred to as sanctuary trauma. Unsavoury encounters and experiences such as these have the potential to bring about spiritual death, emotional maiming, mental torture and physical violation. There sanctuary trauma is experienced, where the safest place (home, church and/or school) is not really safe. It is in such spaces that most people suffer the most damaging trauma. Families can be seen to be overtly dysfunctional because of alcoholism, physical abuse, physical or mental illness, etc. Families can, otherwise, be seen as covertly dysfunctional because of parental emotional dishonesty, unreasonable expectations, unresolved emotional currents, emotional incest, etc.

4.7 THEOLOGICAL ISSUES
The secrecy issue is a theological, as well as, a practical problem that raises questions such as, can we really communicate with the Lord if we cannot and do not communicate with one another? Can the culture of secrecy within families which possess a destructive culture/element be replaced with an open, accountable community based on the church as a model - family of God? The Church is a communion and thus openness and accountability are even more crucial for the life of the Church than they are within a political democracy. Fellowship in the Body of Christ and receiving the Body of Christ means fellowship with one another. This is its very nature which includes mutual acceptance, giving and receiving on both sides.
The author recognizes that the family systems may not be a democracy and that some level of confidentiality is essential to the dispensing of family business. This work is a cogent engagement of one of the great problems that are facing family life.

**4.8 Preliminary Conclusion**

Secrets can be kept collectively by a family or group of people or individually. Trauma has the capacity to disrupt and disarm normal survival strategies for individuals. The existence of trauma within a relationship, particularly within a family setting, can complicate the day-to-day familial negotiations and as a result, individuals or families as a whole may choose not to share traumatic occurrences (Pennebaker & Beall, 1986). When a family unit, whether spoken or unspoken, agrees on silence as a means of maintaining the status quo,

“secret-keeping can become a central form of family communicative practice” (Poulos, 2008:51).

Silence and secret keeping serve as mechanisms of isolation and they foster feelings of separateness for those who are keeping secrets.

Secrecy has, to some extent, been the organizing principle of family relationships and as such a secret is kept as a result of shame. Secrecy has the potential to compound trauma which can result in isolation. Those who find themselves in such situations often come to doubt their own experiences as reality. And this experience of reality is likely to be at odds with the version of the truth that has been embraced by the rest of the family. Certain secrets, as they are disclosed, may provide healing for individuals and relationships. Yet other secrets may, upon disclosure, put people in jeopardy particularly where issues of physical safety are concerned. Thus secrets may hold the potential of both reconciliation and division and there are no guarantees which of the two will or may pertain. As a result, secrets have a way of taking a profound toll on the person’s well-being and have a potential of leaving all family relationships tied in painful knots.

However, secrets cannot always be kept. Eventually secrets demand to come out and if unreleased, they may do so in a potentially destructive manner. Beginning to share secrets with others is like handling a controlled burn; the toxicity of the silence
is permitted to escape in a way that does not have to cause irreparable damage. A clergyperson has an opportunity here to play a pivotal role as she/he “seeks to facilitate a serious, open dialogue between the two sides of the equation, a dialogue that will include sharing of feelings, stories of past experiences, mutual questioning, and search for authentic connections between two poles. Such facilitation virtually always involves the pastor in a degree of tension” (Gerkin 1997:112).

The process of sharing and storytelling has unlimited potential to provide healing where it is most necessary.

“Through stories, we learn to be selves and to act in certain ways. Through roles, we discover healthy ways to interact with others. Through repeating scenes, we rehearse our responses to new situations. Through internalising the attitudes of others, we grow in emotional maturity” (Wimberly 2000:34)

Poulos underpins the aforesaid by intimating that, “the process of storying family secrets as a way to engage personal and family healing” (Poulos 2008:46).

A point of interest which is enumerated by Vangelisti and Caughlin is that “secrets held within the family affect relationships between family members, revealing family secrets is a potentially important act of communication” (Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997: 680).

In many cases, the keeping of family secrets contributes to a decrease in relational satisfaction.

This is the age of the information highway and children who are supposedly shielded from certain information will discover the "facts" about their history, heritage and/or their ancestry at some point of their lives. Discovering these carefully-kept secrets can and often does lead to a sense of betrayal, shame, and/or identity confusion. Though difficult, perhaps painful, these "facts" are crucial pieces of these children's history and heritage. Withholding information because it may be painful or shameful, denies these children the opportunity to develop over time, a clear picture of the players and the forces at work in their history, and the chance to develop coping
skills in order to process and externalize the difficult information and feelings. Keeping secrets especially between generations within a family system implies that the material withheld is shameful.

Shame is a powerful motive for keeping secrets. Therefore the possibility of the reinforcement of trauma exists through secrecy, silence, shame, sorrow, and the society’s attitudes. Being outside of society’s approval is traumatic for many and being outside family and friends’ approval is more so. The silence-secrecy-shame regimen has a potential of being traumatic and not helpful at all. Those affected are cut off from their psychological moorings.

“Shame undermines self-confidence, and shame holds on in our lives tenaciously. Like a satanic force it tries to prevent us from moving constructively within our lives and seeks to draw us back into shame-based world” (Wimberly 1999: 35-36).

Shame leads to family members developing a culture of non-communication and secrecy in order to protect themselves from the truth and to prevent any embarrassing information from leaking to outsiders. Maintaining family secrets provides an opportunity for family members to form a bond between one another. However the involvement in maintaining a secret means that other family members are excluded. Keeping secrets is the norm of some family’s way of functioning. Thus it is natural for those who get to know about the secret to keep the secret to themselves.

Children who are raised in an atmosphere of dark secrecy about either the matriarchal or patriarchal parts of their families grow up with a sense that something must be wrong. Robinson echoes this,

“There is no finality to their grief, as they know that they have another family somewhere and that they will always, in some way, be a part of that family” (Robinson, 2000:106-107).

In this type of family once secrecy becomes the norm; there is no end to the ways in which information is blocked from flowing. Carl Jung, as cited by Black, Dillon & Carnes, made an important statement when he said,
“The most important gift a parent can give a child is to tell them about their dark side. Telling children about your struggles helps them developmentally to have a realistic picture of what it means to be human” (Black, Dillon & Carnes 2003:3).

At the same time, no harm should befall disclosure. Disclosure opens up the process for a multitude of feelings. However truth telling is an important step in restoring trust. Full disclosure regarding identity and heritage among others, is a very relevant factor for child sense of safety and for the dynamic balance between belonging and autonomy which is so basic in any person’s growth.

The next chapter will focus on rituals and their link to secrecy and identity. Rituals serve as a lens through which to view family dynamics and can also bring about positive change and provide support for healing. The power of ritual resides in its ability to stabilize, transform, and communicate (Wolin & Bennett 1984:401). Rituals are powerful symbolic ways to stabilize what is healthy in a family, to transform what is disturbing, and to build up resistance to unhealthy interactions. The use of religious rituals introduces God’s grace, commands, and guidance in a parabolic fashion—in the language of Image and story. Rituals are a primary mechanism used by the family to conserve its paradigm. They also store and convey the family identity from generation to generation. Furthermore

“rituals provided a key to unlock confusing and painful family relationships and friendships.” (Imber-Black & Roberts 1992:xvi).
CHAPTER 5: RITUAL, FAMILY AND PASTORAL CARE
5.1 INTRODUCTION
This discussion of the use of ritual in the pastoral care and support of families is intended to demonstrate the symbolic significance of ritual for the family, to describe the use of ritual in the healing of families who are in the midst of change, and to lift up the Church as a powerful model for the family. Ritual is arguably a universal feature of human social existence just as one cannot envision a society without language or exchange, one would be equally hard-pressed to imagine a society without ritual. And while the word “ritual” commonly brings to mind exoticized images of primitive others diligently engaged in mystical activities, one can find rituals both sacred and secular throughout “modern” society.

Rituals have always been a part of human culture and honour some form of transition from one way of being to another. As a realm of human activity, a ritual primarily relates to human emotions. Ritual is intrinsically interesting as a rich area of human self-expression. Rituals often evolve in surprising ways and illumine aspects of lives never before understood. Through story and ritual, humanity narrate its existence, fashion an identity, and individually and collectively, express and create a vision of life. Ritual is about the human experience. Human beings create both personal and communal rituals to order and reorder time and to remember by recapitulating the past. Ritual is an interpretative act through which human beings express and create meaning in their lives. Not only do rituals mark significant transitions but humanity also has rituals to celebrate continuity. The importance and effect of ritual cannot be overemphasized. Ritual is

“one of the most powerful socialization mechanisms available. As we participate in the rituals of our society, our churches, or our families, we are socialized; we learn who we are and how we are to be” (Laird 1990:113).

Rituals may be seen as stable patterns of behaviour and these may assume many different forms, from the simplest to the complicated forms such as a religious ceremony. Rituals can vary from culture to culture, as such, each culture may perform the same ritual in a different way and they are the components in society that make cultures what they are today. Throughout history, people have used ritual to mark important life events, both on a social and an individual level. Although
Rituals vary with culture, race, and religion, each ritual provides meaning, offers structure, and facilitates the expression of emotions for participants (Romanoff & Terenzio, 1998). There is healing grace unexpected in ritual moments that mark a major transition or traumatic event, or moments that define the daily rhythm of life and faith. The healing that is effected may release the weight of guilt, mend a broken relationship, rekindle hope in the midst of a limited future or transform terror into shared anxiety. Rituals provide a framework for celebrating success with gratitude and praise. When loss occurs, familiar daily rituals, family traditions, cherished celebrations, and life cycle rituals all provide opportunities to heal the hurt of grief. Rituals can be offered in an ordered way to bid farewell to a loved one, express feelings, assimilate the experience, and provide transition to new relationships and living (Rando, 1993). This discussion of the use of ritual in the pastoral care and support of families is intended to demonstrate the significance of ritual for the individual and family, to describe the use of ritual in the healing of those who are in the midst of change.

Ritual is a universal feature of human social existence. Throughout life humanity engage in rituals. Some are short-term rituals to get one through the day. Other rituals mark significant events in the lives of people or in corporate life such as church or nation. In every culture, people develop rituals that identify what is important to them.

“Ritualization is a much wider phenomenon, including all the aspects of our biosocial behavior that are patterned, repetitive, conventionalized” (Ramshaw 1987:23).

Ritualization is about the ordering of experience and the creation of meaning. Thus ritual helps to create order, discern meaning, bond with community, address ambivalence and encounter mystery. ‘Ritual’ refers to events and occasions which invite transformation through the acknowledgement of transition, the affirmation of relationship, the celebration of achievement, the naming of loss, or the offer of forgiveness. While all ritual involves transition, some rituals clearly emphasise arrivals rather than departures. Sometimes such occasions lack formalities. These are wordless rituals with little sense of occasion. Ritual is much more powerful, however, when provision is made for a formal gathering announcing and reflecting on the milestone that has been reached. Rituals
“remind us that communication can be symbolic, that form gives meaning, that repetition promotes learning and that the past is embedded in the present” (Wolin & Bennett 1984:402).

Ritual involves metaphor, symbol and story. Turner sees symbols as a "storage unit" containing a vast amount of information (Turner 1968a:1-2).

“Symbols can be objects, activities, words, relationships, events, gestures, or spatial units” (Turner 1967:19).

Ritual, religious beliefs, and symbols are essentially related. The handling of symbols in ritual exposes their powers to act upon and change the persons involved in ritual performance. According to Turner visual objects which represent our dreams and troubles are needed for social health. Rituals are the vehicles of those symbols (Turner 1982:13-14). Rituals employ symbolic actions and/or objects to convey and bolster both obvious and hidden belief systems to participants and observers. Family rituals are often repetitive. But may also include one-time occurrences in response to a particular family crisis or need. No real distinction will be made in this work between religious rites and secular rituals since both entail a sense of the transcendent and the holy. Christian rites employ the Word of God and invoke the presence of God instead of merely a general inference of transcendence as found in secular rituals.

Laird points out common characteristics of rituals that contribute to their power. They are more likely well prepared and practiced performances-repeated stylized drama engineered to convey a metaphoric message. The drama and repetitiveness carry the message in symbolic often subconscious ways through patterns and imagery as much as through verbal content (Laird 1990:111-112). While all rituals involve transition, some rituals emphasise arrivals rather than departures.

Ritual of itself is not capable of answering all such questions or assuaging all anxieties. However, the personal validation offered by ritual is a balm and encouragement for those who participate. It is of some help to name transitions, acknowledge their significance and provide opportunities for the expression of loss as well as hope. Rituals are essential for:

“(a) mobilizing individuals to participate in interaction, (b) making individuals cognizant of the relevant rules of irrelevance, transformation,
resource use, and talk, (c) guiding individuals during the course of the interaction, and (d) helping individuals correct for breaches and incidents” (Roberts 2002:55-56).

Many rituals provide participants with the chance to step back to consider the bigger picture. They have the capacity to recall participants to their better selves and to the values to which they aspire. Rituals planned collaboratively have a great potential to draw from the experiences of those participating thus facilitating their movement across the threshold to the place of reintegration.

5.2. DEFINITION OF RITUALS

Rituals may be defined as symbolic acts or rites that help people do the work of relating, changing, healing, believing and celebrating (Imber-Black & Roberts, 1992). Turner defines ritual as

"prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings and powers" (Turner 1967:19).

He expresses this well in another definition: ritual is

"a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors’ goals and interests" (Turner 1977a:183).

In sum, Turner's definition of ritual refers to ritual performances involving manipulation of symbols that refer to religious beliefs. They may also be regarded as symbolic acts that confirm a meaning system or a culture and help to define a community. In light of the former, cultural values can be examined collectively and validated through rituals and ceremonial practices (Henry, 1992). Depending on the circumstances, rituals may be employed to engage an individual, family, group, and collective contexts. This work focuses on an individual and family and gives attention to both individual and family contexts. A characteristic of ritual is that it assumes an outlook of being an event that transform and confirms one social status in the society. Within rituals, members should be able to transform from one stage of life to another and finally achieving a new identity. A ritual has the ability to transform worldviews and social status of group or persons in a group. The transformation of the individual enables one to adopt a new identity.
“Ritual participants assume a position/character rather than a special social role because within the ritual, the focus of attention is on their sense of identity and on their relation to what counts as reality and not on specific tasks and functions” (Browne 1980: 21).

Consequently the individual has to create a new relationship with others as one changes social status. The ritual can be repeated over time given aspects that make a ritual. This repetition acts as a remembrance and calls for attention each time it comes up as it brings to life emotions.

“Rituals are episodes of repeated and simplified cultural communication in which the direct partners to a social interaction and those observing it, share a mutual belief in the descriptive and prescriptive validity of the communication’s symbolic contents and accept the authenticity of one another’s intentions” (Alexander 2004:527).

These repeated rituals tend to move from informal to formal, flexible to rigid, and from simple to more complex (Bossard & Boll 1950:16). Because of this tendency to develop into a rigid formal system of actions, there is the potential for family rituals to limit the family's adaptability to sudden changes and new challenges. Members may feel obligated to follow rituals which no longer have much meaning or purpose.

“Family rituals, because they are a crystalized judgment from family experience, define the way to do things under all circumstances, and particularly in respect to the common occurrences of daily family life” (Bossard & Boll 1950:58).

Religious rituals offer an example of this characteristic of ritual. Rites of passage rituals also justify this nature-like character of ritual. Browne argues that “ritual action is believed at some levels to have an immediate efficacy” (Browne 1980: 20).

Thus the use of rituals is for promoting growth. Individual rituals serve to provide meaning and growth experience to one person. Individuals have the ability to use the ritual process as a medium to alter undesirable aspects of the personality, to reframe experiences, and to change the meaning of behaviour or an event (Jung, 1969). Individual rituals are usually designed to meet the specific needs of a participant in the ritual. However knowledge of the participant’s strengths and weaknesses, and desired areas for change would help in customizing the ritual. The ritual is also
structured so that the participant focuses on the good and positive elements of their lives. This aspect of the ritual encourages healing and emphasises co-researcher's strengths and a movement forward. Varying emotions are produced in different rituals and as one flows constantly from a particular situation to the next, so are the emotions it produces. Collins understands ritual as

“a mechanism of mutually focused emotions and attention producing a momentarily shared reality, which thereby generates solidarity and symbols of group membership” (Collins 2004: 7).

Therefore ritual could be considered as informed and inspired by past encounters. Collins believes that the individual is a conglomeration of various past interaction rituals encounters and plays a role in the establishment of a new situation. He emphasized that

“the individual is the precipitate of past interactional situations and an ingredient of each new situation” (Collins 2004: 5).

Ritual arises from the deep human needs to symbolize, establish meaning, create community, and encounter mystery of life (O'Reilly, 1990; Ramshaw, 1987). Order, comfort, and meaning become attached to the symbols and actions used in the repeated behaviors. As a result, a ritual is established, and out of the rituals themselves, entire belief systems eventually emerge (Irion, 1991). The dimensions of ritual are (a) meaning-making, (b) intention, and (c) participation. Rituals occur daily in everyone's life marking transitions, providing meaning, and establishing order for interactions and experiences (van Gennep, 1960). Birth, marriage, and death are important examples of events that are used cross-culturally to mark life transitions (van Gennep, 1960). Transition rituals dynamically shift between such dualities as divine and human, past and future, letting go and holding on, confronting pain and experiencing comfort, and understanding and uncertainty (Anderson & Foley, 1998). Rituals of transition can be part of a complex religious or social system, or can be simple and personal (Anderson, 2003). Whether rituals of transition are sacred or secular, they express meaning and significance that extend beyond the ritual itself as participants struggle with complex issues of human existence (Anderson, 2003; Romanoff & Terenzio, 1998).
Van Gennep’s observation of the transitional function of rituals informed the formulation a general pattern among rituals performed in the African cultures. Common events and activities include, among others, birth, puberty, marriage and death. These suggest differences only in detail but not in the function. Van Gennep explained that ritual is like a threshold which symbolizes the changing of life from one identity to another. During the process the participants experience three different stages in the initiation – separation, transition and incorporation (Van Gennep 1960: 36). He employs an analogy of a house and intimates that if society is a house, then ritual is considered like its windows and doors. The walls of such a house act as a protective barrier designed to keep out those who do not belong and keep inside members of the group thereby maintaining boundary. Ritual is analogized with windows and doors because rituals allow light and air to pass into the house and in between its rooms. The house provides these kinds of openings while security is maintained so that what pass through can be filtered at appropriate times in an acceptable manner. Rituals, according to Van Gennep do much of the same thing to society. For example, baptisms, and funerals, both move people in and out of groups and serve as symbolic transitions in status changes (Van Gennep, 1960: 33).

Furthermore, Van Gennep (1960) was able to familiarize the three-part structure common to all rituals: shift from a pre-ritual state to a transitory state and incorporation in the new state. By understanding the three-part structure of rituals, it becomes possible to comprehend the intricate similarities between many kinds of rituals which were previously seen in isolation from each other – as if they are different things. Van Gennep’s notions were further developed by Turner (1969), who described ritual in terms of “liminal states” and “communitas,” as an anti-structure to the usual structure of society which offer an alternative to the preservation of fixed social orders and traditional forms. This liminal states are much like identity shift and ritual has an ability to lead to an intense experience of community (communitas). Turner maintains that ritual symbols have multiple meanings. He described ritual as the

“affirmation of communal unity in contrast to the frictions, constraints, and competitiveness of social life and organization” (cited in Bell 1992: 20).

Turner’s structure of rituals consists of a pre-liminal phase (separation), a liminal phase (transition), and a post-liminal phase (incorporation). Liminality is referred to
by Turner as the transitory state between two phases where individuals are characterized as “betwixt and between” (Turner 1969: 138). Individuals in this transitional period find themselves somewhat suspended from typical attachments to the society or the group that they had been a part of and they were not yet reintegrated into that society. Turner see this detachment which takes effect in the liminal phase, as a period of

“dislocation of established structures, the reversal of hierarchies, and uncertainty regarding the continuity of tradition and future outcomes” (Turner 1969:32).

