A NARRATIVE JOURNEY
WITH THE HOMELESS YOUTH DISCOVERING THE IMPACT
OF ECONOMIC FACTORS
IN THEIR DISCOURSES OF HOMELESSNESS

by

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DECLARATION

I, Renjan John, declare that A NARRATIVE JOURNEY WITH THE HOMELESS YOUTH DISCOVERING THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC FACTORS IN THEIR DISCOURSES OF HOMELESSNESS is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature

April 2007.

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ABSTRACT

Human realities are formed in particular contexts, and can be understood through telling the story of experiences related with these realities. Homelessness is a reality for many in various parts of the world. The condition of homelessness involves various discourses, each of which can be dominant in different people. Dominant discourses bring with them inherent understandings which in the case of the reality of homelessness can negatively influence the daily activities and future prospects of homeless people. These dominant discourses define the experiences of the homeless people and cause them to assess themselves negatively. This study is in the field of Practical Theology, based on a social constructionist paradigm which holds that meanings are socially constructed and there is no single "Truth". The processes of telling stories, listening to these stories and constructing new meanings make up a narrative approach to counselling, which I use in the context of interactions with homeless youth at the Street Centre run by Pretoria Community Ministries. My approach is qualitative, and the data are evolved from narrative interventions and unstructured interviews with homeless youth. As this process is a journey into the experiences and stories of these young people, empirical sampling is irrelevant.

Listening to the stories of the young people from the streets filled me with enthusiasm to take this narrative journey with them through their stories. Examining the impact of economic factors in their discourses and narrations gave me new understanding of their meanings and challenged me, because many of these were unpredictable. The epistemological approach of postfoundationalism used on this journey allowed a wide range of knowledge types and interactions, which I elucidate through interdisciplinary investigation and identification of the traditions that inform the dominant discourses. The seven-movement methodology used for this work is relevant in the context of the homeless youth, because it allows me as researcher to continue the full length of the journey with

the homeless youth, leading eventually to new possibilities. On the way certain themes evolved and their meanings constructed. Listening for the discourses and identifying their economic factors helped me to deconstruct these discourses, and so guide the stories into more hopeful channels.

Of course, constructing alternate stories and acknowledging the importance of economic factors will not alone change the future of these young homeless people. Economic restructuring of society is needed. This possibility challenges jobless, homeless individuals not to acquiesce in the negative patterns of society, but rather to work with conviction to create new possibilities.

In this project I listened to the stories of ten homeless young people, for each of which two sessions are presented in this report. These stories show that the story tellers are the real researchers, who create new alternate stories of hope in the course of this project. "God-talk" and the discussion of "God-experiences" throws light on the role of God in their lives and in their stories.

The research journey charted in this report describes first the theological context and research model, and then the particular context of these young people's lives. This is followed by descriptions of the discourses. Description of the context of the stories and interpretation of the stories themselves moves into assessment of the stories in their individual context. Interdisciplinary investigation and identification of the traditions that inform the discourses thicken our understanding of the realities experienced by these young people, and deeper interpretations arise which are applicable beyond the local context. Each petal of this flower blooms with new colours of understanding and new fragrances of possibility. The findings of this project are not the final end of this journey, but rather lights for future journeys into the experiences of homeless youth.

<u>KEY TERMS</u>

1. Homelessness
2. Social constructionism
3. Post-modernity
4. Narrative approach
5. Postfoundationalism
6. Interdisciplinarity
7. Dominant discourses
8. God-talk
9. Economic realities
10. Co-researcher.

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CHAPTER ONE

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

Homelessness is a term with vast meanings that involves a wide range of experiences. It is generally equated with lack of a house or shelter. In this sense homelessness is the living condition of many people all over the world, and is a widespread phenomenon specifically in South Africa. The reasons or factors leading to homelessness may vary, but it is a reality. The demographic figures for homeless persons in the world, especially in cities, are increasing at an alarming rate. The youth now constitute a major portion of the world's homeless people. The condition of homelessness in a way dehumanises these youth. Living on the streets or in night shelters, they face many struggles, from bad weather to robbery or rape. Many of them no longer feel their human dignity and the worth of their personality. Sometimes they become desperate. In the midst of all these struggles, however, these young people retain the power of youth and are able to see the possibilities of life, to change themselves for a better tomorrow.

The homeless person's experience and expression of his/her status of homelessness is continually informed by different discourses. These may be cultural, economic, political or other discourses. Some times various different discourses may operate together. These discourses may be invisible to the homeless person telling his/her story. Identifying the discourses and discovering the impact of them in the life situations of the teller are the tasks of the researcher.

Various factors lead homeless people to the situation of homelessness and help them to survive the experiences of homelessness. Economic factors particularly impact on their discourses, vividly strike researchers exploring their life world.

This research study is a journey with homeless youth into their experiences, described through the stories they tell, in which various discourses operate. Some of these discourses, such as the economic, tend to be dominant. This study thus develops a narrative method of getting into the life world of homeless youth and their discourses, especially the discourse of homelessness and the economic impact on it. As I write this research report, the stories told by the homeless youth and their situations are vivid in my mind. All of their predicaments are basically rooted in economic need. My being with them will not directly satisfy these needs, but in telling and retelling of their stories will hopefully contribute towards finding them alternative means to meet their economic needs. This research report is intended to promote wider knowledge about and help provide work possibilities for homeless people.

This research falls under the Faculty of Practical Theology. More than just preaching the word of God, practical theology emphasises living in the human situation with the knowledge of God. It is not a theology of conference rooms and cool chambers, but rather a theology of the streets. My interactions with homeless people in the streets gave me the challenging experiences of practicing theology. My pastoral commitment encourages me to journey with the homeless youth to deconstruct the dominant discourses and help them to find new, hopeful possibilities of life.

1.1 NARRATIVE APPROACH

1.1.1 Narrative counselling

Various counselling approaches are available to a counsellor entering into the world of youth. Each individual counsellor will be attracted to a particular viewpoint and the method of counselling akin to it. Sensitivity towards the various forms of counselling may broaden the perspectives of this helping profession. At

the same time, there is a danger of confusion and the temptation to use many different methods in one counselling interaction, which can lead to a chaotic situation. What is fundamental to all kinds of counselling is the narrating of experiences by the counsellee, and the listening to these stories with empathy by the counsellor. These processes finally lead them to possible solutions or newer paths of life. Narrative approach in counselling is a useful theoretical approach, which focuses on the story telling and then on the re-telling and reformulation of the stories. The narrative approach does not blame the problematic person or prescribe solutions; instead, it moves with the person in a respectful way. "Narrative therapy seeks to be a respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling and community work, which centres people as the experts in their own lives" (Morgan 2000:2). It views the problem as a problem and the person as a person. It distinguishes the problem from the person. Through the process of externalizing, the story teller is helped to see the problem from outside his/her personality and to envision the different angles of the problem.

According to Freedman and Combs, "a rhythmic alternation between telling and witnessing characterizes narrative work" (2002:22). This shows that a narrative approach is not a one-man show but gives an equal role to the storyteller and to the listener. The facilitator does not merely listen to the words, but also listens to the language, the discourse, from which the particular words are drawn. Meaning is not carried only in an individual word, but also in its relation to its context. No two contexts will be exactly the same. Speaking is also not neutral or passive. Every time we speak, we bring forth a reality and a new meaning in relation to the particular context. "Human experience is structured in time and narrative. We comprehend our lives not as disconnected actions or isolated events but in terms of a narrative.… We use stories to construct meaning and communicate ourselves to another" (Anderson & Foley 2001:4). Narrative counselling is a journey with the story teller through his/her life world. That journey leads the counsellor and the counsellee to new paths of knowledge and understanding. Effective and empathetic listening is essential in this journey. The facilitator does

not have to probe the minute details of the story, but must rather move with the story teller to the unknown life stories that are important. Thus listening is an invisible but earnest search for new meanings. "When we listen 'deconstructively' to people's stories, our listening is guided by the belief that those stories have many possible meanings. The meaning we as listeners make is, more often than not, at least a little different from the meaning that a speaker has intended" (Freedman & Combs 2002:26, 27). Through interaction and intervention the facilitator helps the story teller to find the meaning of his/her stories. Listening must involve thoughtfulness about the emerging new meanings.

1.1.2 Narrative research

Much research work has been done in the field of homelessness in various countries. These studies demonstrate the effects of homelessness and the factors leading to homelessness and suggest directions for effective social policies. For some researchers the homeless situation is a slide from stable housing to an increasingly unstable life situation. Some of them emphasise caring for homeless people (Walsh 1992:3). For empirical study researchers use standardised measures and devices to assess collected data. In this qualitative study, I work with homeless youth as co-researchers to discover new realities through interactions with them in their particular contexts. The narrative approach of this research is mainly based on the stories of the co-researchers and their personal interpretations. One of the roles of the researcher is to listen to the stories carefully and write them down without polluting them or manipulating the meanings implied by the story teller. Other roles of the narrative researcher are to identify the unique outcomes in the stories, help the story teller to move from thin descriptions to thick descriptions and report the data drawn from the research material. "Thin descriptions often lead to thin conclusions about people's identities, and these have many negative effects. The person with the problem may be understood to be 'bad', 'hopeless', or 'a troublemaker'" (Morgan

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2000:13). Many homeless people initially only give thin descriptions of their life stories. In the course of narrative interaction they are equipped to construct alternate stories and thicken each story in relation to the others. The narrative researcher also undergoes a process of change, of discovery, in the processes of interaction and writing, while searching for unique outcomes. These unique outcomes are the themes evolved by the researcher through listening to and writing down the stories, drawing on interdisciplinary interrogation techniques in relation to various traditions. Thus the narrative researcher thickens the themes by using alternate stories, and applying interdisciplinary interpretations.

My research experience revealed tensions between existing empirical data and the realities of the lives of the homeless people. Sometimes their life patterns and interpretations speak more clearly than the existing empirical research. Other times the empirical research sheds light on their behaviour and responses. "Overall, the empirical studies of the past decade have yielded important and disturbing findings: the effects of homelessness on its young victims are profound and devastating" (Walsh 1992:7). This tension between empirical research and the life experiences of the homeless people is not analysed in this study, since it falls beyond the scope of this work.

The empirical study investigates samples of the homeless population selected in a standardised way. In a narrative study the members of a specific group of people are not studied as samples, but as human persons with the freedom to tell, re-tell and interpret their experiences. The researcher then reports the meanings and fields of experience that emerge from a deconstruction of these stories. The researcher does not search for specific, predetermined meanings, but discovers new meanings with the co-researcher/s. Thus through this narrative research we will come to an alternate story or various alternate stories based on the experiences of homeless youth in Pretoria. The role of the researcher could be described as that of co-author of the alternate story or

stories. Thus my story is a new story to be listened to, described and researched further.

1.1.3 Narrative approach in the post- modern paradigm

The narrative approach assumes a post-modern paradigm. In contrast to modernism, postmodernism rejects any idea of an 'essential' truth and confirms that realities are socially constructed. "A central tenet of postmodernism is that at the social level, there is no single essential, 'true' body of knowledge about how people, families or societies should function" (Freedman & Combs 2002:187). Postmodernism cannot be understood as a new phase after modernity or a new cultural era. "Post modernism is, rather, an attitude, a radically different way of looking at the world of modernity, a mood that has also slowly and pervasively filtered into the way we think, and especially now into the way we do theology and science too" (Van Huyssteen 1998:5). With this in mind, the counsellor works deconstructively. Listening to, questioning and retelling stories is part of the deconstruction process. "Throughout this process, we endeavour to listen with thoughtfulness about what new constructions are emerging" (Freedman & Combs 2002:27). Through interactions and use of various discourses, new stories and interpretations of these stories emerge. Thus in a way narrative therapy is one of the most prominent developments of postmodernity. As Calvin O' Schrag rightly points out "… the very idea of a uni-versity as an unbroken solidarity of unified discourse becomes problematized and is challenged by a pluri-versity of knowledge practices" (1992:39). This approach shows that we cannot limit the possibility of a text to one single meaning, but must allow it to have a collection or variety of meanings. The meaning is not to be dictated, but rather evolved.

1.1.4 Relation between the counselling process and research

In a narrative approach research is closely related to the counselling process. Thus existing research on counselling can help me as facilitator to view the story teller in his/her particular context. Research into narrative counselling will thus supply me with the requisite knowledge in this field. Counselling work and counselling research are therefore inseparably linked in this study. In narrative research of this kind, theory, therapeutic practice and research are directly linked. The relationship of each to the other is mutual and contributory. With the help of narrative theory a facilitator is practicing narrative counselling. The interpretation of such therapeutic sessions will supplement the theory, and help the research process to progress. "The bridging or mediating role of the narrative processes is in the possibility of analysing therapeutic conversation, its contents, its quality, its dialogical aspects, as well as the conversational context" (Laitila, Aaltonen, Wahlstrom & Angus 2005:207). This use of established counselling processes and the establishment of dialogue between them will allow new topics for research to emerge. Thus the roles of theory, the narrative counsellor and the story teller are equally important here in this research work. All of them are involved in this co-authored journey towards new alternative knowledge.

1.1.5 Postfoundational research

This research study uses a social constructionist approach. It emphasises the social construction of realities. The stories shared by the homeless youth have this constructivist dimension. By telling their stories they are constructing their experiences in a new form. Through listening to and thickening those stories, new stories are constructed. In the process of constructing alternate stories, new stories are evolved. These story telling and story making processes are not based on some preconceptions of reality. As the telling process progresses, the story is unveiled. The foundationalist approach argues that all reality has

foundations, denying the non-foundationalist position that only relative knowledge of truth is possible. For a non-foundational thinker, there is no absolute truth, but everything is relative. The trap in the non-foundational approach is that of indifference to life experiences and the variety of possible meanings. In this study I take an epistemological position of postfoundationalism, which stresses the importance of local context. "Postfoundationalism in theological reflection has therefore shown itself as a viable third epistemological option beyond the extremes of absolutism and the relativism of extreme forms of pluralism" (Van Huyssteen 1999:243). Postfoundationalism is based on a social constructionist approach. It encourages the possibility of various interpretations and meanings. Deconstruction of discourses and reinterpretation are therefore important in postfoundational research.

Postfoundationalism as an epistemological approach promotes interdisciplinary methodologies, drawing on various traditions to inform the interpreted experiences in a particular context. In postfoundational research all experiences are theory-laden, and all experiences are interpreted; this positions the approach in the constructionist paradigm, since it agrees with all the constructs of social constructionism. However postfoundational research also moves beyond the possibilities of contextuality, and thus requires an approach like the narrative, in which alternate stories make a new story for research. This research study applies these approaches in the field of practical theology. Religious experiences and their interpretations are relevant in the context of homeless youth in Pretoria. My strong personal convictions and theological standpoint are relevant in a postfoundational approach, which is a comprehensive approach for social or counselling research, and a relief from rampant pluralism and extreme absolutism.

1.2 THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

All expressions and discussions of reality are unavoidable ingredients of urban theology. Economic factors cannot be eliminated from such theology. Jesus proclaimed a theology that is not theoretical but relevant and necessary for the practical life of common people, especially the poor. His first speech at the Nazareth synagogue proclaims this: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (Lk. 4:18). Since this research study is in the field of practical theology, it deals with the relevance and relationship of the research matter with the practical situation of theology and encourages 'God-talk' in the life realities of the homeless youth.

I have a formal theological background drawn from systematic theological training in a seminary, but my research is better understood from the background of different theological emphases. Each one has its particular slant but is complementary with the others. Various key terms explicitly set out my theological concern in this research.

1.2.1 Liberation

The biblical story of exodus is a story of liberation. The Israelites were in Egypt and the king wanted to oppress them lest they increased in number and became a threat to his kingdom. In the calling of Moses, at the burning bush, God reveals his great plan for liberating the people from the bondage of Pharaoh:

> Then the Lord said, I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their suffering, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the

Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. (Ex. 3:7-8)

The biblical understanding of liberation in the exodus story gives a particular perspective of God, as one who 'observes the misery', one who 'hears the cry', one who 'knows the suffering', and one who 'delivers out of oppression'. "What Gustavo Gutiérrez means by theology's making the commitment to social justice more radical and complete – or, as he can also say, "more self-critical" – is precisely its 'framing the political commitment to liberation within the context of Christ's gratuitous gift of total liberation'" (Ogden 1992:137). This is visible in the process of hopeful counselling, which gives a meaning for the practical approach of theology and is manifested in narrative therapy.

In attempting to understand and analyse the discourses of homeless youth, I do not want to teach them about fate or God's will for their lives. It is easy to lead them to an understanding that each of us is destined for these experiences and that God will reward us on the final day. Instead of this approach, I prefer to listen to their stories of suffering and oppression, make them aware of their own situation and help them to see possibilities of liberation. When the prophet Isaiah writes about the meaning of fasting he says

> Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? (Is. 58:6-7)

This kindness is pleasing to the Lord, not ceremonial fasting. Jesus accomplishes such care by listening to poor people, helping them in their distress and standing against social evils. This is what he declares in his first sermon in Nazareth (Lk. 4:18) and continued to express throughout his life.

In the Book of Revelation also, John pictures unlimited horizons of liberation and hope. When he narrates the magnificent eternal world he actually surpasses the finitude of human existence and the limitations of human imagination.

> John knows that human language is incapable of expressing, just as human imagination is incapable of perceiving, the reality of things in the eternal world as they truly are. But rather than being paralysed by the finitude of human existence, he is set free to portray the End in a variety of this-worldly pictures used metaphorically to allow the character of the eternal world to break through. (Boring 1989:213)

By exemplifying the limitations of articulation about the things which are not seen, John's text emphasises the importance of the moving of things that are seen towards the ultimate. John thus articulates a theology of hope in the book of Revelation.

This biblical understanding of liberation and hope is the theological basis for my research, as I listen to the experiences of the homeless youth in their particular contexts and describe them using a variety of traditions. "The poignant stories of suffering and oppressed people in Africa – victims of war, refugees, displaced people, women who are discriminated against, people with AIDS, etc. – are a genuine narrative theology of liberation" (Healey & Sybertz 1996:22). Africa has the context of many stories of suffering and liberation. The stories of apartheid and freedom are typical examples of suffering and liberation. These stories can help those still oppressed to insight about their conditions and challenge them to seek continuing liberation. Knowing the stories of Africa and entering into the stories of the homeless youth helped me to see the immense potential in the human personality, in the particular context of homeless youth.

1.2.2 Wholeness

The unique features of Christianity include the identification and healing of hurts. These are grounded in a holistic vision of achieving fullness of life for all. The people of God are called to be effective channels of the healing and transforming power of God's love for all humanity. The mission of Jesus was to bring everyone unto the fullness of his personality. When he healed, his aim was not mere physical healing, but the granting of wholeness. When the sinful woman came to Jesus, bathe his feet with her tears and with alabaster oil, he forgave her sins and healed her completely. Jesus reveals that healing is for the whole body, soul and mind and that it leads to internal peace (Lk. 7:36-50). Jesus healed a demon-possessed man in the country of Gerasenes. The man was healed in body and mind and experienced complete salvation (Lk. 8:26-39). In a rapidly changing world, poverty, illiteracy or oppressive social structures continue their suffocating influence on the health status of people. Those suffocating influence make people unhealthy. Here, a wholesome healing of the community is needed.

In my research I encountered people with HIV/AIDS and other physical, mental and spiritual ailments. My approach was to see each person as a whole. Treating the symptoms is not the right way to heal, but rather entering into their world, helping them to find and make use of their own resources for healing. It is very easy to become judgemental towards people with HIV/AIDS, but not so easy to listen to their life experiences, which include the experiences of body, mind and spirit – the wholeness of the personality. When somebody becomes ill, he/she experiences emotions of helplessness, passivity and a loss of self-confidence. The judgemental attitude of others will only make the sick person more hopeless and destructive. Different types of personalities may react differently to diseases and other difficult life situations. The narrative approach helps me to listen deconstructively with the aim of complete healing. "Some may perceive the illness as a punishment for past misdeeds. Others may equate it with the loss of love from significant people in their lives. A careful and empathetic intervention

will only help them to overcome their misconceptions" (Burton & Watson 2000: 5). This point became very real to me in the experiences of the homeless youth of Pretoria.

The economic factors involved in disease and the acceleration of diseases are not negligible. For example, in the Bible when Paul commands the evil spirit to come out of the girl who earns money for her masters by prophesying and telling fortunes, their spiritual and economic exploitation of her comes to an end. The slave owners begin to make false accusations against Paul and Silas. They do not say, "Punish them because they took away our meal ticket," but instead say, "These men are advocating customs that are against Roman law" (Ac. 16:16-23). Making people sick or allowing them to remain in this condition may be necessary for the profit-making, competitive marketing strategies of some multinationals, but this should not hinder the healing ministry or the work of recounting the economic stories behind disease. This kind of exploitation extends through various strata of society, through drugs and the habits of affluent living. "The producers of cocaine, crack and marijuana, the beer companies, the manufacturers of expensive clothes and shoes – all are examples of businesses that exploit the spiritual and emotional vulnerability of young people to increase their profits" (Sanders 1997:80). The holistic perspective of healing challenges us to move forward beyond the ministry of spiritual awakening to a ministry of realisations and empowering our youth.

1.2.3 Empowerment

In South Africa, the apartheid system conducted by a white minority oppressed the black majority both economically and politically. The effects of apartheid included disempowerment and lost confidence among black people to work for economic and political sustainability. Their colour forced black people out of common economic and political interactions. Their lives were secluded, lived in the black settlements far away from cities and industrial areas. Many were not

aware of their rights and strengths. Thus any social development was beneficial only for the minority of whites. In the post-apartheid era, empowerment of children, youth, women and the poor have become more possible, but require economic sustainability, greater health consciousness, and the creation of a peaceful life and enough employment opportunities for all South Africans. Problems like poverty, HIV/AIDS, crime, violence and rapid urbanisation all result in loss of power for the people of South Africa. These problems can be seen as demons possessing the South African community.

Biblical examples of healing clearly show Jesus' initiative to empower the distressed and marginalised. Jesus heals the demon-possessed and strengthens them to live as witnesses in their community for the transformation of society (Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 4:31-37). Most of the population was becoming poorer and poorer in Jesus' time. Many people could be categorized as economically disadvantaged because they were physically or mentally ill, handicapped, in captivity, widowed, or members of a broad group of marginalised people such as tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes etc. "The concern of Jesus for the disprivileged (*sic*) and marginalised was the first protest against those who had made God serve their own interests" (Nissen 1984:15). Jesus' strategy was to create awareness about the status of these people through meaningful interactions and dialogue. By bringing the marginalised to the centre of the community, Jesus initiated social change and empowered them for social transformation. In the healing miracle of the lady with haemorrhage for twelve years, Jesus brought that healed lady to the centre of the community to challenge the stigma of the society towards such diseases (Mk. 5:24-34; Mt. 9:20-22). In our time as in Jesus', empowering youth and women is a necessity.

"Nelson Mandela gives voice to the thoughts and aspirations of the voiceless. And in doing so, his life work continues to challenge the material conditions which keep so many people in silence. His words express what so many people feel, while his actions create the possibility for those millions of people to start

speaking for themselves" (Ramaphosa 2003:185). Mandela's speeches as well as his silence empowered thousands of people in South Africa to equip themselves for their liberation. The people in the streets need to be empowered to realise their situation and emerge whole and strong from that experience. A homeless youth said to me that the status of "homelessness is powerlessness". He was not making a blind statement but sharing his experience of homelessness. He expresses the discourse of power. If we only sympathise with his powerlessness we cannot help him, but if we empathise with him and ask deconstructive questions we can help him to untwist the power relations that hold him and create new possibilities for his own liberation.

1.2.4 Positive change

An attitude that promotes positive change is essential for working among young people, especially homeless youth in the streets. The young mind naturally takes to change. If young people are not listened to, and helped to describe and interpret their experiences, they can easily end up in violent situations and their lives in disaster. It is easy to blame people who respond negatively to their social situations, but the better choice, understanding and helping them, is only possible through more meaningful interventions. Pretoria Community Ministries is an organisation that works with the goal of such positive change. Their strategy involves building a good understanding of the neighbourhood. An article in the organisation's newsletter expresses this in a voice of a homeless person: "If some people who don't know my neighbourhood start to speak about how bad it is and how they pity me for the sacrifice I make to live here, I want to ask them: 'Who gives you the right to speak like that about my home?' After all, I choose to live here, perhaps because I enjoy the diversity, the vibe, the hope of Africa" (Pretoria Community Ministries News Letter 2005:1). If we blame the situation and condemn the experiences of the homeless youth we cannot redeem them. By accepting diversity in the lives of these people, we can listen to and describe their various life experiences with hope rather than prejudice.

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The Bible supports this approach of interaction in the community. On his way out of Jericho Jesus encounters two blind men who seek his help, and asks them, "What do you want me to do for you?" This question helps them to see the possibility of change, shifts their focus from simple economic benefits to a positive change of life situation (Mt. 20:29-34). Before they met Jesus all they could see was the life narrative of their struggles as blind persons and beggars. Jesus helps them to tell alternative stories about their future. In the presence of a true listener and facilitator they can now create hopeful stories of their lives. The intention of the facilitator is to listen and understand the life realities inform the tellers' perspectives. "Even though our intention is to understand people's realities from something very close to their point of view, their realities inevitably begin to shift, at least a little, as they expand their narrative in response to our re-tellings and questions" (Freedman & Combs 2002:27). Narrative interaction thus helps bring a narrative worldview to being in which the tellers can talk about their realities. A narrative worldview gives them the chance for positive change in their perceptions and actions. Bryant L Myers calls this "transformational development". According to Myers the term transformational development reflects 'concern for seeking positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially and spiritually' (1999:3).

The narrative discourse of Jesus with the Samaritan woman is another example of positive change (Jn 4:7-30). Jesus listens to her history, her present and her future through deconstructive questioning. This process leads her to new perceptions about her life narratives. When the Samaritans hear about the interactions of woman with Jesus, they become interested to meet him. They invite Jesus to stay with them. During that stay, further interaction and exchange of narratives happens. After the discourses, the Samaritans construct a new story of their lives. "They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world'"(Jn. 4:42). They construct a new story out of their

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experiences and interactions. As Myers says, "the development process is a convergence of stories. The story of the development practitioner is converging with the story of the community and together they will share a new story for a while" (1999:20). In the narrative approach the story of the story teller and the story of the story re-teller come to congruence and help formulate a new hopeful story.

1.2.5 Practical theology

This research study and its paradigm fall under the vast umbrella of practical theology. Practical theology as the "doing" of theology affects both the life situations of ordinary people, and the theologian's theoretical framework. Effective practical theology will result in a new understanding of social issues and support the emergence of new theoretical concepts.

Some of the essential characteristics of practical theology are pointed out by Woodward and Pattison (2000:13-15):

- Practical theology is a transformational activity: it transforms not only the community and its life situation, but also the theoretical concepts used to understand the experiences of that community. Practical theology always urges positive change.
- Practical theology is unsystematic: systematic theology presents theology in a systematic framework. Practical theology in a way challenges this systematic method of presenting theological concepts, which limits the possibility of more practical meanings. Practical theology is unsystematic in the sense that it continuously re-engages with the fragmented realities and changes of the contemporary world and the issues it presents. Also, much practical theology is not systematic or complete.
- Practical theology is contextual and situation-related: practical theology excludes generalization and emphasises the particularity of a specific context.

It gives priority to the contemporary context or situation in which it is involved rather than to other situations, times or places.

- Practical theology is experiential: it gives more importance to the experiences of people than to social theories. Of course the theories might have been formulated from human experiences in the past, but contemporary situations are more relevant in practical theology, which takes people's contemporary experiences seriously as data for theological reflection and analysis.

- Practical theology is interdisciplinary: as it deals with human experiences and contemporary life situations, practical theology cannot neglect or avoid the contributions and impact of other disciplines such as the social sciences. This means that practical theology uses the methods and insights of academic and other disciplines that are not overtly theological as part of its theological method.

Woodward and Pattison put forward more characteristics of practical theology, but I have chosen these five because they contribute to the postfoundational approach and seven-movement methodology which I use in this study. The other characteristics to which Woodward and Pattison refer do not contradict the selected five, but rather compliment them. All the characteristics reflect that practical theology is theology practiced for the transformation of society. As Anderson rightly says, "practical theology is a dynamic process of reflective, critical inquiry into the praxis of the church in the world and God's purposes for humanity, carried out in the light of Christian Scripture and tradition, and in critical dialogue with other sources of knowledge" (2001:22). Thus this kind of theology is made up of experiences of theology in a specific context. It promotes critical and active dialogue with other disciplines.

Practical theology, as used in this study, is praxis-oriented theology. Its approach is neither formal nor highly academic but rather spontaneous, informal and experiential. It is an organised approach, but has no preset interpretative style. "It will be argued that practical theology, as enlightened by the postfoundationalist

ideas of both Calvin Schrag and Wentzel van Huyssteen, should be developed out of a very specific and concrete moment of praxis" (Müller 2005:74). My emphasis is on the experiences of the practical life of the homeless and my experiences of being with them. My interactions with the poor people in my ministry led me to such a practical theological position. My involvement in the work of Pretoria Community Ministries and especially in their street ministry gave me more insight; it challenged my existing understanding of the practical theological approach, and caused my experience of this study to become an adventurous journey to the unknown.

1.3 RESEARCH MODEL

We must now discuss the epistemology of the research model and the philosophy behind this model. This will help us to understand the research model and how it was applied in this particular study. The social phenomenon of periodic change influences the philosophical outlook of the world and its realities. It also influences the formulation of research methodologies. Understanding the philosophical basis of these methodologies will help us to use the chosen methodology in our particular context.

1.3.1 Postmodernism

Postmodernism is characterised by pluralism. In this approach, there is no "truth". Rather, truth has different facets and continuously changes. The post-modern approach has the advantage of seeing the various possibilities and versions of reality. At the same time, rampant pluralism and relativity can damage the very essence of postmodernism. The correct way of understanding pluralism will yield a better understanding of constructionism. "Unfortunately, many scientists and theologians have also wrongly learned to associate postmodernism only with a rampant pluralism, with a jettisoning of reason and of epistemology, and with

some form of sceptical, gloomy and negative deconstructionism" (Van Huyssteen 1998:5). Postmodernism developed as an intellectual and theoretical movement from evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of modernity. It leads us to a newer understanding of heterogeneity and otherness. It helps us see possibility in others as well as the possibility in our framework and forms of life. In a world scenario, modernity emphasised European culture as superior, and the Enlightenment as the life force for the future. A post-modern outlook questions and challenges this Euro-centrism. It opens the way for the triumphant entry of colourful cultures from all over the world into the world scenario. It is the process of going to the margins instead of bringing all to a centre.

In the postmodernist understanding, the art, creativity, economic efforts, tastes, body languages and dress habits of different cultures penetrate the boundaries of individual nations and cultures. All walls of separation among the nations and cultures have fallen down. Even art and aesthetics has been recognised as a medium of transforming the society. Art can become an alternative discourse. An example is the work among the homeless of a Polish Canadian, Krzystof Wodiczko. He was an industrialist designer by training but has come to be known as an artist. He challenged the modernised industrialised meanings of the well established role of homeless people, the urban poor. In Philadelphia, where he worked, he assisted the homeless people in their struggle against civic authorities by designing a convertible vehicle, to be used for shelter and for storing and transporting possessions, using as material only a supermarket trolley and a rubbish bin. Wodiczko calls his work the "vehicle for the homeless", whom he calls the "nomads of the city" (Rossouw 1995:70). Thus his art work challenges middle class notions of possessions and shelter. It is a mobile icon, helping to assert the personhood of the homeless, who so easily are seen as "status-less non-persons" as they wander about pushing a shopping cart originally designed for middle-class use.

Theology has also been radically changed by the paradigm shift of postmodernism. It has been a shock to church authorities from which many have not recovered. Theological interpretation has moved out of the strong walls of church buildings and created new waves of awareness and creativity in the streets. Postmodernity has contributed a new outlook to theological interpretation. The mission of the church has become relevant once again in the market place where common people live and share their experiences. Instead of church authorities dictating a public theology, more down-to-earth public theologies have evolved, interpreted and continuously informed by the specific context of peoples, communities and cultures.

1.3.2 Foundationalism and non-foundationalism

The foundationalist approach to theology emphasises the strong historical foundations of belief systems and theological understanding. This approach is thus in a way a modernist approach. It holds that the truth is well defined and well, as did the modernists. "Foundations theories are motivated by the idea that all justified belief derives ultimately from the evidence of our senses and that evidence comes to us in the form of beliefs" (Pollock & Cruz 1999:61). Established churches are one of the dominant factors which dictated these foundations. Questioning these established foundations tended to be punished by persecution even to martyrdom. Foundationalist approaches thus tend to deny that we can move out of our own understandings of history and tradition. Our horizons are already set and allow us to enjoy some fixed form of life. The authority of the church hierarchy and the biblical teachings of this hierarchy are considered to be unquestionable in the foundationalist approach. Church authorities have the final say in many faith issues, and the role of the common people is neglected.

Non-foundationalists reject many of the arguments that foundationalists raise, such as strong foundations. "Non-foundationalists deny that we have any of

these alleged strong foundations for our belief systems and argue instead that our beliefs all form part of groundless web of interrelated beliefs" (Van Huyssteen 1998:22). They question all kinds of foundations in faith and practice. Non-foundationalism supports the non-existence of foundations.

1.3.3 Postfoundationalism

A postfoundationalist epistemological position helps us to view cultural traditions as things we construct out of the phenomena of history. A tradition is not a set of facts and derived stories, but rather a series of new stories evolving through continuous encounter with many discourses. Such an understanding brings us beyond the limits and boundaries of our own understanding of tradition and our own forms of life. According to Van Huyssteen, the "principles and goals of postfoundationalism stand over against the alleged objectivism of foundationalism and the extreme relativism of most forms of non-foundationalism". For him, postfoundationalism in theology and science wants to:

First, fully acknowledge contextuality and the embeddedness of both theology and all the sciences in human culture;

Second, affirm the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience and the way that tradition shapes the epistemic and non-epistemic values that inform our reflection about both God and our world;

Third, at the same time creatively point beyond the confines of the local community group or culture, towards a plausible form of interdisciplinary conversation;

Fourth, find the epistemological warrant for this interdisciplinary conversation in the biological sources of human rationality. (Van Huyssteen 1998:24)

Any generalisation of issues is totally out of the question in this approach. The emphasis on the local context affirms the authenticity of the stories and allows the story tellers their own interpretations and descriptions. The influence of tradition, including religious tradition, comes to the fore in this approach. Any discourse, even "God-talk" can be relevant in narrative conversations, since a postfoundationalist approach allows true interdisciplinary conversation. Through such interdisciplinary conversation we are achieving not only better knowledge of other disciplines but also a united search for and continuous construction of new realities. This can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the stories; in other works, the postfoundationalist approach works by thickening the descriptions made by the story teller. The stories and their interpretations also always point beyond the local context. The findings of any particular postfoundationalist research study will resonate in similar contexts anywhere in the world, because of the universality of the themes involved in the life realities of human beings.

1.3.4 Methodology

For my research in the field of practical theology I follow the Seven-movement methodology of Julian Müller (2004:8-11). I chose this methodology because it yields a wide perspective of meaning through its religious and interdisciplinary approach, and because it goes beyond the local. This methodology is based on the epistemological position of postfoundationalism as derived by Calvin O'Schrag and Wentzel van Huyssteen. A postfoundationalist approach is necessary because we cannot make mere generalizations when doing research in the field of practical theology, but rather need to focus on the specific context. Postfoundationalism moves ahead of social constructionism, opening the possibilities of moving beyond the local. According to Van Huyssteen,

> a postfoundationalist theology wants to make two moves, First, it fully
> acknowledges contextuality, the epistemically crucial role of interpreted

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experience, and the way that tradition shapes the epistemic and nonepistemic values that inform our reflection about God and what some of us believe to be God's presence in this world. At the same time, however, a postfoundtionalist notion of rationality in theological reflection claims to point creatively beyond the confines of the local community, group, or culture towards a plausible form of interdisciplinary conversation. (1997:4)

On the basis of this approach, Müller describes the seven steps as follows (2004:8-10):

1. A specific context is described, the context, field of action or *habitus* of the particular study. The vision and goals of practical theology determine the precise focus of this step.

2. Experiences recounted according to this context are listened to and described. Knowledge of the particular context must be shared along with the personal story of the researcher, since the researcher fits him/herself into the specific context. The experience of moving from listening to describing is important here.

3. Interpretations of these experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with "co-researchers". Balancing the interpretations of the researcher with those of the co-researchers is important in this step, in which facilitating the interpretations of the co-researchers is the focus.

4. These experiences are described as they are continually informed by the various traditions of interpretation operating in the context. Exactly which traditions of interpretation need to be studied is determined by assessing which methods are used for understanding the experiences in context.

5. The religious and spiritual aspects, especially God's presence, are explored as they are understood and experienced in the specific situation. Important here is exactly how the researcher facilitates God-talk in the narrative conversations and how this influences the God-experiences of the researcher.

6. The description of experience is thickened through interdisciplinary investigation. Themes are formulated for further interdisciplinary investigations and the reason behind the process discussed. Non-theological resources are balanced with theology in this step.

7. Alternative interpretations that point beyond the local community are formulated here. Important questions here are multiple. How is the researcher to move beyond the local context without falling into the trap of "generalization"? How are the results of the research to be made relevant and available to a larger audience? These questions, which conclude the seven steps of this research project, thus also open the possibility of further research.

1.3.5 The seven movements and this study

I am researching the dominant discourses of homeless youth using a narrative approach. I believe that the seven movement methodology is particularly useful for this research, since it vividly gives a picture of the research theme with its various dimensions. A general outline of the issues to be discussed will not serve the purpose of a study like mine, which focuses on a specific context, that of the homeless youth who come to the Street Centre in Pretoria. By seeing the specific context the seven movement methodology prepares the ground for listening to the experiences of the youth in their context, to reveal stories of despair, hopelessness and powerlessness. My life world as researcher is also important and should be understood through continuous description and interpretation of experiences. As the homeless youth describe and interpret their experiences, they have the full right and freedom to tell and re-tell their stories as they wish. I

am not in a position to judge, correct or edit their descriptions and stories. The meanings constructed by their interpretations enter into dialogue with existing research knowledge. Each young person's experiences before, during and after homelessness may be different and the sharing of them will lead him/her to new understandings. The interaction of the various traditions of interpretation that influence their experiences will also be traceable. "Human service providers have long been aware that the most critical ingredient in helping another person is an understanding of where that person is coming from. At its essence, a helping relationship requires that the helper know how the other person makes meaning out of his or her world of experiences" (Walsh 1992:1). The understandings and discourses within each young person's story are guided by the discourses of wider society. Thus narrative research also facilitates interaction between the discourses of homeless youth and those of society.

We cannot avoid God in any experiences of human life. A postfoundationalist, narrative methodology can yield a thick story of the teller's understanding of God in the specific context. Facilitating God-talk and bringing the resources of spirituality into the interaction between researcher and co-researcher is a genuine experience in this methodology. "This is not a forced effort by the researcher to bring God into the present situation. It is rather an honest undertaking in order to really hear and understand the co-researchers' religious and spiritual understanding and experiences of God's presence" (Müller 2005:84, 85). Homelessness can be defined as being orphaned, and a young person who experiences it as such can feel despairing. Thus there is a place for God-talk in this counselling. Listening and initiating God-talk is an honest undertaking here. The knowledge of God as the One who can understand their life experiences can help the homeless youth to see the brighter side of their future.

Interdisciplinary investigation opens the multiple facets of reality and helps us to go beyond the local. "[W]e should be able to enter the pluralist, interdisciplinary conversation with our full personal convictions and at the same time be

theoretically empowered to step beyond the limitations and boundaries of our own contexts or forms of life" (Van Hussteen 1997:29,30). Many understand and seek interdisciplinarity for interpreting ideas, and I use it to facilitate dialogue between disciplines to construct new meanings for existing discourses.

I could even say that I am the "co-researcher" in this study and the homeless youth, my clients, the researchers. If I call the storyteller an "informant", "subject" or "counsellee", I minimise and regulate the possibilities of his/her role as storyteller. Of course I extract and record the meanings generated in the narrative interactions, but the storyteller is the one who interprets the story and actually reveals these meanings. The youth find the new stories. Thus as co-researcher I simple see, listen to and write down their findings for my dissertation. I do not want to re-author their stories or manipulate their meanings. However, as I write their stories and their interpretations down me too create alternate stories, so I am also part of this process of constructing new stories.

1.3.6 Methods used

In this study I use the method of interviewing to collect data. Interviewing does not always necessarily always involve approaching the client with a set of questions standardised to existing measures. In this qualitative research project I allow my co-researchers to share the stories of their experiences without my directives or corrections. This gives the research openness and a wonderful world of new meanings. "Interviews can explore areas of broad cultural consensus and people's more personal, private and special understandings" (Arksey & Knight 1999:4).

During my interaction with the homeless community in Pretoria, I was able to listen to different stories from many different people of various cultural and social backgrounds. For the purpose of this study I chose ten young people whose stories are saturated with the dominant discourses of homelessness and its

economic factors. These dominant discourses and their economic facets are not measurable in empirical terms. They are complex concepts which have to be understood by sharing the experiences of the storyteller. The number of informants was limited to make analysing the data derived from the discourses manageable. (This is also the reason for limiting the focus of the analysis on one main theme, economic influences on homelessness and its discourses.) The ten researchers chosen are from different cultural and economic backgrounds, so that their stories cover a wide range of experiences and diverse dimensions of the reality of homelessness in Pretoria. Some of the researchers expressed their feelings through songs, dances and poems. In these interactions I am of course limited, since I can describe them in words alone in this thesis. However, I came to understand these poems and cultural art forms and their interpretations through living with and experiencing the life realities of the homeless people.

Through the counselling process each homeless youth, as researcher, searches out the realities and possibilities of his/her life. As co-researcher I carefully walk along with him/her and note down ideas relevant to the purpose of this work. I use any information only with the consent of the researcher. Overall, I try to keep in mind the basic purpose of narrative therapy as articulated by Morgan: "[T]he key question for narrative therapists becomes: how can we assist people to break from thin conclusions and to re-author new and preferred stories for their lives and relationship" (2000:15)? In my interactions with homeless youth in Pretoria I felt more comfortable with and more meaningful in this paradigm and methodology than any other approach.

1.3.7 Qualitative research

Research can use quantitative or qualitative methodologies or a combination of both. In this study I follow purely qualitative methods for collecting, describing and explaining the data. "The application of quantitative methods makes it much easier to collate data across a number of people. When individual experience is

encoded as a number rather than a word, phrase or sentence, a range of operations can be carried out which can facilitate the research process" (McLeod 1994: 45). But in a qualitative study, concepts, insights and understandings are developed from the patterns in the data, and meaning derived according to subject's perspective. "A brief definition of qualitative research might be to view it as 'a process of systematic inquiry into the meanings which people employ to make sense of their experience and guide their actions'" (McLeod 1994:78). Qualitative research involves illuminating and uncovering the meaning of their stories.

Sociology, psychology and other scientific disciplines have their own understandings and theories about homelessness. An approach that draws on all these fields opens up wider horizons for the youth, which will become relevant for the wider community of which these young people form a part. Openness for alternative interpretations can only increase the creativeness of my research. The process of developing a new story from the stories told and retold by the researchers will yield wisdom applicable beyond the specific context of this study. "The bold move should be taken to allow all the different stories of the research, to develop into a new story of understanding that points beyond the local community" (Müller 2005:85). The possibility of forming new stories gives meaning to the future of the existing stories and gives insight into other stories outside the specific context.

Thus since I use narrative counselling as a data gathering method, a qualitative approach is relevant and practical for my research. In the social constructionist paradigm, there is no set meaning; instead this meaning emerges through interaction and interpretation. If I prepare set questionnaires I hinder the rich counselling and meaning-making process, and restrict the different possibilities of data evolving through the counselling process. Qualitative research can be used in a social constructionist paradigm, which has the basic knowledge that "realities are socially constructed". We construct the world through talk (stories,

conversations), through action, through systems of meaning, through memory, through the rituals and institutions that have been created, through the ways in which the world is physically and materially shaped. The role of the researcher and co-researcher is to be part of the construction of knowledge and its diverse meanings. Qualitative research must keep the human conversation open and point out that there is no one truth, thus opening up new possibilities of reality.

Qualitative research thus involves an integrated approach. It must not negate any area of knowledge but rather incorporate it, so as to elucidate new possibilities, new stories. "Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials-case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artefacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts-that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual's lives" (Denzin & Lincoln 2006).

In recording qualitative research, some basic rules must be followed:

1. The research should be written in a form that will communicate with practitioners.

2. The report should include enough qualitative research text to allow readers to develop their own interpretation of the material.

3. The procedures through which the researcher collected and analysed the material should be clearly explained.

4. It is helpful to describe the context of the study, including not only the "pre-understandings" of the researchers but also the social and institutional environment in which the research took place.

5. At the end of the analysis or at the beginning of the discussion section of the report it is useful to include a "summary representation" of what has been found. The presence of a summary representation gives future researchers a set of preliminary hypotheses or understandings against which they can compare their own findings, thus allowing a cumulative, "joined-up" body of knowledge on the topic which can be constructed (McLeod 2001:146,147).

1.4 CHAPTER DIVISION

This table shows the chapters of this report, which are structured according to the seven movements of the chosen methodology. The table lists the movement described in each chapter and its relation to the research problem.

Chapter title	Description
1. Introduction	Introduces the narrative approach, my story, postfoundationalism and the research model which will be used
2. Discourses of homeless youth and the economic factors in these discourses	Describes the youth in their context, identifies the discourses present in their stories and the economic factors involved
3. Listening to the heard and unheard stories of inner city homeless youth in context of Pretoria	Discusses youth and their discourses in general, my relationship with the youth and the theological context of this study, and presents examples of the counselling sessions describing the stories of the homeless youth

4. Describing and interpreting the stories using a narrative approach	Sets out the process of listening to and facilitating the story-telling of the co-researchers, the development of their discourses through various methods of interaction and my position as researcher
5. Description of experiences continually informed by traditions of interpretation	Explains the selection of traditions of interpretation and scientific response, and the analysis of experiences, in context and informed by these traditions, including the God experiences of the researcher, his facilitation of God-talk and the co-researchers' God experiences in relation with the research process
6. Thickening stories through interdisciplinary investigation	Finds relevant material about homelessness from other disciplines and puts these in dialogue with practical theology, to describe how these disciplines interact in the specific context of homelessness
7. Alternative interpretations pointing beyond the local community: conclusion	Traces the wider multiple possibilities which point beyond the local situation, discusses the relevance of the results to homeless youth around the world, develops alternative interpretations, challenges the context of homelessness in different parts of the world and reflects on the process, limitations and possibilities of this research study.

1.5 MY STORY

1.5.1 Background

Relevant aspects of my own story must be mentioned to prepare the specific experiential platform for the process of listening to and re-telling the stories of the youth. I am a Christian pastor from India who belongs to the Marthoma Church of India, serving the Indian Christian Community in Southern Africa. I received my theological training in India. Before entering into the seminary I had the theological outlook of a layman, namely that sacred texts should be interpreted in relation to the daily experiences of life in the world. During my time in the seminary this understanding developed, and I thought that interpretation should reflect the original meaning of the text, and so more or less lead to a history of the text. Instead of aiming to know the meaning of the text, I concentrated on investigating the background of the formulation of the text. This is a modernist style of interpretation. After leaving the seminary, as I worked among the people, my theological understanding and convictions developed further, and I learned to prefer practical theology, which has direct relation to life and its experiences. Practical theology for me is not just doing theology in a specific context. It is seeing new meanings in the context and helping myself and others to find new ways of doing theology. According to Müller, "practical theological research is not only about description and interpretation of experiences. It is also about deconstruction and emancipation" (2004:1).

As I am from India, I am accustomed to the stories in Indian religion, epics and mythology. India is famous for its diverse stories and storytelling methods. In my school years the stories from Hindu epics and religion were part of my studies. These stories exposed me to a wide variety of images and interpretations. Almost all Indian stories lead to a moral lesson. If the moral of a particular story is not well known, the story teller has the privilege of interpreting and formulating the moral lesson. From this story world of my youth I moved on to university

studies, and then to theological studies. Before my theological studies I had the opportunity to work among children as a field staff member of the Scripture Union and Children's Special Service Mission (SU&CSSM). Here I was exposed to the telling of theological stories. As I told the biblical stories, I found that each listening child would have his/her own personal stories to tell, in relation to the story I told. Some of them shared these stories, which are full of imagination and creativity. This opened to me the wonderful world of telling and listening to stories, especially those of children.

1.5.2 Training

In the course of my theological studies I was introduced to various branches of theology such as liberation theology, Minjung theology, Dalit theology and evangelical theology. These theological approaches exposed me to a variety of theological understandings and paradigms. Although these theologies have their own fruitfulness and effects on particular contexts I prefer a more practice-oriented theology, which responds creatively and theologically to the realities of day-to-day life.

The preaching and practicing of theology always have a systematic approach. Through the human experience the theologian seeks answers for theological questions in a structured way. In my seminary studies the emphasis was on preaching and teaching of the word of God in a systematic way, but I did receive some practical training, which gave me some insight into the doing of theology. "Practical theology justifies the first part of its name by the fact that it is concerned with actions, issues, and events that are of human significance in the contemporary world" (Woodward & Pattison 2000:7). My involvement in pastoral ministry for the last 13 years has given me many eye-opening experiences, which urge the necessity of practical theology.

In pastoral ministry the pastor practices the theory learned from the seminary. Thus theoretical theological understanding is transformed through continuous

interaction with the experiences of others and listening to the stories of others. Tradition also plays an important role in this formulation process. The pastor's theology is no longer an idea, but enfleshed in creative responses and interventions manifested in society. "In the post modern paradigm the relation of theory to practice is no longer linear but is interactive" (Anderson 2001:21). During pastoral training we learn theology, not because of curiosity to know about theories, but because we want to make an impact on the life situations of humanity. When we practice theology in this way, it will surely transform the community. The impact of practicing theology is noticeable and unavoidable. It is something different from social activism, which also aims for social transformation. Practical theological activity is an attempt to understand and respond to contemporary human issues from a theological perspective which is likely to affect people's views of themselves and the world, however infinitesimally. This represents a kind of transformation or change. While a social activist tries to change the society using his/her own approach, the practice and goal of a minister practicing theology is to facilitate the people's own approaches for positive change. Thus my ministry began to include helping the people on different levels, including the economic, spiritual, emotional and mental.

By a decision of my church's synod, I was transferred to a Southern African parish of our church. This parish has about 1000 members residing in four countries, namely South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. When I came here I realised that I would have to travel a lot to care for the people. I used to travel on weekends and stayed with local families, mostly Indian, and extended pastoral services in each place. But in the social life of these areas I found I had to relate with black, white, coloured and Indian communities here. As our church is in full communion with the Anglican Church, I had opportunities to attend church services and youth meetings of this denomination in various parts of Southern Africa. I also organised youth fellowships in various different universities, where I was able to listen to the stories of youth from different cultural milieus, social levels and economic strata. All these activities have

helped me to know the people of Southern Africa and gave me the chance to listen to the various cultural stories and discourses.

1.5.3 Narrative family therapy

In spite of my hectic travel schedule I view my placement as God's appointment, so that I can gain a better understanding of ministry, find out the deeper possibilities of my personality and help the people around me irrespective of caste, colour or religion. Thus I am open to different cultural stories and to hearing the multiple possibilities of life. As I live in Pretoria I decided to study further at the University of Pretoria, where I was admitted to the Masters course in practical theology and narrative family therapy. This immeasurably widened my view of the possibilities of stories and their telling. It is interesting to listen to people's stories. The post-modern counsellor is not a problem solver, but rather a facilitator who helps storytellers to tell and retell their stories, and to formulate alternate stories. This approach suited me more than the client-centred approach with which I has up till now been familiar, but I found the new approach difficult to adapt to. When I was introduced to the narrative approach by Prof. Julian Müller, this difficulty made me really uncomfortable, but he patiently listened to my stories of my experiences and helped me through proper interventions to unlearn my client-centred approach and enter the narrative paradigm. The continuous support of my fellow Masters students and of my professors, and the ample opportunities I got for counselling young people at the Street Centre, Pretoria, enabled me to complete my Masters degree successfully. This challenged me to learn more and I joined the PhD programme in pastoral family therapy, in the hope that I can contribute to the world of knowledge and ultimately benefit the community.

The world of deconstructive listening was a new experience for me. I was accustomed to the role of the professional counsellor, the person with the necessary technical know-how. The narrative approach requires that I take a

position of not knowing; the storyteller has sole authority over his/her story, and the right to re-tell it or tell alternate stories. My role is now rather to facilitate the telling of alternate stories. To achieve this I have to listen to the unique outcomes of each story. This is not always easy because this meaning does not come out directly all the time. "Unique outcomes constitute openings that, through questions and reflective discussion, can be developed into new stories" (Freedman & Combs 2002:31). Each instance of describing a positive effect of the problem on the storyteller is a potential opening into an alternate life story.

1.5.4 My position in this paradigm

Müller's seven-movement methodology is based on a postfoundationalist approach. "The concept of postfoundationalist practical theology is in itself a rediscovery of the basic forms of practical theology. It is an effort to move beyond the modernistic boundaries of practical theology as a very formal, rationalistic venture" (Müller 2005:72). The seven-movement methodology is a harmonious mingling of a narrative approach with social constructionist postfoundationalist theory. The methodology is interdisciplinary and facilitates the emerging of meanings from the specific context by opening a wide world of knowledge and experience. It is not a formal application of theological theory, but rather an experience of discovering new realities.

At the beginning of my seminary course, I was interested in Old Testament studies. However, as I learned Hebrew and criticised texts, I realised that this type of study is useful only to help us understand biblical truth better in its original context. This work is only indirectly related to the everyday issues of life. Thus when I took a counselling course, I responded to the immediate relevance of the work. The course really triggered my passion for exploring the specific context of the community around. I started learning and practicing client-centred therapy, pioneered by Rogers and Carkhuff, which empowered me as a counsellor. In the beginning, though, I struggled to develop the counselling techniques necessary, such as empathetic listening, exploration, personalising and initiating decisions.

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Rogers puts forward four preconditions for client-centred therapy (Fuster 1991:27, 28):

1. Congruence: the counsellor must be congruent, that is, his words must be in line with his feelings;

2. Acceptance: the counsellor must have a warm acceptance and esteem of the counsellee as a separate person;

3. Empathy: the counsellor must have the ability to see the counselee and his/her world as the counsellee sees them; and

4. Communication: the counsellee must experience him/herself as fully received, that is, accepted just as he/she is by the counsellor, no matter the counsellee's feelings, silence, gestures, tears or words.

Rogers' client-centred therapy or non-directive counselling inspired many training programmes and influenced counselling practice in various countries. This counselling approach emphasises the interpersonal relationship between the counsellor and the counsellee. It underlines the special gift of the counsellor to influence the counsellee for behavioural change for a better life pattern.

This approach gave me as the counsellor an influential role in the counselling process and in the counsellor-counsellee relationship. It made me feel that I knew something about counselling and about the dynamics of the human mind and thinking. Through various counselling sessions and experiences I came to be able to manage the emotional expressions of the counsellee and help him/her to explore and to evaluate experiences. In the client-centred approach the counsellor influences the thinking and behavioural patterns of the counsellee. "The thing to bear in mind is that the counsellor in all circumstances has an

impact on the counsellee. This may be either for her improvement or for her deterioration" (Fuster 1991:32).

Thus my counselling experience when I came to South Africa was exclusively in the client-centred approach. Then, as I mentioned above, I enrolled for the Masters course in narrative therapy at the University of Pretoria, and as I explained above had to make a difficult paradigm shift. Before I came to Pretoria University, I had already begun reading some post-modern literature. The basic theoretical position of postmodernism, that there is no essential truth, challenged my position as the influential counsellor. The new approach of narrative therapy, which added to my post-modern reading, showed me how counselling can be a process of co-creating meanings for life and its experiences. "Life narrative is always open-ended, always revised and expanded, and it is important that, as therapists, we recognize the relativism inherent in life narratives we hear and cocreate" (Josselson 2004:124). The meanings are co-created in relation with the other. I came to realise that my truth is different from those of others. Thus influencing the client hurts his/her truth and hinders his/her interpretation of this truth. Thus my Masters studies gently led me to the green pastures of 'not knowing' as a narrative counsellor.

The process of telling and re-telling stories widened my approach and led me to redefine my position; rather than a counsellor I am a co-researcher. The story teller is in the position of the author of his/her stories and the sole interpreter of these stories. I position myself as a co-researcher and accept the reality that the informant is the researcher. Epston's model, which has the counsellor as researcher and the informant as co-researcher is not entirely different from this position; both stress that as the counsellor must be respectful and continuously facilitate new possibilities. "I chose to orient myself around the co-research metaphor both because of its beguiling familiarity and because it radically departed from conventional clinical practice. It brought together the very respectable notion of research with the rather odd idea of the co-production of

knowledge by sufferers and therapist" (Epston 1999:7). The approach I use in this thesis, then, is a meaningful combination of respectful counselling and co-creating knowledge. I step aside for the story teller by listening to him/her carefully and move with him/her to new discoveries. The twin processes of narration and listening open up the wide and deep world of expanding meanings.

1.6 CONCLUSION

Youth all over the world face the problems of unemployment and marginalisation. In the specific context of South Africa, the transitions from traditional clan-lineage systems to a modern colonial system and then to a post-apartheid system have each delivered blows to the developmental skills of the youth in South Africa. "Many African peoples, for example, have been profoundly affected by the introduction of western technology-in the view of some observers, they have been affected disastrously since old established ways of community living have been seriously damaged" (Milson 1972:21). The rapid introduction of a democratic system of government has further contributed to a destabilizing of values, which has been negatively affected the lives, attitudes and experiences of many young South African people. The transition from the old community system to an industrialised system has had various effects on the social, economic and psychological experiences of common people. With these changes and experiences have grown up a set of discourses with which people, the young among them, attempt to justify or curse their circumstances.

This research study therefore addresses relevant questions and describes the dominant discourses that can be drawn from the stories told by young homeless people. It investigates the economic factors involved in homelessness in South Africa, through the stories heard, interpreted and retold.

The first chapter introduces the narrative approach, this study's theological context and the research model and methodology. It gives structure of this report, and recounts my practical and theoretical background in practical theology.

The second chapter focuses on the particular context, generally introducing the problem of homeless youth and then exploring the South African context in detail. The process of identifying the young people's discourses and their economic elements is also discussed here.

The third chapter narrows down on the context of the homeless youth in Pretoria and the narration of their stories. These are reported using a narrative approach, and reflected upon from a position of ignorance.

The fourth chapter discusses methods of listening and their relevance. The stories of the homeless youth develop here with new insights. Various themes are identified in the discourses, which influence the experiences of the young people in their particular contexts.

The fifth chapter describes the youth's experiences as these are continually informed by traditions of interpretation. Tradition and its particular impact on the experiences and stories of the homeless youth are assessed. This includes a discussion of the importance and meaning of God-talk in narrative conversation.