Rituals here serve to fulfill the role of ensuring that the needs of the participants which are otherwise not addressed and met, received attention and are met thereby balancing structure and community. Experience of communitas in ritual as mediating “the spirit of unity and mutual belonging” is at the very core of community life (Driver 1991: 156-165). Thus providing a sanctuary in which participants are free to express themselves.

"Rituals reveal values at their deepest level. People “express in ritual what moves them most, and since the form of expressions is conventionalized and obligatory, it is the values of the group that are revealed. I see in the study of rituals the way to an understanding of the essential constitution of human societies" (Turner 1969b:241).

Turner expands van Gennep’s theories of the ritual process of separation, transition and incorporation. He uses the study of tribal rituals to examine the transition or "liminal" period of passage and the spontaneous development of "communitas" or specific communities of commonality that develop. Despite differences in ethnic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds, rituals are universal to family life. Three types of family rituals can be delineated. All families observe rites of passage which are informed by their religious, cultural, or ethnic origins even though the number and quality of the celebrations varies considerably. Similarly, families practice traditions that symbolically represent their families and assure connections and identity with previous generations. Family rituals may be defined as behaviors or activities involving most or all members of the family which occur episodically, have a symbolic meaning for family members and are valued by the participants so that they would like the activity to be carried on in the future (Imber-Black et al., 1988). Rituals
reflect family traditions and are related to cultural, religious and ethnic perspectives and practices.

5.3. FAMILY AND RELATIONAL RITUALS

The family is a formative arena for ritual and the first social as well as emotional context in which a person finds himself or herself. According to Collins,

“a ritual is a mechanism of a mutually focused emotion and attention producing a momentarily shared reality, which thereby generates solidarity and symbols of group membership” (Collins 2004: 7).

Collins described interaction ritual to be largely inclined to the generation of solidarity, group symbols and group membership. When the stability of this vital link is disrupted, there is a sense of insecurity and identity loss. Ritual serves to maintain stability in the family (Bossard & Boll 1950:63). It is within the context of family that a person learns maturity, what it means to be an individual and also a member of a community, social roles, and basic patterns of relating to other human beings (Stewart 1979:21-22).

Gunn argues that family identity

“lies at the very heart of what it means to have family strengths as distinct from strengths accruing to the individuals who happen to be living in families” (Gunn 1980: 18).

He then goes to identify four activities that assist in the formation and maintenance of family identity - Telling the family story; Photographing the events of the family; Preserving and perpetuating traditions, Rituals and distinctive ways of doing things, and; Preserving mementos of the past. These have been discussed in chapter 4.

The making of ritual is a creative act fundamental in human life. It is also a divine gesture. Through ritual and ceremonies people make order out of chaos. Nelson believes that through rituals a fixed point is created to orient human being: a sacred space (Nelson 1986:25). Ritual is a much more pervasive and powerful force in forming and guiding family identity and interaction than is commonly recognized.
“Rituals are coevolved symbolic acts that include not only the ceremonial aspects of the actual presentation of the ritual, but the process of preparing for it as well. It may or may not include words, but does have both open and closed parts which are “held” together by a guiding metaphor. Repetition can be a part of rituals through either the content, the form, or the occasion. There should be enough space in … rituals for the incorporation of multiple meanings by various family members … as well as a variety of levels of participation.” (Imber-Black et al 1988:8)

According to Wolin & Bennett family celebrations, family traditions, and family interactions/rituals of daily family life, are the three most reported categories of family rituals.

“Family celebrations are those holidays and occasions that are widely practiced throughout the culture and are special in the minds of the family” (Wolin & Bennett 1984:404).

Imber-Black et al (1988) subdivides family celebrations into: annual celebrations, where rituals tend to be located within the broader society, either secular or religious/cultural and the broad nature of these rituals tends to be socially defined. However each family adapts the broad tradition to their own style. Often these celebrations evoke mixed responses, yet they remain important to most families and; rites of passage/family life cycle rituals which include weddings, funerals, baptisms, circumcision, to name a few. These rituals “help to define the membership list of the family – baptism, weddings, funerals – and they signify the family’s developmental phase as in bar mitzvahs, confirmations, and graduations” (Wolin & Bennett 1984:404-5).

Family traditions,

“as a group, are less culture-specific and more idiosyncratic for each family. They do not have the annual periodicity of holidays or the standardization of rites of passage, though they recur in most families with some regularity” (Wolin & Bennett 1984:405).

Family traditions run according to the family’s ‘internal calendar’, unlike family celebrations which run according to an ‘outside calendar’ (Imber-Black et al 1988:34). Family traditions help to define the family’s identity, and can include birthdays, anniversaries, holiday trips, and participation in periodic community and/or
extended family functions. Family traditions can vary in the degree to which they centre on the needs of the children in the family and the degree to which they incorporate people from outside the family.

Family traditions can even be built up around problem-solving activities, such as a regular or ad hoc ‘family council’ (Wolin & Bennett 1984:405).

Family interactions/rituals of daily family life are the least standardised of all family rituals, and are often so apparently trivial that families do not even consider them to be rituals. The word ‘routines’ seems more appropriate. Nevertheless, these rituals are performed the most often.

“In this category belong rituals such as a regular dinnertime, bedtime routines for children, the customary treatment of guests in the home, or leisure activities on weekends or evenings. In some families, the discipline of children or everyday greetings and goodbyes are rituals. Whatever the patterns, these interactions help to define member’s roles and responsibilities; they are a means of organizing daily life” (Wolin & Bennett 1984:406).

"When we prepare and participate in life-cycle rituals, our sense of self and our entire network of relationships in our family, extended family, and community undergo change" (Imber-Black and Roberts 1992: 269).

Family rituals are often developed to respond to a particular situation and subsequently from that single occasion, a family tradition would likely be born and then repeated over a period of time and generations. Rituals are developed and modified to react to similar situations (Bossard & Boll 1950:187).

Seubert describes the power of family rituals: The topic of domestic rituals is an important one because the domus is where, by way of either acceptance or reaction, understandings are developed and perceptions are performed into almost irreversible capacities of character (Seubert 1993:38).

Imber-Black and Roberts note,
"Daily rituals give us a sense of the rhythm of our lives, help us in making
the transition from one part of the day to another, and express who we are
as a family" (Imber-Black & Roberts 1992: 15).

Rituals encourage cooperation, dependability, individuality, competition, the
expressing or hiding of emotions, a democratic or hierarchical structure,
exclusiveness or inclusiveness, and many other traits which compose the family's
unique identity and approach to the outside community (Bossard & Boll 1950: 82-
84). Through rituals, family members relive original events and return to former
relational patterns. The family can either get "stuck" in patterns of interaction that are
no longer helpful or it can celebrate a past event or milestone in a way that allows
members to gain stability and emotional energy from a common history.

In addition to the commonly acknowledged and sometimes commemorated
transitions in the life of the family, there are a host of other often more frequently
occurring changes which are unmarked by any planned ceremony, some of which go
virtually unnoticed. These include geographical relocation, broken relationships, and
the routine transitions of daily living and relating. Imber-Black identified five ritual
themes in families (which the same author also uses in therapeutic rituals). They
are: membership; healing; identity definition and redefinition; belief expression and
negotiation; and celebration. Membership rituals help to define

   “who is in and who is out, who belongs to the system, who defines
   membership, and how one gains or loses membership” (Imber-Black et al
   1988:51).

Healing rituals help people cope with and adjust to difficulties in life. Identity
definition and redefinition - many cultural rituals assist in identity definition and
redefinition. Weddings assist the bride and groom change identity from a separate
individual to a part of a couple. Adolescent rites of passage assist in changing
identity from child to adult. Religious and culture specific rituals, for example church
services, assist in reinforcing one’s religious and/or cultural identity. Belief
expression and negotiation- Most rituals serve to give expression to the beliefs and
values of a family, thereby locating the family with a broader context, both in time
(past, present and future) and space (a current community of people who share
those beliefs). Most rituals contain elements of celebration – both rejoicing and
reverence.
“The celebration theme involves that aspect of rituals connected to affirming, honoring, commemorating, and demarcating regular time from special time. Rituals of celebration frequently involve ethnic expression, special food and drinks reserved for certain celebrations, unique music, gifts, and particular clothing. The celebration aspect of rituals is often the most visible and dramatic marker of individual, family and community definition and change, although celebration, per se, is usually only the culmination of a much longer process. (Imber-Black *et al* 1988:76)

Ritual should not be thought of as magic or a quick fix. It is rather a way to encourage the family toward healing and to a "safe" space for experimentation with change. Ritual needs to develop within a pastoral relationship with the family, particularly in response to difficulties in the family system. Ritual provides a sense of hope in the midst of despair and loss by providing closure while the paralyzing residual effects of the crisis is decoded and rendered less or non-toxic. Families must never be led to believe that because the home has been blessed that all threat of evil has somehow been taken away

"Rituals are typically done over a period of time and modified with therapeutic setbacks and gains. They are not seen as quick and simple solutions to therapeutic problems" (Whiting 1988: 94).

Although a powerful tool, ritual is not to be used as if it were the only tool at the pastor’s disposal (Underwood 1993:81). Thus rituals are to be done over a period of time while intertwined with therapeutic setbacks and gains.

Rituals play a significant role in many aspects of family identity and behavior.

“Family rituals are not only vessels to pass attitudes, behavior patterns, and social tools from one generation to the next. They are also processes of family interaction and as such: (a) stimulate family relations; (b) create family antagonisms; (c) reveal family roles and statuses; (d) set family techniques; (e) facilitate household functioning; (f) present opportunities for satisfaction in family display and pride” (Bossard & Boll 1950:58).

And Imber-Black then adds the following five themes of ritual:

"membership, healing, identity definition and redefinition, belief expression and negotiation, and celebration" (Imber-Black 1988:xli).
Rituals also acknowledge and legitimize change and transition, define meaning (Imber-Black & Roberts 1992:27-28), delineate relational boundaries, and communicate and reinforce rules of behavior (Wolin and Bennett 1984:401). Imber-Black asserts that human systems all require a way of determining who belongs-how one becomes accepted or left out. She states:

"Membership rituals occur daily in families during family meals, during which eating arrangements, allowable topics" all work together to make clear who belongs to the group and the status of their membership (Imber-Black 1988: 51).

Imber-Black & Roberts refers to a "lens" through which life is viewed and describes this "lens" as a powerful affirmation of the significance of ritual as it impacts on daily activities and relationships,

“[Rituals] are a lens through which we can see our emotional connections to our parents, siblings, spouse, children, and dear friends. Rituals give us places to be playful, to explore the meaning of our lives, and to rework and rebuild family relationships. They connect us to our past, define our present life, and show us a path to our future as we pass on ceremonies, traditions, objects, symbols, and ways of being with each other, handed down from previous generations” (Imber-Black & Roberts 1992:4).

Although Osterhaus (1989) agrees with Imber-Black & Roberts, the latter prefers the term ‘map’ to ‘lens’. Rituals have a form and a determined course and may be divided into stages which are descriptive of their development. In line with this perspective, Van Gennep has divided rituals into three stages (1960). The first stage is “separation,” which involves preparation and disseminating information about the ritual. This first stage is as important a part of the ritual process as the event itself. Roberts (1988) points out that rituals consist not only of the actual performance or ceremony, but the whole process of preparing for it, experiencing and reintegrating it into life. This same author identifies three stages that are pivotal to the ritual process. They are separation, transitional and reintegration stages. The separation stage entails the process at a time when the individual prepares for the ritual and therefore separates from daily routine. The transitional stage serves a middle stage in and of
the ritual process. During this stage the individual encounters the ritual and begins to explore new roles and identities. The transitional stage is the “event”: people actually participate in the ritual and experience themselves in new ways and take on new roles and identities. The third and final stage of reintegration ensures reincorporation of the individual back into daily routine and activities of life. People are reconnected to their communities with the new status. It is important that all three stages are fully experienced and integrated into the ritual process.

Elements of rituals have the ability to allow individuals some flexibility to create or make additions to its content and consequently attach their own meanings to the ritual. Structure and safety measures are also elements of rituals that provide for the expression of strong emotion. Roberts (1988) pays attention to the elements that are essential in healing rituals. These are: affirmation of pain and loss; alteration of holding and letting go, and; action to celebrate finality. Acceptance and understanding conveyed to the individual have to do with affirmation of pain and loss. The individual is provided with a transition from present to the future in terms of alteration of holding on and letting go. The end of the ritual is symbolised by the action to celebrate finality. Symbolism is integrated throughout the unfolding of ritual experience and comprises another important element (Jung, 1964b; Moore & Myerhoff, 1977; Parker & Horton, 1996). Such symbolism has a connection to the ritual purpose and adds to the meaning of the ritual. Rituals within the family form a communal frame of reference for such areas as discipline, religious beliefs, values (Bossard & Boll 1950:44).

Family rituals can also serve as a “security blanket,” assuring family members that there is a part of the world that is predictable and lasting (Mitchell 1989:70). Laird vividly describes both the importance and pervasiveness of rituals in the life of the family. Human beings cannot live without ritual, because ritual orders lives. Westerhoff & Willimon suggest that it is ritual that draws a group together into community, establishes order and meaning, and passes perceptions and values to future generations (Westerhoff & Willimon 1980:40). Imber-Black & Roberts (1992) agree that rituals form the perspective from which we interpret life, evaluate choices, and form relationships.
Increasing economic and social pressure on the family has rendered it difficult for family members to meet together, thus precluding the possibility of meaningful ritual. As a result, the rift grows ever wider in spiraling fashion between family members, and between nuclear family and extended family.

Careful assessment is a prerequisite to responsible pastoral counselling. A family’s rituals serve as a “window” into those needs. As family members describe rituals, they reveal secrets and modes of interaction which otherwise they may deny or hide. This strong connection between rituals and the underlying family system suggests that changes in a family’s ritual life might actually impact the shape of the family system. Wolin and Bennett (1984: 401,403,407) add that rituals are the major component in determining, shaping, revising and maintaining a family’s identity.

5.4. IMPORTANCE OF RITUAL

Rituals reflects circumstances and values of a particular person. Renner asserts that the needs of the person undergoing the ritual are paramount and alludes that “all rites address themselves to human need”. (Renner 1979:171) Ritual, once established, can provide an oasis of communitas. This is a term Turner employs to indicate the strengthening of common bonds of equal social relationships. He describes a phenomenon frequently occurring during ritual where

“a moment in and out of time is experienced in which the normal ties, hierarchies and structures of societies melt away to an experience of an undifferentiated communion of equals.” (Turner 1969:96)

Ritual helps usher a person from one stage of life to the next. Sometimes ritual seems to be about what is being left behind, about the past, about loss and letting go. A funeral is a case in point. Sometimes ritual seems to be focusing on a new phase, and on the future. A wedding celebration falls in this category or classification. However, ritual is never entirely about the past or the future. Ritual occupies a liminal or threshold space between the past and the future (Cohen & Parsons 2009:15).

Underwood laments modern clergy’s loss of essence of ritual:
"Thoroughly modern" ministers . . . Whether conservative or liberal, Baptist or Episcopalian-are likely to have little or no expectation concerning this ordinance [the Eucharist] or sacrament. For them, rituals and symbols do not have any inherent power or "virtue." They can, of course, serve as graphic aids to the sermonic moment or as expressions of human caring and acceptance, which these ministers believe God does use. But as an aspect of . . . Ministry, the Eucharist best a supplemental or tangential role (Underwood 1993: 118).

Mitchell attributes contemporary impatience with ritual to the poor quality of the ritual(s) performed. Perhaps some of the contemporary impatience with ritual is a justified reaction to the poor quality of much of the ritual in which we are constrained to participate (Mitchell 1977: 117). Mitchell infers that in religious practice, in pastoral care theory, and especially in Clinical Pastoral Education, there has grown up an insistence that ritual ignores the particular in favour of the general, and that the use of rituals permits ministers to avoid dealing with difficult interpersonal situations (Mitchell 1977: 68). There seem to have been a loss on the part of clergy with regard to their traditional connection with ritual and symbol, tools of the profession which should be utilized with ease. There is a need to strike a balance as the clergy in redressing difficult interpersonal situations. Therefore reawakening to the power of ritual and reclaiming a heritage is essential. Ritual, rooted firmly in God, is an important part of what defines our care as pastoral.

Smith states that

“rituals are desperately needed to enable human growing and maturing, both through times of suffering and through times of transition. . . . It is the role of the churches . . . To learn, teach, and practice the conducting of such rites with life-giving competence” (Smith 2012:17).

Since ritual is not a tool which can be used indiscriminately clergy need to take into consideration the unintended messages a particular ritual may send to participants and observers, and carefully mold the ritual in a way that accurately conveys the intended message. Pastoral and ritual nourishment as a norm allows for the same during times of crisis.
“The wish for some ceremonial acknowledgement of what is happening arises in people at times of crisis, when spiritual help is needed to transform the situation or to face fate. This is when people want to receive the sacraments, or create a ritual for themselves and invite grace or healing to enter” (Bolen 1996:14).

When assisting people following a traumatic and life-changing incident and/or experience in their lives pastoral care and ritual play an important role. Eucharistic Ritual can be a portal, an entry point into the mysteries of the faith. Thus as far as the importance of ritual for the discovery of meaning goes, "it is a good ritual system which will enable us to find meaning in the universe and in our own lives" (Mitchell 1977:14).

Some secular therapists recognize the importance of ritual and are increasing its use in family therapy to effect change. This heightened interest is reflected in several books by Evan Imber-Black and co-authors (Imber-Black and Roberts 1992, and Imber-Black, Roberts and Whiting 1988).

Rituals exist to serve various purposes as they either sign or mark a rite of passage or a transformation, as well as celebration or commemoration as in the case of religious worship. Rituals would also serve the purpose of accomplishing some (type of) restoration. Restoration is accomplished through a symbolic removal or disengagement from the harmful event (Parker & Horton, 1996). Negative aspects symbolically ended, dispersed or accursed. Closure is then attained and co-researcher(s) encouraged dissociating from the pain. This process is designed to empower the co-researcher, and the final focus being on the future.

Not only do rituals mark significant changes, they also serve as the vehicle for the transmission of values and beliefs. Rituals carry religious and cultural meaning which has been passed on through the generations. In this sense, rituals maintain the traditional forms of culture and religious experience and help people construct maps of reality which are rooted in the past but experienced in the present.
5.5. FUNCTION OF RITUALS

Rituals have multiple functions in the family and in the culture (Grimes, 1982), and some of such functions had already been intimated to earlier in the chapter. Rituals have been used for centuries to mark changes in the ongoing social structure and in the individual and family life cycle transitions. Rituals that mark transitions are often identified as transition rituals and delineate such change events as childbirth, transition to adolescence and/or young adulthood, marriage, and death.

Rituals remain a cornerstone of resilient families and societies albeit that they are conceivably not as honoured in contemporary society as it used to be the case. A number of authors, among them Roberts (1988) and Wolin & Bennett (1984), highlight the fact that rituals serve multiple functions and this is a key part of their value to families. The daily, familial, cultural and religious rituals: facilitate change or transition, while maintaining order through the location of the ritual within the tradition or history of the family or culture; help to teach and promulgate the family’s worldview, meanings and beliefs; help to hold together the many paradoxes and contradictions of life, such as the joy and sorrow of a wedding; help to hold and contain strong emotions, and; help to delineate and link roles among individuals, families and communities, and to tie together past, present and future.