The sixth chapter describes the interdisciplinary approach used to thicken the stories, and opens a dialogue between theology and other disciplines, to broaden the relevance of this study.

The final chapter opens with an inquiry into story telling and listening methods, and uses the data gathered in the narrative conversations to develop discourses and interpretations of the stories. These interpretations are not limited to a particular context, but are relevant beyond the local situation. The development

of alternative interpretations that point beyond the local context of homelessness is discussed, and the relevance of these interpretations for further research mentioned. The concluding section evaluates the researcher, methodology and results, to improve the quality of this study's findings.

Listening to the experiences of young people in the streets and describing them from a position of humble ignorance are the challenges and aims of this research. As I listened to these youth, I noticed that particular discourses are dominant in their stories. Homelessness thus functions as a specific context for these discourses, and the discourses exemplify various factors of the situation of homelessness. Particularly important are the economic factors. Thus this study, in which uses the seven movement methodology and the techniques of narrative therapy in a constructionist postfoundationalist paradigm attempts to address pertinent questions and gaps of knowledge about homelessness, its dominant discourses and the economic factors involved in it.

CHAPTER TWO

DISCOURSES OF HOMELESS YOUTH AND THE ECONOMIC FACTORS IN THESE DISCOURSES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Youth is a developmental stage of life extending from adolescence to adulthood. Physical, psychological and emotional changes characterise this stage of life. To set age limits for youth is impossible, since it varies from country to country and culture to culture. For the purposes of this research I limit the age group to between 18 and 30 years of age. The lower level is chosen because people this age are at the ebbing of their teenage years and in many ways and for many purposes are already youth. An upper age limit above 30 will include people who no longer share many of the assumptions, emotional reactions and attitudes of youth, people who are actually more adults, which would not serve the purpose of this research and distort our understanding of the discourses of homeless youth. This will also affect our evaluation of the possibilities facing these youth.

Adolescence is a term used interchangeably for youth in the general sense. Adolescence is a period of transition. The adolescent experiences new freedom and renegotiates power and control with his/her parents. Physical and developmental changes take place that generate questions about the self. Relationship issues take on an emotional intensity that demands new behaviour and increasing accountability. Adolescents experiencing these struggles have to be listened to. "It is often necessary to let them speak about their struggles within a dominant culture" (Shelton 1995:52). When working with homeless youth I

have found it helpful to reflect with them on their cultural, racial or ethnic origins, to pose questions about how these associations have made them "who they are" and "what they are grateful for", in their background and current life situation. It is often necessary to let these young people speak about their struggles within a dominant culture. It is better to allow them to interpret their experiences. Thus this chapter offers an overview of youth in general and youth in the South African context in particular. The discourses of the youth and the economic impact on these discourses are also discussed.

2.2 YOUTH IN GENERAL

The 'welfare nation' is a slogan used by many governments all over the world. The developmental strategies planned in such a nation are based on the social, economic and infrastructure developments in various sectors of the country, in which the role of young people in this development process cannot be ignored. The years of youth, as mentioned above, are the years of development of a person. The well-being of the nation depends on the well-being of its community, and so on the well-being of its youth. The youth are the power of tomorrow. If they suffer undue struggles and bondages, the future of the society is at stake.

However, definitions of 'youth', 'young people' or 'adolescent' vary according to different human perceptions. These perceptions find their different shading in relation to different cultural and social settings. The understanding of youth may also vary between rural and urban conditions, and vary in different tribal cultures. Within urban communities, variance exists between rich city people and poor street people. "[A]lthough most people have some idea of who and what the adolescent is, perception of adolescents differ radically and are largely determined by people's respective frames of reference and their experience of adolescents in their cultural and social setting" (Gouws, Kruger & Burger 2000:1). When different communities treat and envision youth differently, the experiences of the youth themselves are important in their own specific contexts. Listening to

and understanding the youth is thus vitally important. If they can be helped to tell hopeful alternate stories of their lives, the youth can surely develop into the strength of today.

2.2.1 General definition of youth

"Youth is the state of being young; the period between childhood and adult age" (Allen 1993). Although it is difficult to define the youth phase in terms of chronological age, it is generally limited to the age between 20 and 30. These age limits differ from country to country, but generally demarcate the age at which the person gets a job or is settled in life. This is the period when the person acquires the ability to live by him/herself and lead a successful life. But because of changing social scenarios and unhealthy competition in society many youth are deprived of the opportunity to achieve their goals of life. Some young people go through periods of intense 'storm' and stress while others experience their youth as placid and free from serious emotional and social problems. Psychological development, cognitive growth, social development and economic maturity are some other factors important in defining youth. Adults are relatively sure about their identity, emotionally independent of their parents, have developed their own value systems and are able to have an adult love relationship (Gouws, Kruger & Burger 2000:5, 6). Youth is a transitional stage, which is very close to but not yet the stage of adulthood. The struggles faced by youth both inside and outside are enormous. The struggles to reach psychological, economic and emotional maturity are some of these, as youth try to come to terms the values of the adult world around them. As an anonymous poem puts it,

> They ask you to enhance your abilities,
> Learn from other disabilities
> But when you really show your capability,
> They ask you for credibility.

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These struggles can creates role confusion in young people. A patient ear to their stories, proper understanding of their struggles, meaningful interactions and supportive facilitation are needed at this juncture. These can help the youth to find the immense possibilities and talents that lie within in them and so that they can develop these in a proper and useful way.

2.2.2 Economic factors and youth

Young people are very susceptible to financial factors. Many homeless youth are on the streets because of unemployment. Others were employed, but lost all they had because of changing trends in consumerism, loans, debt and bankruptcy. The 'Money Matters' column in the *City Press* newspaper often offers advice such as, 'You should not incur new debt if your salary is not going to increase proportionately with your new monthly financial commitment' (Diale 2006:11). Many people do not heed such advice and fall into debt traps without knowing their consequences. When these people face financial crises, financial institutions and banks give them loans without helping them manage their debt. Unpaid loans lead to seizure of assets, and finally these young people end on the streets. Once they are homeless, there is nobody to help them. Thus economic factors are vital to understand in the experiences and discourses of homeless youth.

2.2.3 Development of youth

"Young adults are significantly affected by crime, poverty, and lack of formal education. They also experience a higher-than-overall official unemployment rate" (Perrow 2004:367). These factors badly affect the development of youth in South Africa. This does not mean that all the possibilities for development for youth are at risk. The National Youth Commission has announced plans to help create employment and develop skills to benefit thousands of unemployed youth

in South Africa. "The government would compile a register of unemployed graduates to link them up with relevant institutions as well as help them start their own businesses and get jobs" (Sakoana 2004). Through the Umsobomvu Youth Fund, the organization is creating a platform for job creation, skills development and transfer for South Africa's young people. According to Malose Kekana, "the contact, information and counselling programme should reach more than 730 000 young people over the next three years" (Kekana 2003).

The Youth Development Trust and the International Youth Foundation have announced a three-year extension to the Make a Connection programme, based on a joint commitment from Nokia, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Embassy of Finland in South Africa. The Youth Development Trust is a leading organisation in the provision of solutions to the youth sector in South Africa. The new programme addresses one of the most critical challenges facing South African Youth, namely employability and entrepreneurial skills (Helping Young People Develop 2004).

The Joint Enrichment Project (JEP) is another leading youth development organization based in Johannesburg. It was started before 1994 as a militant organization, but later changed its strategies according to the social changes after apartheid.

> As the external political and social climate changed, JEP underwent corresponding discursive shifts in each of these periods: from a discourse of collectivity and resistance; to a discourse of systemic capacity-building and individual skill-development; to a 'development discourse' of productivity, accountability, and efficiency, to a self-reflexive discourse of individuation and strategising in a competitive free market. (Perrow 2004:371)

The change from the discourse of resistance to the discourse of construction of youth is relevant and contributory to post-apartheid South Africa. The changing discourses of market and competition raise new challenges for youth development programmes and society as a whole.

The government has several developmental measures and policies in place for the development of the youth. One of the goals of the National Youth Policy of South Africa approved by the National Youth Commission is to "enable young men and women to initiate actions which promote their own development and that of their communities and broader society" (National Youth Policy 1997). But the government faces many struggles in this effort to help the youth towards development. One major problem is rural-urban migration. Despite the many dangers of city life, the trend of migration to urban centres in search of economic survival continues worldwide. Perceptions of diverse economic opportunities, greater freedom, varied social roles, excitement and improved public and health facilities all add to the appeal of city life. The young people migrating to the city however are a big source of uncertainty for the government.

2.2.4 Housing and youth

Youngsters are increasingly leaving home at a young age because of family instability, poverty, overcrowding in large families and various other reasons. The South African government has instituted various measures to assist those youth that have to find homes of their own. The land reforms have made access to land more convenient for the poor. Housing schemes should theoretically help poor youth. From time to time, the government announces housing policies specially aimed at the development of the youth, such as the policy announced on 13th January 2005, but these efforts are not enough, resulting in increasing rates of informal settlement and homelessness. As Ike Diale rightly points out, "it must make our hearts bleed to see our communities in shacks of tin, timber and paper in urban centres, villages and on white farms" (2006:11). Economic imbalances in society accelerate this trend, with globalization and its effects impacting on the poor, including the youth, of South Africa. The result is more shacks and more people on the streets. Setting up more shelters in urban areas is not the solution for this problem. More practical measures are needed to address the problems of housing and joblessness. The youth should be helped to create some kind of

positive outlook to the problems of society as a whole and to their personal problems of joblessness and homelessness.

2.3 YOUTH IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

The understanding of youth in South Africa is still in transition. In 1994 all South Africans gained political freedom, but the apartheid era left a devastating legacy. Many of the country's youth lack self-confidence and life skills. The influx of weapons into the community and increasing poverty push many black youth to socially deviant behaviour such as crime and violence. Seeking a better life, many of the rural poor in outlying villages began to move to the cities, worsening problems of accommodation and work. All these situations contribute to the decay of family bonds and so to homelessness among youth. The numbers of street children and youth are increasing alarmingly. However, despite all these negative trends, the youth of South Africa have opportunities to overcome these problems. The diversity of African culture is promising and offers possibilities for innovation. Proper understanding of freedom and independence need to be developed in South Africa's young people, to help them liberate themselves from economic and social oppression.

2.3.1 Traditional youth

Traditional African communities were rural and lived mostly by agriculture, livestock raising, hunting, fishing etc. "African societies were organised around a territory, which might be integrated into either a politically centralised or a decentralised system…. Young Africans grew up within the collectivistic structures of the lineage-based family and the age-class system" (Ly Boubakar 1988:150,152). Traditionally, young people were responsible for agricultural work, maintaining dwellings and policing the community. They found their identity within the lineage and community to which they belonged. Ideas of freedom and

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independence were integrated into the system of rules and taboos structuring their community. In this system there is no question of homelessness or joblessness. Everyone has his own responsibilities in his community and have a place to stay. African society is based on tribal settings. There are enough tribal, traditional ways to orient and equip youth for a community life. Each tribe has their own initiation ceremony to receive a boy from young age to adulthood. "The initiations transmitted to the young people the community understanding of sex and reproduction, and the role wife and husband were expected to play towards each other, their offspring, other children and elders in the family, their in-laws, brothers and sisters, etc." (Mpolo & De Sweemer (eds) 1987:83). The responsibility and their clinging to the community gave them a feeling of togetherness and that becomes an empowerment for the youth. The apartheid regimes shattered the togetherness of the commune systems and used the manpower and resources for their benefit. The people were brought away for mining and commercial farming. This caused breakage of the commune system and a deterioration of the value system. The identity and the dignity of the selfhood of the youth were at stake.

2.3.2 Modern youth

Demographic figures show that the youth comprises the majority of the population in almost all countries. It is not different in the case of South Africa. "Persons 35 years of age and younger constitute 75 percent of the population of South Africa" (Mokwena 1999:1). In the modernist perspective, youth is seen as the resource for production and supportive forces of the market economy. "Colonization introduced the market economy throughout Africa and with it, a new division of labour; its modification of traditional social structures and value systems and its reorganisation of social space opened the way for the emergence of towns" (Ly Boubakar 1988:153). Modernity is the result of industrial revolution and technological advancement. It promoted the importance of the individual over and above the system. "The industrial revolution was the

start of modern-day life as we know it. It led to the process of urbanisation together with technological and scientific progress. This in turn gave rise to the information revolution and globalisation" (Prins & Van Niekerk 2001:2). Modernist view brought human beings to the centre and to the prominent position of the world. Young people became the strength of the world. The increase of unemployment, alarming rate of urbanization and extensive use of drugs put the modern youth in a distressful and hopeless situation. Because of such unemployment; crime, violence and suicides increased. The urbanization caused an uprooting from the families and losing of social taboos which created social deviants. Some people made profit exploiting the distress of youth, by selling drugs to the young people. "The economic changes, the transformation of the employment structure, and the increase of state regulations have naturally influenced the attitudes and the motives of the young" (Allardt 1988:136). That change in attitude creates restlessness, laziness and rebelliousness; as a result the youth becomes unproductive.

2.3.3 Post-apartheid youth

Freedom is the birthright of every individual. In South Africa, the apartheid came into a closure by 1994 and the people of Africa got back their birth right. Before freedom, in 1985 Nelson Mandela wrote from prison to the people in Soweto about the freedom. "Not only I have suffered during these long, lonely, wasted years. I am not less life-loving than you are. But I cannot sell my birthright, nor am I prepared to sell the birthright of the people to be free" (Asmal, Chidester & James (eds) 2003: 46, 47). In the post-apartheid South Africa rainbow has become one of the unifying symbols. It urges the young people, and all South Africans to be in a new covenant for a peaceful life in a common nation.

The freedom experience opened the gates of possibilities for the youth to develop and to be fruitful in the nation. The youth policies of the government and the youth empowering programmes aim at the total development of the youth.

The philosophy behind the national youth development trust reads: "The development of the South African Youth in international perspective-and within the boundaries of the Global Environment-is a critical success factor to ensure accomplishment" ([Philosophy]() of National Youth development Trust 2006). The government is envisioning the youth development in an international perspective which opens immense possibilities for development. "One set of adolescents have their lives enhanced by a wide range of new technologies, including genetic counseling, new computer-driven devices, and sophisticated prosthetic aids, while another, larger set falls further into poverty" (Saraswathi & Larson 2002:359). In the apartheid era the job opportunities and accessibility to the economic resources are only to the whites. The political freedom offered complete accessibility for all South Africans to the resources of the society. Black empowerment and affirmative action are the policies of the post apartheid governments. But the lack of industries and the lack of job opportunities in the rural areas pushed the young people to migrate to the towns, in search of jobs and other life opportunities. As a result, everyday, young, jobless people are coming to the cities and towns. But there is no sufficient jobs and sufficient accommodation for all the people coming to the cities. Thus many find the streets as their shelter or night shelters for a temporary relief.

2.3.4 Youth and HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is a reality in the African community, especially among the youth. Government is taking various measures for preventing more infections and caring the infected and affected. Non-governmental organisations are also active in this field. "The battle to reduce new HIV infection among South African youth is to be intensified following the launch of Youth 4 Life (Y4L) a new non-governmental organisation in Pretoria …." (Sebelebele 2003). The Nelson Mandela Children's Fund began in 1995 as a programme to address the needs of young people facing homelessness, joblessness, poverty, and HIV/AIDS is doing a better job. HIV/AIDS is no longer simply a health concern. It is more than

that. It is directly related to poverty, economics, youth development, social stigmas and psychological effects.

Many young people are particularly at risk of becoming infected with HIV because of the situations in which they live; as a result of the behaviour they adopt or are forced to adopt because of social, cultural or economic factors. A study held at the University of Copenhagen reveals the facts about the economic impact of HIV/AIDS. "There are 16 African countries with an adult HIV prevalence of more than 10%. Of these Malawi, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia have prevalence rates of over 15%, Zimbabwe and Swaziland over 20%, while Botswana rises to at least 36%. In South Africa, the total population decline by around 10million between 2002 and 2015 as a result of HIV/AIDS" (Farham 2005:62, 63). This is a discouraging message to the developing economy of South Africa. However the government is taking preventive measures and creating awareness, the South African people do not realise the consequences of this problem.

Some people still have inhibitions and stigmas in relation with the disease AIDS, that it is directly related with sex. The stigmas in connection with that tempt the people to avoid the treatment for this disease. For this they will bring the mask of traditions and its rituals. Even some traditional healers try to make people believe that AIDS occurs because of some bewitching of others from jealousy. The people having the stigma related with sex will be satisfied with such diagnosis. These types of traditional beliefs and practices will spoil the society. The traditions should be redefined or rewritten in the light of contemporary realities. "The only way to allow traditions to survive is incorporation into a newer tradition or language" (Orr & Patient 2004:13). The traditional practices should be redefined and the morality of the community should be re-established to save the young people from this traumatic condition of AIDS. When I met some young people in the street centre they were very energetic and enthusiastic. After some months I noticed that, their health is deteriorating. Along with that their

enthusiasm and level of hope also diminished. The pleasant laugh turned to a pale smile. Even then they could smile and that was the message of hope involved. When listening to the youth stories, all of them may not be infected with HIV but all are affected in one way or other.

2.4 IDENTIFYING THE DISCOURSES

2.4.1 Identification criteria

In a social constructionist and post modern paradigm, it rejects the deliberate effort of individual to create meaning. Rather it believes that the meanings are emerging out of discursive relations. The discourses may be outer or inner. "We each carry a social discourse in our heads and, therefore, we have an internal controller and we risk being diagnosed as mad or bad if what we say is not part of the dominant narrative" (Milner & O' Byrne 2002: 22). In the discursive interactions the discourses involved are that which heard and that which unheard. The facilitator is not guessing the inner discourses of the story teller, but listening to the story told with a discursive approach. The themes, from which the story teller wishes to tell a story, are becoming the pointers to the inner discourses. Of course there is a role for the facilitator in listening to the themes shared. He has another role of listening to the stories untold and searching the themes unheard. The criteria for identifying the discourses are not that of listening to the stories shared but also listening to the stories unshared.

2.4.2 Identification methods

In the narrative approach of counselling work, the externalizing questions will help to identify and expose the dominant discourses. "We can expose dominant discourses by asking externalising questions about contextual influences on the problem. What 'feeds' the problem? What 'starves' it? Who benefits from it? In

what settings might the problematic attitude be useful? Which people would proudly advocate for the problem? What groups of people would definitely be opposes to it and its intentions?" (Freedman & Combs 2002:28). By asking such questions and listening to those questions we could identify the dominant discourses involved in his conversations. This approach will help the storyteller to view his perceptions and the discourses separately from his personality. This will help him to relive in the situation and move forward for alternate discourses and alternate stories. Along with the externalizing, the tracing of the history of the problem and exploring the effects of the problem could identify the discourses inherent in the interpretations. By certain therapeutic questions in the narrative relationship the facilitator could identify and deconstruct the discourses. It will lead to the discovery of unique outcomes and further lead to alternate stories. A set of questions are given by Alice Morgan for the deconstruction process.

- What are some of your beliefs about people's roles in sexual/intimate relationships?

- What ideas do you have about what makes 'good' and 'bad' sexual experiences?

- How did these ideas develop?

- Are you comfortable with these ideas?

- Which ideas are helpful in your relationship? Which ones get in the way? How do they work against your relationship?

(Morgan 2000:46, 47).

This is a pattern of question for deconstructing conversation. That does not necessarily demand questions in relation with sexuality. It is to help the story

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teller to come out of the set meanings and move forward to alternate meanings.

2.4.3 Discourses

There are different discourses involved in the experiences of homeless people. The discourse about homelessness is directly related to the discourses of poverty, unemployment, crime, governmental policies, youth empowerment and so on. There are different categories in the discourses. The anger of some people towards the system and towards themselves expresses the psychological discourses. The response towards crime, violence and unemployment involves social discourses. To demarcate the boundaries of the discourses in different categories is a difficult task. Discourse constructions define the identity of the youth. The discourses involved in the conversations of the homeless youth will be the deciding factors of the construction and deconstruction of their stories. The hope and hopelessness of each individual is based on his or her discourses. Identifying the discourses will help them to deconstruct and reconstruct their identities for a hopeful future. There are discourses about homelessness having economic impacts such as poverty, globalization, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, personal irresponsibility and joblessness. All these discourses have economic overturns which will tamper their future stories of hope. Listening to the unique outcomes and moving to the alternate stories of hope will help them in the process of narrative therapy.

2.4.4 Apparently dominant discourses

Of course when I listened to different stories of Youth, there were some discourses that came dominant which have some sort of negative effects on their personalities and experiences. "Discourses provide frameworks for debating the value of one way of talking about reality over other ways" (Parker 1992:1). There is no analytical method in understanding discourse. It is so difficult to identify the

discourses, which are dominant. Some of the discourses identified are the discourse about homelessness, discourse about modernity, discourse about habits, discourse about family, and discourse about the government or system. For the homeless youth, discourse about homelessness itself has much negative impact on their identities. Even though they are acquiring a futuristic vision, they are chained in the experiences of being homeless. Some people think that it is so difficult to be good in streets. Because all the people around are wicked. Some people confess their sins, but no way to go back. Some others prefer to share the good news of not being homeless. Some have the perspective that it is enough that God can understand our homeless situation. Homelessness, for all of them, is not an encouraging experience, but coping.

As they are away from homes they have role confusions in their identity. They are son, brother, father, and husband. But they are not doing any roles at this stage. So during conversation they swing from one role to the other and vice versa. But when we could see the possibilities in this shifting of roles, it is so easy to move with them for more vivid understanding of the present. "Inherent in our approach is the assumption that social identities are discursively constructed, dynamic and multiple: potentially our young informants present themselves in several roles or identities throughout the conversation" (Norrby & Wirdenäs 2003:249). These multiple roles are in a way possibilities for better options in the future. It can also end up in role confusions and utter desperateness.

2.4.5 Impact of economic factors

The adverse experiences of the homeless youth gives them negative evaluations and affirmations about the factors that lead them to homelessness. The starvation in the family, the increased number of family members, the broken family ties, repeated disappointments to get a job, lack of good friends, lack of dignity and helplessness are some of the discourses of the homeless having

economic impact. The economic impact on these discourses is so adverse and powerful. The economic policies are formulated by political and economic authorities. They have no real, concern to uphold the development goals of the homeless people. Thus the policies will again become oppressive. "The present trends in the economic sphere are none the less a sure sign that the time has come to take account of our attitude to work. To appreciate this, it is necessary to know what the essence or deeper significance of labour is" (Venter 1959:30). Some of the homeless have even a negative attitude to work. They got fed up in searching jobs. Now they are enjoying food from different charitable organizations and non-governmental organizations. It made them lazy and lethargic. In deconstructing the discourses, having economic impacts, making the value of work in them and help them to raise the dignity of their lives are important tasks in the narrative conversation.

2.5 HOMELESSNESS AS A DISCOURSE

2.5.1 Discourse analysis

In the strict scientific sense, the process of discourse analysis within the social psychology is problematic with the qualitative inquiry. It is not just analysing the discourse and finding meaning involved in it. It has a preconception that there is a set of meanings for a particular discourse. When approaching a discourse in search of a particular meaning or a set of meanings there is the opportunity of neglecting or missing the new meanings evolved. The danger involved in the discourse analysis is that which is the searching and finding of the meaning intended by the author of the discourse. It will not view the meaning evolved, in relation to the context or in relation to the audience. "Discourse analysis is an approach or a stance rather than a method. In terms of specifying or recommending procedures for conducting research studies, discourse analysts place most weight on the capacity of the researcher to understand the idea of discourse analysis, rather than on his or her willingness to master particular

research techniques" (McLeod 2001:100). There is a stream of various approaches for analysing discourse. There are approaches within discourse analysis which are against the approach of social constructionism. Thus I am not adopting the methodology of the scientific pattern of discourse analysis, but using it to understand the positive and negative discourses of the homeless youth. Also in a social constructionist narrative approach, it is not the duty of the co-researcher to analyse the meaning of the discourses. All I can do as the co-researcher is to understand their discourses within their specific context and help them to interpret as they wish to interpret. Through interpretation and retelling they will move to new meanings of their stories. By scripting and explaining their stories and its interpretations I am engaging in a process of discourse analysis.

2.5.2 Discourses, negative and positive

There are enough books, which go into the problem of homelessness. Many of them analyse the reasons for homelessness as personal irresponsibility, shortage of low income housing, the impact of changing technology on work, globalization, alcoholism, extreme poverty and so on. "The current and expanding crisis of urban homelessness results from the convergence of two contradictory and proximate forces; the rapidly dwindling supply of low-income housing and the increased economic marginality among the poor and the near poor, caused by the changing economy, changes in family structure, and shifts in government policies" (Timmer, Eitzen & Talley 1994: 17). It purely put the responsibility for the problem of homelessness to the shoulders of government. The factors leading to the economic deprivation and the factors leading to homelessness should come to the fore for a better understanding of the discourses of homelessness. Understanding homelessness involves a matter of various ingredients. Here, cultural, social and political factors cannot be minimized. The poor governance results in the displacement of people geographically, socially and politically. "Long-standing cultural currents figure in such displacements: a deep-seated ambivalence toward dependency, anxiety

about the shaky purchase of the work ethic among unsettled men, fears of mobility itself (people without ties were thought to be without norms as well), resentment by ordinary working people of their own ordinary working lot, the deep distrust shown by organized charity toward those of its charges who prove uncooperative or indifferent" (Hopper 2003: 26). According to Dear & Wolch, "Homelessness, at its most elementary level, is caused by a series of adverse events. These include eviction, loss of job, discharges from an institution, personal crises (such as divorce or domestic violence) and withdrawal of financial support" (Dear & Wolch 1987:197). These researchers analyse the sociological factors of homelessness. The discourses of homelessness are closely related to the discourses of unemployment and poverty. The discourse on the problem of the unemployed is an extension of liberal discourses and practices regarding poverty.

2.5.3 Homelessness as a dominant discourse

Homelessness has very hard experiences that lead the people to hopelessness. These retain the uncured scars in their minds. This will create some beliefs and affirmations about some social realities and phenomenon. This will be always negative. Those negative affirmations can be defined as negative discourses or in other words dominant discourses. It may be related to the stories about gender, race, class, age or so on. "There are subjugating stories of gender, race, class, age, sexual orientation, and religion (to name a few) which are so prevalent and entrenched in our culture that we can get caught up in them without realizing it" (Freedman & Combs 2002:27). The subjugating nature of such stories declares that those are dominant discourses. The dominant discourses are called dominant because they have a negative influence on the person and his identity. It is in a way invisible and not consciously known about. It may have direct or indirect relation with the discourses in the society. The responsibility of the counsellor is through deconstructive questioning help the person to examine problems in detail and expose discourses that support them.

When seeing the problem of homelessness as a dominant discourse, the picture adds more and reads more. When this sociological information became part of the discourses of the homeless, it may have negative and positive impacts. They may have a tendency to excuse for their homelessness and blame the social, economic and political system for the dysfunction. In the positive way some people will think about empowering the government and non-governmental organization to help the poor by supporting them. When we listen to the youth stories, the negative discourses are prominent. For the homeless youth, discourses about homelessness itself have a very negative impact on their identities. The understanding of the homeless youth about their condition of homelessness is very negative and it is taken for granted. In the real sense they don't know what they believe, but they live according to their belief. This will make their life worse and their experiences negative.

2.5.4 Economic conditions as discourse

'Homelessness is the result of poor economic conditions' is a major discourse. "Discourse analysis of economic theory, at least in post modern thought, is not a question of ascertaining the scientific core of concepts and methods; rather it is a question of seeing how language and other discursive forms can produce the meanings that determine partly our cognitive experiences of economic reality" (Samuels 1990:16). This is vivid in the conversation with Joseph (name fictitious) aged 23.

Renjan: When did you come from your home?

Joseph: Last year

Renjan: What circumstances made you to leave your home?

Joseph: My family is in poverty. My four sisters have nothing to eat. If I also
was there it would be a great burden.

Renjan: How do you feel about coming out?

Joseph: It is so sad, but no other way.

Renjan: How do you experience now as a homeless person?

Joseph: It is not a pleasant experience. I miss my family very much.

Renjan: Do you think you can join them again?

Joseph: Sure, I hope that I will get a job and can help my family.

This researcher and his experiences shed light on the fact of the economic aspects of the homelessness. He has dominant discourses of homelessness and poverty, as surely unpleasant. But he has a hope of redemption and moves to a better experience in the future. The dominant discourses are in a way the discourses happening in his mind about his experiences and its stories.

2.6 ECONOMIC FACTORS

Existing literature works on the social, anthropological, economic reasons of homelessness. According to Passaro it is the culmination of crises and missed opportunities in life. "For some people, homelessness comes relatively suddenly, with job loss and a subsequent eviction. For others, 'homelessness is often the final stage in a life long series of crises and missed opportunities, the culmination of a gradual disengagement from supportive relationships and institutions' " (Passaro 1996:29). Such scholars were engaged in the discussion of homelessness as a social, political or economic problem. That doesn't give

answers for the inner struggles of the homeless youth. Knowing about the social or economic reality will give a clearer picture of his/her economic situation. But it helps little in disengaging the dominant discourses of the homeless youth and the economic impacts involved in their life experiences. Filling the gap within the researches about homelessness and economic reality is a great task. That is the effort going to be done in this research.