Rituals may also be viewed as contributing to the development of a family identity. Families, like individuals, have identities. Individuals in the family may have certain beliefs about themselves which are generally recognized and applauded or alternatively may be scorned. Such beliefs may relate to the family’s achievement, career aspirations, wealth, poverty, physical appearance, communication styles or coping mechanisms. Each of these qualities or characteristics reflects the family identity. Family rituals are the vehicles through which the family identity is delineated and transmitted to future generations. The choice of rituals, the underlying meanings contained in the ritual and the intensity of family involvement in the ritual are significant markers of family identity. They provide family members with a sense of history and rootedness as well as a future perspective. This ritual can also give them the chance to mourn the passing of the old and familiar. So ritual is situated in that liminal moment in the midst of transition. This in most cases
“we are barely conscious of the rituals we follow and are amazed at their detail when someone calls attention to what we have been doing” (Wynn 1991:43).

Rituals provide either a way of re-experiencing the past or to experience the future, or both-while living in the present. Rituals coordinating family, church and community values are helpful to people in developing their sense of personal identity. Rituals would also provide support during periods of mourning a loss as in a case of a death. Groups of people join with each other to bear each other’s burdens, share food, wear certain clothes and express certain words of comfort. The experience of collective mourning is time-limited and the circumstances are well defined, thus creating a feeling of safety and security for the participants. Mourning rituals are often linked to meals or visiting; consequently they may reduce isolation and loneliness, especially during periods of loss. Rituals facilitate healing and are an important part of healing process. Personal and relational healing is needed at various stages of human life. A loss experienced requires healing which may be grounds for ritual performance.

Ritual not only serves as a lens through which to view family dynamics but can also bring about positive change and provide support for healing. The power of ritual resides in its ability to stabilize, transform, and communicate (Wolin & Bennett 1984:401). Rituals are powerful symbolic ways to stabilize what is healthy in a family. They facilitate the remaking of what has been the normality that has been thrown into confusion. Rituals expedite building up resilience to unhealthy interactions. The use of religious rituals introduces God’s grace, commands, and guidance impressed upon by parables and the language of image and story contained therein. Wimberly’s (2005) method of story-linking process pays attention to the importance of connecting narratives. Story-linking applies to life’s experiences and encourages those involved to see the connection between biblical stories and their own personal stories.

“The Christian religion asks us to put our trust not in ideas, and certainly not in ideologies, but in a God who was vulnerable enough to become human and die, and who desires to be present to us in our everyday
circumstances. And because we are human it is in the realm of the daily and the mundane that we must find our way to God.” (Norris 1998:69)

Therapeutic ritual is designed to honour an internal transition, a personal shift not necessarily obvious to the outside world. It is a rite-of passage from one way of being to another; a way of cutting ties with the old and allowing something new to emerge. It is especially important in times of significant changes: the ones for which are and can be planned as well as the sudden and shocking ones. These events, expected or unexpected, have an impact on one’s basic identity and may demand a creation of a new one. They implore one to redefine one’s world in significant ways. Successful transitions facilitates healing and growth while being unable to find a way through the transformation process denote that feelings of anger, depression, fear, grief, guilt and/or shame become dominant. Therapeutic ritual is both significant and valuable because it gives form to meaningful life events and honours the internal shift that has been made. Therapeutic rituals can be an important experience in restoring personal wholeness and facilitating healing following traumatic losses.

5.6 RITUALS FOLLOWING A DISCLOSURE

Change has always been part of the life of the family but is more prevalent in this age of complexity and rapid technological developments. Ritual has the ability to provide a pathway through which change to the new reality can be realized. Carefully planned and carried out rituals can help family members release the past and look to the future with hopeful anticipation instead of fear.

“The rules, and rituals, and roles of that family will throw bright light on the behaviour and reactions of each of the individuals within it” (Wynn 199:145).

In the face of major changes that occur in the life of any family and individuals affected, ritual serves several vital adaptive functions. These functions briefly discussed here are the assurance of stability through community, legitimizing and naming the change, letting go of the past while focusing on the future, and redefining family identity and membership. Roberts points out that ritual does more than merely accompany transition. The same time that ritual is marking social order it can transform and destroy social structure and establish new norms and new traditions.
Ritual can therefore not just mark a transition but also make a transition at the same time (Roberts 1988:14).

Rituals help families recognize the value of the past and yet accept a new reality which enables family members to cope with change and loss (Laird 1990:114). Whiting describes his experience with assisting families in the "letting go" process, "The letting go actions facilitate a cleansing and healing process. …Such ritual actions have assisted people in moving beyond traumatic events and meanings that have interfered with their living in the present" (Whiting 1988:93). Imber-Black sees unresolved loss as a particularly imprisoning problem and asserts that ritual can provide that necessary connection between past, present and future which allows for release and families to move beyond the past. Imber-Black and Roberts describe the key role of ritual in negotiating the twists and turns of change

“The profound and often precarious changes inherent in [life-cycle] transitions are made safe and manageable through rituals that connect us to our past, our cultural and religious roots, our potential future, and our common humanity” (Imber-Black & Roberts 1992:268).

Family rituals

“serve as a window into a family’s underlying shared identity, providing special access to the behavioral and emotional tenor characterizing each family” (Wolin & Bennett 1984:401).

A clergyperson needs to be aware of the purpose and power of the ritual. Enquiring from

“a family about its rituals or having the privilege to share in the enactment of one provides rapid and vivid access to family beliefs and organizations” (Laird 1990:113).

Thus a clergyperson would be in a better position to help families to create a ritual contextual and facilitate performance thereof and offering support to an alternative positive pattern of familial interaction. The liturgies of various churches entail rituals to mark transition in the life of the family but those excellent resources are seldom used. The role of the clergy here should be more of facilitating than merely conducting and/or performing. It becomes more meaningful, more powerful and transformative when rituals are
“Developed collaboratively which draw from the skills and insights of the participants” (Cohen & Parsons 2009:18-22).

Because of their profound effect on the family structure, clergy should exercise great sensitivity in creating and conducting rituals for the family and for public worship. Ritual, while perhaps not as honoured in contemporary society as before, remains a cornerstone of resilient families and societies (Imber-Black et al 1988). Rituals serve multiple functions; hence this is a key part of their value to families. Roberts (1988; see also Wolin & Bennett, 1984:407-13) identifies the following functions of daily, familial, cultural and religious rituals as facilitating change or transition, while maintaining order through the location of the ritual within the tradition or history of the family or culture; helping to teach and promulgate the family’s worldview, meanings and beliefs, and; helping to hold together the many paradoxes and contradictions of life, such as the joy and sorrow of a wedding.

Ritual is an important consideration in providing care to families since many experts have pointed to a direct correlation between the type of ritualization in the family and the health of the family system. Those families which have very few rituals are usually also disorderly, lack coherence, and are without a clear sense of identity (Laird 1990:125). On the other hand, those families that have many complex and rigid rituals experience difficulty adapting to change. Myerhoff, in Turner (1982), bemoans the sparcity of culturally generated rituals and encourages people to create their own to fill the need. Myerhoff encourages the development of more rituals to address the complex transitions and relationships (Myerhoff 1982:131). Turner asserts

“[There] is clearly a profound therapeutic value in the recognition and ritualization of recurrent problems involved in the maintenance and repair of human relationships and in assigning meaning to what subjectively may seem to be merely pain and loss “(Turner 1982:25-26).

Until the recent past, there has been a neglect of ritual life in the family. Not until very recent years has there been a serious interest concerning the therapeutic value inherent in family rituals. Mitchell makes the revealing comment that

"Until about fifty years ago pastoral care was expressed more often than not, in ritualized forms" (Mitchell 1989: 68).
The challenge has been the increasing economic and social pressure on the family which has rendered it difficult for family members to meet together, thus precluding the possibility of meaningful ritual. As a result, the rift grows ever wider in spiraling fashion between family members and between nuclear family and extended family.

While a variety of Christian churches have published prayer books containing blessings and rituals for almost every occasion relevant to home and family, these rich treasures are rarely utilized. Yet according to Ramshaw, the presence of a clergyperson with whom a family would identify symbolized the presence of God as they experience challenging times (Ramshaw 1987:75-77). A family who have experienced a life-changing loss will need consistent pastoral care and ritual can become a tool to facilitate hope restoration. Broken relationships, including divorce, are another transition faced in many families. In light of such a secret disclosure relationships are affected. As a result they assume a different outlook and that heightens the need for pastoral intervention which entails the employ of all possible resources to effect healing and growth needs that seek clerical attention entail closure of the relationship, a realization of brokeness, forgiveness and absolution, healing, community recognition and support, and the sorting out of new statuses for parents and children (Ramshaw 1987:53). Ritual not only serves as a lens through which to view family dynamics. But also can bring about positive change and provide support for healing.

5.7. COUNSELLING AS RITUALS

Imber-Black and Roberts (1988: 37-38) point out that counselling itself is a ritual. It is carried out in a set-apart place with specific modes of preparation and events which happen in an organized fashion. Counselling has a beginning and a closing. Recognizing the power of the ritualized environment of counselling, clergy should attend to the form, symbolism, and tone of the counselling event; to the arrangement of the space; the symbols present; the significance of times and dates; and to openings and closings. At times when people need a sense of order or meaning, a handle on ambivalence or an approach to mystery, it may be the ritual authority of the clergy that draws them... the minister's function as ritualizer colours all pastoral relationships, by holding out the possiblity of access to a symbolic world large
enough and powerful enough to embrace the most intractable events of life and death (Ramshaw 1987: 57).

The use of blessing, confession, prayer, communion, or even a song during counselling can serve a dual function. These practices offer reassurance to participants of the Holy Spirit’s presence in counselling and serve as healthy models for the constructive use of ritual. Including religious ceremony in the counselling event is a tangible demonstration of the presence of God. As the family members struggle with the need to change and with unresolved loss, it might be helpful to pause at appropriate times for silent prayer. The clergy might also want to plan rituals to begin or end future counselling sessions. These rituals might include the sharing of the Eucharist, or the lighting of a candle accompanied by appropriate words from Scripture.

However, care must be taken not to interrupt healthy tension which often leads to new insight for family members. Perhaps at some point in the counselling, family members will want to plan a ceremony to mark some change, loss, or progress in the healing process. Underwood emphasizes the need for straightforward religious ritual during counselling: "Although effective pastoral counseling from a dynamic point of view can virtually constitute confession, without a definite ritual that includes absolution, counseling often is little more than catharsis" (Underwood 1993:81).

5.8. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Ritual is an inevitable component of culture extending from the social and political processes to the most intimate aspects of self-experience. Yet within this universality, the inherent multiplicity of ritual practices both between and within cultures also reflects the full diversity of the human experience. A ritual is a patterned activity with symbolic meaning. It is an ordered sequence of intentional actions often occurring in relation to an event or circumstance. The purpose of a ritual is to provide a framework for transitions, help shape identity, and commemorate shared meanings in order to fashion a trustworthy world. Rituals regulate accessibility, making and keeping connections within communities of significance. By engaging the entire person or community rituals integrate past, present, and future into a seamless story.
and journey. Despite these commonalities, a ritual is an interpretative act that often means different things to different people.

Ritual moments have an ability to act as a balm for healing of memories. People are often in bondage to feelings of guilt, loneliness, hurt, separation, anxiety and/or fear, among others, and these are linked to memories of the past. Healing from wounding memories begins by making them available in the present, and reframing them as part of life stories. Rituals are a primary mechanism used by the family to conserve its paradigm, they also store and convey the family identity from generation to generation. Furthermore

“rituals provided a key to unlock confusing and painful family relationships and friendships” (Imber-Black & Roberts 1992:xvi).

The worshipping community needs to recognize its own profound effect on the family through the words, structure and symbols of its rituals. Rituals are storehouses of meaningful symbols by which information is revealed and regarded as authoritative, as dealing with the crucial values of the community (Turner 1968a:2). Not only do symbols reveal crucial social and religious values but they are also transformative for human attitudes and behavior because of their reference to the supernatural. Rituals help to hold and contain strong emotions. They help to delineate and link roles among individuals, families and communities and to tie together past, present and future.

The handling of symbols in ritual exposes their powers to act upon and change the persons involved in ritual performance. Smith states that

“rituals are desperately needed to enable human growing and maturing, both through times of suffering and through times of transition. . . . It is the role of the churches . . . To learn, teach, and practice the conducting of such rites with life-giving competence” (Smith 2012:17).

The next Chapter focuses on stories of co-researchers. Pastoral Care gives voice to human stories. Stories, among others, which justify shame, of regret or omission and therefore the setting for ritual. Beyond everything,
“Stories and ritual are a basic way by which we construct reality and make meaning” (Anderson & Foley 1998:21).

By the same token,

“Our storytelling and ritual making can become life-giving when they point beyond themselves to larger and transcendent narratives: when they open us to the all-embracing story of God” (Anderson & Foley 1998:38).

Memories prod through ordinary time hinting at deeper meaning and purpose. Occasionally, rituals thrust through the fabric of ordinary time allowing us to reconnect with our stories in a new and different yet enriching way and that link brings about and facilitates meaning and inspiration that renews and recreates. But rituals do not blossom and grow of their own accord.

In order to fashion a restorative narrative, we need to visit the moments and memories that are most painful. Consolation for both individuals and communities depends on the freedom to attend to the wounds that hurt the most.

“Ritual is a privileged place for appropriating [God’s] redeeming narrative because it honors diverse stories within a community of shared values. It also provides a setting in which to explore the darkness and name the demons without mythologizing or secret keeping. Such communal gatherings have a particular capacity for embracing personal tales of violence and destruction” (Anderson & Foley 1998:172).

Ritual honesty does not mean that all secrets must be publicly revealed but it implies that the ritual is not used to hide the truth. Ritual honesty is mandatory if our lament is to identify painful topics that a community must address in order to heal.

In light of co-researchers’ stories, rituals would play a pivotal role when attempting to bestow experience with meaning while co-researchers relinquish negative aspects of the initial story thus realizing release. Ritual help to usher humanity and those involved from one stage of life to the next leaving behind the negative aspects of the past dealing with loss and letting go focusing on the future. Rituals express what cannot be otherwise articulated in words. They make the invisible visible. Rituals are linked to human stories and contribute to meaning-making. They are essential for healing and serve as a medium that facilitates liberation of narratives from being
constraint and retelling of such stories to bring about release and liberation. The meaning-laden stories told find expression in ritual.

Ritual also occupies a liminal, or threshold, space between the past and the future (Cohen & Parsons 2009:15). Therefore rituals become central to informing a therapeutic model. The use of rituals for healing purposes is an age old practice noted within a variety of cultural and religious contexts (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1996; Idowu 1992; Jung 1964a; 1969). Healing begins when the wounding memories of the past are reached and brought into the light without fear or when wounds are intimately connected with the suffering of God. To heal then, does not primarily mean to take pain away. But to reveal that our pain is part of God’s pain and our sorrows are part of the greater sorrow of God. Rituals are more likely to heal when our remembering occurs in a witnessing community gathered by the ritual and infused with the compassion of God. Jung (1964a; 1969) understands rituals as a mechanism to promote transformation and rebirth. Ritual as a process is defined as a renewal of personality functions that are healed, strengthened and improved through a ceremonial process (Jung, 1969). There is also therapeutic importance of ritual. Therapeutic rituals contributes to positive coping. Rituals thus hold a level of meaning and significance that words alone cannot capture.

Jesus used storytelling as standard equipment in his evangelistic approach, building his parables from images drawn from his environment and grounding them in imagery from his own sacred tradition. Storytelling serves as a catalyst for theological reflection in its challenge of the imagination. It is in our imagination that we can begin to grasp the mysteries of Jesus’ teachings. This apprehension is rooted in a sacramental encounter in which the Divine is accessible through symbols and stories which the ritual framework provides. Storytelling constructs a future using the building blocks of the past as listeners become co-creators with the Divine Storyteller. Further, storytelling connects listeners, facilitating the gathering of the Christian Community in a common point of departure while offering them a direction and destination. Storytelling leads us to encounter the sacred by taking seriously our human experience as an entry into a broader reality. Storytelling moves us into the sacred because it moves the sacred within us.
Telling stories allows us to imagine a world of possibilities. With stories we are enabled to more freely play with our paradigms, opening ourselves to wider possibilities of what it means to be active participants in the mystery and message of Jesus. Kierkegaard stated that "life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards". The storytelling witnesses to that reality.

"there is a structuring relationship between a life that is lead and a life that is told" (Thomson et al. 2002:339).

The manner in which a story is told, influences the life of the teller. Therefore our stories

“are not just accounts of the past, but are living parts of us now. The retelling of the stories is not so much about changing them as it is about gaining new perspective. Often that new perspective helps us understand our current situation better.” (Schereiter 2008:20).

Facilitation for stepping aside and allowing stories that will frame the direction is necessary. The basic elements of any culture are expressed in its stories of identity and in its rituals. It begins with personal stories of who the person is, what does a person stand for, and why does a person do things the way he/she does. These personal stories often lay the foundation a culture that is expressed in the collective stories of who we are, what is important to us, and where we are going. The rituals make the stories tangible they are the physical manifestations and enactments of the one’s culture, values and beliefs. Rituals thus hold a level of meaning and significance that words alone cannot capture.
CHAPTER 6 : STORIES OF CO-RESEARCHERS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The late Ellen Merafe Kuzwayo once said:

“Africa is a place of story telling. We need more stories never mind how painful the exercise might be. Stories help us to understand, to forgive and to see things through someone’s eyes” (Bosman & Petersen 1996:7).

This quote by Kuzwayo, informs what this chapter will deal with: which is stories of the co-researchers. Schereiter impresses upon this by further buttressing Kuzwayo’s thought, by alluding that,

“Stories are powerful means for shaping our identities. They weave together in a narrative the events that have special significance for us. By moving persons as actors and actresses along the story line, they allow different aspects of personalities and characters to emerge. The drama of the story helps us remember its content more easily than if that content were stored in concepts. Our identities are based strongly on the stories we tell about ourselves, our families, our communities, our countries. In these collections of stories, stories about origins hold a special place.” (Schereiter 2008:19).

These stories preserve memories, prompt reflections, connect humanity with the past and present, and assist to envision the future. The understanding is such that each story has a point of view that will differ, depending on who is telling the story, as well as, when and where the story is told. Wimberly sees the process of organizing human experiences using stories as: ‘storying’. (Wimberly 1994: 15)

Storytelling allows for the revelation of the depth of their own experiences and goes on to pose testing questions about life. Storytelling helps the storyteller

“to connect to God’s guiding, sustaining, and transforming Story in the Bible, to resources from the past, and led them to decide how they would act amid the realities of life as moral and accountable beings” Wimberly (2005: 4).

The intentions of the stories, as shared by the co-researchers, are meant to facilitate the exploration that leads to insight. Therefore, by telling stories, experiences of co-researchers are woven into words; and the process validates the stories told and their value in the lives of co-researchers.
Stories inform the comprehension of ourselves, the world around us, as well as, the relationship with the created order. Thus; in a case where stories fall apart, one is left vulnerable and irresolute with regard to identity or what to do. The process of sharing their stories, facilitated the awareness of what informed the co-researchers respective behaviours and provided a window to see the changes that need to be considered. Undertaking this process, begins to galvanize the co-researchers to be able to identify the reasons they are experiencing particular emotions and feelings and to see how these have influenced their choices. Gerkin impresses upon us that, “The past holds a powerful grip upon the future by shaping, feelings, actions, and beliefs in the present.” (Gerkin 1997:167)

Therefore, through the process of reflecting, structuring and narrating, disparate events are made meaningful. A narrative is constructed. The author acknowledges that the term narrative generally can refer to any spoken or written presentation. However, he confines his usage in this research to the kind of organizational scheme that is expressed in story form. Therefore the author will use the term “story” interchangeably with “narrative.” By using the two interchangeably, or as fits the context, the author hopes to capture the experiential quality of telling a story. It is therefore, that whatever comes to the fore, will be a revelation of a particular way of thinking or knowing and a framework for telling a story. This is to help co-researchers to create meaning in their lives, in light of events that have unfolded.

Meaning is thus constructed between one person telling the story and the other listening. Therefore, the interaction of listening with recounting is critical to revealing meaning in the story and to creating new meanings that are necessary to re-envision the story. The ability to reconstruct memories over time allows for meanings to change, evolve and have relevance throughout life (Kotre 1996). The therapeutic process of reframing a memory is the exchange of one set of meanings for another. In this process, the new set of meanings creates a different perspective that highlights or downplays different aspects of the memory (Kotre 1996). Often memories and their meanings are expressed as metaphors. Metaphors are used in everyday language and play a role in the therapeutic domain. Elements of narrative such as metaphor
“provide a means of expressing emotion, feelings and reactions that will otherwise be lost in translation” (Johncox 2009:12).

In connecting one object, event, or place, to another, a metaphor can uncover new and intriguing qualities of the original thing that we may not normally notice or even consider important. Metaphoric language is, hence, used in order to realize a new and different meaning.

“The connection between metaphor and narrative is seen as integral. Metaphor is a quality of narrative” (Pearce 1996: xv).

Storytelling in its various forms allows us to listen, take in information, understand, comprehend deeply, interpret, and integrate new information at numerous levels with both the conscious and unconscious minds.

“Narrative and metaphor provide a buffer against the tensions created by the experiences, personal concerns, problems, and storms of life” (Pearce 1996: xiii).

The stories from the Bible, in particular Gospel stories, are employed to assist the co-researchers. In light thereof,

“The stories of Jesus have this powerful effect for Christians and indeed many others. For Christians the stories are a special window into God’s activity in the world. They give us clues as to who God is and what God is trying to communicate with us” (Schereiter 2008:20).

The focus here is on people discovering, through conversations, the hopeful, preferred, and previously unrecognized and hidden possibilities that are contained within themselves and story-lines. Thus the exercise of story-telling, here, is to endeavour to replace negative and self-defeating narratives about individuals, which produce feelings of low self-esteem, inadequacy, and justifications for negative, self-defeating beliefs, by replacing them with positive ones.

As Dykstra described what he calls the indigenous storyteller, he goes on to focus and pick up on the storytelling heritage for

‘Communicating the gospel from the pulpit and how stories have come to serve individuals, couples, and families in pastoral care and counseling’ (Dykstra 2005:155).
He highlights how the storytelling tradition has been affirmed for a long time amongst
‘many indigenous communities as the healing power of “storying” one’s faith and life’ (Dykstra 2005:155).
Schereiter goes on to highlight that key to the process of story-telling is a need for accompaniment of the co-researchers.

“[The risen Lord] Jesus appears [to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus] in the story as someone who overtakes the disciples on the road and falls in with them, accompanying them on their journey. This act of accompanying the disciples is a powerful image that can become a model for our own pastoral praxis. We do not walk ahead of people so much as alongside them, speaking with them, hearing their stories, comforting them, challenging them when necessary. Many of us need this kind of accompaniment on our journey to reconciliation. Those who accompany us may not be able to provide the definitive interpretation of our burdens, but they can become a means by which those burdens are lifted. They can create an atmosphere of safety and trust that makes possible our finding the way out of our distress.” (Schereiter 2008:42-3).

The journey undertaken with the co-researchers was an effort to consider positive alternatives to their meanings, values, and assumptions, regarding their experiences. These factors dictated the views of the individual and their issues while this initiative seeks to create new, positive outlooks that determine the meaning of an individual’s experience.

Story-telling also empowers the co-researchers with a voice regarding their experiences and to be able to name their problems. As they tell their stories, they make sense of the concerns that they have in light of disclosure. Story-telling also assists the co-researchers to see that they are not alone and isolated in these circumstances. It bears to mention, here, that meaning cannot be removed from the worlds of the people who

"constitute, shape, and live within its definitions" (Giroux 1983:184).
The journey becomes possible; since it draws on the expertise of the co-researchers’ lives. Storytelling, the by co-researchers, provides a richer version of the events and experiences.

“People ‘know’ and are able to present a lot of their lives than they have intergraded in their theories of themselves and of their lives. This knowledge is available to informants at the level of narrative presentation but not at the level of theories” (Flick 2009:180).

A collaborative process, that emboldens deconstructing problem stories and constructing unique outcomes in their place, is employed. The premise, here, is that a person is never conceived as the problem; rather that a person has a problem which is, of course, caused by external factors.

Gerkin’s (1997: 110-111) idea of a Christian story becomes part of the stories that the researcher and the co-researchers are working on and with. He calls the model the: ‘Narrative hermeneutical model’ and it is useful within the Christian circles and for the many life stories of people who are related to the Christian community. According to Gerkin’s narrative hermeneutical model, pastoral care is at the centre of the dialogical space between the communal story of the Christian community and the life stories of people who are connected, in one form or the other, to the Christian community.

Wimberley (2005) buttresses this mode quite immaculately in her work, Soul Stories. She intimates that,

“story-sharing provides an approach... that helps to heal a paralysis of the mind; if not always of the body” (Wimberly 2005:4).

She points out that along with the healing properties of story-sharing, the potential “exists for exploring how the canonical story or the canon of the biblical literature, the life story, and the unfolding communal story relate” (Wimberly 2005: 4).

She goes on to bolster that notion by saying,

“Our stories are the sacred texts of our lives that open the way for transformation when we tend to our memoirs. Through remembering the “sacred texts” of our lives, we come in contact with the wisdom inherent in
them and with the Holy One, the Source of hope and healing.” (Wimberly 2005: 4).

The theological and ethical premise, here, is such ‘that not simply does God want us free, but God through Jesus Christ sides with the oppressed in their struggle for freedom.”

6.2 STORIES
The author explores the co-researchers’ experiences with the hard disruptions that occur when confronted by others in ways that lead the co-researchers to question the very ground of their being, their identity, and their place and purpose in the world. Finding a nexus for understanding these disruptions and interruptions, a story of their respective life struggles unfolds as a series of passages through gateways to transcendence.

In the end, these interruptions, as harsh as some of them may seem, are proposed as necessary

“Moments of rupture” that allow for the eruption of infinite possibility, and a spirited life. In the process of story-telling, “We must communicate aspects of the gospel that are relevant to them where they are, and not just launch into some presentation we have learned. This will mean listening to them carefully and not just talking at them… Meanwhile, as we listen to them, we must also listen to God.” (Pollard 1997: 114)

6.2.1 Co-Researchers’ Stories
When stories were shared, respectively, important insights, which lead to deep change in the co-researcher’s relationships and internal world, were gained by the researcher. The ‘storying’ aided the researcher in exploring how the co-researchers perceive themselves. This, furthermore, enhances the therapeutic process which facilitates emotional growth in areas where development has been at a snail’s pace. Understanding what it is that the co-researchers, in question, believe is, imperative in this study.

To engage, effectively, with co-researchers, the researcher has to understand their worldview. That premise informed the kind of questions to be raised with them.
Pollard terms that engagement, as well as, the entire process: positive deconstruction. The process is engaged for the purpose of helping the co-researchers to rethink their beliefs; which are shaped and are in light of their respective personal experiences. However, the initial step will be to learn about their background and worldview. From that basis, the author will seek find a model to help the co-researchers to turn from held beliefs, to the truth which is found through Jesus the Good Shepherd.

The methodology of questions (Annexure A: Attached) will be used to unpack the process of (Pollard’s) positive deconstruction. This process involves four elements, namely: identifying the underlying worldview, analysing it, affirming the elements of the truth which it contains, and, finally, discovering its errors. Pollard asserts this, by saying:

“If we are to engage meaningfully with people in contemporary culture, therefore, we must begin by extracting and identifying the underlying worldviews from its multiple complexity” (Pollard 1997: 52).

The opening session has been extremely important for building an alliance, developing therapeutic rapport, and creating a climate of mutual respect. The main goal was to gain a broad understanding of the co-researcher’s presenting problems, and an effective working relationship. This session also serves an opportunity to gather as much information as possible about a co-researcher. The gathering of information was undertaken with sensitivity to confidentiality and co-researcher’s consent issues. The client's freedom of choice and potential for meaningful change is emphasized here. Developing the alliance can be undertaken through reflective listening, demonstrating respect, honesty, and openness; eliciting trust and confidence. The degree of motivation that the co-researcher feels after the first session is determined largely by the degree of significance experienced during the initial therapeutic encounter.

Maintenance strategies will include continual provision of support, feedback, and assistance in setting realistic goals. Strategies to help co-researchers maintain the progress made as at the initial session include: Reviewing problems that emerged following disclosure and did not receive attention and empowering co-researcher to
capitalize on personal strengths. In subsequent sessions focus should be on helping co-researchers to help maintain motivation and address identified problems.

Pollard supports this approach of employing questions to unpack issues,

“That is not actually anything new; it is the way in which Jesus taught. He made use of questions, often answering one question with another. And he told the greatest stories of all time” (Pollard 1997: 72).

Questions that are presented to co-researchers have been asked in the light of acknowledging the: cultural context thus; giving details of values, beliefs, and habits. Applying, Historical positioning and continuity; Temporal nature of story; Beginning, middle and an end provides the story with recognisable parameters; Significance of other people; Embodied nature of the co-researcher(s) and their engagement(s) in the events, their senses, feelings, thoughts, attitudes and ideas; thus locating the narrative in the experience of a real life. Choices and actions of the co-researcher(s): the co-researcher is the active participant in the events, making choices based on values, beliefs and aims.

The above approach is inspired by Jesus’ methodology, say mentioned by Pollard,

“Whenver Jesus talked with people he used an approach tailored to each individual. The words he used when talking with the Samaritan woman at the well were very different from those he used for Nicodemus, and both were very different from those he used when he encountered the rich young ruler...different people different...[and] they all have different backgrounds, experiences, hopes and dreams, hurts and fears. If we are to treat people as people and not as gospel fodder, we must help different people in different ways” (Pollard 1997: 103-4) [italics added].

Pollard goes further to expound that,

“We must communicate aspects of the gospel that are relevant to [co-researchers] where they are, and not just launch into some presentation we have learned. This will mean listening to them carefully and not just talking at them...Meanwhile, as we listen to them, we must also listen to God” (Pollard 1997: 114). [Italics added].

It needs to be noted, as Pollard highlighted, that
“employing positive deconstruction is just one part of demonstrating God’s love for people” (Pollard 1997: 46).

The Story of Sello (25). Pseudonym name used due to true experiences.

My real father died in 2005. I have met him a handful of times and I did not know then that he was my father. All members of my family knew but kept it from me. This was because he was not welcomed in the family since he was a wrong tribe. I got to know of this only after turning 24 in 2011. There is a deep sense of sadness in me that I will never know him or hear his voice. I would not wish what happened to me on anyone. Following the death of my mother, I embarked on a re-examination of my family relationships and dynamics. This followed cleaning out the last items from my parents’ home. “I should have just hauled everything to the dump unexamined”. In my early years nothing was ever said about that part of him. Discussions and questions about such matters were not tolerated in my family.

I would have liked to have known of that before my mother’s death. Better yet, I would have liked to have known my real father… They had been buried with all of these secrets. I could never break through the isolation that held my father prisoner long before his death…

My aunt maintains that my parents really loved each other. However, the rest of my family was not chuffed about their relationship. I was conceived and my biological father was the best kept secret from me…all because it was felt he was a wrong tribe. Their daughter could not be associated with a son of someone like that and/or even that tribe. My mom was told, if she ever told me who my real father was, they would not only disown her but also not support her in any way… I remember the moment like it was a month ago: ‘Your father is not your real father,’ my aunt stated. I wondered how often she must have rehearsed that line. I sat still, trying to absorb the shock. This new information…One is left with pure conjecture.

Secrets twist reality and isolate people…I don’t want to have secrets from my children or my wife, when I have a family of my own. There may be secrets that I do not know about my family of origin but now I do not have to accept them or the disquieting feeling they bring, as normal.

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The Story of Basetsana (23) and Owami (21). Pseudonym used due to true experiences.

Basetsana found out almost two years ago that her father had a daughter with another woman, when she was 6. “I have 2 older sisters and thought I was the youngest. My father, her mother, she, and one of my whole sisters went to dinner as old friends. The trouble started when the girl realized she is the spitting image of my father. She confronted her mother; who told her the truth and now we all have to deal with their cheap sordid affair. I feel so bad for her ‘dad’ - the guy who is married to her mother and has raised her for 21 years not knowing she is not his. People can be really sucky.”

Owami felt somewhat different from her siblings from an early age. But she could not explain that. Then, when she was 19 turning 20, her mother told her the truth. That opened the door to a whole new family. Owami’s life changed, dramatically, when the secret identity of her father was revealed… “My father has clearly passed us both (Owami and Basetsana) his genes: we share his slight frame, and his passion for music…I am a lovechild…My mother felt the need to keep me a secret. Because our family, as in any at the time, lived by the model where parents married, worked hard, and where love children spelt shame. My mom was like that: a young wife and my father - the man who raised me, a respectable businessman husband. She had one crevice in her domestic armour – her first love.

My ‘real’ father was always on the move…the kind of jobs he worked. They kept in touch, via the odd letter or a secret meeting when he was around. I was apparently conceived during one such secret rendezvous. When she realised she was pregnant with his child she told no one, not even my dad, who was by then out of reach. At first mom determined to go to a clinic to resolve the problem before it became apparent, but ‘she couldn’t go through with it. Instead, she told her husband the truth. Extraordinarily, he agreed to raise the baby as his own, so long as she kept the secret firmly to herself. And so she had me within her marriage…

When I was seven, my mother got divorced and subsequently remarried. My mother was not upfront about readily letting him into my life. It was a melting pot where,
paradoxically, it was the many differences, not similarities between us that bound us together as a family.

When I saw my ‘real’ father for the first time I felt an instinctive connection. Much as there are similarities with my stepsister, there are also differences. She had left home by the time I found out my true identity. She is one of the least few who got a job straight after obtaining tertiary qualification. We are not really that close but we get along fine.

**The Story of Thatoyaone (24).** Pseudonym name used due the true experiences.

It was at my 21st birthday party when I got to discover the truth about my real father. My aunt said she couldn't stand carrying the secret any longer and asked had I never wondered why I don't look remotely like my brother. We have, she explained, different biological fathers, and our father was not in fact my father. Following the disclosure, I confronted my mother and asked when she was planning to tell me all this. And she simply answered: never. The person I had grown up to know as my godfather was in fact my dad. I was told on a number of occasions not to go after the answers I needed. I had been told ‘not knowing about your ‘true paternity should not make any difference about who she you are’. But how can I live with myself not knowing anything about one whole side of me? I want to know…I need to know who am I and what happened.
The Story of Khotso (22). Pseudonym name used due true experiences.

My mother handed me an envelope as she told me my father’s name. There was a letter in it with handwriting strangely familiar, as if I wrote this. And two photographs: one of a woman with a baby, my sister, and of my new father. The letter introduced this other family to me. I was told it had been written as part of the plan. My natural father was keen to know me. My mother had agreed that perhaps it was time.

My spirit shook with the shock of it. My initial feeling was one of sadness for my mother, for having held on to this weighty secret for so long. But I loved her and I trusted her instincts in all things, even this. In the days following the disclosure I read and reread the letter and... I felt disembodied… One day I was certain of who I was, at least I thought so… And the next I am not certain about anything anymore. When I told my friends, they looked at me with incredulity and I felt a bit of a freak.

“Eventually I met ‘my father’, in a sense it was a meeting of getting to this other genetic part of me…We shared similar loves, of reading, music and movies. However, I could sense that my presence made him anxious. It was a time for adjustment for us all... The differences between my first and second families fast became evident. I was in need of a safety net for me within my father’s chaotic world. At one dinner some friends of my second family had joined us. There was fascination about this secret son about whom they had all known for years. I felt uneasy as if foreign inside my own skin…Having relocated and moving into a place of my own, I realised I still had issues to deal with following the disclosure about my ‘real’ father. With hindsight I think I tried too hard to make all the pieces of the jigsaw fit, believing that I could be cohesive again… There is a feeling of loss of identity and purpose.
The story of Eric (23). Pseudonym name due to true experiences.

“I never knew my dad. Upon disclosure, I got to know my father has four children from three different women, and I’m the third. Apparently he walked out before I was born. While growing up I always felt something is out of place but I just didn’t know why or what. I live with a question mark over my head every day of my life and am not able to put words to that question...I feel like I am looking in a shattered mirror and seeing a distorted reflection of myself.”

During the fourth session, as the spotlight fell of the family, he went on to poignantly comment: “I felt as if I am a product of sperm donation - getting to know of my dad 15 years after and only for a while. When I first saw him he was on a deathbed and not much time left to can make any connection. Not having a father scarred me in more ways than I can count. After this well-kept secret was disclosed I felt sad for some time. and I got real angry…I felt all messed up. I can’t tell my mom how I feel because I once said something to her and she got very hurt and upset. So since then I kept all of my feelings to myself. I can tell you that for as much as I love her, inwards I am angry at her for holding out on me and thinking that she had a right to decide if I needed to know my dad or not. I feel deprived of so much. I feel like I am in black hole and I really want to get out”. He went on to disclose that he felt trapped and defenseless; and that alcohol provided solace for him. However, that did not help the situation. “At first I would enjoy it but I would finish numb. My baseline unhappiness persisted”. Drinking did not make him happy but only helped him to, momentarily, forget his unhappiness. He had been filled with curiosity and fear and a hope so distant that he did not recognize it as such. So he buried himself in his work. “I often wonder if I am worth being loved [by my father]…I wonder if I am anything like him.”
The story of Gift (25). Pseudonym name due to the true experiences.

My mother was 18 years old and still in High School when she gave birth to me. Her up-bringing had many problems of its own. After my birth, when my Father came to visit my Mother and I, he was given a choice: be a full-time father or don’t be a part of our life. I am told at the time he was in another relationship and this may have influenced his decision. I was also told that later on that when we ran into him at a wedding, he left the reception early. That is as much as I know of my connection with my dad.

I’ve always wanted to know everything there is to know about my dad. I think my Mother could have offered more details about his life. I think some of the small things were inadvertently passed over and maybe some of the bigger things were withheld for either my benefit or deep-seated emotions of my mother’s.

I received a call from my aunt – never met or heard of her before - telling me of my dad who was in hospital following a car accident. I visited him. It was quite awkward to say the least. Subsequently he passed away. My mother and I attended his funeral. The next of kin had to put dirt in his grave. I also did, I gently threw the soil on my father’s coffin. And I imagined his lifeless body in there. It was a surreal moment. After his funeral, my aunt told me that my father was actually a nice man, and went on to say that I look exactly like him. I didn’t know what or how to answer her. I just nodded my head. To date, I don’t know who my father is. I remember shedding tears driving back home from the funeral. These were tears of an element that emerged, anger. I was angry. That was the first time I recall feeling a sense of anger towards the man that choose not to be a part of my life while he could but waited until last days. It was at this point I began to question God and wish I had never been born.
The story of Mulalo (28). Pseudonym name due to the true experiences.

Raised to believe I was adopted by strangers, in order to hide the family shame, I discovered that I was biologically related to my adoptive parents and that my favourite aunt was in fact, my own mother.

I will speak of the trauma I went through as a result of finding out that my adoptive grandfather was in fact my natural father and uncle and my adoptive great-aunt was in fact my natural mother and auntie. My adoptive mother was in fact my half sister and full cousin.

I grew up thinking that I had been adopted by strangers who were not related to me. As a child I spent most of my weekends growing up with my grandfather, his wife, my great aunt, and my grandmother who was the mother to both ladies. This situation stopped when I was told I was adopted at the age of 9 and although I was shocked I did not feel as though I was a stranger and always felt as though I was a part of this family, and this was very confusing to me. My relationship with my adoptive mother was more of a brother, sister relationship rather than a mother, son relationship. I did not understand this and it felt very strange. But I did have a very close bond with her. But on the other hand I just felt that I was part of a normal family who I loved and who loved me. Out of all the family I felt very special as I was the only child out of the all family that the great aunt had a special bond with and each time I heard her voice or saw her I became very excited and happy. She never missed my birthday and when we saw each other or spoke on the phone it was the best thing that happened to me.