Generalising the factors involved in the reality of homelessness is making the issue vague. When searching for the specific factors involved, light will be shed on various issues of poverty, disempowerment, globalization and mismanagement of resources, etc. When some people think their life as a curse in the streets, we cannot be judgemental to the real life experiences of the street people. Sometimes it may be a generalisation about the people around and sometimes we may think that as an exaggeration. We are not able to analyze completely the interpretations given by the homeless youth for their stories. Some people confess their sins, but no way to go back. The pricking feelings of their past experiences are haunting them again and again in their present street experiences. Even if they have people with them having the similar experiences they are not relieved from their own personal feelings and evaluations. Some of them have pleasant past memories, at the same time some others have highly irritating and painful past experiences. Some people prefer to share the good news of not being homeless, with others. All of them have some economic reasons or other factors that threw them to this status and that still haunt them. We cannot overlook other factors leading or contributing to the homelessness and joblessness. "Many of today's problems in the inner-city ghetto neighbourhoods-crime, family dissolution, welfare, low levels of social organisation, and so on-are fundamentally a consequence of the disappearance of work" (Wilson 1997:xiii). When work disappears, the joblessness and homelessness result. Homelessness, for all of them is an experience of confusion and trials of life.

2.6.1 Poverty

It is a Herculean task to define poverty. Poverty can be defined as a deficit of some essentials. Those essentials can be the physical necessities as well as the spiritual and mental necessities. The lack of food, clothing and housing can be defined as poverty. The lack of knowledge about God and good news of Jesus Christ can be defined as the spiritual poverty. When Robert Chambers [England] defines poverty as entanglement, John Friedman [California] is of the opinion that poverty is lack of access to social power and Jayakumar Christian [India] describes poverty as disempowerment (Myers 1999:66-79). These definitions are not self explanatory. Each one has its own particular social contexts to explain. But the important thing to notice is these definitions are not contradictory, rather they are complimentary. Poverty is directly related to homelessness and its economic conditions. We cannot place poverty in the prominent place in identifying the economic factors of the homelessness. We also cannot fall into pitfall of belittling poverty as one of the factors. "Inner city joblessness and homelessness are severe problems that are often overlooked or obscured when the focus is placed mainly on poverty and its consequences" (Wilson 1997: xiii). Joblessness and homelessness are in a way called as the extreme forms of economic marginality.

The biblical picture of poverty is varied and gives different dimensions of poverty. Basically Bible tries to define poverty as material poverty and spiritual poverty. The gospels give picture of disciples who choose poverty in response to Jesus' call for discipleship. "When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him" (Lk. 5:11). They left everything including their possessions and relations. The result is that they volunteer themselves to be jobless and homeless. Jesus said to the multitude, "Sell your possession and give alms" (Lk. 12:33). There are blessings pronounced on the poor. "Then he looked up at his disciples and said: blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Lk. 6:20). It gives us the picture that poverty is a blessed

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status. In Mathew we read the parable of people who give up everything in order to acquire the buried treasure or a priceless pearl which is the Kingdom of God. "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which some one found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Mt. 13:44). This teaches that the treasure on earth is not important when compared to the treasure of God's kingdom. Even the gospel pictures rich man as a fool (Lk. 12:20) or as a villain (Lk. 6:24-25). Bible gives another picture of sharing at the context of famine and poverty. "The disciples determined that according to their ability, each would send relief to the believers living in Judea, this they did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul" (Ac. 11:29-30). When Paul exhorts the Corinthian people to share the resources with the poor people, he supports his request by the argument of God's richness and God's volunturiness to be the poor. "For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). All the biblical stories lead to the particular context where they experienced economic adversaries. "The hypothesis is that there is some correlation between the economic circumstances we see in Bible and the different strata of teaching in poverty and wealth in the gospels" (Mealand 1980:11). This understanding will help us to be non-judgemental towards the biblical passages. As the economic circumstances create the biblical stories, the stories of the homeless people have their own specific economic circumstances. Listening and describing in the helping sessions will reveal more about these contexts.

2.6.2 Globalization

Globalization is an array of processes in the global, economic and social scenario which shrinks the world into a village. "The effects of globalisation on the youth has been the same as with nation states….Among disadvantaged young people it has resulted in increased unemployment, a growth in unfulfilled expectations and the growth in migrant labour…" (Johnson 2005:11). The

financial markets and global economy is ultimately not aiming to include the poor but only escalates the existing gap between the rich and the poor by avoiding the poor from the common areas of economic transactions and its global decision makings. The availability of consumer products from different countries in the market tries to make the common people understand the globalization as a blessing. Cheaper products from China, Hong Kong or Japan became common and are affordable for the middle class and also for the poor. But ultimately the national economies will be disempowered and it will weaken their market power. That will enable the multinational and some other financial agencies to decide on the market policies. Then the national governments may not have a say in the economic matters of the nation. That will be completely determined and dictated by the external forces ruled by the multinationals and the developed countries.

Through globalization the problems of a nation or a culture is not at all an internal or household problem. It turned to a global problem. As well, the possibilities of the local cannot be fenced in a globalized context. It turns to be the possibilities of the world at large. "Also life in the global village focused attention on pluralities of all kinds-cultural, political, religious etc." (Rossouw 1995:88). Accepting the pluralities open up the way for the different possibilities of the community. This is in line with the approach of postmodernity. As well as the globalization opens the plurality of cultures and economic opportunities, it marginalises the powerless, economically poor majority.

The possibilities of globalization minimises the use of human work force and extensive use of technological innovations. This results in massive discount of employment rate. "The absence of employment for youth and adults in inner cities not only makes the young deeply pessimistic about their future and the value of school but also means the young have no opportunity to learn how to work, or to learn the skills and habits of the workplace either through their own involvement or through the models provided by adults in their lives" (McLaughlin

1993:40). It shows that the globalization negatively affects the future of the urban youth. It curtails the opportunities to familiarise with the work situation.

When all the international assemblies held in connection with economic development and market strategies declare 'There Is No Alternative [TINA]', we have to listen to the practical proposals of deglobalisation. "Deglobalisation is not about withdrawing from the international economy. It is about reorienting economies from the emphasis on production for export to production for the local market" (Bello 2004:113). Seeking the alternatives through non-judgemental interaction with the local community is important in this context. In the context of homeless youth, there is the influence of a global culture which leads them only to unsatisfactory life experiences. When they wish for the imported fanciful products of other countries, more than their necessities, unaccomplishment of those wishes turns them to despair and disillusionment.

2.6.3 Substance abuse

Use of alcohol, stimulants, tranquilizers, heroine and ganjah are significantly higher in the youth compared to other age groups. The particular homeless situation adds the circumstances for becoming a drug addict or/and a drug seller. It is another easy way of getting money. The individual street fights, robbery and rape happen because of the extensive use of the drugs. Lack of relationships, loneliness, and deprivation of opportunities cause these types of social deviance. "Leisure activities among South African youth were linked to risks associated with HIV/AIDS, delinquency, violence and substance abuse" (Johnson 2005:11). Although much research has not been done in this particular area the stated discourses are clear from my experiences with the street people. I saw drug users and drug sellers, some selling pen and small items in the streets as a cover to drug selling. I met some males been raped by other homosexual males who are HIV positive. Lack of social taboos, social control and the ambiguity of the streets contribute to such activities of personal spoiling.

2.6.4 Personal irresponsibility

For the well being of a community the personal responsibility of the individuals are necessary. There are cultural and social factors behind the reality of homelessness and its economic backthrows. Blaming those cultural and social factors will not help us to evade the personal responsibility of the individual. In some of the cases of homeless persons the personal irresponsibility is a major factor contributed for their status of homelessness. Some of them coming to the Street Centre are homeless and jobless for years. They have their own reasons for coming out of their homes. But they are still homeless because of their personal irresponsibility. They are satisfied with the food they get from the social and religious organizations working among the street people. They have the shelter for night stay. Thus some of them are too lazy to seek some job. They will find lame excuses for being homeless and for being jobless.

We cannot totally blame them for their personal irresponsibility. They are not at all coming from a well defined family or social setting. From their raw life situations they haven't achieved enough life skills for coping up with the changing society. "Many children from poor homes are not exposed to situations that would promote the development of the coping skills required to meet the demands of an increasingly complex society" (Prins & Van Niekerk 2001:14). Thus they fall in a mood or attitude of blaming the society for their failures. Otherwise they will be lazy to seek for a job and find the reason that there is no use in seeking and seeking.

There are psychological reasons for these kinds of responses. They have no goals of self actualising or social role. The lack of self esteem and the vague understanding of the realities lead them to unhealthy attitudes of life. The existing life situation of homelessness and economic problems contribute more to this situation.

2.6.5 Shortage of jobs

"Many young people in South Africa were highly positive in their outlook even though many felt that they would not be able to fulfil their potential. The main reason for this feeling was indicated as a lack of financial resources; there may of course be a range of other reasons such as the lack of facilities" (Steering Committee 1994:20). Lack of jobs is a major factor for in the negative financial condition of many homeless youth. The new government's development approach, extensive growth in computer technology, and increasing rates of urbanisation are some of the reasons for the scarcity of work in South Africa. The result is that many young people live in a state of permanent unemployment, which has many psychological repercussions, including loss of confidence and a failure to seek for work, which only worsens the grip of unemployment. Thus a psychological response is also needed to the impact of economic factors in the life situation of homelessness and its discourses. Most of the people coming to the streets of Pretoria from rural settings in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape or Mpumalanga are relatively unskilled and lack working abilities. Some of them cannot even speak or understand English, which is necessary for survival in an urban setting, especially in South Africa. These less skilled, uneducated youth in streets struggle to find the jobs they need to meet their economic and physical needs. Even though they are positive in their attitudes scarce resources and minimum or absent job opportunities lead them to socially deviant activities such as crime, violence, substance abuse, drug trafficking and rape. Thus an important part of the ministry of the Street Centre is helping homeless youth to prepare their CV's and to hunt for jobs. Along with these practical measures, counselling interventions and spiritual classes also help the young people to discover their resources and to be self-equipped. However, these interventions which develop job-hunting skills will only re-order the queue for jobs, if no more jobs are created. Thus the governmental has to complement these social, psychological and spiritual interventions with effective job-creation programmes if the problem of unemployment is to be solved in South Africa.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter was a journey through various definitions of youth and issues related to these. The sector of society made up by youth in the South African context was identified, and the discourses of homelessness explored. Identifying and deconstructing these discourses are the tasks of a counsellor as facilitator of new stories. The various economic factors involved in the discourses related to homelessness were identified, and gave insight into the unavoidable economic condition of homeless people. The economic factors identified in the discourses can help policy makers in further empirical studies and policies. They contribute to alternate visions through which homeless youth can identify the trends in their stories and find better alternate understandings.

CHAPTER THREE

LISTENING TO THE HEARD AND UNHEARD STORIES OF INNER CITY HOMELESS YOUTH IN CONTEXT OF PRETORIA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Demographically youth constitutes two-thirds of the overall population of South Africa. Thus we must realise the potential that the youth population has to challenge the social scenario of South Africa. The many socio-political changes of the past century have affected all race groups in South Africa. Currently, "most South Africans are experiencing a threat to their previously established identities and, in many instances need to redefine their position in society" (Prins & Van Niekerk 2001:10). For instance, many middle-class black South Africans now experience a sudden progression up the social ladder because of employment equity measures. At the same time, crime, violence, political instability and poverty plague all sectors of society, especially the youth. Increasing numbers of street children and youth, and rising rates of prostitution, theft and crime are some of the negative effects of the 1994 socio-political transition. This does not mean that freedom brought only negative consequences for South Africa, but rather reflects the identity struggle induced by the transition. For people in their teens and twenties, already undergoing identity confusions and crises, this social change only makes the process of maturing more difficult. These young people need adults to listen to them carefully and openly, a process that will help them greatly in their efforts to define their identities.

But the 1994 transition has by and large brought great good to South Africa, particularly to women and young people, who are increasingly aware of their own human dignity. The redistribution of job opportunities has improved the economic situation of many families. Despite poverty and crime, many young people are becoming more creative in participating in nation-building processes, and trying to find small jobs and start their own businesses. The youth are also increasingly eager for education, which the government promotes. In his speech on the second National Youth Day of the independent South Africa, the first black President Nelson Mandela said, "This generation of youth stands at the borderline between the past of oppression and repression, and the future of prosperity, peace and harmony" (Ramphele 2003:242). During the apartheid era, black leaders in exile shared the stories of oppression with young people worldwide. This hightened the international response against the oppressive minority government in South Africa. Miriam Makeba, the famous singer, shared the stories of the people of South Africa during her musical journey in exile. About the title song of her album, 'Masakhane', she says, "And in the song I say I've been around the world telling the story of my country and my people and in that journey a lot of people listened and raised their voices against injustices" (Makeba 2003:281). Such activities accelerated the arrival of freedom in South Africa. After 1994 these stories became more hopeful, especially among the youth. This hope is that freedom will become a reality in all areas of life in South Africa, as economic and social factors slowly improve and culture and art challenge and motivate youth towards achieving a better future in their particular contexts.

3.2   YOUTH IN PRETORIA

The young people of Pretoria are not different from the youth in South Africa in general. The youth of Pretoria, rich and poor, urban and rural, represent the youth of South Africa. People are constantly migrating to urban centres seeking

economic opportunity and security, varied and alternative lifestyles and individual freedom and choice. The majority of the rural poor people end up on the streets, seeking a livelihood. This study concentrates on these street people, particularly the youth among them. The experiences of youth who live on the streets are complex. These young people have to cope with stress both from their immediate environment and from the complexities of society as a whole.

3.2.1 The reality of the lives of these young people

Even though governmental and non-governmental organisations have various policies and projects in place to help and develop South Africa's youth, many young people still leave their homes daily and end up on the streets of major cities. When they come to the city they have no place to stay or job to support them, so they become homeless and live in utter poverty. The influx of village youth coming to the city streets is growing, not only from the villages of South Africa but also from those of other neighbouring African countries. These young people come as illegal immigrants or refugees. Some of them turn to damaging behaviour such as drug abuse, robbery, rape and murder. Others live by illegal begging, or seek street centres and job programmes.

These are some of the realities of life on the street, and the number of young people suffering their ill effects is likely to rise, since 70-75% of South Africans are expected to be living in urban areas by 2030 (Sebelebele 2003). Young people will continue to come to the cities because in the villages they often lack even basic nutrition and education. Even if some of them leave school with an exemption, it is very difficult for them to enter a university for any kind of higher education. "One of the crucial challenges facing South Africa is the continuing inaccessibility of higher education to poor and disadvantaged students" (Cele 2005:11). According to Cele, the apartheid regime and democratic state's student funding policies are largely to blame for this situation. But it is easy to blame broad social situations and large institutions. We must rather take responsibility

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as citizens, and not let the aim of the education system become profit rather than complete social development. Economic growth is of course a vital part of the nation's development, but it cannot be achieved without proper higher education for the nation's youth. Education is arguably the birth right of each individual in theory, but in practice accessibility to education is hindered by various social and economic factors in South Africa.

3.2.2 Homeless youth

A particular problem not solved by the social transformation in South Africa is housing. Accommodation initially became more affordable for the urban poor. For a while after 1994, middle-class people tended to move out of city centres and poorer people to move in. Housing in the inner regions became the most affordable in the city and many different cultural groups of people moved into these areas (Van Niekerk 2004:125). This influx of people has not stopped since, and as the inner cities do not have the capacity to accommodate all these people, housing has become unaffordable for many people. Many of the people moving to the city left their homes because of family problems, poverty and joblessness, so they have no economic or social reserves. The cities can offer only overpriced housing, and few jobs, and so these people have no option but to end up on the streets. As Johaan Meylahn writes from his own experience, "Inner city is a place where homeless and unemployed individuals try to make a living from the scraps of society…. [I]t is place of brokenness, where people try to construct and reconstruct their lives on the margins of society with the broken bits that society throws to them" (Meylahn 2003:164).

The homeless young people living in the inner city endure much hardship and have to struggle to keep their identities in very difficult situations. That they are homeless in the city does not necessarily mean that all of them have no home. Some of them have distant homes to which their economic deprivation prevents them returning. This alienates them from their relatives and friends who wait for

them at home. Other young people are truly without homes, since they left their families and have broken relationship with their relatives. Thus many young homeless people experience extreme loneliness, even though there are many homeless people around them.

3.2.3 Pretoria Community Ministries

Through its Street Centre, Pretoria Community Ministries strives to journey with the homeless youth of Pretoria through their experiences of homelessness. A brief history of this ministry is needed to understand the particular context of counselling sessions reported and analysed in this study. This context is the relatively safe and peaceful setting of the Street Centre where the young people strive to tell and interpret their stories. Pretoria Community Ministries (PCM), started in 1993, is the work of a fellowship of six inner-city churches in Pretoria and the greater Tshwane region, which joined together to work towards the freedom of the people in bondage and hardship. The churches are the Melodiya Tshwane Uniting Reformed Church, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Cathedral, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, St. Alban's Anglican Cathedral, and Wesley Methodist Mission.

The slogan of PCM is "Rebuilding our communities in the name of Jesus." This gives the goals and objectives of the ministry in a nutshell. To love the city and its people with God's love was the specific theme for the movement for 2005. The ministry thus includes within the framework of social work the opportunity for practical theology. "Just as human beings need love to carry on bravely, a city that is not loved also slowly withers away until it becomes a cold, soulless place, where nobody dares to tread. But a city that is loved attracts people, reflects beauty, exudes passion, becomes heaven for the soul" (Pretoria Community Ministries News Letter 2005:1). The goal of the ministry is to express God's love in meaningful ways in Pretoria. Street ministry is a part of PCM's activities, working from a street centre located near St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. The

Street Centre has been operating since January 1998 and provides between 1500 and 2000 instances of service a month, including advice, support and fellowship to homeless people in the inner city of Pretoria.

3.2.4 The Street Centre and homeless people

Akanani is the name for the street ministry started by the PCM in 1997. This is a Shangaan word which means "let us build together". The vision of the Street Ministry states that "Homeless people can re-connect, recover their dignity, and access the resources that will re-integrate them into communities. At the same time Akanani wants to tell the stories of homeless people-both stories of struggle but definitely also the amazing stories of hope" (Akanani 2006).

The main objectives of the street ministry are as follows:

1. Preparing people for employment by providing them with job hunting training, preparing CV's and contacting employers;

2. Caring for people on the streets and referring them to shelters and housing projects; and

3. Giving counselling and support.

In the Street Centre homeless and jobless people gather everyday for Bible classes, life and job-hunting skills workshops and church services. After the sessions in the morning they all have coffee offered by some well-wishers. Food, clothing, blankets and shoes are supplied to the needy. Facilities and materials are provided for bathing and washing clothes, so that the homeless people can live with cleanliness and dignity. Staff members and volunteers are always ready to help the poor and needy in many ways. Some of the people who come to the

Street Centre are not only homeless or jobless but do not even have proper identification documents. The staff help them to prepare applications for ID documents and to follow up on these applications, to prepare CV's and send them by fax to possible employers and to call employers to ask for work. In addition, the staff counsels the distressed, HIV/AIDS infected and affected, persons, those involved in substance abuse and person in other hardship or danger.

3.3 CONTEXT OF THE STORIES OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

3.3.1 Homeless youth in Pretoria

Homeless youth in Pretoria originally come from various provinces of South Africa, and from neighbouring countries such as Burundi, Congo, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. They have various cultures, social practices and languages. They all share the problems of lack of faith in each other. Crime, violence, mugging, drug abuse and rape are common experiences among them. Many of them have no identity documents. Most have no specific skills or work experience. Some have been unemployed for years. "Homeless people are generally marginalized because of society's stereotypes, a lack of policy that includes and affirms homeless people, and the lack of appropriate programmes and services to assist them" (Akanani 2006). For this reason PCM established its programmes to help and support the homeless, jobless youth, as described above.

3.3.2 My involvement in the Akanani programme

As part of the Masters course in Narrative Family Therapy which I attended at the University of Pretoria I joined the Street Centre as a volunteer. One day when I

went into the Street Centre I saw Lizy, a staff member, talking to a drunken old man. Lizy was talking to him with the affection of a loving mother and the old man was listening like a child. The Bible says God listens when human beings cry or talk. Our God is a listening God. I could not understand most of the conversation between Lizy and the old man, because it was in Afrikaans, but by their expressions I understood the feelings involved in that conversation. After some time another drunkard, a younger man, arrived. Lizy spoke to him about his mother, who was begging him to come home. He said he would stop his drinking and go home. These scenes were enough to convince me of the power of and need for street ministry.

So I met Mr Alson, the co-ordinator of the Akanani street ministry. He appointed me to lead Bible devotions every Tuesday for the homeless community. After the Bible classes I could spend time meeting people and talking with them. Sitting at the Street Centre and looking at the faces of the homeless people, I began to try to invite them to come and share their stories with me. As a student of the narrative approach I tried to listen and ask questions deconstructively. Many of the people who come to the Street Centre are youth, and because I am still young, though a pastor, these young people showed that they liked to talk to me. This motivated me to listen to more and more of their stories about homelessness and its various factors. Thus the youth became my main target for conversation, though of course I did not avoid talking with older people, who were free to also share their stories with me.

Our conversations were not without difficulties. The youth to whom I talked belong to various cultural groups such as Sotho, Swana, Tsepedi and Afrikaans. Also, the atmosphere in the Street Centre is very relaxed, nothing like the structured environment of a clinic or therapy room. People move about in the room, talking freely about topics of their own personal choice. However, despite these difficulties, I managed to interact with the youngsters. They shared their stories shaped by the dominant discourse of homelessness. All the stories gave

me insight into the impact of economic factors on their situation and their discourse, the unavoidable economic conditions which pushed them onto the streets and prevents them from returning to a more settled life. I listened to their stories and helped them create alternate stories of hope in their lives.

3.3.3 Context of the stories heard at the Street Centre

The various stories of the youth coming to the Street Centre reveal different dimensions of homelessness. How did these young people become homeless? What do they feel about being homeless? What are the struggles they face every day? These are some of the questions we pondered in these conversations. In sharing their past experiences the youth retell their stories and reframe their experiences. This helps them to see the past, not as something completely negative, but as experiences that can be seen from different angles. This can ultimately lead them to find hope for a new life. "Narrative practice makes use of this understanding of people's need to find new meaning in their lives, and it is this important element which serves as a motivator in narrative's emphasis on helping people to re-author their lives toward preferred outcomes" (Abels & Abels 2001: 83). The stories I heard at the Street Centre are typical examples of the re-authoring of lives. As example I can show part of a conversation I had with Joy, a young man who has been homeless for the last eight years, since he left home in his teens when his father died. For a time Joy lived with a partner with whom he had two children, but he left this home too, this time because of relationship problems with his partner.

Renjan: What do you think about leaving your home i.e. leaving your parents?

Joy: It was a necessity at that time.

Renjan: Why do you think it was a necessity?

Joy: When my father died my mother seek another man as her partner. Then I thought I could not be there.

Renjan: How do you think about that now?

Joy: Being homeless is being powerless. So it is good to avoid such a situation.

Renjan: You mean, it is not right to come out?

Joy: That is my thinking about my coming out from my wife and kids?

Renjan: How do you feel about homelessness?

Joy: As a homeless one for several years I don't prefer it as advisable. I wish to go back to my home.

Joy begins by talking generally about his experiences, but as the conversation deepens he reveals that his real desire is to go back to his home. Nobody wants to remain homeless, which is an inhuman condition forced on individuals by circumstances. Enlarging the vision of young people like Joy of homelessness can help lead them to a more hopeful future.

Another example is a young man called Joseph, aged 23, who became homeless because of the poor economic conditions of his family. His father and mother died and he and his four younger sisters lived with their grandmother. She was too poor to support them, so they were starving. To seek a job Joseph left his home and came to the city. At the time of our conversation he had been looking for a job for a year without success.

Renjan: When did you come out from your house?

Joseph: Last year.

Renjan: What circumstances made you to come out from your home?

Joseph: My family is in poverty. My four sisters have nothing to eat. If I also will be there it will be a great burden.

Renjan: How do feel about coming out?

Joseph: It is so sad, but no other way?

Renjan: How do you think now as a homeless?

Joseph: It is not a pleasant experience. I miss my family very much.

Renjan: Do you think you can join with them again?

Joseph: Sure, I hope that I will get a job and can help my family.

Thus in the midst of his struggles with homelessness Joseph still hopes to be reunited with his family. This vision about a hopeful future stems from a better understanding of his present.

3.4 CULTURAL DIVERSITY

'Culture' can be defined and interpreted in many ways. It covers the habits, rituals, lifestyle and language for a group of people, whether this is a clan, tribe or community. "Basically, it incorporates all aspects of the society's life, including

production and technology, economic and family ties, governmental systems and so on" (Erasov & Singh 2006:12). South Africa has white, coloured, Indian and various types of black communities. Each community or tribe has its own cultural artefacts. Culture is formed in a specific social, geographical and historical context. Thus each culture is unique. This uniqueness should be seen as an opportunity not for rivalry but for unity.

Indigenous cultural systems are diverse, and give different meaning systems to the children that grow up in them. For example, cultural values are received through the stories children hear, and shape the social responses of these children as persons. The problem is when indigenous cultures die and is replaced by the generic, post-modern urban culture of the west. "We struggle in our post-modernist world between a dominant culture which emphasizes an instrumental stance and is bound up with the pursuit of freedom, independence, self-reliance and conquest" (Walrond-Skinner 1993:48). Instead of stressing the differences and conflicts between cultural systems, thus, we must strive to protect indigenous cultural values and promote them for the betterment of the community. Protecting these cultural values from the lingering effects of colonialism and the current threat of globalisation is vital in South Africa at the moment. This is why now the trend changes to localising of economies and values.

3.4.1 Beyond colour

Seeing and understanding communities beyond their colour and racial settings is a necessity in South Africa today. Until we see people in this more genuine way, we cannot separate a particular individual or community from their own specific context. This deeper understanding will help us to go beyond colour to find possibilities for working together for the betterment of society. A multicultural context always presents the possibility of miscommunication or lack of communication, and "the local context of the counselling organization is critical in

a multi-cultural environment" (Rawson, Whitehead & Luthra 1999:13). During the apartheid era in South Africa, people were discriminated against on the basis of colour, and non-white communities oppressed. After 1994 we must try in South Africa to rather use colour difference as a possibility, a chance to practice understanding cultural and social contexts and to help each other towards social growth. Colour difference, say management theorists, can be an opportunity for managing resources. For students of culture and of counselling colour or cultural differences can be an opportunity for getting to know each other and growing together through experience.

3.4.2 Understanding cultural differences

The coexistence of different cultures in one society is unavoidable in the post-modern setting. Globalization has opened the boundaries of nations and increased the economic, social and cultural interactions between societies. These interactions are not always easy. "Mutual inter-cultural contacts began in time immemorial and are a constant feature of communication among human communities. Modern culture as a whole is the result of the endeavour of the whole of mankind and the interaction between different cultures" (Erasov & Singh 2006:288). Coping with conflict requires social change, but merely recognizing the existence of diverse cultures will not contribute to this social change; rather a meaningful understanding of diversity is needed. This will not arise from just sitting together and discussing the differences and similarities of cultures in a sophisticated setting. Rather, members of different cultures need to interact in a down-to-earth way, such as by participating in each others' cultural festivals and artefacts. Another effective interaction is through listening to each others' cultural stories within the specific context of personal experiences. In this study, I as researcher need to understand the cultural overtones of the stories of the homeless youth, my co-researchers. I have the responsibility to listen to the cultural interactions within myself as the researcher, as well as to those within the co-researchers. At the Street Centre I experienced many stories and other

cultural interactions, such as singing and dancing together and sharing cultural values through Biblical discussions.

3.4.3 Diversity: hindrance or possibility?

Some people think diversity is a phenomenon that divides society and creates hatred between communities. Such people consider diversity as a curse and a hindrance to human development. Of course there are problems created by differences in colour, caste, language and other systems in society. But, as discussed above, diversity also offers immense possibilities. We cannot separate people from their particular cultural and social settings. For example, people worship differently in various languages and styles, all formed by their different geographical, social and cultural settings. The post-modern perspective celebrates plurality, accepting it as inescapable in human interaction. Young people especially now tend to accept the goodness of and celebrate plurality, which can have very positive effects. "In the South African situation, it was precisely the acceptance of diversity which forced politicians to seek a compromise by a creating a federal constitution which promotes the devolution of power to the nine regions" (Maimela 1996:90). This urge to understand different cultures and interact meaningfully must be encouraged. More literature, educational programmes and social events will help this endeavour of knowing each other, to transform differences from a hindrance into a possibility. My experience with the young people at the Street Centre bears this out; though we come from many different cultural backgrounds, and in the beginning I experienced some problems, particularly with language differences, their enthusiasm to share and my willingness to listen to their stories soon overcame these problems and I was able to understand them within their individual cultural contexts.

3.4.4 Cultural stories and youth

Cultural stories have a great impact on the youth and their destiny. Some of the young people I spoke to fear the future and others hate the present. All these responses were moulded by the specific cultural milieu of their backgrounds. A narrative approach to listening to the cultural stories can help them to retell their stories in their present context. In retelling their stories they will find new meanings and values for their life. The cultures of Africa have great potential for such meaning. "On the overall journey of life, African human and spiritual values can call people back to their roots and give them new meaning and purpose" (Healey & Sybertz 1996:15). The young people's stories carry immense meaning which can support and propagate life. A spiritual-theological interpretation of their stories is a way of understanding these in a practice-oriented theological way. Inculturation of such stories is useful for addressing the contemporary issues these young people are facing. This is not Christianizing African culture or Africanizing Christianity. It is more an encounter of African culture with Christianity, an encounter which brings newness, freshness and originality (Healey & Sybertz 1996:19, 20). Understanding the individual young person's cultural stories within his/her specific context as story teller will help me to be with him/her in his/her struggles, without westernised or personalised prejudices. Even if some cultural stories have particular meaning in their original setting, the storyteller, having a particular cultural experience, has the right to interpret such stories in light of this experience. One of the young men to whom I listened, Michael, fills his personal stories with cultural stories and understandings. He interprets and responds to such cultural stories and their values from his personal perspective. Thus I have to accord these stories a proper unprejudiced listening to extract the full content of cultural values and traditions.