As I grew into my teenage years I became an isolated person who drank, and took drugs. I had identity issues and I did not know how to deal with them.

At the age of 17, I gave up the drugs and still continued looking for my mother. At the age of 20, a lady I met told me that my adoptive mother is actually my sister and her father is in fact my father as well, and her aunt is my mother. On finding this out I was in a state of disbelief, shock and became hysterical. I had no problem that my aunt was my mother or my adoptive mother was my sister, but my grandfather being my father was beyond my comprehension because of his wife being the aunt’s sister and he had been dead five years. My mind went into a mode of trying to understand
all this. I was shocked at this and in a state of despair. I later confronted my adoptive mother who denied the accusation of the revelation.

Few months later I then found out my true relationship with these people, when I confront my great-grandmother, she breaks down and cries and asks for my forgiveness and tells me that I am her real blood grandson. At that point I wanted to die because my grandfather had been dead for 5 years and to know that he was my father and aunt, my mother whom I love and adored. Since that point in time I have suffered a roller-coaster ride of emotions resulting from the confusions of the events that have happened in my life.

Following that disclosure, my mind has been in utter turmoil and devastation verging on madness. The only thing keeping me going was the constant contact with people who were trying to help me come to terms with this trauma. I would pretend to my family that nothing had changed. And yes, I still saw them physically in myself for who they really were, my real blood family in spite of their denial of my true identity.

I am as happy as can be and in time to come I believe my mother will come forward and reclaim me as her son, and even though I thought I was adopted because she put a different name to whom she is she has always been my mother without me knowing and then the family will acknowledge the truth and find the peace that I have found and they will be the family that they should have been before the family secrets destroyed our lives.
The story of David (25). Pseudonym name due to the true experiences.

It had been the third time in a month that mama had called us home to share a meal. I had taken my infant son along with me. My first sister, Dipuo, and her husband Oupa, were there and so was my second sister Motlalepule and Vusi, her husband with their children. Mama’s sister, aunt Louisa was also present. Mama had some news that she wanted to share with her family. However on two previous occasions she got interrupted before she could say why she called the family together. This is because my sisters were not getting along very well and they would argue over everything. On this occasion Dipuo was late for dinner and so we had to wait. Yet again, her arrival sparked an argument between her and Motlalepule. However, it was different…this got so heated to a point that Motlalepule lost it and told Dipuo “unlike you, I don’t unfavorably dispose of my family as you did your son”. Then there was an unusual silence for a while around the table. I then asked who this child is and where was he then. That silence again…no one responded. I turned to aunt Louisa and asked her if all this is true and how come I don’t know and that I never saw him. My aunt responded that all is true and she would even at times help mama by babysitting. Again, “So where is he? Why have I not seen him? How come I do not know him?” I asked. She responded, “Well, you have seen him alright and know him very well.” Then she was also as quiet as the rest of the family members. I was confused and then I turned to mama and mama confirmed what aunt Louisa said but no more. Then I remember saying, “I know we are family, but where is he?”

Motlalepule then said what then sent chills down my spine and for a while I thought I heard wrong. “You should look in the mirror.” I was dumbfounded and my head was spinning and then asked: “What are you saying?” Motlalepule said again, “you are not my little brother…Dipuo is your mom…” She kept talking but I cannot remember what she said or much of what happened afterwards. All that comes to mind is what I said out of anger and frustration before I left the house. “You always told me and talked about not telling lies…Don’t keep secrets…But you kept one from me…” I returned to the house to bury mama –my granny- few weeks afterwards. She had been hospitalised and subsequently passed away. By calling us over to the house she wanted to tell us her cancer had resurfaced and even more advanced and she was not going on treatment no more.
The story of Mabhutho (26). Pseudonym name due to the true experiences.

I found out when I was eighteen years old. Before this time I had no idea that things were so different about my place in my family. I grew up with a mum, a dad and siblings. When my parents told us about this secret about me that they had carried for so many years, it came as the biggest shock of our lives. And for reasons I’ll probably never understand – perhaps shame, denial, or misplaced protectiveness – my family had decided not to tell me yet. But it also made a lot of sense to me. It was not until I was a few years older that it all sank in and I started to realise how unjust a position I was in. For those first few years the small, non-identifying pieces of information about my biological father were enough. Then I became more curious and wanted to know more about my own family, my roots, and my identity.

Not knowing is the hardest part. Not knowing who my biological father is, who his family is, my paternal family... whether he is still even alive! Does he want to know me? Does he have a family of his own? The questions that whirl around my head are endless. I do not want money from him or to cause him any drama. I need what is an intrinsic part of me. I need answers that will help me to feel that I completely know myself. I can say without a shadow of a doubt that at the age of 27 I still do not know myself as I believe I should.

In time I have moved through so many phases; shock, curiosity, anger, loss, grief, disconnectedness, disempowerment and hopelessness. I can say that whilst the anger has subsided over time the other emotions come in waves, over and over. Whilst it is a yearning that mostly lingers like dark clouds, it is always present and always heavy in my heart, even when I am at my happiest. I feel as though it will always bring about in me difficulties that will never be resolve or healed, for this curiosity and yearning is like an open wound with no one to be able to offer a bandage.

I love my parents, and I respect them for telling me the truth about my identity.
Stories from the global village...

The stories of the co-researchers above and the two below highlight how being kept in the dark about one’s heritage takes its toll. There are few things more confronting than having one’s sense of identity turned upside down, especially when at a prime of their lives. Once the shock subsides, the confusion, anger and distress kick in. In all the stories those who share them opened their wounds to the listener. One of the key turning point for each storyteller was to abandon blame approach and mentality but to focus on wrestling to understand; and taking the anger and turning it in to an adventure of discovery.

*CNN.com ran a story (9.23.12) entitled: “Ohio woman unknowingly married father”*

By Chelsea J. Carter, CNN

The story was about a woman, Valerie Spruill, who had unknowingly married her father. “Nobody shared it with Valerie Spruill while her husband was alive. For years after his death, she heard bits of the story. It was something about an absentee father, something about her husband. None of it made sense, she said. That's not until her uncle, finally, told her what no one else had: She had unknowingly married the father she never knew. "It is devastating. It can destroy you," Spruill told CNN. "It almost did." Spruill, 60, of Doylestown, Ohio, went public with her story, it was first published in the Akron Beacon Journal, with the hope that it would help others who are facing what seem like insurmountable problems. “…How a woman unwittingly married her father?” It’s the question that Spruill said she has been grappling with since she first learned the truth in 2004, six years after her husband Percy Spruill died. "I don't know if he ever knew or not. That conversation didn't come up," she said. "I think if he did know, there is no way he could have told me." She confirmed that her husband was indeed her father through a DNA test, hair taken from one of his brushes.

The aftermath of the secret was devastating emotionally - and physically, Spruill suffered two strokes and was diagnosed with diabetes. All of it, she believes was brought on by learning the family secret. "Pain and stress will kill, and I had to release my stress," Spruill said. "I'm just telling the story to release my pain." Stress may harm the brain - but it recovers. She has a deep, abiding faith in God, who she
believes has guided her through the experience - and others that have shaped her life.

Spruill knows that not everybody tells the truth. It's a lesson she learned, the hard way, as a child. By all accounts, Spruill's mother got pregnant as a teenager while dating her then 15-year-old father. She was 3-months-old when she was sent to live with her grandmother and grandfather, who she initially believed, as she grew up, was her father. Spruill said at about age 8 or 9, she discovered that the woman who often visited the house was not a family friend but her mother. But nobody, she said, talked about her father. There's nobody left to give her the answers about her husband-father. Her mother, Christine, died in 1984. Her grandparents have long since passed. She also does not have a number of any of Percy Spruill's relatives.

The Washington Post (Published: 05 February 2012) ran an article “SHE THE PEOPLE: Strom Thurmond’s black daughter: a symbol of America’s complicated racial history”
By Mary C. Curtis

Essie Mae Washington-Williams lived for 87 years. But, in her own words, she was never "completely free" until she could stand before the world and say out loud that Strom Thurmond, the one-time segregationist South Carolina senator, was her father. That was in 2003, after she had spent more than 70 years being denied what we all deserve - her true name and birthright. "In a way, my life began at 78, at least my life as who I really was," Washington-Williams wrote in her life story. She has died.

Thurmond's oldest child — born when he was a 22-year-old man and her mother, Carrie Butler, a 16-year-old black maid in his father's house - had kept the senator's secret, an open one rumored about but never revealed when he was alive. As in the case of Thomas Jefferson, another successful southern politician who was father to black children, stories shared among African Americans were long disbelieved until they turned out to be true.

She kept her public silence ... Some may see kindness, but I see cruelty in the "family" visits to his law office. "He never called my mother by her name. He didn't
verbally acknowledge that I was his child," Washington-Williams wrote in "Dear Senator: A Memoir by the Daughter of Strom Thurmond." He gave her money, yes, a defense I heard when the story became public. Would that have been enough for you? I would ask right back, money changing hands behind closed doors and hidden meetings where your father never called you "daughter."

In the tangled Thurmond family tale are echoes of the hypocrisy and lies that have historically propped up America’s racial divide, the ways so many can see the same thing differently. …We can be sure that in the South Carolina of the 1920s, it was not a relationship of social equals, and only one had veto power.

Thurmond’s daughter was for years kept on the outside looking in…yet not always invited to sit at the family table. Washington-Williams died at the start of black history month, a time set aside to make up for the months and years black contributions received little notice. …her life reflected the connections made and missed.

In 2003, she could finally stop holding her breath and tell her truth. The Thurmond family didn’t dispute her, and her name was added to the list of children on a monument for the senator on the grounds of the South Carolina state house. Wanda Bailey, Washington-Williams’ daughter, said in The State newspaper that her mother was an inspiration. "She was there for us," Bailey said. "She was a very giving person. She did everything she could not only for her children, but her grandchildren and great-grandchildren."

In that, she proved a better person than the man who spent his own life denying her. I wonder if she was smiling a few years ago when she said she would become a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy through Thurmond’s ancestral lines. Facing internal conflicts most could only imagine, she became a mother, wife, teacher, and a daughter that Strom Thurmond or any father could be proud of.

6.3 Author’s Reflections:
The co-researchers opened their wounds to the researcher, and was moved by co-researchers’ personal struggles and triumphs. Their pain and strength was felt and embraced as well as their courage to engage their struggles.
People are both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and telling their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others. For the researcher, this is a portion of the complexity of narrative, because a life is also a matter of growth toward an imagined future and, therefore, involves retelling stories and attempts at reliving stories. A person is, at once, engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories. The retelling “can lead to seeing experience from different perspectives and can lead to a new spiral of retellings” (Olson 2000:350).

Thus narratives engage. When well told, a story has the ability to bring the others into the moment of the experience being described.

Storytelling in pastoral theology seeks to enunciate to wider society that relationships are the key to vital life and meaning for all. Stories serve a purpose of reminding the populace that relationships amongst people are what create culture, and without attention paid to the quality of relationships between people, life would therefore have meaning.

For the co-researchers, respectively, this has been a dark secret - the kind that destroys lives, devastates families and decimates faith. The researcher surmised that co-researchers’ problems have an intricate fusion of personal, psychological, sociocultural, and biological roots. It bears to note that not only their grief but also their hardness, could be felt in and through the initial sessions.

“[Our stories] are not just accounts of the past, but are living parts of us now. The retelling of the stories is not so much about changing them as it is about gaining new perspective. Often that new perspective helps us understand our current situation better” (Schereiter 2008:20).

Conversations have a potential to shape new realities. Listening to and telling or retelling stories about people and the problems in their lives is never a trivial pursuit. The bridges of meaning built as a result of telling and/or retelling stories of co-researchers have a potential to help healing developments flourish and reframe events into narratives of hope. Sharing in the stories and participating, therein, with the co-researchers, the author found himself engaging the co-researchers at the very
epicentre of their respective sources of pain. Their context was defined and dictated to by unresolved anguish. In sharing stories, a path is laid for and towards healing.

6.4 Cases Illustration
The stories represent a pattern mirrored in Scripture. In the stories co-researchers unfold their respective journeys toward a deepened understanding of their personal worth and value. “Initially co-researchers have been marred in the problem-saturated and deficit-laden conversations of” their early lives respectively. The initial and key stories about their identities were distorted and riddled with untruth. Consequently there had been a lack of “more self-authenticating stories and conversations to take center stage at midlife.” The setting for this new self-authenticating conversation was in pastoral counselling sessions where transformation took place. A challenge with such stories is assisting co-researchers to realise that they are “endowed with a sacred value and worth.” They find themselves “embraced by God’s unmerited that affirms their value and worth despite what they had been through. From an early age, co-researchers have felt somewhat different and this feeling can become crippling. Subsequent interactions and activities around co-researchers and comments that would be passed from time to time, all reinforced their feelings of being different from their respective families. Such wounded the co-researchers and “became a poisoning conversation that came characterize how” they thought about themselves. All the negative aspects which seemed dominant motives became defining characteristics of their respective identities of worthlessness.

Having highlighted the former it is, however, worth mentioning that not everything was negative for co-researchers while growing up. They were brought up in Christian background and orientation which has also informed who they are though negative aspects seemed dominant. They had been part of their respective communities of faith. In consequence co-researchers had somewhat internalised the fact that they are in their own right children of God with worth and value.

“But these conversation were silenced as [they] encountered conversations in a society that devalued [them]” (Wimberly 2003:21).
While co-researchers had

“a rich resource of religious and spiritual imagery that could help facilitate [their] inner conversations connecting them to God, there were also
disconnecting and disjointed conversations. These disjointed conversations not only drowned out the voice of God with a cacophony of noise, they distorted other potential healing voices” (Wimberly 2003:23).

However conversation with God can never be “obliterated by other conversations. It [may be] silenced but never eliminated.” (Wimberly 2003:27).

Following the disclosure, co-researchers have been struggling with a sense of belonging and this was further reinforced by the absence of a biological father, who at a point of disclosure has not made efforts to look for the child with whom he had no relationship and contact. Thus co-researchers felt like they were, respectively, on the outside looking in. Their sense of worth had been defaced and their sense of self devalued. A question that then emerges is “will the co-researchers be able to forgive and have a relationship with their biological father for not being able to afford them a valued place in a father’s life?” Trauma is a deeply distressing or disturbing experience.

“Trauma occurs when a sudden, unexpected, overwhelming intense emotional blow or a series of blows assaults the person from the outside. Traumatic events are external, but they quickly become incorporated into the mind” (Terr 1990:8).

It is not the trauma itself that does the damage. It is how the individual’s mind and body reacts in its own unique way to the traumatic experience in combination with the unique response of the individual’s social group.

Co-researchers had experience difficult episodes respectively and in their own way. During sessions there were manifestations of bitterness. Almost all the entire first sessions for co-researchers were unloading of emotions. They had reservations regarding the participation before or initially, eventually, agreeing to participate in the sessions. This is attributed to the belief that all this would be inoperable and that little would change, if any chance. The first two sessions seemed as if little had been accomplished. The third sessions were somewhat different. Co-researchers who had as yet not opened up begun doing so. They were mellow and less emotional.
During the fourth and fifth sessions, depending on the progress of the co-researcher the notion of bridge-building with ‘new family – father and siblings’ was introduced and possible exercises as well such as letter writing to the parent and/or siblings. This would, depending on the responses to the letter, be followed by a possible meeting and preparations for such.

Telling their stories, co-researchers were able to use those as avenues to vent their hurt and anger. Co-researchers internalised the negative aspects which brought them pain and self-destruction in some cases. Storytelling helped co-researcher “to transcend the problem-saturated and crisis-laden conservations characterizing [their past. Co-researchers were] ready to begin an inner conversation that would re-examine these negative stories in [their lives] and initiate a re-editing process that eventually led [them] to transformation.

As this conversation began to come to the fore, it brought with it a sense of liberation.” (Wimberly 2003:22).

“…As affirming conversations took shape over the course of many months, the old self-sabotaging conversations receded like the ebbing tide.” (Wimberly 2003:23).

…However

“becoming liberated from negative and limiting conversations is a long process. This process involves reviewing the conversations that have shaped one’s life, including identifying them, assessing how they have impacted our lives, and deciding to privilege other or different conversations that are more growth facilitating. Although stories shape who we are, we can transform these stories and participate in shaping the stories that impact our lives.” (Wimberly 2003:25).

Co-researchers needed to be affirmed and empowered as to be able to privilege. “Privileging is a process of articulating our current story and conversations that go into making up our stories, assessing the story and its impact on our current life, and deciding to re-author or re-edit the story conversations” (Wimberly 2003:26).
This process employs the examination of negative conversations that one has internalised and goes on to facilitate the privileging of positive conversations to enable a person to move forward in life. Negative conversations leads to life circumstances that demean a person’s self-esteem and restrain personal growth. Inversely, positive conversations have the ability to build a person’s self-esteem and enhance one’s capacity for growth into, among others, the image of God.

“Negative stories always impoverish the person; positive stories enhance and enrich. Negative stories lead us away from God and ultimately to sin and death; positive stories lead us toward a relationship with God” (Wimberly 2003:27).

When a person’s life is informed by positive conversations, s/he is able to reconnect with God and Wimberly calls this process of reconnecting with the former positive conversation “re-membership” (Wimberly 2003:27).

Re-membership sets of another process and Wimberly calls it externalization.

Externalization

“is not the same as psychological projection, which defends the ego from anxiety. Rather, this process is the ego looking directly at the conversation basis of one’s personality. It assumes psychological or ego strength and a desire to grow. It comes when a person realizes that his or her life, up to that point, has been lived trying to avoid internal pain. Externalization is the decision to face the pain caused by privileging negative stories and conversations. …A point of externalization is to lessen the impact of negative conversations and to promote more positive conversations through exploring one’s recruitment” (Wimberly 2003:27-8).

Together with the processes of positive deconstruction and reframing a person is set on a path to healing and growth.

It is worth giving attention to the processes of positive deconstruction and reframing to highlight how these processes taken in a complimentary would yield envisaged results.

Understanding what it is that the co-researchers believe is imperative. To engage them effectively there is a need to understand their worldview. That premise will
inform the kind of questions to be raised with them. Pollard terms that engagement and the entire process as: positive deconstruction. Positive deconstruction is a process that is employed to 'dismantle' the worldview in order to identify areas of conflict which are based on a Christian worldview. It is positive because the intention is not to destroy the person's ideas and belief system, but to build on areas of agreement between the two worldviews; in order to argue for the truth of the Christian worldview. The process is engaged for the purpose of helping those who are affected to rethink their beliefs; which are shaped and are in the light of respective personal experiences. However, the initial step would have been learning about their background and their worldview. It is a process that provides the basis for the researcher to help co-researchers to turn from held beliefs to the truth which is found through Jesus the Good Shepherd. This, too, is a process that will take time and effort.

“The process of positive deconstruction recognises and affirms the elements of truth to which individuals already hold, but also helps them to discover for themselves the inadequacies of the underlying worldviews they have absorbed. The aim is to awaken a heart response” (Pollard 1997: 44).

The process of positive deconstruction involves four elements: identifying the underlying worldview, analysing it, affirming the elements of truth which it contains, and, finally, discovering its errors. Pollard believes that there is a need for a response at a far deeper level. That is,

“we must address the changes taking place in their underlying worldviews”
(Pollard 1997: 30).

When dealing with the co-researchers’ stories and their meaning, it becomes clear how to inform how the co-researchers see themselves and the world in which they live.

Reframing takes the same situation and the same circumstances and then gives those "facts" a different meaning.

“When the meaning changes, the person’s responses and behaviors also change” (Capps1990:10).

This different meaning allows us to take a different approach and gives us new possibilities for the action that we might take and the responses we might make.
“To reframe to “change the conceptual and/or emotional setting or viewpoint in relation to which a situation is experienced and to place it in another frame which fits the ‘facts’ of the same concrete situation equally well or even better, and thereby changes its entire meaning” (Capps1990:17).

Reframing is about changing perception by understanding something in another way. Bandler and Grinder explained reframing in the following manner

“What reframing does is to say, Look, this external thing occurs and it elicits this response in you, so you assume that you know what the meaning is. But if you thought about it this other way, then you would have a different response. Being able to think about things in a variety of ways builds a spectrum of understanding. None of these ways are 'really' true, though. They are simply statements about a person's understanding.” (Bandler & Grinder 1982:43)

Capps then infers,

“re reframing is not a science but an art. Moreover, it is a hopeful art. It builds on the idea that a person can break out of limiting preconceptions to a broader understanding of human possibilities.” (Capps1990:24-25)

While reframing shifts the co-researcher’s framework from a negative to a positive one, “it achieves one or more of the following goals:

1. It identifies the motives, need, desires, or intentions of current or past behaviour and labels these positive (i.e., well-intentioned under the circumstances).
2. It discriminates between the motive and the self-defeating behaviours so that new and more effective means to satisfy the actual needs of the client can be developed.
3. It restructures the experience so that new learnings and desirable experiences are created in place of the problematic behaviours, feelings and thoughts.” (Capps1990:25)

There are two basic kinds of reframes: context reframing and content reframing. Both can alter our internal representations of events or situations, which permits us
to experience the events in other, hopefully, more resourceful ways. Bandler & Grinder noted that

"every experience in the world and every behavior is appropriate, given some context, some frame" (Bandler & Grinder 1982:9).

Context reframing offers an understanding of how we make meaning through the environment - physical, intellectual, cultural, historical, and emotional - in which a situation occurs. It can also provide a pattern of thinking that helps us see the value in every situation regardless of any perceived downside. Context reframing is taking an experience that seems to be negative, not useful, and distressing and showing how the same behavior or experience can be useful in another context. For example, throwing away dead flowers many not seem like an opportunity to many, but when you can reframe them into another context, you have created free raw materials.

The second type of reframing is content reframing. Content reframing is simply changing the meaning of a situation - that is, the situation or behavior stays the same, but the meaning is changed. For instance, a famous army general reframed a distressful situation for his troops by telling them that "We're not retreating, we're just advancing in another direction." Bandler & Grinder noted that

"as a communicator you want to have the ability to shift the frames that people put around anything" (Bandler & Grinder 1982:33).

Learning to reframe is essential in learning to effectively communicate with others and even with ourselves. In every field of endeavor, it is the person who sets the frame who defines the playing field, and, therefore the scope of the "game" to be played. The framer defines the focus of attention and sets the frames that define the presuppositions of the activity or conversation.

For example, the age issue raised when Ronald Reagan ran against Walter Mondale. In a television debate, Mondale made a comment that implied Reagan's age was an issue. Reagan replied that he did not think age should be an issue and that he had no intention of making a issue of his opponent's youth and inexperience. In that one comment, he totally reframed the question in a way that made sure that it would not be a major factor in the race. Reframing, which is accomplished through communication, is a tool for changing perception.
In practice, reframing is widely used in the therapeutic context. When challenging a co-researcher to "see it another way" or "think about it differently," it is an attempt to reframe events to get him or her to see the problem in another light. Perceptions define our experience. Meaning is created in our brains from our experiences. Behavior is given meaning based on what we learned the behavior meant in the past. We have a past frame into which we fit current behavior in order to identify and understand it. The understanding comes not from the behavior itself but from the particular frame through which we chose to view it. Each of us perceives the world as it is filtered into our awareness through our frames of perceptions. Thus, each of us experiences and finds different and unique meaning in our world.

Reframing, then, is expanding our own or others’ perceptions by providing a new frame through which to view a life situation. Every moment of every day, there is opportunity to see things in another way. To see them through another frame of perception can give us hope and a better perspective of ourselves and others. A major implication of this concept is that there are no correct or right frames of perceptions. There are only useful frames and not so useful frames depending on the particular context. A useful reframe is to understand that all perceptions are useful in some context.

There is a need to nurture hope and optimism that leads to engaging in goal directed behaviors and embracing positive strivings and visions. One’s faith conveys hope and sense of mastery. The people can have some control over their lives, hope that they can find a way to give their experience some meaning, and hope that in spite of tragic events, life is not over and can improve. Spiritual forms of coping may prove most helpful for handling those aspects of stressful situations that cannot be personally controlled, and that are not amenable to direct-action problem-solving coping efforts. This is so since the co-researchers’ faith has been shaken really hard, nevertheless it is not lost. For some, faith actually proved to be an anchor desperately sought. Most of the co-researchers have used their religious beliefs, faith and spiritual means of coping.
Co-researchers bring with them their values and ideas based on their personal histories. Even though two individuals may share a cultural identity, other factors may cause them to respond differently to the same situation. Invisible differences shaped and differentiated those who seemed otherwise similar allow anyone person to represent a particular cultural group, or to allow our experiences with an individual to create expectations of what the next experience will be like. It is important to pay attention to personal feelings, discomforts and uncertainties when working with co-researchers. One envisaged outcome of engaging in spiritual coping activities is to reduce the likelihood of engaging in such “negative, self-disparaging, stress engendering” story-telling to oneself and to others. One’s faith and participation in religious rituals have an ability to give a person a sense of being loved and valued, despite a person’s self-image as being “damaged.” A major goal of interventions is to help individuals engage in non-negative thinking and develop a coherent narrative. “In the final analysis, the question of why bad things happen to good people translates itself into some very different questions, no longer asking why something happened, but asking how we will respond, what we intend to do now that it has happened.” (Kushner 1981:147) Annexures B and C highlight how spiritually based activities may be employed. The intention is foster and enhance the process of reframing which ultimately leads to the process of integration for parties involved.

6.5 Rituals and Integration

Storytelling can be an important ritual, particularly among people with shared experiences, like co-researchers.

“When we tell our own stories and listen to those of others, we come in touch with all three: life, divinity, and soul. Telling our story is a way of preserving our individual history and at the same time defining our place in the larger flow of events. It reveals patterns and meaning that we might otherwise miss as we go about the mundane activities of living; it invites us to see the universe working through us. Storytelling also knits the community together. It records or re-creates the collective history and transforms actor and listeners alike into communal witnesses” (Tick 2005:217).
Bonding, association and connection are important components of resilience to stress and trauma. One of the challenges is to find ways to encourage co-researchers to find positive rituals in the family and to encourage families to form rituals for simultaneously welcoming siblings who had been kept secret while journeying with a biological father recently found.

"Our transformations are not completed in solitude; they are honored in public and integrated into the culture as its shared history" (Tick 2005: 217).

The importance of ritual following a distressing discovery and seeking to recover from the devastation thereof is something ancient cultures understood, but many contemporary societies have largely missed. Traditions are quite rare within the contemporary milieu and culture that are capable to efficiently deal with traumatic experiences. Thus individual end up having to deal with such on their own, because there are no cultural ritual. A ritual for negotiating life’s intense experiences that is understood by all is a necessity although it may be done differently in each culture. That would provide a place to go to when devastating events unfold. Such healing ceremonies would generally address both body and mind. These rituals would illustrate some ways which can be used to address the effects of disclosure. Key is to understand that a ritual is not a “thing” or even an event, but a way of partaking in an event. Rituals provide meaning and order to transitions, and symbolically connect people and events.

“The wisdom of such rituals lies in their ability to decondition the intense emotions... Ritual purification, embedded in cultural meaning, begins the process of transformation in identity and role expectation” (Silver & Wilson 1996:303).

Furthermore, ceremonies and rituals for integrating such as co-researchers into the family not only acknowledge disclosure reactions but also rely heavily on the participation of the family, and clan.

On the role of ritual in maintaining social stability and chaotic social changes’ Van Gennep argued that

“rituals such as the rite of passage serve to order chaotic social changes that could threaten to disturb society” (Van Gennep 1960: 189).
Such rites, he argued
“distinguishes status groups with clear marked boundaries, which contributes to the stability of social identities and roles” (Van Gennep 1960: 183).

Ritual acts as a tool for problem solving in traditional societies. Ritual constitutes and change groups in an orderly manner thereby maintaining the integrity of the whole system.
“These changes can occur smoothly and meaningfully as part of a larger, embracing, and reassuring pattern only by means of their orchestration as rite of passage” (Bell 1997: 37).

Gluckman explicitly explains that,
“the goal of ritual as such is to channel the expression of conflict in therapeutical ways so as to restore a functioning social equilibrium”(Gluckman 1962: 132).

Thus ritual facilitates the social order that exist in the society. Ritual in this case “functions to identify and protect the sense of personal boundary and identity, it reaffirms personal values and standards”(Maises 2005).
It also augments personal powers and status in the society. Certain types of rituals are essential primarily at the level of the group while others are at the level of social status of the individual (Browne 1980).

It is worth noting that the transformation is not only important to the individual upon who the ritual focuses or “not only concern the individuals on whom they are centered, but also mark changes in the relationships of all the people connected with them by ties of blood and many other ways” (Turner 1967: 7).
This in effect, affects the whole family system as had been known, and then the family itself undergoes structural changes through the rituals.

Van Gennep explains that “through this sequence of activities, rituals effects the person’s removal from one social grouping, dramatize the change by holding the person in a suspended “betwixt and between” state for a period of time, and then

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reincorporate him or her into a new identity and status within another social grouping” (Van Gennep 1960: 3).

He called this stage the luminal (transitional) stage of initiation.

6.6. Preliminary Conclusion:

“Telling stories is a natural part of life, and individuals all have stories about their experiences to tell others. In this way, narrative research captures an everyday, normal form of data that is familiar to individuals” (Creswell 2008:511).

The

“story of a life is also more than the life, the contours and meaning allegorically extending to others, others seeing themselves, knowing themselves through another’s life story, re-visioning their own, arriving where they started and knowing ‘the place for the first time’” (Richardson 1997: 6).

Storytelling in its various forms allows us to listen, take in information, understand, comprehend deeply, interpret, and integrate new information at numerous levels with both the conscious and unconscious minds. Narrative and metaphor provide a buffer against the tensions created by the experiences, personal concerns, problems, and storms of life (Pearce 1996: xiii). Analytical connection helps to draw out the wisdom from the stories which can be used to intervene in the lives of co-researchers. Thus there is a need to learn to recognize certain symbolic and mimetic patterns and, therefore, to be alert when certain symbolic and mimetic patterns emerge.

This approach of reflecting helps envision that important spiritual and theological conversation is taking place.

“We become aware that we are about to launch into potential transforming dialogue with the counselee” (Wimberly 2003:34).

Pollard possesses a similar opinion that

“God is currently in the transformation business. ….he doesn’t take away our suffering, but rather transforms it. He takes bad things and turns them into good things (Pollard 1997: 147)."
Mutual analysis, reflection and interrogation of such stories facilitate transformation and provide an avenue to consider new alternative and possible meanings, thereby restoring. Another study on the subject by Schereiter asserts that

“The struggle to find the way to interpret our story is frequently a gradual retelling of that story until it becomes a new story.” (Schereiter 2008:42).

However, there is a certain vulnerability that lurks while healing unfolds. It is like an injury that leaves scar tissue. Thus; there exists a potential to relapse, while on route to healing. In relation to this, anger is like an infection in the wound and thus; prevents healing if it not dealt with. Notwithstanding that it is natural and proper to feel angry at a certain stage of grieving for a loss, however, hanging on to the anger, results in unresolved grief. The vulnerability that is experienced by the researcher brought about the realisation that the co-researchers have felt more trepidation upon embarking on this journey. This is based on the realization that the co-researchers experienced a whirling mass of emotions with regard to social nature.

Secrets are a minefield in families, especially between parents and children. After the death of a father one mother held back from her two boys, twelve and sixteen years old, the fact that he had a child with another woman. At the funeral this now pre-adolescent girl turned up, to the surprise of the two boys. In a family session following this, where this and some other secrets were dissolved, the twelve year old said: “Are there more secrets now?” Family secrets can create walls of silence within the family, walls that are difficult to tear down when solidified over time. When facts about a trauma are hidden from parts of the family system, this can greatly affect the trust and stability in the system over time.

Following up on the story of Eric, he (in one of the early sessions) disclosed that the author had been the third person he has told since he got to know about his biological father. The author felt stunned, and not really sure how to make sense of what he had then been told. Years, months and days of holding in the devastation and trauma. This had the author reflecting on his own process and how the “telling” had become a huge part of his healing. It was saddening and as a bolt from the blue to learn that Eric have not been able to have a process for his grief. It bears to mention that each person, somewhat, take cue for how one grieves from one’s
family. The way different families express sadness and emotion informs somewhat how proceeding generation(s) express sadness and emotion.

Those who have been kept a secret, are physically and emotionally devastated. They, generally, feel as incomplete and as consequent misfits upon the disclosure. The epicenter of their source of pain had been heightened by unresolved pain that has been dormant for some time. Given that the co-researchers were engaging the very epicentre of their source of pain, the structure, which the initial sessions assumed, was informal in order to ensure that, respective, co-researchers are comfortable and that they feel no coercion. Having heard and reheard these stories and then capturing them in such an abridged manner, makes the process of reunion sound like the stuff from fairy tales.

However, the reality is not always so clean cut, cast in stone or pleasant. Myriad of relationships, as well as, practices play a pivotal role in constituting personal identity. Therefore, when such relationships and practices seem to have an outlook that suggests to be contradicting and unstable, one’s identity becomes fragmented, fluid and dynamic; while being open to change and contestation. The co-researchers were in such a situation in as far as their perceptions on their reality; which concerned their identity. Gerkin puts it better when précising such therapeutic engagements as he perceives the conversations

“as a pastoral effort to offer …care for [such souls. They spoke] of the deepest issues [they faced. The] patterns of interpreting the events of [their lives] and convictions about who [they are and who they] sought to be that came from the depths of a lifetime of self-formation. [The co-researchers] had not been formed in isolation, but by participation in a community of faith and a culture that had forced upon [them] certain meanings, certain questions, certain ways of seeing and judging [their] behavior” (Gerkin 1997:84)”[Italics added]

Not all stories are successful and neither do they end in a dream union. Sometimes, not everyone wants to be one big happy family; especially in light of such a disclosure. The above stories are chosen to illustrate that telling stories is not an end in itself, but an attempt to release ourselves from them, to evolve and grow beyond
them. Storying stimulated the co-researchers to cut through the bonds of the problems that imprisoned them. In each case, the co-researchers could complete grieving once they had dealt with past emotional baggage. Then, they be able to move forward.

There is also a matter of the rights of the child. South Africa is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which embraces civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of the child. As much as all the rights in the UNCRC are important, some bear more relevance than others, such articles 7 and 8. Article 7 deals with the right to having a name that should be officially recognized by the government as well the right to a nationality (to belong to a country). Article 8 speaks to the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference. The South African State Government holds strong values around the well-being of children. The wellbeing of any child would firstly center on having a clear picture of who they are, first and foremost. It is then in every person’s interest that they know their true identity.

Without the correct attachments, role models and support children can fail to meet their milestones and grow into well rounded people. Nature and nurture affect the paths that we follow, shape the people that we become.

“Creating a therapeutic atmosphere capable of holding all of the differentiated responses to secret disclosure is critical, lest a new secret immediately form regarding how family members feel about the content of the secret” (Imber-Black 1993: 27).

As much as there may be a desire, we are not in a position to wish old feelings away nor do spiritual exercises for overcoming them. This remains the case until such time we have woven a healing story that transforms our previous life’s experience and given meaning to whatever pain that we have endured. Telling and retelling our stories has a potential to release the storyteller from such stories, to evolve and grow beyond them; thus experiencing transformation ourselves and over and above that, to live more of storyteller’s spiritual and earthly potential. The rituals provide a way of acknowledging the depth of the loss and present opportunities to express emotions within the context of community (Macdonald et al., 2005). As a
result, affected persons are able to move through their grief, transform the relationship to their ‘new family’, and ultimately create new connections with their newly found families (Brin, 2004; Ct-Arsenault, 2003; Grout & Romanoff, 2000; Rando, 1993; Van & Meleis, 2003). The use of ritual is just one aspect of grief work, not the endpoint of the grief process.

The next chapter will focus on Data Similarities and Differences emanating from the stories of co-researchers. Furthermore, the following chapter will seek to highlight, “how do we come to endow experience with meaning?” (Bruner 1986:12).

The intention behind drawing from similarities and differences, is to explore the aspect of living with a huge issue but doing nothing to, authentically, address or engage the issue rather than buying a way out. Thus; a discussion on the findings, ensues in this chapter, in an effort to assist in carving the wayforward, thereby creating a therapeutic model of welcoming among siblings. The conclusion and recommendations follow, in light, thereof.
Chapter 7 FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings from the study and links it to the existing literature, theoretical frameworks that guide this study and the research questions. It also identifies limitations to the study and states the conclusions of the study.

7.2 Discussion of Findings

There are factors that affect the path of life taken and therefore condition the remainder of one’s life thus shaping the route that has been followed from childhood through to adulthood. The family relationships, the culture in which one grows and participates and the historical period in which one lives are among such factors which inform one’s being.

The co-researchers’ perceptions of the world and their places in it have embellished both the identity that they each assumed and the meaning attributed to them. The interactions or lack thereof with family and community have played a pivotal role in this regard. Thus every human being has a need and a right to the facts about heritage, ancestry and personal life journey. Every human being needs their heritage both the good, and the difficult including birth parents, as individuals, and their racial as well as cultural heritage. "Negative" information needs to be presented as a part of the picture, not the whole image. Any person who is shielded from difficult information may discover the "facts" about his/her history or his/her ancestry at some point in their lives.

Discovering these carefully-kept secrets can and often does lead to a sense of betrayal, shame, and/or identity confusion. Though difficult, perhaps painful, these "facts" are crucial pieces of any person’s history and heritage. Withholding information because it may be painful or shameful denies any person the opportunity to develop, over time, a clear picture of the players and the forces at work in their history, and the chance to develop coping skills to process and externalize difficult information and feelings. Keeping secrets especially between generations within a family system, implies that the material withheld is shameful. When a secret such as this has entered a reservoir of shame as a result of family dynamics, it becomes the
maintained shame that the co-researchers find themselves struggling with and bound in growth inhibiting relationships. It has become apparent, and some authors attest to this, that the secret is often about what is hidden in the past family history and not so much about behavior in current relationship.

There is a sense of loss and comprehension of this loss which has a potential to trigger grief. Subsequently one may have a difficult time finding an outlet for this grief since grieving is not a readily reaction that society acknowledges. Anger, numbness, depression, anxiety and/or fear are normal reactions from affected person as had been the case with co-researchers. Such a person may also suffer secondary losses. This refers, inter alia, to a loss of cultural connection and in some cases a loss of language connection as well. These losses have a potential to trigger grief and consequently require some form of resolution. Questions about identity begin to surface at this juncture. The question about the influence of inherited traits as contrasted with acquired traits becomes real to the co-researchers who are trying to determine the impact that all these influences have on their own identities.