African religion is rich with rituals and stories. The religious heritage of Africa can be understood only in the light of the stories of African traditional religions. Understanding these religious traditions is necessary for building a suitable

spirituality for our changing modern times. Inculturation in Christianity is an accepted religious approach in faith practice. "Inculturation stresses the encounter of Christianity with the cultural and religious heritage of Africa while liberation stresses the social and economic contexts in which Christianity is lived out" (Healey & Sybertz 1996:21). The mythical stories of African traditional religion have been passed down from one generation to the next with cultural emphases and alterations. Each story can be altogether new when it reaches the next generation. Many stories give the traditional community hope for liberation and power to persevere.

The Sukuma ethnic group has a mythical story about a young man, Masala Kulangwa, and a monster, Shing'weng'we. The story goes like this: Once upon a time, the monster Shing'weng'we swallowed all the domestic animals together with all the people in the world except for one pregnant woman, who hid in a pile of chaff. Later this woman gave birth to a boy and named him Masala Kulangwa. When he grew up he asked: "Mother, why are there only the two of us? Where are the other people?" She answered: "My dear one, everyone else was swallowed by the monster Shing'weng'we." From that day on, the clever young man started looking for the monster. One day he killed a grasshopper and arrived home singing: "Mother, Mother, I have killed Shing'weng'we up in the hills. Rejoice and shout for joy". But his mother answered: "My dear one, this is only a grasshopper, not the monster. Let's roast it and eat it." On other days he killed a bird, a small gazelle and an antelope. He came to his mother singing and dancing each time, and each time she replied that it was not the monster. Finally in desperation he went to the forest and shouted for the monster, which then appeared. In a great fight, Masala Kulangwa overcame the monster, killed him and cut open his back. Out came the boy's father, along with his relatives and all the other people of the world. The people made the clever young man their chief, seating him on the Chief's chair with his mother beside him as queen mother (Healey & Sybertz 1996: 64, 65). This story is an example of the narrative outlook of traditional African communities. This tale gives power to the young

people in the community. It makes them relevant, opening to them the roles of saviour and liberator. These stories influence the young people who grow up hearing them. But because of colonisation and urbanisation, many young people lose the stories of their traditions and world views. The impact of these hopeful stories is then lessened and the young people fall into hopelessness.

3.4.5 Meanings emerging from cultural stories

One of the cultural interactions I experienced at the Street Centre was morning devotions with the young people in which they shared their cultural stories about beauty. This exercise was intended to explore the beauty of each of the countries from which they come. The session included both hopeful descriptions and stories, but also stories of frustration and anger. The following are examples of both these types of narrative. George, from Mthatha, described the beauty of the land in his home area and narrated how new settlements were build on the mountain sides. It was lovely to live on a mountain side, he said, with nice breezes and a wonderful view of the natural scenery. This beauty came to the people because of the apartheid system, which forced black people to move away from cities and live in the meadows and valleys. Michael from Tzaneen shared a similarly hopeful story about the natural beauty of the Northern Province. His area is full of fruit trees and vegetables gardens. He likes gardening and cultivation, which he finds interesting, he says.

Another hopeful story, this time from a different country, was told by Fernandes from Zimbabwe. His land is beautiful because of the Victoria Falls. The water falls down and wets the land for miles around like rainfall. It is a marvellous sight, though also dangerous, because many people drown in the river. The famous Balancing Rocks in the falls are shown on the Zimbabwean currency. In his story, Musihi from Angola celebrates the natural resources of his land, especially diamonds and oil. Musihi tells how, because of the Portuguese invasion, the people of Angola struggled greatly. When the colonisers left, the different tribes fought each other. Now that was over and the country is getting better, though

still difficult to live in; Musihi left because of poverty. I shared the natural beauty of India and the diversity of cultures there. For me, the green vegetation and mountains of the south of India, the beauty of the deserts in the central part and the snowy mountains of the east make a perfect conglomeration of beauty in diversity.

It was fascinating to listen to the stories of people from different cultures. The stories also showed how the culture in which individuals are socialized influences the way they communicate. The way in which the young people shared their stories as well as the content of these stories reveal particular cultural repercussions and uniqueness. Trying to understand the stories within their particular manner of telling helps us to recognize the culture and life realities of the teller more truly. The meanings emerging from such sharing allow us to glimpse the teller's social, cultural and economic hopes and frustrations. When the young people share about the natural beauty of their homes they are sharing their love for and desire to be at home. A feeling of nostalgia is reflected in these stories. Yet though their countries have natural resources, the common people experience frustration because they live in poverty. Thus these same stories point to the naked truths behind the phenomenon of homelessness. However, they also show that the youth telling them all still keep alive hope for a future change in their life situations.

3.5 ECONOMIC REALITIES

3.5.1 Population growth

Population growth has both negative and positive effects on the economic conditions and sustainability of a nation. Some people curse population growth, saying that it hinders economic growth. Other thinkers read population growth as increasing a country's potential for economic development. Economic statistics and demographic figures affirm that population growth in sub-Saharan Africa is

higher than most other regions of the world. "In developing countries, population growth – particularly in cities – is still very large, although the rates of increase are declining" (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HAITAT) 2007:2). This decline is arguably partly due to the recent increase in mortality rates because of AIDS in South Africa, which translates into a decrease in population growth. When the population grows employment opportunities have to increase simultaneously, otherwise unemployment, poverty and deprivation of resources can result. These effects in turn negatively affect the economic growth of the nation. However a decrease in population growth because of HIV/AIDS, instead of improving the situation, can affect the self-confidence of people in their efforts to use resources for development. Many of the homeless youth in Pretoria show this effect, living in a mental and social situation of helplessness. Meaningful interaction can greatly help them to be liberated from this self-doubt. But more social action and better governmental policy are required for the development of the economic conditions of the majority of South Africa's population, who are poor.

3.5.2 The labour market and unemployment

A labour market has two sides, demand and supply. If there is a demand for labour which the supply does not satisfy, the result is negative economic growth. But at the same time, if supply exceeds demand, the result is unemployment, which becomes a social problem. An unemployed person can be defined as one who is unable to find employment in the given economic conditions. Alternately, an unemployed person can be a person who is unable to find a job that suits his/her choice. Various different kinds of unemployment prevail in society, such as frictional, structural, seasonal and demand-deficient unemployment. Frictional unemployment is created by the movement of workers between jobs. Structural unemployment is caused by long-term structural changes in the economy. Seasonal unemployment arises because of a lack of economic activity in certain areas of production in some seasons. Demand-deficient unemployment is

associated with a lack of aggregate demand. Various kinds of unemployment are found in the different parts of South Africa. Demand-deficient and structural unemployment are the most common types of unemployment among the unemployed youth on the streets of South African cities. This is because the South African labour market is characterised by the simultaneous existence of a secure highly paid labour sector, large enough for the supply of educated/skilled workers, and a very low-paid labour sector, too small for the supply of unskilled workers. Population growth tends to encourage the rural poor to move to urban centres seeking jobs. Legislative factors prevented this to a large extent under the previous regime in South Africa. Now, because of liberalised government policies, urbanization is happening at an alarming rate. To a certain extent urbanization is needed as an integral part of the country's economic development. But when urbanization and a decline in labour needs occur simultaneously, the result is severe unemployment. When the government fails to provide cheap or free accommodation to the large groups of poor people coming to the cities, the result is homelessness. Thus joblessness and homelessness become the twin realities of life on the streets.

3.5.3 The market and competition

Profit is the slogan continuously chanted in the marketplace. To accomplish maximum profit, companies compete with each other. Competition is an inevitable phenomenon in a market, but healthy competition is very rare. The end result of companies' striving for maximum profit and promoting ruthless competition is a minimisation of the role of human beings. The value of ordinary human beings becomes insignificant in the market economy. In economic terms a competitive market will produce better products for a better price, but in personal terms, such competition evicts poor people from the transactions of the market, because they have no purchasing power.

There are some alternatives for competition, which may not ever replace the unhealthy competition in the market but which can challenge current market practice and give hope to the poor. One of such alternative is socially responsible companies. Such companies are socially responsible because of the personal commitment of their staff, which makes social transformation the aim of their work. Religious institutions and organisations can make positive contributions to society by investing in such firms. Another way of curtailing unhealthy competition is co-operative societies. These societies aim to bring the maximum benefit of production and distribution to the basic farmer or small-scale industrialist. These types of co-operative society create a new dimension for the market and a new transaction environment.

3.5.4 The youth and drug abuse

Since South Africa's first democratic elections held in 1994 and return to the international arena, the country has become more vulnerable to the illicit influx of drugs. Young people are at risk from a wide variety of potentially dangerous drugs including alcohol, crack, marijuana and ecstasy. "The fact of the matter is that the existence of any social problem, including the use of alcohol and drugs, depends to a great extent on certain social definitions held within a society. These definitions in turn depend in social attitudes and behavioural norms which are often reflected in and reinforced by law and government regulations" (Scarpitti & Datesman 1980:9). Young people start using drugs without any active awareness of such social norms or attitudes. They are influenced instead by peer group and backgrounds of alcohol abusing families. Whatever the causes of the abuse of alcohol and drugs, this practice does not contribute to the economic and social growth of the country. "The negative impact that alcohol, tobacco- and drug-related practices may have on health, economic growth, social relationships, community life and emotional and spiritual well being is widely acknowledged" (Rocha-Silva, Miranda & Erasmus 1996:3). The negative economic effects for young people are both cause and effect of homelessness.

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People on the street tend to be jobless. But life on the streets also offers easy access to drugs, which seem to offer an escape from the misery of life. However, addiction results, and the youth only find their lives more miserable and dark. Alternately, many young people on the streets were drug abusers and alcoholics before they became homeless. The drugs decreased their productive capacity and ability to hold employment, so they end up poverty stricken and on the streets. Then their drug habit prevents them getting out of this hopeless situation. The conditions of life on the streets are not conducive to the correction of drug abuse, but rather encourage it. Destructive peer group influence can also come from other people on the streets. These realities negatively affect the young homeless people's possibilities for a sustainable and growing economic situation.

3.5.5 Economic possibilities

Despite the negative effects of rapid population growth, unemployment, a competitive market economy, drugs and other such things, which are economic realities in South African society, there are also possibilities of liberation and growth. If cities are seen as congested places populated by desperate, ugly, unemployed people, it is easy to lose sight of these possibilities. If we move forward to concentrate on the economic potentials within and for these persons, all citizens can gain the will power and attitude we need to achieve social change. This will surely include the creation of more employment opportunities, which will contribute to economic growth and sustainability in our society.

Economic restructuring is often suggested as a way to achieve economic growth. This restructuring is however an elusive concept with multiple meanings. Scholars on the right, who are market-oriented analysts, focus on the benefits of economic restructuring: job creation, urban revival, greater efficiency and enhanced national competitiveness. Scholars on the left focus on its costs: unemployed blue-collar workers left behind by capital flight, the "missing middle" in the wage structure, displacement caused by gentrification and fiscal crises in

local government. Both sides however generally agree that powerful logic supports economic restructuring as a hope for economic growth. Economic restructuring and its possibilities challenge jobless, homeless individuals not to conform to the negative impacts of changes in society, but rather to work with conviction towards creating possibilities. If the economic policies of the government and the attitudes of the homeless poor in urban centres could change simultaneously, their positive effects would work together and make economic growth possible and visible. This is possible, because my experience shows that despite the harsh economic realities and struggles experienced by street people; generally they have positive attitudes about change in the near future. Even in their frustrations, they see a ray of hope for good things in their lives and in the development of society.

3.6   LISTENING TO THE STORIES OF THE YOUTH

Listening to the stories of young people, as I have mentioned, is particularly interesting, because they have unique perceptions about homelessness, poverty, their lives, habits and so on. The ten young people whose stories I explore in this thesis are no exception. All of them are black except one, who is coloured, and all are male. Their names have been changed to protect their identities. In the following subsections, I present the stories of these ten young men, each exploring their experiences of homelessness in their own context. The headings of the subsections reflect the major theme of each story.

3.6.1 "Being homeless is being powerless"

Joy is a 28 year old youth from the Eastern Cape. His story was told above: when his parents died he was married for a time and fathered two children, but then separated from his wife and has now lived on the streets for eight years. Joy says that living on the streets is not a proper way of life for human beings

because it makes them powerless. Street people mostly live by begging, which gives power to the people from whom they beg. As Joy puts it, "being homeless is being powerless". When he decided to leave his wife because their relationship had become unhappy, he says, he did not take into account how much worse it is to be homeless and live on the streets. He wishes to go back to his family as soon as possible, but only after getting a job. Joy's stories reveal some of the hardest experiences of homelessness.

Renjan: How are you doing?

Joy: I am okay.

Renjan: What is your name?

Joy: Joy

Renjan: How long you are in the streets?

Joy: Eight years. It is a long story.

Renjan: If you don't mind, I would like to hear your story.

Joy: I am from Eastern Cape. I have two sisters. My parents died. After their death I got married and have two kids.
         (Then he told the long story of how he came to the streets.)

Renjan: How do you see your present situation?

Joy: Nothing to say…. I was thinking what to say. I am sleeping in the street corners. When it is raining it is so horrible. What I can do?

Renjan: How you are managing now?

Joy: I will roll up all my stuff and move to some shades of shops.

Renjan: How do you managed to have your food?

Joy: I am trying to get a job. But there is nobody to help. I did begging. But it is shameful for me.

Renjan: Can you name your problem or how can you describe your situation in a phrase or word?

Joy: Whole my story is a big name. What else?

Renjan: Can you try to summarise that whole story in one sentence or a word?

Joy: One thing I can say, I am powerless. When I beg I feel powerless. When I am in the streets I am powerless. When I am starving I am powerless.

Renjan: What do you mean by powerless or powerlessness?

Joy: If you have some thing for your needs you are powerful. If you have more money you are more powerful.

Renjan: Money makes a man powerful.

Joy: Yes. Also if you are able to do big things like having a company or something like that, you're powerful.

Renjan: So in the light of your definition of power, you understand your situation as powerless?

Joy: Yes.

The conversation continued in other sessions, and Joy gradually told his story in relation to powerlessness and then retold it with its possibilities of empowerment.

3.6.2 "No other way"

Joseph is a 23 year old youth from KwaZulu-Natal, whose story was also briefly told above. He is Zulu-speaking and has lived on the streets for the last year. His parents died and left him and his four younger sisters to live with his grandmother. She was unable to support them all, and so he left home to find a job. He says that he contacts his sisters regularly by phone, misses his home. He is searching for a job for survival. Though he is glad that his absence from home reduces the burden of his grandmother and sisters, he hates living on the streets. Joseph cannot see any other options for his life, though he believes that God will provide something for him, that Jesus is a God who cares for him. He longs for a Bible to read daily. Joseph experiences homelessness as loneliness and misunderstanding. Even though his family was so poor, he says, they were able to understand each other, whereas on the streets nobody understands each other. Homelessness is a pathetic condition where nobody understands you rightly.

Renjan: Hello Joseph, how is it?

Joseph: Not too bad.

Renjan: That's fine. How you are coping?

Joseph: It's so hard in the streets. Two days I was sick. Nobody was there to look after me.

Renjan: You feel lonely at that time.

Joseph: In the streets, everybody is selfish. They don't care others.

Renjan: How go you expect others to treat you?

Joseph: They can help me by buying some medicines, which are not so costly. Otherwise they can offer me a cool drink or juice.

Renjan: But nobody did.

Joseph: Yes, even they didn't ask me how my condition was.

Renjan: How did that situation and experience affected your relationship with the people in the streets?

Joseph: Now I don't want to talk to them. Even I don't want to face them. I know that there is nobody good to have a company with or to make friendship with.

Renjan: What is your feeling when you think about your family?

Joseph: I was really missing all of them. I know that I was a burden for them, because of poverty there. There is no job. But the fact is there is love. A painful love.

Renjan: You feel missing that love.

Joseph: Really. But I cannot go back. I have to get a job or at least some money to help them. But I am in the streets. No other way.

Renjan: Is there a possibility to search other ways?

Joseph: Now I am not seeing anything on my way… I have to think about that.

Renjan: Yes, that is good to think about other possible ways of survival.

Joseph: Yes, I will.

3.6.3 "I should have a plan"

Andre is a 25 year old who has been homeless for five years. He has a sister living with her family in a suburb of Pretoria. His parents are dead, and he has to support himself. Andre has strong personal beliefs; he is a fruitarian, a person who only eats fruit, which is an expensive way to live. His story reveals faith, confusion and hope. We all need a plan in life, a vision for the future, he says. Andre's plan is to start a business of his own on the streets. He does not want to be an ambitious big businessman, but just to run a small-scale telephone public booth and a stationary shop. Andre says his plan sometimes conflicts with his faith; the Bible says 'You don't have to think about tomorrow, God will provide everything', yet he also sees that without some business or job he will not survive.

Andre: Hallo, Pastor, how are you?

Renjan: I am fine. How are you Andre?

Andre: No problem. I have some questions about the Bible study today. The Bible says - I don't remember where it is - 'you don't have to think about tomorrow. God will provide everything'. Is that correct?

Renjan: What is your opinion about that?

Andre: I am confused.

Renjan: Can you explain it please. What confuses you?

Andre: If God will provide everything, he is not giving everything to me. He is not giving everything to the poor people here.

Renjan: How do you understand 'everything'?

Andre: Everything means everything I want.

Renjan: Is that everything I want or everything I need.

Andre: If so, I need a job, I need money, I need food. Nothing is there. What can I do?

Renjan: That is a good question, what I can do.

Andre: I don't know what to do.

Renjan: But you know that you have to do something.

Andre: But God will give everything. That is what you said.

Renjan: Does that mean we don't have to do anything, simply sitting, will God

provide everything?

Andre: No, we have to work.

Renjan: How or what can we do to get something?

Andre: Make some plans.

Renjan: Plans for?

Andre: Plans for the future.

Renjan: Ok. What are your views about such a plan?

Andre: I have to think about that… I will do some business.

Renjan: So you started working out something for your future with God.

Andre: Yes. I think so.

Renjan: So?

Andre: I will share something with you next time.

Renjan: That's fine. See you then.

3.6.4 "Hardships on the streets"

Salin is a 30 year old coloured man. Six months ago his mother, his only surviving parent died, and he came to the city seeking a job.

Renjan: How do you manage to be in the streets?

Salin: It is so hard to be in the streets.

Renjan: What do you mean by hard?

Salin: I don't have enough clothing. When the rain comes or in the winter I am struggling. Also it is not safe to sleep in the street.

Renjan: You don't have anything to be stolen, and then what is unsafe in the street?

Salin: Others are making fun of me, by kicking, using harsh words or not allowing me to sleep in some place.

Renjan: How do you feel then about living in street?

Salin: It is so hard and no one should come to the streets. It is a wicked place.

Renjan: How do you survive in these hardships?

Salin: I don't know how I am surviving, but I am living.

Renjan: It is disturbing, is it?

Salin: Yes, it is. Without a job it is so hard to live. How can I beg? How can I get something to eat?

Renjan: Are there people to help you in the streets?

Salin: There are people making fun of me. But there are some people who

look at me with sympathy. They are also not in a condition to help me. They are homeless and in the streets.

Renjan: But they are not doing harm to you.

Salin: Yes, I am also in their condition, they know that. We cannot believe all people in the streets. They need something for their needs.

Renjan: Do you have such experiences?

Salin: Once I got a piece of bread. If somebody asked me to share that bread I don't have a problem to share. But a white guy snatched my bread and kicked me.

Renjan: That was a bad experience.

Salin: I fought with him for a while. But he was a stout guy. So I stopped and went away.

Renjan: That type of hardships give you pain.

Salin: Yes, I don't like to be in the streets. I want to escape from here.

Renjan: Are you seeing any opportunity to escape from this situation?

Salin: I can escape only to another street. There also the things may not be different.

3.6.5 "I repent for being homeless"

Roul is a 26 year old man from the suburbs of Pretoria. His story shows that he believes that every human being should have some place to live and somebody to love. Roul became homeless ten years ago and is still seeking a job. He believes that God will take care of him and provide him with a job. Homelessness, says Roul, is not an enviable status. He sleeps in a night shelter, which is open from nightfall to eight in the morning. In the daytime he wanders here and there in the streets. On some days, in the morning, he comes to the Street Centre. Roul has had many terrible experiences, such as when he was ill for a month with no one to help or take care of him. Roul also recounts his experience of repentance. He regrets the wrong doings of his past, since he believes that if he had been better and avoided certain bad things his life would have been different. He longs to return to his childhood house, but it is no longer his home.

Roul: Pastor, as I shared last time, I repent for being homeless… I came out of my house at my age of sixteen after fighting with my mother. Now I don't know whether she is alive or dead.

Renjan: You are now thinking about your past.

Roul: It is really haunting me. I think that I could be different in my past. I was not like this.

Renjan: In what ways does your past influence you now?

Roul: The ill feeling about my doings. If I were a good boy I could get opportunities.

Renjan: What kind of opportunities?

Roul: I am not sure. But at least I could get my mother's love.

Renjan: You miss your mother and her love.

Roul: That's my fault. I thought that I could live on my own. But now I am in the streets.

Renjan: It's ten years back. Is it?

Roul: Yes, but still it haunts me.

Renjan: You are struggling with that ill feeling.

Roul: Yes, I don't know what to do?

Renjan: What you are doing now?

Roul: I am sleeping in the shelter. In the morning, coming to the streets, wandering here and there. Some days I go to the Street Centre. Your devotions are good for me.

Renjan: How is it good for you?

Roul: It gives new meanings.

Renjan: What kind of meaning, you mean?

Roul: Good meanings. Gives some comfort.

Renjan: Is it dealing with your ill feelings.

Roul: I can see some hope for my life.

Renjan: In what ways you see hope for you life?

Roul: I believe that God will open something for me. I don't want to be in the streets. If I get some job, I will find some place to stay.

Renjan: How will that affect your present doing?

Roul: I can move away from the shelter. I don't have to wander in the streets.

Renjan: How would your new routines influence your feeling?

Roul: I believe that I will get relieved from those wrong feelings. I am praying for that.

Renjan: May God bless you.

Roul: Thank you, Pastor.

3.6.6 "Being helpless"

John from Mafikeng now lives on the streets of Pretoria. He is 30 years old. He has a wife and two children, who live at home in Mafikeng, where the children go to school. John is looking for a job to support his family. According to John, being homeless is being helpless. Though he has a home in his town, in Pretoria he is homeless and struggling for money.

Renjan: Hai, How are you?

John: I am ok.

Renjan: Are you new here? I haven't seen you before?

John: First time I am coming here.

Renjan: You are from?

John: I am from Mafikeng.

Renjan: When did you come here?

John: Last year.

Renjan: Do you have some work?

John: I got some piece job with a construction company last year. In December I went home. When I came back in January, they said there is no job.

Renjan: So, how are you managing now?

John: I am sleeping in front of an apartment.

Renjan: How does your homeless situation affect your daily life?

John: I have to vacate my sleeping place every morning. By six'o clock in the morning everything should be cleared. So I wake up at half past four in the morning. At night I can go there only by 10 o'clock. Until then I have to be in the streets.

Renjan: What do you think about your situation?

John: Being homeless is being helpless. Nobody is there to help with money. If you are a rich man the banks or other rich people will help you. When you are a poor man, no body is there to help you, because the company of the poor man is always with the poor people. They are not able to help. They are also in a position of helplessness.

Renjan: How you are coping with your financial needs?

John: No money, no food, helpless.

Renjan: Work?

John: If I have a work I will have money. I am seeking a job, tomorrow I have to go to Centurion for a job.

Renjan: Did anybody offer you a job there?

John: No, but I have to search for a job.

Renjan: Then what makes you to go to Centurion for a job?

John: Here in Pretoria, see many people are seeking job and so it is so difficult to get one job here. When I go out of the city there may be more chances.

Renjan: So, you see some possibility there.

John: Of course. I hope so.

Renjan: Ok John. All the best for your efforts.

John: Thank you.

3.6.7 "Struggling in the street"

Mzwasi is a 25 year old energetic man from KwaZulu-Natal. He hopes to one day work for himself, but is currently struggling on the streets to find a job. He always seeks opportunities from life in the hope of achievement. Two years of homelessness have taught him the lessons of struggle and surviving.

Renjan: Hello, how are you?

Mzwasi: I am fine Pastor.

Renjan: How was the devotion today?

Mzwasi: It was so good. It was helpful to understand about the Kingdom of God.

Renjan: What is your comment on it?

Mzwasi: It is so difficult to know God is merciful.

Renjan: How it is so difficult, is it in relation with your experiences?

Mzwasi: We all know that God is merciful, but sometimes…

Renjan: Sometimes…?

Mzwasi: Sometimes it is so difficult to find a way.

Renjan: Can you explain it a little more?

Mzwasi: I have no job, trying to get one in many ways.

Renjan: You are trying, but it is not working.

Mzwasi: I have a diploma in security training from KwaZulu-Natal.
　　　　(showing the certificates)

Renjan: Are you from KwaZulu-Natal?

Mzwasi: Yes, I am.

Renjan: What pushed you to come to Pretoria from KwaZulu-Natal?

Mzwasi: There is no job.

Renjan: You tried there also.

Mzwasi: Of course, I worked with many organisations, but on a voluntary basis.
　　　　They will not pay much but only some allowances.

Renjan: How long are you here?

Mzwasi: Two years. I registered myself with a security company.

Renjan: Then how does it work?

Mzwasi: Working of that need initial capital, an office and security persons.

Renjan: What was your family's response for your coming to Pretoria?

Mzwasi: My mother and two sisters are not interested, but I have no other way.

Renjan: Where are you staying here?

Mzwasi: In the shelter. There I have some friends. They said they will work as the security personals.

Renjan: Are they having the security training?

Mzwasi: Yes, three of them have.

Renjan: They are ready to help you?

Mzwasi: By helping me, they know that they are also getting jobs.

Renjan: What is your plan then?

Mzwasi: I have to approach some companies or government offices, which need security personals.

Renjan: Did you approach some one?

Mzwasi: The problem is I don't have a cell phone. So they cannot contact me. Also they ask about the office, I cannot give the address of Street Centre.

Renjan: Then how do you?

Mzwasi: I am still struggling.

Renjan: What about your friends, what are they saying about these situations?

Mzwasi: They are ready to help. I am looking for the opportunities in newspapers and calling some companies.

Renjan: Do you think it will work?

Mzwasi: I hope so.

Renjan: Try to share with me the further proceedings on that later.

Mzwasi: I will.

3.6.8 "Lonely and angry"

Patrick is a young man from the Eastern Cape. His story is filled with anger against the system, society and eventually himself. He is naturally a scholar and is looking for a job according to his educational qualifications and interests. His story reveals how, though he is surrounded by many people, he feels lonely. He has big ambitions, to found a joint registered company.

Patrick: How are you, Rev?

Renjan: I am okay. How are you doing?

Patrick: I am fine. Thank you.

Renjan: Do you want to share something with me?

Patrick: Yes. I was watching you when you lead the Bible class.

Renjan: What did you watch?

Patrick: I was watching that you are a learned man.

Renjan: How do you evaluate it?

Patrick: I am interested in learning.

Renjan: That's good. How far are you studied?

Patrick: I completed matric. I left home after that in 1997. When I came to Pretoria I joined for a Construction course in Technicon Pretoria.

Renjan: Did you complete it?

Patrick: I did. Completed last year.

Renjan: Then, how do you come to street centre?

Patrick: I have no job. I am staying in shelter.

Renjan: Do you have your family?

Patrick: I am from Eastern Cape. I have nobody there.

Renjan: But when you came to Pretoria you got the opportunity to study a course in Construction.

Patrick: I did some other diploma courses there.

Renjan: Before you came to Pretoria?

Patrick: Yes, in my town. Also I worked with some construction companies. But those jobs were temporary.

Renjan: How do you experience in the streets?

Patrick. I am seeing many people in the shelter and in the streets, but I am feeling lonely.

Renjan: You don't have friends here?

Patrick: Streets are not a good place to have friendships. I have no relatives and I have no friends.

Renjan: What is your opinion in having some friends?

Patrick: I hate that. Friends are cheating. Everybody is selfish.

Renjan: Do you have any experience to say like that.

Patrick: I don't have any particular experience, but I believe so.

Renjan: How you are managing in the streets?

Patrick: I don't have money and food. Inside the town there are different organisations which give food to the street people. I am making use of all such opportunities.

Renjan: Is that ok for you?

Patrick: I am not satisfied. But it is ok for the time being. I have to get a job. When I approach some companies they all need experiences.

Renjan: You have experiences.

Patrick: All my experiences in the field were before my course.

Renjan: But you are experienced and you know the things.

Patrick: Yes, those experiences will surely benefit when I work for somebody.

3.6.9 "Darkness all around"

The South African tribal culture has a great impact on the belief systems of South African people, especially in youth. Some young people see in social change a ray of hope, but are then held back by existing tribal rituals. They drown in an ocean of traditional beliefs. Even if they become Christians they are obliged to follow traditional tribal practices. Michael from Tzaneen has stories that illustrate such tribal beliefs and their Christian versions. These beliefs, in addition to his homelessness, make his life miserable.

Renjan: How are you, Michael?

Michael: I am fine.

Renjan: You are from?

Michael: I am from Tzaneen.

Renjan: Tzaneen is a fertile place in South Africa.