Disclosure initiated change in the lives of co-researchers and their perceptions of their origins. They each had a sense of distorted identity, heritage and culture. Following the disclosure the families involved went into a closed system mode and self-contained as a way to ward of additional stressors that manifest themselves in light of the disclosure. This reaction and period of closed system saw affected families struggling with the upsetting of the equilibrium as a result of the disclosure. However families impacted upon eventually began to realise gradual progression from a closed to an open system where elements and situations outside the family are allowed to influence it to a point of welcoming external influences. This meant among other things, that these families integrated themselves into respective communities with their new identity. Individuals’ beliefs and values had also been challenged. There has been role alignment which facilitated integration and attachment and the ability to speak their thoughts. Recognition of what seemed like once mute voice of the family has been an enhancing effort towards building self-esteem. Communication that is dominated by openness is key to be able to navigate through disclosing process individually and collectively.
As conversations continues, new narratives that emerged about co-researchers seem to become optimistic and empowering. Co-researchers’ narratives about their struggles following disclosure allowed them to view the issue as external to the person. This externalisation of the ‘problem’ further aided co-researchers’ ability to derive new options for escaping oppression of the problem as they each worked respectively to defeat the problem rather than blame other involved parties for it. The ability to defeat the oppression that they perceived was synonymous with not having a sense of belonging, identity and heritage increased as co-researchers were embraced by members in their ‘new’ families and enhanced healing. The acceptance they received in their ‘new’ families respectively had an empowering effect. These ‘unique outcomes’ of acceptance helped co-researchers separate from their dominant ‘problem-saturated’ story that shape their lives and see alternative aspects that led to describing themselves in a new, empowered story. The construction of one’s own reality can however, lead troubled persons to deny their problem. Rituals appropriate for such a context play a key role.

Disclosure initiated a growth in co-researchers’ family systems. Systems change inevitably required a structural change within co-researchers’ families including the recently discovered to enable their family systems to adapt to the demands of the systemic change. Co-researchers natural need to relate to others as they processed both their personal and systemic change led to the sharing of their stories.

Narrating their personal stories was not only growth enhancing experience but also helped in externalizing their struggle with their identity in light of disclosure. Externalisation helped depersonalise co-researchers’ struggles making it more manageable. The stories shared progressively became increasingly optimistic and empowering. They empowered co-researchers who found their “voice and place in the world” in the process.

7.3 Analysis of Data
The co-researchers, respectively and in their own way, were initially stunned and paralyzed into complete disbelief upon disclosure. The extent to which this hurt co-researchers not growing up with a biological parent experience can prove difficult to
measure. They will never know what is like growing up with a biological father. This made co-researchers to mourn after having lost out on growing up without their biological parent(s). These co-researchers, face significant difficulties when in dealing with their feelings and emotions as they grow older. They often struggle with their own sense of dignity and identity and with a desire to understand their family connection.

Initial engagements with co-researchers made them realise that the author was not insincere. And that the reality is that the author too, is humanly challenged by questions and uncertainties just as much. More so, he had not claimed to be a saviour, leader or teacher. But rather a companion, friend and a presence that is representing the Good Shepherd. Thus; that became a premise that the relationships were based upon, trust was subsequently built. Therefore, the co-researchers could confide into the researcher.

Co-researchers told their stories about the problems and the meanings that have been reached about themselves. These meanings reached in the face of adversity allowed little space for people to articulate their own particular meanings of their actions and the context within which they occurred. Thin description and actions which are borne in light of such a scenario, obscure many other possible meanings. In most cases these actions have to do with making a stand for belonging.

Confusion and anxiety have been constant companions for the co-researchers and have lived that way since their respective disclosure. The coping mechanisms for the co-researchers have been elements such as being detached, denying what is happening and dissociation. They did not have to learn to put on masks so that no-one can see the real co-researchers. They felt their situations, to a varying degree respectively, had imposed the masks on them. They rarely felt fulfilled in relationships because the disclosure seemed to have marked their lives with rejection, mistrust, low self-esteem, and a deep, empty hole that nothing seemed to fill.

The co-researchers had adopted certain behaviours in an effort to escape and distance themselves from potential harm and more pain. During storytelling space
was created for them to be able to look back so that they can see their reactions which have led them deeper along the paths of loneliness, and despair. Subsequently, they recognised that they do not have to keep denying that part of their lives and compromise their potential. There came a time when the co-researchers, respectively and in their own way, faced the truth and the pain that goes with the revelation.

In the co-researchers telling their stories it becomes clear that their articulation of themselves is the result of a thin description and conclusion. Thin conclusions are often expressed as the truth about the person who is struggling with a problem which relates to their identity. The thin conclusions are drawn from problem-saturated stories and have the potential to disempower people as they are regularly based in terms of weaknesses or inadequacies. Some of the thin conclusions which are surmised by the co-researchers were along the lines: ‘It’s because I’m not good enough’. One co-researcher conceded: "My existence owed a little to the unexpected nature of normal human reproduction, where is a natural progression of mutually fulfilling adult relationships." There were times when it proved difficult for co-researchers to put words into what they are feeling and experiencing as one of the co-researchers emphasized: “The confusion I felt growing up was not your normal run of the mill confusion. I didn’t even begin to understand the inner turmoil I felt when I found out about my beginnings.”

For the co-researchers the disclosure has been life-changing with ruinous consequences for them as well as for all those who are involved. This includes those on the fringes of the event. The information that has been disclosed has had, to a varying degree and depending on the individual, an explosive effect that had the potential to tear that which co-researchers held dear. Human roots awareness is critical to a sense of personal identity. Thus because of the vulnerable "sense of self", as humans, co-researchers felt as a subclass. This had been precipitated by the thin description; which has a potential to leave one isolated and disconnected. Thin description often leads to thin conclusions about people’s identities, and these have many negative effects. The co-researchers, subjectively, struggled with broken or absent relationships. The ability to cope diminished due to the shock as experienced and the stress that had been imposed on the individual. Given the

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nature of death, there is a sense of loss of safety and security in the affected individual’s world. This affects all aspects of the life of the person and it creates a lot of much anxiety as an attempt is made to confront “who” was lost to the individual’s world.

Alternative descriptions are necessary and they have a potential to open other possibilities. Being able to move into future depends on having dealt with those parts of the co-researchers’ lives and reclaiming those parts. However issues of identity have the ability to be an intimidating encounter. Furthermore the new and anticipated connections may exacerbate matters and cause these young adults to revisit earlier issues of identity.

Yet when our humanness is at the most vulnerable and exposed it is then that natural human connection is discerned and experienced. The co-researchers struggled with their realisation of who they thought they were. Or rather limited, at best, representation of who they really are and that their personality and beliefs are part of a story. With the disclosure the lives of the co-researchers were, respectively, not what they seem.

As a result of a sense of being one is overwhelmed by feelings of being a relational refugee. Thus such co-researchers go through life feeling less grounded and unanchored. They found themselves drifting away without hope. They had no emotional checklist to base their introspection upon. This gave rise to feelings of emotional homelessness since they lived a resigned life and without support from the past. Most of the time they were in their own unique way going through a vortex of emotions and thoughts that are contending for legroom and dominance. Key is to negotiate navigation through the raging ‘storms’ on this journey of life.

The co-researchers also needed to be primed and poised to engage in forward movement amidst the storms. Bible stories which speak to our stories of moving through the midst of the storms of adversity were key in this situation. They were used diligently in order to assist the co-researchers to navigate through these storms. However rediscovering roles and a sense of purpose helps and it is pivotal in
processing the change. Once this has been realised wholeness can be attained over time. The same is the case for the author.

There was no sufficient time to properly bid farewell to the deceased parent in order to deal with the passing away and this adds to the hurt and emotional pain. There has neither been the time nor space to review past events—both good and bad—and to plan a future without the deceased. The disclosure regarding a ‘new’ sibling soon after death of a parent, impacted on the adjustment of co-researchers and the ability to reconcile the loss. While dealing with the adaptation to changes and continue life incorporating the loss of the relationship there was also a need to deal with incorporating a new acquisition as well as invest energy in that development. That, over time, provided a new perspective.

Personal adjustments had to be made and they comprised transitional aspects of the grieving process, as well as incorporation. The family also undergoes forced change due to the loss of a member. Not only is there grieving for the personality that is lost but all the roles and expected behaviors that became so much a part of daily living are also lost. The loss of a mother presents certain issues that affect the dynamics of what is, as opposed to what is desired and expected for the present and the future. There are many issues that may be part of any loss, but are often an immediate aspect of a death loss.

This is part of the emotional pain of letting go of a way of life as the family is simultaneously forced to create something new that is inclusive of a sibling that has been disclosed. It is often during this change into the ‘new’ normal that the family members feel they will forget the loved one. There is a need for reassurance that forgetting the person need not happen as their journey of life continues. We are a product of our experiences and these need not die when a participant in that event dies. The loved one has become a part of others due to the relationship that had been experienced. This is what is grieved the connection and the need for the individual.

In light of the spaces that co-researchers respectively find themselves in, they had run their lives by their lost aspects. They have as a result felt torn apart. There are
desires that powerfully propel humanity forward. Although there are lost aspects that are holding the affected back, an opportunity exists to integrate those lost aspects in order to redress identifying with a shattered reflection of self. The theory of positive deconstruction will be pivotal in such an endeavour since there is a need for a response at a much deeper level. This enhances engagement to be beyond face value; but helps to tease underlying worldviews. Efforts are to be employed to identify such a worldview on account that leads into other conversations about God and what the Christian worldview is. This augments well the process of story-telling through and during which questions about God as a nurturing, caring father who does not forsake his children were also addressed. The questions emanating from storying can be used to turn conversation into spiritual matters and into sharing the Gospel of Christ by going through the process of positive deconstruction. Positive deconstruction does not simply shatter the foundation of concepts, it exposes its vacillation and relativity. It also deploys a series of constructive alternatives for a concept or theory. It potentiates new ones, inscribes each concept into a broader framework where it can be posited as the only one in the whole family or cluster of possible concepts.

With that in mind, the author is aware that co-researchers are not only grieving but are also participating in life and those stressors will affect the journey of adaptation. Each person reacts in his/her own unique way. However reactions may change over time. What needs to be noted is that reactions follow the event of experiencing loss. It is then that a grief reaction is considered. As the co-researchers were reflecting on their feelings, such feelings were named either through the actual words of the individual or through the observation of non-verbal communication (eyes, facial expression, posture, voice tone). The grief experience impacts all aspects of the being. The intensity of grief has had an impact on the period of time to process the reactions of the co-researchers. It bears to note that grief reconciliation depends on many factors which confront the co-researchers lives respectively. This entails physical, behavioural, cognitive, emotional and spiritual/philosophical reactions.

Physical reactions manifests in changed appetite; sleep disturbances; oversleeping; loss of motivation and nightmares. These reactions (or any combination, thereof) have the potential to trigger health problems, if they are not given attention.
Behavioural reactions are noted, since the loss event had changed the co-researchers’ behaviours. This is exhibited, whether while they are alone or in social settings. Such notable behaviours include being aggressive; withdrawn/passive; and self-doubt, is likely to increase. Alcohol use/abuse and drug use/abuse can also be observed as they are often used to numb feelings as well as escape the emotional reactions. Cognitively, reduced attention span is manifested. What is worth mentioning is that there is focus on the individual’s thought process to the point of obsessiveness and it results in impaired self-esteem; idealization of the past and of the future and of the individual and the relationship lost.

The co-researchers acknowledged that they had to deal with emotional reactions such as fears, helplessness, anxiety, hopelessness and anger – having been angry at life’s situation and at God. They had become withdrawn and were not, readily, sharing their feelings with others because they did not understand or “get it”. In light of emotional reactions, spiritual/philosophical reactions are also notable. Challenges of that system take over whatever one’s belief system is.

What the co-researchers believed often came into question and were examined in light of their loss. This is part of the process of grief and adaptation to the loss. In terms of faith the co-researchers had questions such as: why God did not intervene? Why did God let this happen? Where is God in their paining and adjusting experience? Such questioning about God and the anger towards God subsequently brought about guilt as a result of ‘telling-off’ God. The guilt will need to be worked through, as well. The experience of grief and the mourning process involves many changes in the life of the individual. It is a period of adaptation and transition in all aspects of the individual’s life.

Therefore it is the whole person that faces this forced change. An individual’s circumstances in life, coping mechanisms, and spiritual/philosophical beliefs will all contribute on how one adapts. It is imperative to acknowledge that one does not get over a loss but learns to live with the loss experience. Yet the pain never entirely disappears from the story of trauma. Further, this acknowledgement has the ability to assist individuals in accepting their grief response as a journey and as a part of their own life experience rather than just as tasks to be accomplished to “get better.” The
loss experience is part of the individual’s life journey in all aspects of life and these include: physical, behavioral, cognitive, emotional and spiritual aspects in a person’s life. As the story is retold a window of opportunity opens to usher in a moment of grace which is realised when the perspective shifts and a new meaning unfolds. Furthermore, as the retelling of a story turns in to a redemptive one, a pathway which leads out of the deep tangled memories and emotions is formed.

Another perspective that comes to light has been that although the parents had undoubtedly wanted to protect their children from pain, what really happened was that the co-researchers were left holding unwanted secrets. Although the co-researchers articulated that they were glad that they were eventually told, almost all of them reported about feeling angry at the time and for some time to follow. Their anger was primarily over having their lives that were turned upside down…. “I still feel sad at times and despair. It happens spontaneously. Then I find myself in a sea of turbulence. The disclosure is indelibly imprinted on my mind,” intimated one of the co-researchers.

What was common among all of them was the key question that they had asked themselves: “who am I and where and how do I fit in? What is the purpose of all this?” Some of them became resentful of the parent that they thought had violated the basic tenets of a good relationship… “I find myself at times drawn into an abyss of loss and emptiness,” was also a common sentiment. As the crisis of personality and identity results is realised, this gives rise to relational and/or emotional refugeeism. That is consequential of not being grounded in nurturing and liberating relationships and being without significant connections with others. Most of us take it for granted who our parents are but for many people whose parent had been kept secret they find out they are ill at ease with themselves and often for their entire lives. It all comes down to an unfulfilled sense of identity. This is often coupled with an unresolved sense of loss. The co-researchers had been told that one cannot miss what one has never had. Nonetheless no group of people reveal this as being more misguided than those who long to know their paternity. If it has not been worked through this unmourned loss can occupy a huge inner space of a person’s psyche.
These questions seek to highlight the irritabilities of the co-researchers’ lives, and they are: who am I? Where do I fit in? With what purpose has my being written into existence? The answers to these musings may have to do with the determination of one’s epistemological point of departure and in light of that premise, they need to be assured that there are swarming provisional possibilities awaiting them. The challenge has been that the co-researchers have been baffled by their own inability to put the past to rest and get on with creating these limitless possibilities. The co-researchers further get mired down in the insecurities of the past. There is a sense of being caught between the rock and a hard place. This is brought about by mixed feelings; one moment, feeling highly optimistic and motivated, and the next moment feeling an unholy depth of despair and sadness.

Various salient memories that reluctantly siphoned from the archives of the past highlight the effect that the disclosure has had on the co-researchers. Their sense of who they are, had respectively been shaken to a differing degree. Thus these memories have brought about an indelible mark on their worldview. Further questions that arise are has the consequent shame contributed to the silence assumed by the researcher and co-researchers initially? How significant of an impact these have been in shaping who they have become and worldviews assumed? This is in light of discourses on what constitutes the family that had been internalised by the co-researchers. Thus; the discernment of their own identity, was informed by that premise. This ran deep to a point of having a decisive influence on the co-researchers’ constitution, respectively, hence they became manifestations of their perceived realities.

Some of the co-researchers had tried to take care of their parents emotionally. Some who had suspected or known somehow about the sibling(s) who have been kept a secret reported feeling immediate validation, confusion, anger, and mixed messages from the parent that was disclosing. The co-researchers generally found themselves writhing as a result of the disclosure. The upshot thereof, is that they retreat into ruinous relationships that compound; rather than ease their difficult situation.
The experiences of betrayal become the centers of pain that paralyze everything around them. Due to the thin description even when they have the words right the emotional intensity of their experience will not allow them to hear the story from a different perspective. It takes the insight of a stranger to pry them loose from that interpretation. Once a new perspective is gained on that particular traumatic experience, the story must be retold and not only that story but many other stories. The Emmaus story is a case in point. The stranger retells the story of Jesus and goes on to recast the whole story about how God dealt with Israel.

A story is retold with an intention to turn it into a redemptive story from a burdensome and oppressive one. When the perspective shifts, a new meaning is found. Retelling stories goes a long way and has a therapeutic effect; which facilitates learning about selves and to act accordingly. Further retelling of our stories facilitates and aids our responses to new situations. Retelling stories and its therapeutic effects enhances emotional maturity. Thus release emerges from the process and practice of telling one’s story.

7.4 Alternative Stories as necessary Contribution for Healing

By retelling their stories the co-researchers got involved in a state of the novitiate of love and nurture with a trustworthy person whom they will journey with. That is our own Emmaus experience. This person who plays a role of a mentor facilitates the journey and reconnection by leading the co-researchers from being relational refugees back to human community and companionship. As things unfolded the co-researchers declared that, to some point, they felt as if there is a definite umbilical cord that was never cut. Thus; this precipitates the need for reframing.

Reframing begins when the co-researchers begin to engage by reviewing how they have been acting and behaving; and subsequently, on how this has hindered or aided the transformation of trauma and eventual healing. This is done through storytelling. Thus nurturing can take effect. The co-researchers needed to be aided and journeyed with in order for them to be able to learn to reframe their shame and anger in order to facilitate healing. While reframing is underway, the trauma that had been experienced and its impact is acknowledged and embraced since it is part of
the threads of the tapestry that informs one’s being. This is different from being overwhelmed by trauma.

Storytelling possesses the mastery to make it possible to communicate previously silenced and unspeakable topics. Moreover storytelling prepares us to highly regard and to cherish the miscellany of human experience. Through this process positive deconstruction is carried out by taking apart the interpretive assumptions of a system of meaning under examination, for the purpose of interrogating the assumption that the model is based on. As this process unfolds a space is opened to bring about alternative understanding. In this regard, the alternative is based in a Christian perspective which is tying up one’s story with the Story of God revealed through Jesus Christ.

The process provides a corrective moment to continually demystify the limiting realities that are created by ourselves. The intention is not to decipher and unknot without destroying the discourses rather to deal with those aspects of the discourse that are toxic in their effects. Thus positive deconstruction, here, involves engaging and reconstructing previously negative narratives, by opening up possibilities for restorying; with an intention to bring about alternative stories. Just as various thin descriptions and conclusions can support and sustain problems, alternative stories can reduce the influence of problems and create new possibilities for living. The process of positive deconstruction is a fitting tool in order to take the process further. It is an alternative where the transformative and redeeming meaning of the story is realised. However, positive deconstruction is not a holy grail. It needs to be complemented and buttressed by other means as employed in this work.

7.5 Recommendations
While dealing with the stories of co-researchers, it is crucial to note the loss experience is not the end. It affords the wounded with a key transition in order to allow the story to come to its genuine fulfillment. Furthermore, it is also crucial to tell the story in its entirety for, the disclosure and, the subsequent, reactions are part of the story and not the story. Stories should be retold with an intention of providing a shift in perspective. This shift in perspective, provides an important turning point. It
has the potential to reorient the co-researchers’ stories, respectively, without diminishing the gravity of what had happened nor does it trivialise the experience that the co-researchers had gone through.

This is made possible to a large extent, by engaging in the process of deconstruction with an undertaking to help the co-researchers realize that it can be positive and that it is possible to arrive at something stable and virtuous. The process of positive deconstruction is somewhat double pronged. It does not only deal with the belief systems of the co-researcher but also with those of the researcher. This ensures that the researcher goes round to the side of the wall and helps the co-researchers to climb over. Clergy must be willing to become like wounded healers and like the resurrected Jesus with distraught disciples on the road to Emmaus.

An exploration of the alternative stories in the co-researchers’ lives has the ability to create space for change. These would be stories of determination throughout the history of humanity or biblical stories. In any of these territories of life through therapeutic conversations, alternative stories would be unearthed to assist in addressing the problems the co-researchers are currently struggling with. The retelling of a story has the ability to facilitate the healing of memory.