Michael: Yes, it is. But there is no job.

Renjan: Why it is so? There is enough farming.

Michael: But they have their own workers. Some times they will call others for piece work. Other wise many people are jobless.

Renjan: When did you come to Pretoria? What made you to come here? Do you wish to tell your story?

Michael: In 1998 I came to this side. I got a job in Shoshangue that year. I have worked there for one year. At that time and later I am staying with a friend there. When I have work I pay a small rent to that man. When I lose my job he said there is no problem, I can stay there. I stayed there for six months and sought job. I got only some piece jobs. That was not enough to give him a rent. Then one day he told me that I should leave. I asked him the permission to keep my dress and other stuff there for some time. I took it back after six months. He didn't tell anything. But he took some of my clothes and my good shoes within that time. That may be the rent for that time. After that I am in the streets.

Renjan: Now how are you coping up in the streets?

Michael: That may be a correct word for my life-coping. It is not living just coping.

Renjan: What are the things behind that comment? Why you are telling like that?

Michael: It is the experience of me. I am really struggling and worried here.

Renjan: Can you explain it little more?

Michael; Here, I don't have a job. If I could have a job I could go to my home.

Renjan: You miss your family.

Michael: I have two girl children and wife there. Also my mother and three sisters.

Renjan: What is their response to your situation?

Michael: They all feel sorry about that. My two sisters are going to some houses as domestic workers. My girls are going to school. But the problem is my uncle.

Renjan: What is worrying you about your uncle?

Michael: I had six sisters. He killed my three sisters.

Renjan: So sorry about that. How it happened?

Michael: He is an agent of Zion church. There is a prophet. When disease comes he takes my sisters to that prophet and he will give some powder and treats. For my second sister he treated her for two weeks. After that he asked me to take her to some hospital. She died on the second day in the hospital. (Weeping…).I am really worried, he will kill my other sisters.

Renjan: That kind of death really hurts you.

Michael: Yes, I will kill my uncle one day.

Renjan: You are angry towards your uncle.

Michael: Yes I want to kill him. He brought my elder sister to a Sangoma for treatment for stomach pain. That sangoma gave some medicine. Actually after some days my sister died.

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Renjan: All these incidents one by one put you in the problem.

Michael. I am in real problem. Don't know what to do?

Renjan: You hope that if you go back you can sort out many problems.

Michael: At least I can save my mother and the sisters.

Renjan: So you have a hope of it.

Michael: Yes, I do have some hope to help them.

Renjan: Yes Michael, that's good. Be in that hope.

Michael: I will tell about my uncle's doings next time. He is not good. He is killing
my family.

Renjan: I will be available next time to listen to your stories.

Michael: Thank you.

3.6.10 "Dreaming of better"

Sam is a young man from Cape Town, now living on the streets of Pretoria. He is
in a desperate condition, because of a tragedy in his life, but he hopes for better
future. He seeks for a job because of his love for his children and the family.

Sam: Pastor, I want to share my story with you.

Renjan: Yes, I love to listen to your story.

Sam: Last October my wife died in a car accident, leaving sixteen days-old twins to me. A drunken man hit my wife and on the spot she died.

Renjan: So sorry about that. It was really shocking.

Sam: I became very angry towards that man. I caught him on his neck. Then that man said sorry. I shouted at him. You killed my wife, you made two kids who were just sixteen days old desolate, and you shattered my life. Then I realised that I don't have the right to take one's life. God will punish him. I released him.

Renjan: It was a confused situation.

Sam: There a policeman came and asked, How can I help you? I said, can you help me by taking care of these kids? I cried. (Crying...)

Renjan: That experience shattered your life.

Sam: Ours was a life without many problems.

Renjan: What was the response of your family members to such a shocking situation?

Sam: It was not believable to my mother. She is still crying. I don't know how to console her.

Renjan: How do you feel that experience now?

Sam: It is still shocking for me. My wife was a good, committed lady. She always urged me to go to the church. But I said, Ok, you go I will come. Instead of going to the church I will go to wine cellars and drink, drink and drink. But by that accident I stopped drinking and never touched it after that.

Renjan: How does it affect your daily life?

Sam: I realised that because of a drunken man this tragedy happened to my life. So I will never drink and drive. Some friend of mine asked me, how can you eat braai along with a coffee or tea? Once I asked my wife to have some beer. But she said I will never take, and I am praying for you to stop. She was a good Christian.

Renjan: The good memories of your wife give a meaning for your life.

Sam: It was nice, but some time pricking. I was not living as her wishes.

Renjan: But now can you live according to her wishes?

Sam: But she is no more to see. I have to live a good life for my kids.

Renjan: How did your experiences affect your relationship with your kids and your family members?

Sam: Thank God, they are three months old now. They are with my in-laws now. I am regularly going there and caring them.

Renjan: It gives more satisfaction to you.

Sam: One of my friends came there. I was bathing the babies. I bathed them one by one. Then my friend said, 'you are good with babies'. Then I replied, 'I have to learn. God gave me the opportunity to learn'. I love my kids.

Renjan: What about your mother and in-laws?

Sam: They all are in sympathy to me. They are always ready to help me. They are taking care of my kids nicely. I thank them really. It is not an easy job to take care of two kids in the same age.

Renjan: When you shared your experiences, how do you feel?

Sam: It gives a kind of satisfaction to me. I love to talk to you.

Renjan: I also love to listen to you Sam.

Sam: Thanks for listening. See you next week.

Renjan: Thanks. See you, bye-bye.

3.7   REFLECTION ON THE STORIES

3.7.1 Possibilities of youth

Youth is a period of emotion and confusion. Often young people struggle to express their emotions creatively and positively. "In counselling young people, intense, raw emotions can be encountered" (Mabey & Sorensen 1995:25). Handling their emotions is very important for them. When we listen to the stories of young people we often detect elements of emotional disturbance. This is not a

reason to blame or condemn them. Instead we have to help the young people to externalize their emotional problems. "Unconditional positive regard – the intrinsic valuing of the client without imposing conditions of worth – is of particular importance when working with young people whose sense of self-worth is often low" (Mabey & Sorensen 1995:26).

Often when talking to rich youth I challenge them to find new ways of bringing meaning into their lives by helping the poor. When talking to poor youth, I try to help them to see possibilities for their lives. To work among African youth is very challenging for me. The epidemic of HIV/AIDS and the aggravating factor of crime are some of the harsh realities I have come to know about in dealing with South African youth. The South African people, irrespective of race, class, age or gender, are engulfed in an ever-increasing wave of disease and crime. "Quoting figures from the South African Institute for Race relations, SAPA (2000) reports that the HIV epidemic will decrease the country's population growth rate by 71% over the next decade. It is estimated that six million South Africans will have contracted the HIV virus by 2005, leaving one million children orphaned" (Prins & Van Niekerk 2001:12). The number of street children and youth are also increasing. However, despite all these negative factors in society, I believe that youth have the ability to overcome the struggles of life. As I am from another culture, an Indian culture, which has many similarities with African culture, I can see in the diversities of African culture promising possibilities for innovation. The young people I talk to take me on a journey through their life stories as African youth. They have the imaginative power to create new stories out of their life stories. If I as facilitator move with the teller through the story, I can help the teller search out new possibilities and work towards them.

3.7.2 Passion for change

Politicians always raise the slogan, "The young people are the power of today", or, "They are the future of the country". How homeless youth are practically to

become the real future of the country is the question. Instead of completely relying on the promises of politicians, young people have to develop an attitude of self confidence and really believe that they are the future of the nation. "[Y]oung people need to believe that they have a future if they are to fulfil their potential in shaping the new South Africa" (Johnson 2005:11). Nowadays, youth identity is shaped and dictated to a large extent by the multinationals through the media, who market their products. The craze for mobile phones, fashion dresses and shoes are examples of such youth trends. These trends result in a youth culture which may not be in line with social norms or tribal values.

In my personal experience I have found that youth have the potential to change. My theological understanding always challenges me to help the youth towards this change. When I work with youth in a parish setting and outside I feel a missionary urge, like that expressed by Jesus in his Nazareth Manifesto: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk. 4:18-19). My vision and passion for the poor are also influenced by the words of Jesus about the last judgement. "And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me' " (Mt. 25:40). These verses are the biblical basis for my passion for the poor in society. Reading of and experiencing social realities further fuel my intense urge to help the poor and to work for their liberation.

3.7.3 Reflections on my role

My involvement with the youth is based on sharing. I feel concern for the poor people in society, especially the youth. In my pastoral practice I try to give more time to ministering to children and youth. I am eager to listen to their stories. Many pastors tried to avoid the youth, because they ask critical questions, which are difficult to answer sometimes. The interesting thing I have come to

understand from my experiences is that the youth often do not need concrete answers to all of their queries. Instead they just need someone to listen to them patiently, someone to understand them. We hold a youth fellowship in Pretoria twice a month, especially for university students. At a recent meeting the young people did an exercise in which they each anonymously commented on each person present. Most of the youth mentioned that they experience me as 'an accessible person'. This was a welcome comment to hear from the youth.

I have also experienced times when my concern for and relationship with the youth have encountered opposition from elder groups in some places. These times I took as challenges and encouragements. I chose youth as my target for this research because it is my inner conviction that youth have many possibilities. But, because of drugs, alcohol and other social evils, many young people are spoiling their futures. We have to help the youth for the salvation of society and the future of the nation. Of course youth is an age of possibility. But it is also a time of confusion, and so it is vital that the youth have somebody to listen to them in their confusion, or they end up in social deviance and even suicide. Thus it is essential to help the younger generation in all ways possible.

3.8 CONCLUSION

As the waves touch each and every corner of the sea shore, my experiences with the homeless youth touched each and every corner of my perceptions, understanding and belief systems, and are helping me in my profession. But it is a great task to explain where the waves touched and the effects they had. Listening to the experiences of homeless youth in Pretoria has opened for me a new world of social, economic and theological realities. As they move on with their stories they give me hope about the future and about the youth. The shared stories in this chapter give us an introduction to the economic realities of the life experiences of these homeless young people. The examples showed the

dominant discourses of homelessness and its consequences. Narrations of further dimensions of their stories and their interpretations of these stories will focus on the economic factors in their experiences and in the discourses they use to understand their homelessness.

CHAPTER FOUR

DESCRIBING AND INTERPRETING THE STORIES USING A NARRATIVE APPROACH

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The narrative approach is very useful to help human beings give meaning to their experiences. The approach basically involves the making, telling and re-telling of stories. This process aims to help the story teller to describe his/her experiences and to interpret them using his/her own language and assumptions, so that he/she gains a better understanding of these experiences. The story making is related to everyday actions and understandings. The facilitator in the narrative approach listens to the stories, respecting the feelings and interpretations of the teller as fully as possible. The approach does not try to improve the 'accuracy' of the stories, but rather to move to new platforms of reality for constructing new stories. "Meaningful therapy will help clients gain a sense of 'being their own experts' via enabling them to author stories based upon their experiences, thoughts, and feelings" (Parry & Doan 1994: 46). This chapter is a journey through the described experiences of the story tellers and my experiences of listening to and narrating those stories. The interpretations are the authentic interpretations of the story tellers, evolved or co-constructed in their interaction with me as facilitator, in their relationship with the community; and in interaction with the group context in which they told the stories.

4.2   METHODS OF LISTENING AND DESCRIBING

Listening in the narrative approach does not focus on gathering information about the teller's life problems, but on the story itself, however problem-saturated it may

be. The listener does not try to find or investigate the core problem(s) in the story, but to experience moving with the story teller and listening to the possible meanings of the story.

To effectively listen to and describe stories various methods can be used, such as interviewing, questioning, letter writing and drawing. In this study I used interviews, questions and writing. Even for feedback I could not use written or printed forms with the young people I worked with, because many of them cannot read or write English. Thus my most common method was interviews.

4.2.1 The role of listening in counselling

In common life many people have no one to listen to their problems. This can end in these lonely people feeling hopeless about life and its challenges. The counselling process helps by providing a listening ear for people's problems. Listening is extremely important in the helping professions, especially in counselling. In the narrative approach good listening skills are vital in helping to create a healthy rapport and trust between the facilitator and story teller. "Good listening helps them [the counsellees] to feel affirmed, safe, accepted and understood. This in turn helps them to make choices that allow them to share their world with you" (Nelson-Jones 1996:14). In the narrative approach there is no role for the counsellor as the influencer. Instead the helping person is a facilitator for the telling and retelling of the life story of the story teller. The narrative approach, as discussed above, emphasises stories as stories. Listening to the life stories of the counsellees is not merely a part of the counselling process, but the golden thread uniting all the processes and sessions. Listening in the counselling process is deconstructive listening, which is an art. "A story deconstruction consists, in essence, of identifying the terms, the shape, and the plot of an individual's childhood survival story – what the person is coming to realize she/he had to do to survive childhood" (Parry & Doan 1994:42).

God has plans for a future of peace and hope, not of misfortune. While some young people are gripped by worry about the future and find themselves at a standstill, others are inventive, creative and hopeful, always aware that scepticism and discouragement can paralyze human beings. In the young homeless people's search for a better future, counselling can play a vital role. Condemning these young people or branding them as unwanted is a destructive approach. Through patient, deconstructive listening, the story teller can be helped to enter into a world of possibilities for the future.

4.2.2 Entering the story world

Through slow careful listening, the facilitator enters into the story world of the story teller. Before this can begin, the story teller has to be relaxed with the idea of telling his/her life experiences in story form. To achieve this, a useful beginning is initiating discussion of the non-problematic aspects of life. In all the processes of listening and story telling the facilitator must see the teller as a person and the problem as a problem. A preliminary problem-free talk is thus useful for the facilitator and good for the counselling session. "Unless people insist on moving quickly into talking about problems, we spend a while listening to stories about their preferences and pleasures" (Freedman & Combs 2002:26). In some cases the story teller feels comfortable and will enter into story telling directly. In such instances, it is not necessary to use prefacial conversation to help the teller relax.

Listening to the stories of young people is very interesting, because they have their own perceptions about homelessness, poverty, human life and habits, and so on. As a volunteer in the street ministry, I met all kinds of people at the Street Centre, from various age groups, language backgrounds, genders and racial groups. Each one had his/her own cultural background and belief systems. Entering into the story world of each of the story tellers is interesting because each story gives a wider perspective about life, culture and social systems. When the youth retell their stories in a narrative relationship, new meanings become

apparent to me as well as to the story teller. "Retelling, forgetting and inventing stories continues to modify the socially constructed world of the storyteller and listener. And, most importantly, these retellings, forgettings and inventions simultaneously confirm and challenge the storytellers' and listeners' assumption, thinking, and identity" (Musheno & Maynard-Moody 2003:158,159). In the story telling process, listener and story teller enter into a new world of discoveries about their assumptions and identities. The stories of the young people from the streets should be listened to with empathy rather than prejudice. The facilitator should have and stimulate in the teller inquisitiveness about the unique outcomes in each story. To achieve this, the facilitator must assume a stance of ignorance, rather than seeing him/herself as 'the counsellor' with superior technical knowledge.

From the diverse group of people at the Street Centre with whom I talked, I have identified ten whose stories most clearly reflect distinct views about homelessness and the impact of economic factors on their experiences. Their stories are described below as I heard them, with some indication of the context of their experiences.

4.2.3 Interviews

Interviewing is a method used for collecting data in research studies, and can be structured or unstructured. Structured interviews use questionnaires which are prepared earlier according to a standardized theory. Unstructured interviews do not follow set questions; instead the interviewer enters into free discussion with the interviewee and promotes open answers to open-ended questions. Such unstructured interviews are commonly used in qualitative research, where empirical data leading to wider explanation and theorising is not required, but rather a deep exploration of human experiences. My study uses unstructured interviews, following a longitudinal plan in which each informant is interviewed

several times over a long period of time. This approach is often used for unstructured interviews (Arksey & Knight 1999:32).

In a qualitative interview the focus is not on collecting facts but moving with the interviewee to new understandings of his/her social world, about which the interviewee may not have much awareness or understanding. "Unstructured interviews produce a wealth of qualitative data; the findings can generate deep insights into people's understandings of their social world" (Arksey & Knight 1999:7). These deep insights may help the interviewee to understand him/herself, society or particular habits and relationships better. All these insights and topics can be accessed through discourses. Each discourse reflects a particular context and set of concepts. Revealing the discourses in a story will help the story teller to understanding and viewing life differently. Thus unstructured interviews tend to range very wide, over many different discourses. "The interviewer would be anxious to listen to informants' accounts of their behaviours, beliefs, feelings and actions and would probably ask open-ended questions, rather than ask questions that invite precise answers that can be tallied to provide numerical summaries" (Arksey & Knight 1999:4). Interviews in a counselling setting are usually unstructured. The counsellor listens to the experiences, feelings and discourses of the counsellee. Narrative therapy involves helping for the counsellee uncover his/her social world and deconstruct its discourses.

Narrative therapy cannot always take place in the stable environment of a therapist's room, but places like the Street Centre, where people come and go at irregular intervals, are not ideal. Appointments for sessions cannot be made, or uninterrupted interviews ensured. Luckily a narrative therapy interview does not require that the counsellor take a journalistic perspective, gathering information. Such an interview is rather a discussion that reveals the experiences of the story teller. At the Street Centre, therefore, I found that the best opportunity for interviews was after Bible class, when the people who come to the Centre

usually sit down for a while to drink coffee. I also sat with them then and chatted with them. This free talk is possible because I am a regular visitor there and lead the Bible classes, so I have a rapport with the community there. This helped me to begin each interview. Despite the language problem – English is the second language of most of the people there – they were usually eager to talk. "At the beginning of the journey we are not sure where it will end, nor what will be discovered" (Morgan 2000:3). But conversation opens varied possibilities of story telling and story making. Through this develop interpretation and understandings that lead to new directions for the story told.

4.2.4 Questions

According to Morgan (2000:4), two particularly significant principles of narrative therapy are:

1) Always maintaining a stance of curiosity, and

2) Always asking questions to which you genuinely do not know the answers.

We ask questions not to gather information or prescribe solution, but to facilitate their story making and story telling and to create alternative stories. "[W]ithin a narrative approach, the reason we ask questions is to invite people to story their experiences and to do so in relation to both problematic and alternative stories in their lives" (Freedman & Combs 2002:202). Questions help unroll experiences in story form. Questions help both story teller and listener to understand the problem-saturated story. They help the teller to externalize the problem, that is, to see the problem as problem and the person as person. "The primary intention of our question has been to gain understanding of people's problem-saturated narratives. At some point, usually when it seems that a certain degree of trust and mutual understanding has been achieved, we begin to ask questions of a more purposefully interventive nature" (Freedman & Combs 2002:208). This is

the beginning of deconstructive questioning, inviting the teller to view the story from a different perspective.

Deconstructive questioning is effective in the counselling process to deconstruct the experiences of the story teller. Many social and cultural stories and concepts about many social realities influence a person's life stories and the hopes and hopelessness related to these stories. Subjugating stories of gender, race, class, age, religion etc. are prevalent. Awareness of such cultural and social concepts will help the facilitator to ask deconstructive questions. These subjugating and influencing stories are called as discourses. According to Freedman and Combs, "therapists must continually reflect on the discourses that shape our perceptions of what is possible, both for ourselves and for the people we work with. Such reflection puts us in the position to ask deconstructive questions – questions whose aim is to examine problems in detail and expose discourses that support them" (2002:28).

Many discourses influence a person and his/her stories. Asking questions about how the problem influences the teller is a method of externalizing the problem. Separating the problem from the person has a powerful deconstructive effect. "We can expose dominant discourses by asking externalizing questions about contextual influences on the problem" (Freedman & Combs 2002:28). Deconstructive questions concentrate on how the problem affects the person's life and the effects of the problem on him/her. When I deal with the homeless youth, it is easy to identify the discourses in their stories about their homeless condition, discourses about age, social systems and so on. In the stories of a homeless youth, discourses about homelessness are of course the most prevalent. Homelessness is an experience which shatters all their expectations. The feelings behind these discourses include rejection, discouragement, low self-esteem, neglect, hopelessness and self-denigration. "We believe that by questioning the discourses of influence, we allow people to consider their preferences more clearly, and to decide whether or not the ideas that influence

them 'fit' for them" (Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996:69). All homeless youth have something to say about the influence of homelessness upon their life story. Some are simply more eloquent than others. While one curses his fate for being homeless, another spiritualizes her experience. Both reveal the untold areas of their experiences. When I question these tellers, the one about the relationship of fate to his story and the other about the relationship or effect of spirituality to his story, what is evoked can be called unique outcomes. "Usually, the telling and retelling of the story produces at least some heroic and success narratives ('unique outcomes') alongside the more habitual problem-saturated accounts of troubles that people bring into therapy" (McLeod 2004:23). Every story includes many experiences that remain untold at first, that are kept out of the problem-saturated first story. The telling and re-telling of the story thus allows these untold experiences and thoughts to be spoken, i.e. allows for the creation of alternate stories.

4.2.5 Scripting experiences

Telling a story to a listener is different to writing down the story. In story telling, the teller interprets his/her story in the moment of telling. As the facilitator helps to retell the story, the teller can reinterpret the original story and create alternate stories. In the listening process the listener may hear a story which is different to the one told by the story teller. This leads to further conversation about the story told, and this to interpretation of various ways of understanding the story. For studies such as this one, the listener then has to write down the story, so that it can be further studied. This is called scripting the story.

Scripting stories creates other areas of story making. It is very difficult to write down experiences, especially the experiences of another person. In writing down the stories the researcher faces the problems of interpretation. During the process of writing down a given story, many interpretations may present themselves as the recorded story interacts with the personal life story of the

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researcher who is writing down the story. Thus the scripting of experiences involves deeper dimensions in the recording researcher. "Good research stories provide details about events and settings. They also tell us about the characters and their interactions, relationships, and feelings" (Musheno & Maynard-Moody 2003:27). Thus a detailed report of the events and settings of the interviews is not needed. This information should be included in the scripting of the narrative journey. In such a journey the events, settings, problems, interactions and relationships are sufficiently explained and interpreted by the story teller. This also opens a wider perspective of alternative stories and their scripting. Then all these processes become part of the narrative journey.

4.3 LISTENING FROM A POSITION OF NOT- KNOWING

Anyone listening to the stories of another person should be curious. The counsellor must not dictate, direct or guide the story teller using professional expertise. The counsellor is only a facilitator helping the story teller to find meaning him/herself. The role of the counsellor of the modern paradigm, as advisor or influencer, has been replaced by the post-modern role, that of facilitator. "When we listen 'desconstructively' to people's stories, our listening is guided by the belief that those stories have many possible meanings. The meaning we as listeners make is, more often not, at least a little different from the meaning that a speaker has intended" (Freedman & Combs 2002: 26, 27). Thus the facilitator assumes a position of humble ignorance, rather than superior knowledge or training, and moves with the story teller without prejudice.

4.3.1 Barriers to listening

When I spoke to Salin, who become homeless recently, I asked about his experience. He defined his experience as "very hard". When I asked him to explain the word "hard", he discovered several different meanings, namely

"unsafe", "extreme weather", "starvation" and "joblessness". This shows the narrative approach in operation. In answering my question, Salin tries to examine various dimensions of his problem. As facilitator I am in a position of ignorance; I do not know his experience first-hand. Though I may have my own interpretations of his story, if I were to insist on these and express them, this would hinder our narrative conversation. Rather, I simply work to find meaning along with the story teller who is interpreting his/her own experiences.

This requires that I be aware of the various discourses at work in my own life and its interpretations, and of the discourses operating in society which influence story tellers. I do not have to try to be fully objective – the post-modern social constructionist approach takes this as impossible. Rather, since narrative therapy holds that the storyteller is the sole authority in the telling, interpreting and retelling of stories, I as facilitator must not try to be objective or show my professional expertise, but simply listen deconstructively. This is why, in the narrative approach, the story teller is called the co-researcher. I place myself in the co-researcher's role. I do not have the right to re-interpret or manipulate the story and its meanings. It is my task to listen to the discourses in their stories and identify the discourses that are dominant. "When clients say, 'It's a given', or 'It's normal', or 'That's the way it is,' or something similar, we perk up our ears. Our intention is to explore the ideas that influence people, not to destroy them; to question them, not to leave persons without an anchor or without some sense of constancy in their lives" (Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996:69).

Language is very important in story telling and interpretation. In my conversations with the homeless youth, English is for both of us a second language. We sometimes struggle to express our original and proper meanings. In spite of the language difference, however, I found that certain dominant discourses could be detected in the stories of the homeless youth. These can be identified as discourses about: homelessness, rich people, the social system and the future of the homeless. Some stories show these discourses positively, others negatively.

I found that each teller has an individual discourse about homelessness. Listening to such discourses from a position not-knowing is very interesting, especially the influencing economic factors detectable in the stories.

4.3.2 The Street Centre setting

The Street Centre is the site of the street ministries run by Pretoria Community Ministries (PCM). Various services are offered to homeless people at the Street Centre. The main aim is to help the people to be self-equipped and find employment. As part of this work, the Centre offers Bible classes, moral teachings and skills development training. The Street Centre is open by 9am in the morning. The homeless people who sleep on the streets or in shelters gather there for the services. The Bible study or other classes begin at 9.30, but there is no regulation for when the people have to come and go in the Street Centre, as this would not be practical. The people come and go according to their convenience, need and mood, which is not conducive to a controlled therapeutic situation!

4.3.3 Position of knowledge

The counsellor operating from a position of superior knowledge is responsible for prompting and probing the respondent for specific research material. In client-centred therapy and various other counselling approaches, the counsellor is seen as one with technical know-how, as one who can influence the course of the session. The counsellor is a learned person with knowledge of various different scientific branches such as history, sociology, philosophy and theology, and has insight into and knowledge about the life world of the counsellee. In this context interviews tend to be one-sided and directive. "Interviews set up a one-way information flow from respondent to researcher, and it is generally obvious to the respondent what the researcher wants to know" (Musheno & Maynard-Moody

2003:28). In the personalizing process of client-centred therapy, the counsellor plays the role of motivator, bringing the counsellee to a position of taking responsibility for his/her problem. "In personalizing the meaning, the counsellor stimulates the counsellee to dialogue with herself and reconsider the statements which she has made, and find out the hidden meaning behind those statements which affect her personally" (Fuster 1991:164). The counsellor knows how to deal with the person and is completely aware of the direction in which the therapy is heading. This is exactly the opposite of the narrative approach, in which the counsellor adopts a position of ignorance.

4.3.4 Position of ignorance

In the process of narrative counselling, the story teller is the custodian of information about his/her life. "Narrative ways of working are based on the idea that people's lives and relationships are shaped by the 'stories' which individuals and communities of people develop in order to give meaning to their experiences. These 'narratives of meaning' do not simply reflect or represent our lives – they actually shape and constitute our lives" (White & Denborough 1998:3). Each story teller is the authority in telling, interpreting and forming meaning for his/her story. The listener must not dictate the story. He/she does not know how the story will develop or what particular features of the story mean. The story teller is the sole producer of the story and its meanings. The listener or counsellor plays the role of facilitator, helping the story teller to tell and retell the story with new meanings. The facilitator should operate from a position of ignorance, participating in rather than directing the meaning-making process of the story told and retold. This is the opposite of more directive approaches, discussed in the previous section. In the narrative approach the story tellers are the researchers who discover new meanings in the dominant discourses of their stories. By participating in this process, the facilitator is the co-researcher who co-authors the stories. In such participation it is essential that the facilitator does not influence the story teller according to his/her own perspectives. Instead, the

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facilitator must challenge the dominant discourses which negatively influence the story teller and so help the teller to move towards preferred stories with new hopeful meanings. "If people are engaged in a project of challenging the dominant meanings of their lives, and creating alternative, preferred stories, then the participation of others in the creation and reflection of these stories is very important" (White & Denborough 1998:9). From an assumed position of ignorance, then, the listener or co-researcher listens for the unique outcomes implicit in the stories told, and thus engages in a narrative journey with the teller.

4.4 THE PROBLEM IN THE YOUTH'S OWN WORDS

4.4.1 Losing power in the streets

Renjan: How are you, Joy, today?

Joy: Ok

Renjan: In our last conversation you named your problem as "powerlessness". Can you share the experience of powerlessness in your life situation?

Joy: You mean in the streets, or that of my past life?

Renjan: If you like, both.

Joy: My father was a daily wage labourer, but he drank a lot and wasted money. When I asked him for my needs in the school he never gave any. He was not concerned about our family. He never allowed me to do anything on my own, even though I am his only son.

Renjan: You felt powerless in that situation.

Joy: Surely, I had no confidence to do things on my own. With money only, we can survive. For getting money we have to do some business, but it is not possible for me.

Renjan: Did you try to do something on your own?

Joy: No, I know that I can't.

Renjan: How does this problem of powerlessness affect you?

Joy: I am not getting any job. I am struggling financially.

Renjan: You are struggling to find your livelihood.

Joy: It is a hopeless situation for me.

Renjan: You are not finding any hope in front of you?

Joy: Yes.

Renjan: How does this powerless experience affect your relationship with others?

Joy: I don't have many friends, but I know many people coming to the Street Centre. I know some people in the street also.

Renjan: How do you relate yourself with them?

Joy: I don't have a problem to mingle with them because some of them are powerless as me.

Renjan: Do you think that you are powerless or your problem is powerlessness?

Joy: Yes, it is my problem.

Renjan: How are you related to your problem?

Joy: It is really putting me in distress, but my little hope is there, there are many people with the same problem.

Renjan: It gives some hope for your survival.

Joy: In the midst of the problem I am surviving.

Renjan: Is this the survival you want?

Joy: I want more, I want a job.

Renjan: Until you get a job can you survive?

Joy: I hope I can cope, with that hope of getting a job.

Renjan: I wish you all the best to get a job.

Joy: I will try to overcome my problem of powerlessness by trying and trying.

Renjan: You will continue trying and trying until success is yours, isn't it?

Joy: Yes.

4.4.2 No options

Renjan: How do you experience being in the streets?

Joseph: As I said last time, it is so hard.

Renjan: How this homelessness and hardships affect your daily life?

Joseph: Sometimes I feel so desperate.

Renjan: It's a bad feeling, isn't it?

Joseph: Yes, I know that but no other way.

Renjan: You think that there is no other way.

Joseph: I don't know what to do, struggling.

Renjan: When we talked last time you said that you would think of some plan
for survival. Is there any progress in your thinking?

Joseph: In the street there is no time and space to think in other ways.

Renjan: What tempts you to tell like that, or what do you mean by that?

Joseph: It is like that .Nobody has any concern for others. Everybody is
selfish. When I think about my younger sisters I think of some ways to
get a job.

Renjan: Your relationship to your sisters is encouraging you to search for a
job.

Joseph: Yes, because they are so loving and they are starving.

Renjan: So you are concerned about them.

Joseph: Yes

Renjan: What would be their feelings and reactions to your absence and to
your joblessness?

Joseph: They will be so sad, but they know that I went away for their good.

Renjan: How do they understand that it is for good?

Joseph: They know that if I get a job they will be helped.

Renjan: They have such a hope. What is your feeling about the condition of
your sisters?

Joseph: I feel so pity and sometimes guilty of them. I left them in a sad
condition. But I have no other way.

Renjan: What do you think about such a situation?

Joseph: I know that I am not doing my responsibility to my family. Even by
calling them, I feel more guilty. I am really struggling in the midst of
their love and poverty and my joblessness.

Renjan: In the midst of that struggle you know and believe that you will get a

job. The love and condition of your sisters motivate you to search for a job.

Joseph: Yes, I am searching.

Renjan: Do you have the hope to find?

Joseph: I think I will get one.

Renjan: Is this the situation you want to be.

Joseph: No, I never wanted to be a homeless, but now I am here. But I know God will open some ways for me.

Renjan: What kind of job are you searching for and what are you doing to get it?

Joseph: Any job I can do. But I am looking for a security job or to be an assistant in some companies.

Renjan: Did you send some applications for that or have you approached somebody?

Joseph: Yes, I am waiting for the response for some applications.

Renjan: So you have more confidence about the future.

Joseph: Yes I have.

Renjan: Be in your hope, God will provide you.

Joseph: Thank you. See you.

4.4.3 Waiting for the future

Andre: Hi! Pastor!

Renjan: How are you Andre?

Andre: Good.

Renjan: Did you make some plans for your future?

Andre: Yes, I did and have already started.

Renjan: It's so interesting that you planned and started working.

Andre: I made a plan for starting a business in the streets and I got it.

Renjan: How do you work out everything?

Andre: I borrowed some money from a friend in the street and bought some sweets. I picked up some wood pieces and a piece of wood from the backyard of some shops. With those things I made a small table to place the sweets. Then I found a place to do my business. I got a good place.

Renjan: You place you mean?

Andre: Where more people pass by.

Renjan: How do you manage the income and the expenditure?

Andre: I started with a small amount. After some days, it is the same. A fear that, it will stop after sometime.

Renjan: What makes you worry like that?

Andre: Because, when money is with me I have to eat something. No I am separating some money for buying sweets and spend the rest for my food. If I fail to do that one day my business will finish.

Renjan: Your story is interesting; it is full of plans, negative and positive.

Andre: [Smiles]

Renjan: You have a fear that you are not managing your business well and it will end up one day. Do you think that it will help you not to spend too much for your food?

Andre: That's right. In a way it will help me to spend less. But I like fruits and it is costly. That is a problem.

Renjan: That means you have to make some plans for your eating habits.

Andre: Yes, I have to.

Renjan: Thus, what are your future plans?

Andre: God will guide me.

Renjan: You changed your position from God will provide you to God will guide you.

Andre: God will guide me to receive his provisions.

Renjan: That is a good understanding. Why do you believe that God will
guide you and provide you?

Andre: It is my experience, even from my present situation. God guided me to
start a business. People are buying sweets from me because God guides
them.

Renjan: You are speaking like a good theologian.

Andre: My experiences make me speak.

Renjan: Do you have the plans for the future with the guidance of God.

Andre: I am waiting. If God gives me opportunity I have the plans to buy some
chips and cigarettes for sale.

Renjan: Then it will help you to improve your financial position.

Andre: Not only that. I have a plan to start a public call booth, in the future. I don't
know how to start it or to operate it.

Renjan: Even if you don't know more about the public telephone booth, you wish
you could start one.

Andre: I wish I hope so.

Renjan: That is good. You have improved a lot in your dreams and plans, how
do you think about you now?

Andre: It's nice.

Renjan: You feel so proud and worthy.

Andre: Yes, sure.

Renjan: It's nice. All the best for your plans!

Andre: Thank you. Pray for me.

Renjan: It's pleasure. I will.

4.4.4 Surviving in hardship

Renjan: How are you, Salin, today?

Salin: Ok.

Renjan: Are you really ok, or feeling bad?

Salin: Why are you asking like that?

Renjan: You shared on your bitterness in the streets, last time.

Salin: That's right. Still the picture is the same.

Renjan: Are you still facing hardships?

Salin: Yes.

Renjan: It's so bad.

Salin: Two days back, I was sleeping in a street corner. Two black guys came and kicked me and pushed me to the road. I was about to be hit by a car. It was so horrible. I tried to resist. They wanted to take my things. I don't have any valuable thing but only some clothes and a bag.

Renjan: So sorry about that incident.

Salin: This time it happened to me, but it is common in the streets.

Renjan: Did you see similar incidents.

Salin: I saw a few incidents, but I can't help. Those people are rude and ugly. They will kill me.

Renjan: Are these incidents really disturbing you?

Salin: I hate to live in streets, but no way to go, no place to go.

Renjan: Do you think that all the people in the streets are ugly and bad.

Salin: No, there are good people, but they have no power. If I am in trouble they can't help.

Renjan: They are in the similar condition like you.

Salin: Yes, but we can help each other in simple things.

Renjan: In what ways can you help other people in the street?

Salin: When I get some food I can share it with those who have no food. I have three sets of dress, if anybody is in dire need I can give one.

Renjan: With those acts of sharing can you change the streets into a better place.

Salin: I don't think so. But I can be changed and they can also.

Renjan: A positive change will result.

Salin: Of course.

Renjan: Did you practice it and see the changes.

Salin: Yes, I am trying sometimes, and surely change is there.

Renjan: Are you comfortable with that change and satisfied with that?

Salin: I don't have a problem with that. I have to do more. I will tell others to share. Then only it will make some changes. I think some of the people do that in their life in the streets.

Renjan: That is good.

Salin: There are hardships, but in the hardships these experiences give me joy and love.

Renjan: It strengthens you to survive in the hardships.

Salin: Yes, I have to survive. I know that one day I will go away from the streets. But I can help others wherever I would be.

Renjan: You have the hope for the future.

Salin: Yes I have.

Renjan: Good luck for that.

Salin: Thank you, see you.

4.4.5 Needs guidance and assistance

Roul: How are you, Pastor?

Renjan: I am fine, how are you doing?

Roul: Fine.

Renjan: Did you find some job?

Roul: I got some piece jobs. So I am surviving.

Renjan: Because of those piece works you managed to survive.

Roul: Yes, but that is not enough.

Renjan: Still you have struggles.

Roul: It is so difficult to get food every time and everyday. Nobody will give money.

Renjan: It's so difficult to manage the need of money in the streets?

Roul: That's why I am thinking about mother. I wouldn't fight with my mother.

Renjan: You have still that feeling of guilt.

Roul: Yes, I have.

Renjan: So what name you will give to your problem?

Roul: Guilt feeling is my problem.

Renjan: What is your relationship to your problem?

Roul: When I starve and struggle in the streets, that guilt feeling comes to me again and again.

Renjan: How does it affect your daily life?

Roul: It really disturbs me. When it comes I will not talk to anybody. I will be so gloomy.

Renjan: That guilty feeling knocks you down.

Roul: Not completely. After sometime I will change my mood and come back to the normal.

Renjan: What makes you to change your mood?

Roul: When somebody talks to me lovingly or when I listen to Bible devotions I change my mood.

Renjan: You can change your mood in such occasions. Thus you can make another better relationship with the guilt feeling, that it may not knock you down.

Roul: It's so difficult.

Renjan: You think it's so difficult. At the same time you can change your mood as a response to good relationships and good Bible devotions.

Roul: Yes, I can [Silence]. That guilt feeling catches me and put me in a different mood.

Renjan: So?

Roul: I want to escape.

Renjan: What can you do to escape from the problem?

Roul: I will kick it away when it comes to knock me down.

Renjan: Like a soccer ball.

Roul: Yes, with prayer, with God's power. For that I need assistance. Your devotions are helping me a lot.

Renjan: Thus you can keep the problem away for ever.

Roul: I want to write something. After sometime I will come back to you.

Renjan: Ok, Roul.

Some time later Roul came back to me with a poem written on a piece of paper which he had collected from the street ministries' office. He recited the poem to me. As he started reciting, others of the homeless people came near and listened. At the end everybody applauded Roul for his poem. It reads:

I GIVE ALL I HAVE

I JUST THROW ALL AWAY

4 A CHANCE 2 WALK WITH YOU

THROUGH THE HEAVEN'S GATE

THAT'S WHY I'M THANKING YOU

4 YOUR LOVE AND GRACE

I DON'T DESERVE THESE BLESSINGS

THAT YOU GAVE TO ME

DEAR GOD, AS A HUMBLE MAN

I COME TO YOU LIKE A CHILD,

IN NEED OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE,

YOUR GUIDANCE AND YOUR PROTECTION GOD

I KNOW IAM SINNING.

I AM A MAN

DEAR GOD IT'S ME

I'M SORRY, SO SORRY

4 NOT LIVING FOR LORD

I PROMISE FROM THIS DAY ON

I'M LIVING 4 YOU GOD

WITHOUT MY MEAN, NOTHING WAYS.

4.4.6 Who will help me?

John: Hi, Rev!

Renjan: Hi, John, How are you?

John: Fine, thank you.

Renjan: Did you go to Centurion?

John: I was planning to go, but I didn't get money.

Renjan: So you dropped the plan.

John: I didn't drop the plan, if I get money I will go.

Renjan: You want to seek other possibilities to get a job.

John: Yes, but who will help me?

Renjan: You worry that nobody is there to help you. Did you ask somebody to help you?

John: I asked some people, but they didn't help me.

Renjan: You think that nobody will help you?

John: I don't think so.

Renjan: If somebody helps you what would be your life then?

John: I will go to Centurion. I am sure that I will get a job there. Then I will go to my wife and kids.

Renjan: Then you can have the fellowship with your wife and kids.

John: Yes, I am missing them now. I have to go back and see them. But now I can't go back. I don't have money to travel; I don't have money to buy food for them.

Renjan: The money matters, is it?

John: Really. Without money we cannot do anything, even we cannot move.

Renjan: Is that money is the most important factor in life?

John: No, love is important.

Renjan: You love your family?

John: A lot.

Renjan: Do you love your situation now?

John: No, I love a better situation for me.

Renjan: Better means?

John: Having a job, having money and taking care of my family.

Renjan: So there is such a possibility.

John: I believe that. Somebody will help me and I will go to Centurion and will get a job.

Renjan: You love that better situation more.

John: Yes.

Renjan: How did this conversation help you?

John: Before this, I was thinking that nobody is there to help me. Now I have a hope that somebody will help me and I can find a job.

Renjan: You changed to a better attitude.

John: I affirmed my conviction to go to Centurion. It will surely help me. Thanks for the support.

Renjan: It's my pleasure. May God bless you to find the means for your better life.

John: Bye-bye.

4.4.7 Finance matters

Mzwasi: How are you Pastor?

Renjan: I am ok, and you?

Mzwasi: I am fine, thank you.

Renjan: Did you make some progress in your plans?

Mzwasi: I made some calls to some companies, but they have to take decision and will call me back. But where to call, because I don't have a cell phone.

Renjan: I can do onething; you may give my cell phone number to them. I can receive your calls and inform you.

Mzwasi: That's great. It will help me a lot.

Renjan: You think that everything will be sorted out?

Mzwasi: No, first I have to provide the uniform to the security personnels and to have an office to coordinate the things. For all these things finance is needed.

Renjan: Your problem is finance. How you will manage the finance?

Mzwasi: I know that once I get started the finance will come. I believe that some generous people will help me for the initial investment. Or I will work as a security personal for a while and earn some money for that.

Renjan: Thus you can control your problem.

Mzwasi: Finance is a problem not only for me; it is a common problem of the people in the streets.

Renjan: So you are not alone.

Mzwasi: Yes, I am not alone. I want to help some people in the streets. That's why I wish to start the company.

Renjan: The lack of finance makes you in the similar position with your friends and create a concern for them?

Mzwasi: Yes, I have to help them.

Renjan: Did you share your attitude and vies to them?

Mzwasi: Yes, I did. They are also interested. They cannot support me financially, but they are supporting me morally and mentally.

Renjan: You like that support.

Mzwasi: Yes, I cannot do a business on my own and alone. I need support of others always. There are people to support me. But the government is not supporting me. When I approach the government offices for some loans for my business, they need this document and that, which I cannot give. I am a homeless person.

Renjan: You have regret towards the government.

Mzwasi: They are supporting people who have money.

Renjan: Do you think that government is for the rich people.

Mzwasi: May not be fully, but they are not good to the poor people.

Renjan: Do you like your life as a homeless person?

Mzwasi: I don't like it. I want to have a home as my own. I hope I will.

Renjan: You like such a life having a job, having a home and having supporting friends.

Mzwasi: Yes, that is my hope.

Renjan: I wish all the success for your efforts.

Mzwasi: Thank you.

4.4.8 Hope of companionship

Renjan: Hi, Patrick!

Patrick: Hellow, how are you?

Renjan: Alright and you?

Patrick: I am ok.

Renjan: How you are managing your life in the street?

Patrick: As I said last time, I am making use of all the opportunities to get food from different organizations.

Renjan: Did you find some friends?

Patrick: Not at all. I am alone.

Renjan: You will not talk to any body?

Patrick: Yes, I am talking to many people, but it is not good to have some friends. God is my only friend.

Renjan: God is your friend and you are God's friend.

Patrick: Yes.

Renjan: If God is your friend, then God is the friend of other people also, isn't it?

Patrick: [smiling]. That's a good idea, so?

Renjan: It is easy to make friends from the company of your friend, God.

Patrick: That's right, but I could not make friends.

Renjan: Are you satisfied in such situation having no friends.

Patrick: I am not satisfied actually.

Renjan: So it is better to have some friends.

Patrick: Good friends should have some qualities.

Renjan: What are the qualities you mean?

Patrick: They should listen to me and to my problems. They should be caring, not cheating. When I share something they have to help me to sort out things, not to put me in a trap.

Renjan: What is the approach of other people when you deal with the people around with your views about friendship.

Patrick: They don't want to be my friends. They cannot promise me hundred percent faithfulness.

Renjan: Your relationship is so demand based and conditional. So what do you think for having friends?

Patrick: I don't know, I have to find good people.

Renjan: In what ways good?

Patrick: I have to make some friends and select good friends from them.

Renjan: That's a great idea. For that you have to make friendships without conditions.

Patrick: I have to; otherwise people will not mingle with me.

Renjan: Are you satisfied in doing so?

Patrick: I am not comfortable, but I think I have to. My loneliness is so severe. I have to have some good friends.

Renjan: Your heart is longing for friendships.

Patrick: Not so much, but it is better to have good friends. They will listen to me and support me in my troubles.

Renjan: Then you will not feel lonely.

Patrick: Fellowship is essential for a healthy life.

Renjan: That is why you feel that it is better to have good friends?

Patrick: Yes.

Renjan: How does this conversation help you in your decisions?

Patrick: This helped me a lot. Before this I didn't even think of having friends. During this talk I was changing my mind slowly, that I know now.

Renjan: Are you comfortable with that change of mind?

Patrick: Yes, I am. Thanks for that.

Renjan: That's good. Keep it up.

4.4.9 Seeing a little light ahead

Michael: Hello! John, how are you?

Renjan: I'm ok, and you?

Michael: Not too bad.

Renjan: Did you visit your family?

Michael: It needs one hundred and twenty Rands to go there and come back. Also I cannot go to my mother and to my children empty-handed I have to bring something for them. I don't have money.

Renjan: Did you get some job?

Michael: I got some piece job, only for survival.

Renjan: What about your family?

Michael: They are in big problem. I don't know what to do.

Renjan: Can you explain it a little more?

Michael: I said to you that my uncle is making problems. My family believes in
ancestors and such things. We are Christians, and have beliefs that
my father will disturb us, if we are not pleasing him. He is no more, but
his spirit is here.

Renjan: Why should the spirit of your father disturb you all?

Michael: We have to do some rituals to please him, otherwise he will be angry.
That is not good.

Renjan: When you think like that, it haunts you?

Michael: My sisters died because of my father's anger. My uncle did that. My
father was using my uncle.

Renjan: How do you come to know about this?

Michael: We have that belief in our community and my uncle told us that my
father is angry. I know that he will kill my mother also.

Renjan: How does your mother and your family respond to this?

Michael: I phone them always and ask them not to go with my uncle to anywhere.
But if they have some sickness, there is nobody to help. That is a problem.

Renjan: In this situation how do you experience being in the streets and away from home?

Michael: I am really struggling. I am struggling to get a job here and I have to go back to my family.

Renjan: Now you don't have a job and you are unable to go back.

Michael: Yes, but yesterday one of my friends said he talked to a man in Cullinan,a suburb of Pretoria, and he is trying to arrange the job of a gardener for me there.

Renjan: If so what would be your story?

Michael: Then my story will be different. No doubt, I will get money and I can go back once in a while to my family and can take care of them.

Renjan: Then what about your relationship with your uncle?

Michael: If I am there he will not make much trouble. I can handle him. But he is not good – very cunning.

Renjan: You can manage your uncle, but will be careful.

Michael: Sure, he is dangerous. If he gets some opportunity he will kill all of us.

Renjan: Now you have a ray of hope that you can lead a better life.

Michael: Without money we cannot survive. Also in the streets it is not good.

There is no dignity. I love to work in the garden. In my home there we have agriculture-maize, vegetables and flowers also. Not too big, but small. I like working in the field. If I get that job in Cullinan, it will help me.

Renjan: May God help you to have a better life.

Michael: Pray for me. Don't forget to pray for my mother and my sisters.

Renjan: Surely I will pray.

Michael: Pray for my uncle that he may become a good man.

Renjan: We can hope for his change.

Michael: Thank you.

Renjan: Bye, Michael.

4.4.10 One day, I will

Sam: Hi, you are back?

Renjan: Yes, it is good to see you again. How are you Sam?

Sam: I am fine and you?

Renjan: Ok, how is your life now?

Sam: I was waiting for you to talk to you. I asked to Lizy yesterday when you would come. She said you will come today.

Renjan: How are your kids and your mother?

Sam: My kids are growing, they are smart girls. My mother is still struggling to cope.

Renjan: She is recovering from the shock.

Sam: Getting Ok slowly. To bring up two kids together is really a struggle.

Renjan: You are experiencing that struggle.

Sam: One day I was washing my kids one by one, one of my friends came there and said 'you are good with children'. Then I said to him 'if your wife die leaving two kids to you, you will also be good with children'. I really cried by saying that.

Renjan: What was your feeling at that time?

Sam: He doesn't know my struggle. I know that it was cruel to say like that. But he talked like that and probed me.

Renjan: Did his comment really disturb you.

Sam: It was so painful for me. I was struggling to earn money for my kids and taking pain to help them to grow.

Renjan: Are you regularly going home?

Sam: Almost all the weekends I am trying to go home.

Renjan: How does your mother and family see your experiences?

Sam: Even if they have grief, they are supporting me. They cannot compare my loss and grief. I lost my good wife. It was so painful.

Sam: No doubt. It affects all my life. I changed my life style. It changed my attitude. I was a drunkard, now I am not. I am working hard for my kids.

Renjan: Are you comfortable with this life situation?

Sam: I think I will never be comforted, because that is a great loss.

Renjan: You think it is irrepairable.

Sam: Yes, but now I am satisfied that I can live and work for my sweet kids.

Renjan: So you have the dreams about the future of your kids.

Sam: Yes, I have dreams that they will grow as good people. I will work for that. In the midst of all my mental and physical struggles I will do my maximum for them.

Renjan: You are imagining a bright future for them and through that a meaningful life for you.

Sam: My everything is for them.

Renjan: Now your life has some meaning.

Sam: Yes.

Renjan: Are you satisfied in talking to me.

Sam: It is so lovely and nice to talk to you. You are moving with me to my hopeful life.

Renjan: That's good. See you next time.

Sam: Thanks for listening, see you.

Renjan: Ok, bye.

4.5 METHODS OF FACILITATING

4.5.1 Cultural difference

Cultural diversity can be an advantage or a hindrance in the counselling process. In the narrative way of counselling it surely offers a wide range of possibilities, because such diversity allows the story teller to dictate his/her own meaning. In the context of a single culture, no effort is needed to learn cultural stories and particularities. McLeod says of his experience with counselling, "In my own life and work, I have become increasingly aware of the importance of culture, rather than individual psychology, as the starting point for making sense of my own, and other people's, behaviour and actions" (2006:57). When different cultures come together, however, the differences may also be overemphasised. A counsellor has to strive to avoid both extremes, and have broad cultural knowledge and an open mind and so appreciate the values of other people even when those values differ from his/her own. This requires a deep and empathetic understanding of individuals and of the environment in which they have been brought up.

Ethnic and cultural diversity is one of the characteristics of South Africa. This is why Archbishop Desmond Tutu called South Africa the Rainbow Nation. This imagery rightly signifies the cultural and ethnic diversity found in the country and

its ideal blending together. In the apartheid era, cultural diversity was exploited for the benefit of the oppressive minority. "[T]he political ideology of apartheid was designed precisely to exploit the reality of ethnic diversity to further the socio-economic and political interests of the dominant whites" (Maimela 1996:89). Freedom in South Africa has opened the immense possibilities of cultural diversity. How far these have been and will be used for the development of the nation is a matter for debate.

The people coming to the Street Centre are homeless people from the streets. They come from different parts of South Africa, or from neighbouring countries. They represent a range of cultural backgrounds and ethnic identities. Their responses to their problems are moulded by their identities and particular cultural backgrounds. I am a facilitator from another cultural background which is entirely different from South African culture. My Indian cultural background, of course, did create some problems and hindrances in my communication with the youth, but was not a total barrier to communication; in another way it helped me as facilitator and the young people as story tellers to open our minds to the wide possibilities offered by other cultures. "South Africa is a country of astonishing creativity, and it offers almost endless opportunities for the traveller interested in the arts. Perhaps this artistic richness has something to do with the country's traumatic past, but most certainly it has been stimulated, too, by the country's huge cultural diversity" (Gordimer 2005:7). Conversation between two persons from different cultures opens up possibilities for constructing a variety of meanings. A reader, for example, reads and understands the meaning of a text according to his/her cultural and social expectations. "A reader interprets the text – finds meaning in it – on the basis of how it fits or challenges her expectations. In constructing the text's meaning, she finds her horizon of expectations changing as well" (Griswold 1994:83). In conversation and counselling interviews the story teller reads his/her life text, finds new horizons of expectations and searches for the meaning of his/her experiences through alternate stories. Thus

the stories of other cultures can help the story teller to see the problem differently and equip him/her for a better relationship with the problem.

4.5.2 Confusing identity

A sense of identity is one of the essentials in the personality of every human being. "Identity" is the sum and substance of the sense of being at one with oneself as one grows and develops. "During adolescence, individuals sense more clearly their uniqueness as people and at the same time experience more intensely their relatedness to a larger whole" (Xavier 1987:131). As a person develops through various mental stages, he/she experiences a variety of issues related to friendship, sexual orientation, career, group loyalties, value systems and religious identification. Each person has to find suitable roles in these experiences and integrate them properly. Particular experiences which are not helpful for proper integration into social experiences can result in identity confusion.

In the South African context, many people who are now youth were born under the oppressive regime of apartheid, and were adolescents when of the country gained and began to come to terms with freedom. Their identity formation thus involved a shift from slavery to freedom. This freedom was gained, contrary to the expectations of many black people, not by war but through peaceful negotiation and a policy of reconciliation, instigated largely by Nelson Mandela. Black South Africans regained the cultural legacy of thousands of years. But this transition was not without confusion, not necessarily in a political sense but rather in a psychological sense, which was the beginning for the healing process of the community. "As we seek to know the truth about our divided past nothing is more painful than confronting the terrible hurts that we inflicted on each other during the last decades of apartheid rule. But the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has shown us, beyond what anyone could have foreseen, the power of the truth to heal" (Mandela 1997:81).

Such experiences will with or without their knowledge affect the development stages of the people of the nation. This may result in identity confusion. One symptom of this confusion is the tendency to violence so common among South African youth at the moment. A sense of community and their role in that community is needed to resolve this identity confusion. "The real legitimation for this can only be effected through a culture of rights in a humane society that is respectful of individuals and groups; a culture of peace between its diverse communities that is sustained by consensus not force; a sense of community that gives persons a feeling of individuality, participation and agency in the human community" (Heredia 2005:653). In some African traditional cultures various rituals and feasts mark the beginning of adulthood. Circumcision of young people is an accepted initiation rite in many African ethnic groups as the entrance to their adulthood. Youth is the preparatory stage for this maturity. However, these practices of orientation to adulthood and to the community have been greatly weakened because of the effects of modernity and urbanisation, with consequent negative effects for many of South Africa's young people.

Many of the young people I talked with suffer from identity confusion. But most of them have not turned to crime or violence. They are struggling to be better and trying to define their identity. Some of them have resolved this confusion with the help of the community around them, and now have the personal understanding to withstand difficulties. Most never had enough opportunities in their adolescence for proper role integration and healthy community experience. One result was that they became homeless and jobless. Part of their struggle to redefine their identities is retelling their stories, through which process they gain a new consciousness about their selves and hope for alternate and better life experiences in the future. My experiences with the young homeless people taught me that they are aware of their responsibilities to their families and society, but are powerless to integrate these various roles. Through the helping sessions many of them were able to envision a new role and its life possibilities.

Exactly how and to what degree they resolved their identity confusions is not important here. Through the narrative journey they are moving towards a better identity and better self. They are growing to a better relationship with their problems and equipping themselves to deal with these. These processes will surely create a stronger sense of self-worth in them and give them a sense of direction in life.

4.5.3 Towards a better understanding

The problems faced by the young people are becoming an integral part of their personality. Their cultural and social setting teaches them to think that these problems are part of their lives and that they are fully responsible for these problems. This can lead to their forming a negative conception of their character, nature and worth. Various terms used by the homeless youth, such as "powerless", "helpless", "no dignity", "no other options", "loneliness" etc. show this thinking. "When people experience hardship within our culture there are many invitations for them to see themselves as the problem, as deficient in someway, and to take on a dominant story about themselves as a 'failure' or being 'to blame'" (White & Denborough 1998:3). This dominant story then begins to dictate their behaviour and their relationship with society following a negative pattern, and leads to further "powerlessness", "helplessness" and "hopelessness". In narrative counselling, the facilitator helps the story teller to see the problem as separate from his/her personality. Through the helping process the story teller enters into a new relationship with the problem. The basic concept behind this new relationship is that the person is not the problem; the problem is the problem. This process is called 'externalization'. "Externalising conversations, which occur all the time in narrative therapy, are ways of speaking that separate problems from people" (Morgan 2000:17). By helping the person to name his/her problem, the facilitator gives him/her the opportunity to deal with the problem properly and move to a new alternate story for his/her life.

The homeless youth in Pretoria face various problems which have brought them to the streets. Problematic cultural, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds may dominate their stories. These scripts and understandings form the discourses that control the young people's attitudes and life narratives. In my experience with the young people, I learnt not to try to compel them to name their problems. In some cases this did happen, but in others, this naming would have interrupted the journey. Rather, I found it more useful to listen for the unique outcomes of their stories, which are revealed by key words. These can be taken as the name of the problem and used to tackle the problem. This process of identifying key words is of course not purely objective; it rather evolved out of my journey with each story teller, as my cultural stories and background interacted with theirs.

4.5.4 Language and facilitating

Language can be considered as a carrier of meaning. "It is the primary medium for communicating the highest qualities of human nature. It is through language that parents convey messages about the world, God, others, and the child herself. Humans talk about needs, values, goodness and sin, goals and the satisfaction of goals. Conversation makes available a world in which the young child can act, and helps the child develop a sense of her own identity" (Johnson 1997:160). As language is the medium for communication, its practical use for communication is important. Here a post-modern approach is useful. According to Derrida, "there is no magic language…The notion of magic language is the notion of a system of thoughts or meanings that stand behind 'natural' human language as the meanings expressed by the terms of the natural language" (Wheeler III 2000:217). This traditional assumption about language is questioned in Derrida's theory of deconstruction. The traditional view of meaning denies the usefulness or even the possibility of further interpretations of a text or experience, because its meaning is fixed. The deconstructive view insists that no

such fixed meaning exists. Words that facilitate the interpretation of experiences allow a conversation to be deconstructed, and various interpretations teased out. Thus using facilitative language does not involve correcting the experiences of the teller according to the meaning desired by the facilitator. Rather, the facilitator helps the story teller to tell and interpret his/her own experiences from different points of view so as to open up diverse and deeper meanings.