The co-researchers initially struggled with shame and anger and with hating the parties involved, mainly parents, for what happened. Therefore, there is a need to assist the co-researchers to untangle and deconstruct such emotions. Sharing and retelling of their stories respectively, enhanced the process of restorying for co-researchers. They each made the decision to, through sessions to embark on a journey of discovery, to work out their differences with their families. The key has been to learn to communicate in a more productive way and to establish a detente with the help of those who act on behalf of the Good Shepherd, the clergy. To truly heal an injured relationship, it is important to strike the appropriate balance between discussing past issues and moving on. Faith plays a key role here as well as when one is dealing with the aspect of forgiveness.

Caring is the intent to the point where the individual is able to manage his/her distress. How can we assist people to break from thin conclusions and to re-author
new and preferred stories for their lives and relationships? Kubler-Ross has impressed upon us to see the wounded that we serve, as our teachers. There is a need to allow those who are wounded to teach us what their experience is rather than constructing some set of goals and expectations that we expect them to meet and achieve. The clergy are not to play experts on anyone’s grief. The wounded must be met without expectations about what should happen or what they should be feeling. The clergy should guard against applying systems, rules or emotional road maps. Rather, to be a presence as the risen Lord was to the sorrowful Mary Magdalene; the distraught disciples who had turned their backs on Jerusalem and were headed for Emmaus and to the fearful disciples who were locked up in the upper room as they were grieving, distressed and deadened to any sense of reality.

This implies listening with the heart while bearing witness to the struggles of others. This further entails respecting the disorder and confusion of people such as the co-researchers. Thus journeying to the wilderness of the soul with another human being. It is a ministry of presence - being present to and embracing the co-researchers’ pain respectively.

The clergy need to understand their uniqueness as pastoral counsellors. The heart of that uniqueness is the theological and pastoral heritage and that places the clergy in a unique position to tap into those areas of the lives of others that are shipwrecked in the storms of daily living and are broken on the hidden reefs of anxiety and guilt, among others. The Clergy possess an instrument of continuing renewal in pastoral care through reconciliation, helping to heal the estrangement from selves and families as well as growing the relationship with God. The involvement of the clergy and carrying out pastoral care (entailing counselling) is meant to enable release, healing, empowerment and growth within individuals and their relationships. The Clergy has the responsibility to create a therapeutic atmosphere and is capable of holding all of the differentiated responses to secret disclosure. Furthermore, a clergyperson must be able to illuminate biblical truths by applying these in the arena of human struggles. He or she must be able to use these biblical truths to reveal the Story of God, through Jesus Christ, and thereby, enter the Story of God with the co-researchers or those who are wounded and their stories.
The clergyperson might also want to plan rituals to begin or end future counseling sessions. These rituals might include the sharing of the Eucharist, and/or the Sacrament of Reconciliation. However care must be taken not to interrupt healthy tension which often leads to new insight for family members. Perhaps at some point in the counseling, family members will want to plan a ceremony to mark some change, loss, and/or progress in the healing process. There might be a need for ritual during pastoral counseling from a dynamic point of view which is often a little more than catharsis.

The story of what God has done through Christ has the ability to bring about a transformation of narratives of suffering. This methodology of reading stories, points to their narrative power and the capacity that stories possess in shaping one’s identity. The narrative power sets aside such stories as narratives of reconciliation and healing. These gain more impetus when they are re-entered against the backdrop of the resurrection story of Jesus, as the story of reconciliation. This is so, since this resurrection story addresses, inter alia, the effects of the shameful torture and death of Jesus as well as the trauma that was created in the lives of the disciples.

Subsequently the appearances of Jesus are moments of recognition, of reconciliation, and of healing. The resurrected Jesus appears to: foster healing and reconciliation and to re-establish a relationship. The appearances of the resurrected Jesus are shaped according to the needs of those who come to recognise who he is. The appearances are moments of the recognition of the pain, the loss, and the guilt of the disciples the pain and the confusion of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus; the loss felt so keenly by Mary Magdalene; and the guilt of Peter for having denied Jesus. They are moments of reconciliation and forgiveness for a doubting Thomas and a remorseful Peter. They are moments of healing for everyone, and helping them to overcome timidity and fear in order to regroup.

The therapeutic model aims to enable healing empowerment and growth to take place within individuals and their relationships. This becomes an instrument of continuing renewal through reconciliation, helping to heal our estrangement from ourselves and our families, and growing relationship with God. The model has to be
developmentally-oriented and should assist the co-researchers to draw on their own strengths and develop healthy coping mechanisms that permit them to gradually resume their pre-disclosure level of functioning. The model acknowledges sensitively and caringly helps the co-researchers to grieve their losses in their own unique ways – be it through their expression of feelings, problem-solving, thinking, and/or activities.

Reclaiming the full range of feelings allows the person to regain the lost parts of self. Mourning becomes the way to give due honour to loss and there is no adequate compensation. There is a need to find something that will serve as an aid in overcoming the pain and transforming the memory. And this has to be dynamic in nature and outlook. There is a likelihood that telling the story may start as fragmented as can be. It becomes a process through which unexpressed grief begins to come out and the person needs pastoral support and encouragement to grieve at their own pace. In addition and crucially, the method needs to allow the co-researchers to get on with their lives. This should be done in the gradual retelling of their stories until they become new stories, respectively. And in the telling and retelling of the story there is the healing of memory, and a lot of one’s identity is tied up with memory. Through narratives, the memory of persons, as well as, important events are stored. The co-constructing and re-authoring of an alternative story needs to be richly described while being bolstered by a Christian perspective. This will aid the co-researchers in gaining awareness of more positive, opened-ended and feasible outcomes to their stories.

The co-researcher is the expert regarding his or her own circumstances and potential solutions. In addition, the co-researcher’s needs are to be kept central throughout the process and the procedures used are tailored specifically to him or her. Key here is the approach that assumes that present and future orientation is retained in order to help clients find meaningful solutions to problems in life. Co-researchers need to be acknowledged for who they are at the present moment, and for who they are becoming, but not for where they have been in the past. Central is the establishment of a therapeutic alliance in the first meeting and co-researchers are here affirmed of the control they have over events and that they can make their own decisions and choices. In addition, co-researchers are given room to
communicate the expectations they have and what they hope to achieve through counselling. Over and above all else, the methodology employed serves to empower the co-researchers, rather than taking away their authority over their own problems.

As the member of the community brings his or her prior experience to the story, in turn, the story and retelling thereof validates and strengthens that individual’s place in society. (Pearce 1996: 12) The restorying process must be able to assist the co-researchers and/or survivors to witness their stories and; help reflect and reframe such stories. The process needs to be designed to help the co-researchers and/or survivors create a sense of empowerment, self-efficacy and hope. The approach that is employed, must speak to socio-cultural factors that have an influence on the co-researchers.

In helping such as co-researchers reframe their experiences, there is a need to help them to see how their actions and behavior reflected their strengths as well the fears they harbour and how they hindered or aided their healing and development as individuals. It is imperative that they learn to reframe the guilt and shame as sorrow and grief so that they can nurture themselves, respectively, instead of continuing to blame themselves or others. It is equally important reframe their anger, shame, and blame as sadness, loss, and grief as well in order to heal.

There must be recognition and acknowledgment of the trauma and importance of trauma in life. To ‘honour’ the trauma means to acknowledge the reality of it and the impact on the affected person, the fact that it is parts of the threads of the tapestry of who the person is. That is not the same as wallowing in it, being overwhelmed by it, or believing we cannot heal. Thus: the reauthoring must make it possible for the co-researchers and/or survivors to step into other experiences of their identity, since reauthoring gives shape to life and identity. New stories enhance living out new self-image, and offer possibilities for relationships that never existed before. Narrative does not only have the power to heal from physical, spiritual and psychological point of view but also has the ability to validate the position of individuals within society and provides identity and security to such.
These stories of co-researchers that points to events that have hurt and healed are not easy stories to tell. However as had been already been alluded to that much as life is lived forwards it can be understood backwards. Therefore in cases such as these reconciliation cannot be forced. It may unfold and begin to take shape as it is in the encounter of telling and hearing of a story. In light of understanding borne out of this process the ground has been leveled, as it were, for reconciliation to unfold as a process in itself and not just as an outcome. It then takes a nature of a process that is not managed but heart-felt.

Mending familial ties following disclosure of this magnitude which has the potential to change life as had been known and lived, takes time and effort. Deep engagements by all affected have an ability to help in formulation of new families and building relationships as people involved become more aware as the pain and hurt are addressed and are gradually replaced by seeing the humanity of the other.

Rituals may need to be developed to assist the co-researchers to move beyond any uncertainty. They provide acts to engage in for the purpose of meaning-making and provide a symbolic connection. Such rituals are to be developed to address, among others, aspects of continuity, of transition, of affirmation and of intensification. Rituals must fit the story and must be planned and thoroughly processed after completion. The ritual must be able to acknowledge what is still embraced both cognitively and symbolically. Rituals have the ability to help confront and deal with emotions and feeling that are difficult rather than being suppressed and avoided. This has the ability to strengthen the connection among kinsfolk and reinforces their common identity.

**7.6 Conclusions**

Humanity, unlike any other thing does not pass through phases in an undeviating progression mode. Having the privilege of ever moving as dynamically as can be and never leaving anything behind, humanity has the ability to hold our identity together even through changing sceneries of life. Therefore what we have been is in some way what we still are. And pastoral work takes effect on the basis of such being a pastoral premise and within a scope of Genesis 1 through to Revelation 21. Here the implications on the ordinary lives of people unfolds as they engage with daily
routines buttressed by, among other things, love, hurt, grieve, learning and growing in times of crisis and times of routine. Thus pastoral work takes place between boundaries of creation and resurrection and becomes ministry of presence and accompaniment.

Pastoral work begins in an act of worship and continues beyond the four walls of a ‘church’ building into a domain where interactions and relationships takes place. From an act of worship, where people of God are called to attention before God’s words, the clergy continue as companion to those same people just as Jesus did to the disgruntled disciples. Pastoral work/care draw from worship and thus maintains its biblical character and does not just become an isolated act of guiding, of ordering, of comforting, and of healing.

Therefore it requires the mode of action to be local, specific and personal. This is to ensure that each person is encountered and engaged as the object of the love of God. The method of caring that Gerkin employs, focuses on an individual as well as the Christian community. Gerkin’s approach appreciates and embraces the individual and family; and addresses their needs, accordingly. One aspect as an outcome is that adult children who had been kept a secret often have a different understanding of some basic stories or teachings of the faith. For example, the parable of prodigal son is not heard as a comforting story of the abundance of God’s forgiveness and love but more as a command to forgive the prodigal parent.

Stories of facing difficulty trauma and vicissitude, and overcoming such and having had no sunny disposition hold a significant place for one who is affected. The ability to rise above these experiences bestows one with a notable discernment into who a person is. We tell our stories to transform ourselves, to learn about our history and to tell our experiences in order to transcend them. Our stories are meant to make a difference in our world, as well as, to broaden our perspective to see further than normal; by acting beyond a story that may have imprisoned or enslaved us, in order to live more of our spiritual and earthly potential.
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**IN PRESS:**

**FROM INTERNET:**
Appendix A: Questionnaire for Co-Researchers provided a guideline for stories of co-researchers

1. **Beginning:**
   ‘Where does your story begin?’

2. **Historical positioning:**
   ‘Tell me about the time when it was disclosed to you of who your biological father/mother is.’

3. **Cultural contextual:**
   ‘What did you think about that?’

4. **Historical continuity:** (contextual information)
   ‘What was happening in your life at that time?’
   ‘How old were you?’

5. **Temporal nature of story:**
   ‘What happened then ….?’
   ‘How long did that go on?’
   ‘What was your sense of what was going on?’
   ‘How did you cope with that?’
   ‘How did that affect you/make you feel/think?’

6. **Middle:**
   ‘What do you think about that now?’

7. **Turning point:** ‘When did you realise that it/you couldn’t go on harbouring ill-feelings?’

8. **Embodied nature:**
   ‘What was your sense of what was going on?’
   ‘How did you cope with that?’
   ‘How did that affect you/make you feel/think?’
   ‘Did you have any ideas about this at the time?’

9. **Significance of other people:** how does teller’s network of relationships impact on events?

10. **Meaning making:** ‘What kind of sense did you make of all that?’
    ‘How has the disclosure influenced your life?’
"How did disclosure interfere with your attempts to achieve goals you had set pre-disclosure?"

"Were there times that you didn't allow news of disclosure to make choices for you?"

"How has your ability to accept love and support from others helped you?"

11. **End - Choices and actions of the co-researcher:**

   'How do you envisage the future?'

   "As you begin to understand the positive and negative influences in your life, what qualities must you possess in order to develop better relationships with your 'new' father and siblings?"
ANNEXURE B:
ASSESSMENT OF SPIRITUALITY

How is the role that spirituality plays in the co-researcher’s coping repertoire determined? The researcher will employ the use of a quantifiable interview to establish the role that spirituality plays in the co-researcher’s coping repertoire. Psychotherapists have used a variety of assessment approaches to tap their client’s spiritual and religious orientation and behaviors. These are discussed in some detail by Hodge (2001), Hill and Pargament (2003), Koenig et al. (2001), Lovinger (1996), Pargament (2007) and Tisdale (2003). When conducting an assessment of the client’s spirituality, it is important for psychotherapists to keep in mind that, as Watts (2007, p. 507) observed, “Severe stress can push people to extremes in their view of religion as a way of coping. Some people who are not normally religious turn to religion under severe stress to cope. Other people, under severe stress may abandon or turn against religious beliefs and forsake their spirituality. This is especially possible if their religious beliefs were never strong to begin with.” Whenever conducting spiritual assessments, there is a need to be respectful and supportive of co-researcher’s current beliefs. The assessment approaches may include:

Quantifiable Interview
A series of open-ended questions can be used to ascertain spirituality of the co-researcher as a supplement to the story the co-researcher told. The following are illustrative questions but not restrictive:

- **Let me ask what happened.** (The probe should allow the co-researcher to tell his/her story at own pace. Key is to listen for any instances of how the co-researcher used prayer or other forms of spirituality as a means of surviving or coping. It is useful to ask the co-researcher about how such praying helped and explore the general role of spirituality in the client’s life.)
- **How important is religion (or your faith) in your life?**
- **How often do you attend religious services and engage in religious activities (prayer, Bible reading, etc)?**
- **How do you go about coping with stress?**
- **Have you been able to make sense of, or find any meaning in what happened to you?**
• Has your religion or faith helped you to cope with or handle the emotional aftermath of what you have been through?
• Do you see any possible ways that your faith (religious beliefs) could be of help?
• Have you ever wondered, “why me?”
• What have you found yourself struggling to make sense of in light of disclosure? What answers, if any, have you come to?
• Was it as bad as it could have been?
• Has anything good come out of this event?
• Do you see God’s grace in the midst of this?
• To what extent are you able to put this behind you?
• What advice, if any, would you have for someone who finds him/herself in a similar situation?
ANNEXURE C: ADDITIONAL SPIRITUALITY-ORIENTED INTERVENTIONS

How do metaphors, analogies and story-telling can become tools to help co-researchers become “unstuck” and reframe events? Metaphors and analogies can be incorporated in the co-researchers’ stories in a timely and judicious fashion and in a manner that is personally relevant to the individual being helped. The co-researcher’s experience will be employed to select the relevant metaphorical example and spiritual activities that nurture hope in a bid to help the co-researcher get “unstuck” from the negative impact of having been victimized. The following can be used with the co-researcher, yet the list is not exhaustive.

1. Examples of courage and resilience can be offered to the co-researcher and go on to comment on the co-researcher’s records and milestones. Alternatively, ask the co-researcher to suggest what are some of the things that might have to be recorded in the researcher’s notes that documents the co-researcher’s resilience and courage.

2. Compare someone who has experienced a traumatic event(s) as being like someone who emigrates to a new land and must build a new life within a new culture from the one left behind (Herman, 1992). Ask the Co-researcher to apply this analogy to his/her experience.

3. Ask the client if he or she can make a “gift” of his/her experience to others? In what ways?

4. “Crisis means a change in the flow of life. The river flows relentlessly to the sea. When it reaches a point where it is blocked by rocks and debris, it struggles to find ways to continue its path. Would the alternative be to flow backwards? That is what a person in crisis craves, to go back in time. But life doesn’t provide a reverse gear, and the struggle must go forward, like the river, with occasional pauses to tread water and check out where we are heading.” (Kfir 1989:31).

5. “When the roots of a tree hit a large stone or other obstacle, do they try to shove the stone away or crack it? No. The roots just grow around the obstacle and keep going. The stone may have interrupted or slowed the tree’s growth for a while, but no stone, no matter how large, can stop the tree from growing. (Stone symbolizes obstacles to personal growth.) (Matsakis 1992:133).
6. Dolan (1991:74-75) tells a story about the Titanic sinking and the Captain’s stubborn insistence that nothing was wrong. “Full steam ahead, as if nothing happened, may have actually caused the Titanic to sink faster.”

7. As reported by Kingsbury (1992), Milton Erickson compared therapy to a process where clients get by a “log jamming a river.” The therapist metaphorically can kick the “right log” and help the client become unstuck so the mass of logs will move.

8. The Biblical stories to be used as healing metaphors for co-researchers who are struggling with “why” questions.

9. Kathryn Hanson Carroll (M. Div), has offered several other examples of how stories from the Old and New testaments can be used to comfort, inspire and guide victims of trauma.

In Christian circles, individuals can find strength and comfort from the person of Jesus. Victims can be reminded that God identifies with struggle and isolation. For God has had the full range of human experiences through Jesus. This can offer a sense of solidarity with a God who understands and can respond to “brokenness.” People may find further comfort and strength in recognizing that Christ loved them enough to die on behalf of them.

The letter of Paul to the Philippians reminds people that struggle is part of human experience. The power of hope in suffering can also be found in Romans 5:1-5.

Scripture highlights the sense of being accepted, no matter what one has endured.

Isaiah 43:4 “Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you” Jeremiah 29:11-13 “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all of your heart.”

The narrative of Joseph, with the culminating verse in Genesis 50:20, spoken by Joseph to his brothers, who had sold him into slavery years earlier, underscores that God can use evil for good purposes.

“Don’t you see, you planned evil against me, but God uses these same plans for good.”

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The story of Joseph serves to remind victims that ultimate meaning to a negative (or positive) event should not be assigned immediately. It was years before Joseph could see God’s gracious hand active in the negative acts of his brothers. It does not mean that one needs to feel happy about the experience, but it does suggest that good things may stem from it.

The Book of Psalms that deals with the full range of human emotions of grief, guilt and anger toward God can be helpful and comforting. These poems can also serve as “permission” to be honest with one’s feelings towards God. They also can give voice to someone struggling for words to describe an emotional state. Examples include Lamentation Psalms 6, 13, 22; Imprecatory Psalms - 39,109; Penitential Psalms - 51, 130, 143.

10. A ritual can be used to help a co-researcher deal with the lingering impact of a disclosure. The use of a ritualized spiritual ceremony has a potential to help the co-researcher. A prepared biographical statement can be read, accompanied by carefully selected music, followed by a brief celebration. This has a potential to bring about a sense of completed a chapter in the co-researcher life.

11. Traumatic memories of the co-researcher are not to be forgotten, but rather contained and sanctified. Healing metaphors are helpful in this regard.

Questions about expectations co-researchers felt from family and community would be asked. Questions like, "How did disclosure interfere with your attempts to achieve goals you had set pre-disclosure?" or "How has fear contributed to your feelings of hopelessness?" may be asked. Positive aspects of a story and exceptions to destructive aspects of a narrative could be identified by asking questions like, "Were there times that you didn't allow news of disclosure to make choices for you?" and "How has your ability to accept love and support from others helped you?"