A particular word in one language has its own particular meaning which can have very different connotations from the word used in another language. Language itself is a product of culture. Culture can be defined as the interactions within a society. Thus language is intimately involved in social interaction, and language differences and the social construction of meaning can be both barriers to communication and social interaction and important possibilities for understanding a diversity of meanings. "People may exist in multiple communities through multiple networks, but along these networks they still share meanings with one another" (Griswold 1994:152). People in specific contexts are able to and should have the right to interpret their cultural objects and assign them unique meanings.

The homeless people in Pretoria comprise people from different parts of South Africa, belonging to various different cultural milieus. Though English was the common language for the counselling sessions, the young people from Tswana, Sotho, Sepedi or Afrikaans culture interpret their ideas of homelessness and their experiences according to these cultures' expectations, discourses and languages. "Although the homeless have to make up their own culture and identities with few resources and limited precedents, most interactions that transmit culture and form identity call on a known and shared history of the community" (Griswold 1994:56). This community feeling helps meaningful communication, and allowed me to explore the meanings of the young people's stories through empathetic listening to their descriptive storytelling. Thus the language differences we experienced actually became a blessing in my

interaction with the young people, helping to uncover the different cultural meaning of basic concepts and experiences. The young people all experience homelessness, economic hardship, grief, anger and helplessness share these through their own language and search for meanings for these experiences in a homeless community setting.

Facilitating in this counselling experience does not involve trying to conceptualise and express their experiences and attitudes in another language, Instead the facilitator helps the story teller to envision the meaning of his/her experience in his/her own cultural/language setting and articulate this in the language common to listener and story teller. Of course we have to admit that a concept clearly articulated in one language can sometimes be inadequately expressed in another language. But through continuous interaction between facilitator and story teller, this problem can be minimised as the facilitator learns to read the meaning of a concept in the story teller's cultural world. I was able to maintain such continuous interaction with the homeless youth at the Street Centre in Pretoria.

For the purposes of this report I have described two sessions of story telling with each informant to gives insight into this research project and the themes and meanings uncovered. My search was not selective but rather let these themes and meaning evolve during continuous interaction within the homeless community in Pretoria. The dominant discourses involved were not listened for deliberately, but rather arose through experience as part of my narrative counselling interactions with the homeless youth.

4.5.5 Feedback from the story tellers

In the Street Centre setting, arranging a session for feedback from the story tellers about this report is not relevant or possible. Some feedback was obtained in the course of the data collection, however, since all the young people voluntarily shared their stories with me, and corrected my understanding and

gave additional information to clarify points when necessary during the course of our sessions. As co-researcher I selected words to communicate back to the story tellers the meanings which I understood from their stories. I tried to make empathetic responses and asked facilitative questions. If the meaning which I had gathered was not correct, the tellers would intervene or respond and correct it. Also, I asked the young people to describe their experiences of telling their own stories and also about their understanding of the story telling process. This gives me real feedback about their stories and their experiences, and helped me to move with them towards new stories.

4.6   CONCLUSION

The counselling sessions described in this chapter show the movement from unique outcomes to preferred stories. The description offered here may suggest that this shift was sudden, but this is only an effect of having to give selected excerpts of my interactions with the young people. Though these excerpts are reproduced *verbatim* from the counselling sessions, the sections are stories retold by me for the purpose of this research. I did not consciously twist the sessions or omit important aspects of our conversations. But nobody can construct a story on his/her own; each story has multiple authors. "No one ever fully becomes the author of her/his own story; any such assumption can only lead back into the illusions of control, individual autonomy, isolated selfhood, and single truth. The person goes forth instead to join with others in the universal human action of multiple authorship" (Parry & Doan 1994:43). So the story I present here is a valid interpretation of my experience with and the experiences of the homeless youth. This co-authoring is unavoidable considering the nature of my journey with the homeless youth. As I came to understand the meanings of their stories and shared this with the story tellers, they travelled to new stories with new meanings.

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CHAPTER FIVE

DESCRIPTION OF EXPERIENCES CONTINUALLY INFORMED BY TRADITIONS OF INTERPRETATION

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The contextualised experiences of homeless people are continually informed by traditions. Traditions are not necessarily limited to the rituals and practices of a community or a group of persons. Tradition is something more than that which finds its meaning in society, culture, spirituality and so on. Defining and redefining meaning from time to time is related to traditions which continually inform the particular life situation of a person. The do's and don'ts of society are dictated by such traditions. Human beings are inescapably social beings, thus they cannot avoid the influence of these traditions in their life world and in their concepts and attitudes.

5.2   TRADITIONS OF INTERPRETATION

5.2.1 Definition of traditions

Traditions can be defined and interpreted in different ways. Most definitions mention a set of values, rituals, customs and practices used and formed in the past which are handed over from generation to generation. When people say they are 'traditional', however, they cannot negate the fact that they exist in the present. Thus, however old the tradition from which they come, these people are

actually part of the present. "Tradition in its real sense means the continuation of faith in eternal truth and values. True tradition is therefore a continuous re-experiencing of the original breakthrough from inner worlds of other realities, a re-experiencing today of a dynamic aliveness, no matter how long ago the tradition may have been formed" (Tradition 2006). In one sense story telling is a re-envisioning and re-experiencing of the inner worlds formed and continually informing the dynamic aliveness today. It is an ever–moving, ever-reconstructing process. Those inner worlds themselves are formed by the influence of various traditions. Intentional transmission of historical facts can be found in legends, proverbs, balleds and sagas. These traditions may be oral or written, but they usually begin as oral testimony handed down from one generation to the next. Story telling is an irreducible method of transmitting traditions. Each occasion of story telling conveys some sort of tradition to the listeners, the next generation.

Retelling stories is part of a dynamic, that of life experience moving forward. It may be influenced by various traditions such as social, cultural, religious and political traditions. It is difficult to separate these traditions and analyze their impact on a person's experience. Traditions, like discourses, are intertwined and they influence a person's life stories in multiple ways, each of which must be attended to, since it opens a unique possibility. Traditions are not to be considered as rigid things, but rather as part of society's processes of change and growth. The homeless youth in Pretoria with whom I interacted understand this. In their stories they never negated traditions and their impact, either directly or indirectly. Their stories are saturated with such influences. However, often the story tellers are not consciously aware of the traditions that influence their experiences or how this influence works. It is the task of the facilitator to listen to the stories and their interpretations of life experiences. Through such patient listening the facilitator can read the influences of different traditions in the stories. Thus relatively good knowledge and understanding of various traditions and their expressions, especially in a particular life setting, are essential for a facilitator. Studies in the fields of cultural, political, social and spiritual traditions can help

the facilitator as co-researcher to co-author the stories continually informed by traditions.

5.2.2 Criteria for detecting traditions

A person's history is not negated by the experiences of his/her present life. This history has validity for interpretations of the present. The past continuously informs the process of finding meaning in present experiences. Traditions can be understood as beliefs, rituals and practices informed by past experiences which now inform present experience and form part of a person's life story, or inform alternate stories. "A genuine understanding of the past lies always before us as a task for the future. It is a mark of shifts in the epochs of thinking that they arrive, sometimes over centuries, sometimes over decades, but always as if they were already here, so that it becomes near impossible to turn back into their origins and what lies behind them without finding them already everywhere" (Hemming 2005:12). The past enlightens the present and gives light for the future. When the homeless youth share their stories, the trace of various different traditions is visible. For example, traditions of modernity influence the stories told by Andre. He views the goal of his life as to 'be independent'. The basic trend of modernity is that of individuality. Modernity affirms the human being as the creator of his/her own destiny. Modernity upholds the power of human beings. Andre believes in his own power and he wants to be independent. This attitude helps him to make plans for his future. Another influence on Andre's stories is that of religion. He was born in a Christian family and learned the lessons of Christianity in his childhood. He now interprets Christian teachings according to the assumptions that best fit his present condition. When he listened to the Bible classes at the Street Centre and the ideas presented there, he began to experience confusion. He now tries to retell his story, informed by this new religious tradition and affirming his present experiences and his continuing interpretations of them. Andre's telling and retelling of his story is an example which reveals the implications of informing traditions. Newly experienced realities are more

accessible than the past, yet these new realities continuously interact with past experiences to create new experiences. These new experiences, their interpretations and the meaning these reveal together all become clearer if we identify the traditions influencing the particular experiences.

5.2.3 How the traditions are chosen

Different traditions continuously inform story tellers in their lives and in their story telling. All interpretations are made in light of these traditions. Thus identifying these traditions will help us to understand the story tellers' interpretations. Traditions can come from society, peer groups or churches, amongst others. The discourses of the homeless youth are also continually informed by various traditions. "When engaging in language, we are not engaging in neutral activity. There exists a stock of culturally available discourses that are considered appropriate and relevant to the expression or representation of particular aspects of experience" (White & Epston 1990:27). Through analysing the discourses that emerged during my conversations with the young people, we can identify the traditions that inform them and so enter wider discussion with these discourses. Further discussion about the impact of such traditions in the life experiences of the researchers also helps. Inviting them to investigate their previous experiences will reveal their inner concepts about the various traditions that inform these experiences. Deconstructive questioning is also essential at this stage. By examining the discourses using questions like: How has this discourse influenced you in the past? How does it influence you in the present? How do you think it will influence you in the future? How does it affect your relationship with yourself? How does it affect your relationship with other people? The answers to questions like these can illuminate the different traditions present in the stories, and the story teller can begin to converse with them.

5.2.4 Traditions relevant in this study

Traditions are essential ingredients of culture, and descriptive sources of human diversity. This diversity allows human experiences to be rich, varied and transcendant. Discourses and traditions are handed over from generation to generation mainly through cultural artefacts. Such discourses may not have had a global setting in the past, but nowadays are mostly entangled with global issues. Different traditions cannot be examined without looking into the global issues related to those traditions.

Thus we have to identify the traditions that are relevant to the experiences of the homeless youth, because in so doing we discover a world of meaning-making. This is a part of narrative therapy and research in the narrative paradigm. Here the experience of the person is important, since his/her story of this experience gives direct messages, sometimes insights, about the traditions that informed these experiences. "Narrative psychology can be considered an extension of cultural psychology that connects culture, identity, and human experience" (Hoshmand 2006:9). The connections between culture, identity and human experience make the role of traditions in the meaning-making process highly relevant to this project. The dynamics of traditions in human experiences are complex and intertwined. Nobody can directly detect the traditions in a person's life experiences, but through the narrative way of listening and interaction the facilitator can read glimpses of various traditions and discourses in his/her story. The facilitator may detect many cultural and traditional aspects in the stories shared by the story teller. Searching out the relevant traditions that influence and inform the experiences is a shared task of the facilitator and the researcher. Without the arena created by the counselling interaction, such research is impossible.

The stories told by homeless youth in their particular context of Pretoria clearly reveal the influence of socio-political traditions, traditions informed by cultural

stories and spiritual traditions. Identifying these traditions in the course of narrative interactions opens wider possibilities of creating meaning and promotes the telling of alternate stories. "Human beings are culture bearing and at the same time capable of self-creating. The notion that we can appropriate from culture what we desire for our identity may seem to suggest endless human potentials" (Hoshmand 2006:11). The cultural traditions that inform Michael's stories, for example, are easily read in his narrations. The cultural traditions of traditional religion are deep rooted in his experiences and influence him in his present day activities. Even though he is a Christian, he believes in ancestor worship. He believes that all the trouble now being experienced by his family is because of the displeasure of his deceased father. Michael performs the rituals traditionally believed to please the ancestors, but because he is also now influenced by more modern traditions, he wants to leave traditional tribal beliefs behind. He is not able to untangle the discourses related to these conflicting traditions. This example affirms the importance of the traditions that inform the stories of homeless people.

5.2.5 Informing traditions and life experiences

Most of the homeless youth in Pretoria are products of apartheid South Africa, and its strict social controls. This social control was part of an exploitative capitalist system. Thus social, economic and personal factors intertwine in the homeless people's experience. Education, training, the mobilization of certain social sentiments (the work ethic, company loyalty, national or local pride), and psychological propensities (the search for identity through work, individual initiative, or social solidarity) all play a role in the experience of homelessness. In urban families, the conditions created by the parents' work hours often result in young people growing up in an uncontrolled and unprotected way. Migrant labour, also, which forced the males of the community to leave their homes to work in the mines, alienated many men from their home societies and left their families desolate. Many of these families broke down, leaving the children to be

brought up only under the care of their mother or grandmother. Children brought up in such unstable social settings experience insecurity, which can lead to lawless behaviour. Post 1994, many of these children ended up on the streets, as explained above, where they often lose the last remaining traces of stable family or cultural traditions, and are left unprotected against present day social evils. All the young people to whom I spoke showed negative discourses in their stories of their life experiences, which must be identified so that the tellers can be helped to retell their stories.

Many of the psychological problems for which people go to therapists – problems like depression, anxiety, family strife, addictions, criminal behaviour, a sense of meaninglessness and low self-confidence – are much less likely to occur, or are simply ruled out, in people who live by the Christian virtues. The psychological value of these traits should be obvious not only to Christians, but to virtually everybody. Now psychological problems are very common among the homeless. They have their own discourses about such problems which are often traditionally informed. Sometimes a tradition's informing of their experiences may be negative. The psychological traditions on which they draw to construct their self concept have great influence on their experiences. For example, many show vivid influence of negative concepts when they lament that 'I am unworthy'. Other labels that affect their self concept include 'homeless', 'lower class' or 'under class'. All these labels become part of the socio-political traditions that inform their stories. "Regardless of how we label them, their troubles play a central role in homelessness. Because they cannot find steady jobs, they cannot afford to internalize the work ethic or link their self respect to their job performance" (Jencks 1995:114). As long as these young people are homeless they are imprisoned by the different traditions which are part of their discourses.

5.3 HOW TRADITIONS INFORM EXPERIENCES IN THE CONTEXT OF HOMELESSNESS

In this study, the assumed paradigm is postfoundationalism, which "in theology and the sciences wants to…affirm the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience and the way that tradition shapes the epistemic and non-epistemic values that inform our reflection about both God and our world" (Van Huyssteen 1998:23, 24). The role of such traditions in the life world and life expectations of homeless people cannot be avoided. An identification of such traditions in this particular context and an assessment of such traditions are necessary for a better understanding of the particular context of homeless people coming to the Street Centre in Pretoria.

5.3.1 Assessment of traditions

Homeless people in Pretoria, as mentioned above, come from various cultural, social and economic backgrounds. Thus the traditions that inform their values and ideas are also varied. Because of their young age, the people to whom I spoke are very sensitive to the influence of traditions. "Traditions are not innate in the human mind, although the capacity to assimilate traditions and to adhere to them is innate. Without that capacity, no infant could become a human being, a recipient and carrier of cultural traditions, and hence could not become a member of society" (Shils 1988:111). It is thus difficult to identify and assess the particular traditions informing the discourses of these homeless people. Each storyteller has his/her own particular ideas about the values and attitudes of society, ideas which were formed by the traditions which influenced him/her in childhood. The facilitator of course also has a particular set of values informed by traditions which may be different from those of the story teller. A third story will evolve through continuous interaction between all these traditions and their concepts.

For the purposes of this study, the traditions that continually inform the experiences of the homeless young people in the particular context of Pretoria are divided into socio-political, cultural and spiritual. There may be other traditions, but these did not appear prominently in my conversations with the homeless youth, and so are not included here. The chosen traditions were identified in the youth's responses to their life situations. As they articulate their life stories, they knowingly or unknowingly present their attitudes and responses to socio-political issues and their impact on their lives, try to share their cultural values, and formulate questions or clarify points about their God experiences. Through all these means the young people create a new story of their God experience and a new understanding of their future.

Assessing how these traditions inform the experiences of the youth begins with simply investigating these life experiences. As the story unfolds the facilitator begins to identify particular traditions. This must not be a deliberate attempt to twist the attention of the story teller to a particular direction desired by the facilitator. Instead the facilitator carefully listens to the meanings created through the words used by the story teller in the casual flow of the story. In some cases the facilitator may ask questions or make comments, to clarify the emerging concepts, but intervention must not exceed this. Thus it is essential to read between the lines and in effect reinterpret of some parts of the story with the intention of identifying and assessing the traditions contained within it. In this study, the genuineness of the results of this process was tested as far as possible by checking these interpretations with the story teller in later sessions, which are not included in this research report.

5.3.2 Socio-political discourses

Socio-political discourses continually inform the experience of homelessness and its economic impact. Many of the homeless persons in Pretoria migrated there from other provinces, and quite a number of them from other countries. All came

to Pretoria seeking jobs and better living standards than in their original village or country. This migration pattern can be seen all over the world. Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General, tries to see the positive side of such migration to cities., saying that the migrants can be more useful for the country in the new city or country than they ever were to their original area: "Yes, migration can have its downside-though ironically some of the worst effects arise from efforts to control it: it is irregular or undocumented migrants who are most vulnerable to smugglers, traffickers and other forms of exploitation" (Annan 2006:9). However, urban society, especially the permanent residents of the city, views such migrants as a nuisance, a disturbance in their peaceful life. In poor countries such migration creates fear in the residents that they will lose many job opportunities because of the influx of migrants. This widespread social attitude creates negative feelings in homeless people and helps push them down into non-creativity. When they say 'I am helpless', 'I am powerless', and 'I have no other option', they reveal negative feelings about their social role and participation, which disempowers them.

As the path to homelessness can take several routes, so too the effect of homelessness can differs. Reasons for homelessness may be personal irresponsibility, shortage of low-income housing, the impact of changing technology on work, globalization, alcoholism, extreme poverty and so on. Its effects may be lack of self-responsibility, lack of self worth, living in shelters or streets, inaccessibility to resources and living in utter poverty. "The growth of the homeless population swamped the social welfare system and changed the public's viewpoint. …By making every homeless person a messenger and every passer-by a witness, homelessness triggered a crisis of visibility that scratched the psychological armor of even those citizens who insisted that all those people on the street were still the unworthy poor" (Blau 1992:175). When these attitudes become part of the discourses of the homeless youth, this can have both negative and positive effects. The young people may develop an attitude of avoiding responsibility for their homelessness, rather blaming dysfunctional

social, economic and political systems. Or they might think about supporting the government and non-governmental organizations in their efforts to help the poor. Both these effects can be seen in the young people's stories.

Interestingly, the stories not only reveal awareness of discrimination and social injustice, but also a readiness to react to such social scenarios. This means the youth are ready to have a new relationship with socio-political traditions. "The political behaviour of youth conforms to the overall pattern of life among young people. Crises, injustices, and patterns of discrimination are strongly felt by them, but they are also more apt to try to do something about these problems than are other age groups" (Allardt 1988:142). The economically poor condition of the homeless people lessens or even eliminates any opportunities to participate in social change, but despite this their willingness to change motivates them to use any remaining opportunities.

The post-apartheid government in South Africa has attempted several policies to improve the economic conditions of its people especially those who are alienated from the educational sector. Higher education being expensive in South Africa, many turn to seeking a job after completing their basic education. The government knows that education should be available to all for economic growth in South Africa. "Post-1994 South Africa saw a number of progressive higher education policies developing, aimed at eliminating apartheid backlogs and enabling higher education to serve as the engine of economic growth (Capital accumulation) and a source of social mobility (economic and social equity)" (Cele 2005:11). However, a particular socio-political discourse about higher education, namely that "Higher education is for the rich" strongly influences the poor majority in South Africa. The result is that many of them have no ambition to learn more. However, some homeless people whom I met are interested in obtaining degrees and eager for higher studies, even after they became homeless. This shows that they are ready to re-tell their stories for a better future. Many homeless people do get jobs, because they are ready to learn, and take advantage of the computer

literacy and technical skills which are offered by PCM. A PCM newsletter from 2005 reports that the Tshepo Community Economic Development, one of the projects run by PCM, helped place more than 40 people into sustainable employment in a few months, and that many more people benefited from computer, small business, security and hospitality training programmes (2005:6). Projects like this help people to change their relationship with existing socio-political discourses of educational alienation, economic disempowerment and political exploitation. This leads them to a better understanding of their situation and helps them to create alternate stories of their lives.

5.3.3 Discourses informed by literature

Studies and articles published on homelessness, unemployment, lack of education and poverty in newspapers and other types of literature greatly influence the discourses of people who live under these conditions and are exposed to this literature. This type of information affects the homeless in different ways: sometimes they feel affirmed in their social status, sometimes they gain hope for change, and sometimes they feel more negative reactions. A 15 year old girl Felicia, from a severely economically and disadvantaged background, wrote a poem on her status of abandonment (Leggett, Møller & Richards 1997:34):

>   Where do I go?
>   I have no home
>   I just have to find a place
>   That's warm enough
>   To make me survive

This poem gives a glimpse of hope and change, but also affirms her status of abandonment. We cannot neglect and be deaf towards such cries for survival.

Current management theories confirm the empowerment of the rich and the powerlessness of the poor. Salin, a homeless man involved in this research, is very aware about his powerlessness. He is not explicitly aware that his understanding has been informed by traditions from literature, but because of his schooling and a continuing reading habit, he shows the effects of such information. He understands and believes that his poverty makes him powerless, that "hierarchies are there to help the rich and powerful become richer and more powerful" (Leavitt 2005:29). Salin is not skilled and so cannot apply for good jobs. He thinks that rich people will not help him, but will only choose those with a better level of achievement. He believes that "human hierarchies…are psychological magnets that attract achievement-driven men and women" (Leavitt 2005:49). Such information disempowers the poor and homeless and tempts them to believe that they are in an inescapable trap of powerlessness and poverty.

Alienation from higher education and the resulting lack of education teaches unskilled people that they are not worthy of or eligible for jobs. Thus they often end up jobless, on the streets, depending on the charity of generous people. They also tend to fall into in socially deviant patterns of behaviour, such as crime, rape and drug trafficking. As a 16 year old homeless girl puts it, "education is very important in the youth because if you are looking for a job the employer will want to see your certificate and if you don't have it you can't get a job and that how the crime start but if we going to school we can stop if once and for all that why education is important to us as youth" (Leggett, Møller & Richards 1997:83).

Traditional African literature is another kind of literature that affects homeless people, a treasure of stories that has a great impact on their life stories. Their inner discourses often have some roots in the stories they have learned or heard. These stories do not always have a good influence, as one story, reported by Munroe, illustrates. This story is called "The Story-Teller", and features an aunt, her three nieces and nephews, and a stranger, a bachelor, all on a train journey

together. The Aunt tells the children stories about good children, filled with good values and moral lessons. She considers this the proper way of story telling, not realising that it is thoroughly boring for the children. The bachelor then tells a different kind of story, which the children find much more interesting. The aunt, shocked, says to him, "That was a most improper story to tell to young children". The only result of her admonition, so the story goes, is that "for the next six months or so those children will assail her in public with demands for an improper story" (Munroe 1994:43). The point of this fable is that attempts to preach, moralise or idealise in stories never work. The genuineness of a story excites the interest of hearers.

This I found very true in listening to the homeless community, who each have stories to tell, not fictions but stories of their experiences. The eyes and tones of the story tellers testified to the integrity of their stories, which of course interested me and encouraged me to listen more. In continuing conversations the young people highlight or explain the discourses involved in their experiences, and this often involves telling the stories they learned at school or elsewhere. These stories can be seen as stories within the story.

Sometimes traditional stories can also suggest some sort of hopelessness to the youth, particularly some of the stories they learned at school. One of the homeless youths said to me that the government is like a white ant. I asked him why he used this image. He explained that the government exploits us and leaves us no hope for the future, and that he got the image from a story he learned at school. When I searched the book and found the story, I understood what he meant. The story is about Jan Theron, who has a wooden leg because of an accident. Then one day the white ants hollow out the whole wooden leg while he lies asleep. Thus he loses his only support for survival. So people approach the school master, asking him out of his learning to tell them how to eradicate white ants. The schoolmasters answers that there is a chapter in his book on the destruction of termites which can help. "It was the last chapter in the

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book. But he had unfortunately left the book lying on his desk in the school room over one week-end. And when he had got back on Monday morning there was a little tunnel running up his desk. And the pages dealing with how to exterminate the white ant had been eaten away" (Bosman 1991:91). The homeless youth took this story to symbolise how the government has eaten up the people's last hope of eradicating evil, yet remains firm in its destructive policies. This reveals a negative discourse about the government and the role of government in this young man's particular life context.

In this way, literature, daily newspapers, oral stories and poems continually inform the discourses of homelessness and its economic factors. The negative or positive nature of this influence is a question that can be variously answered.

5.3.4 Cultural stories

Cultural stories create various meanings in the concepts of homeless persons. Some theorists say that people see their lives only through the values and attitudes formulated and given to them by the culture around them. Zimmerman however argues people produce meaning in relation with culture. "The 'discourse' we have been focusing on is how the culture created a way of seeing the individual as the sole producer of meaning, rather than the culture as the creator of meaning" (Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996:19). Culture includes stories suggesting the role of youth in society, about the hopes and hopelessness of jobless, homeless people; and the economic power of the person in the streets. The homeless person normally takes in these cultural stories and uses them in his/her own definitions and interpretations in daily economic and social matters.

Narrative therapy involves a process of externalizing, which aims to reveal how a problem influences the client's daily life and relationships. Through this it is easy to identify the influence of cultural discourses in the life of the homeless person. "By carefully mapping the influence of the problem on people's lives and

relationships, the therapist and each client can notice, how much of the client's experience has been affected by the problem (and the cultural discourse that supports it)" (Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996:55). The impact of cultural stories on the discourses of homeless people cannot be neglected.

The stories told by Michael disclose that he is still haunted by the values of cultural stories. As mentioned above, he still believes in the cultural value systems of his traditional culture, and the basis for his fear and anxiety is his cultural artefacts. Telling and retelling his story will help him to find new meanings. This story always pushes him to go back to his home to save his mother and sisters, but other stories, his stories of homelessness, prevent this. Economic poverty defines his strategies. The cultural stories he learnt as a child taught him to fear the wrath and displeasure of his ancestors. "In most cases, going against the will of the ancestors makes the individual incur their displeasure, and this leads to mental problems. Essentially, in African thought, the individual is protected against afflictions by the ancestors" (Bodibe 1992:151). In the South African context, indigenous and traditional African healing systems coexist with modern, western forms of counselling and psychotherapy. Because Michael is informed by the cultural stories of his context, I as the facilitator must also be informed about these cultural values and the stories which propagate these values. With such understanding and awareness of traditional healing systems I can effectively help Michael as story teller to retell his story so that it avoids the negative values and focus on the positive values of his particular culture.

5.3.5 Tradition and modernity

Modernity is the child of industrialization and enlightenment. A modern paradigm believes in the power of human reason and places human beings at the centre of the universe. The advancement of science and technology gave momentum and meaning for the concept of modernity. "Though its roots may be traced further

back, the modern world is marked by its unprecedented dynamism, its dismissal or marginalizing of tradition, and its global consequences" (Lyon 1994:19). Tradition can be viewed as a set of values and customs practiced from generation to generation. Modernity set aside such traditions and redefines society to stress technological advancement, progress, integration and rationalism. Such an approach of course contributed to the rise of oppressive governments in different parts of the world, including South Africa. Economically, technologically powerful nations dictated the socio-political destinies of other countries. Socio-political traditions and cultural discourses lost their grip on the everyday life of common people.

However, the modern era has arguably come to an end. In South Africa, with the passing of the apartheid regime society became open to post-modern possibilities. "When South Africans eventually become participants in democratic political institutions, they are bound to be sensitive to all forms of power relations-especially those outside the traditional political institutions, such as power relations in prisons, hospitals, mental institutions and educational settings" (Lötter 1995:58). This new paradigm changes the relationship between traditions and human life experiences.

The homeless people to whom I spoke still hold the values of modernity. Some of them believe that powerful social organizations or political parties will bring them freedom and progress, and so do not believe in searching for other opportunities. They blame the government for their poor economic and social status, because they think the government is responsible for providing food, shelter and jobs. Of course there is a role for the government in supplying the basic needs of citizens, but this does not minimize the responsibility of the individual in social change and progress. A narrative approach in dealing with the homeless people can help them realise their responsibility, to see their problems differently and to admit their role in the development of society.

5.3.6 Traditions in transition

We have discussed how socio-political traditions, discourses from literature and cultural stories continuously influence the experiences of the homeless people in their individual contexts. We have seen that the traditions of modernity inform their concepts of survival with ideas like self sufficiency, self employment and more individualistic approaches. These homeless people tend to seek the meanings for their lives dictated by literature and development classes. But they can change their attitudes and become open to other possibilities. Many of them do not want to limit their options for type of job or skill. They are open to various economic possibilities. "Discourse analysis of economic theory, at least in post-modern thought, is not a question of ascertaining the scientific core of concepts and methods; rather it is a question of seeing how language and other discursive forms can produce the meanings that determine partly our cognitive experiences of economic reality" (Amariglio 1990:16). Their economic and social activities can be liberated from the bondage of tradition and reach for experiential realities constructed through discursive interactions.

5.4 OWNERSHIP OF THE PROBLEM BY THE RESEARCHER

5.4.1 My power is inside

Some people define youth as the fullness of potentialities, and others as the power of the future. These definitions may or may not be true, according to the attitudes of the youth to society and to their lives. In the urbanization process many youth become hopeless. They move from their villages to the cities seeking jobs and shelter. The cities are not big enough or structured enough to offer accommodation for the hundreds arriving everyday. Thus many of those arriving become homeless. Most of the people coming to the cities are not skilled or trained which makes it difficult for them to get a job. Homelessness and

unemployment together make the young sometimes turn to socially deviant behaviour or end up depressed. Building up a right attitude to society and to their experiences is a great task.

Young people always have to face challenges, including the physical challenges of their maturation, the social challenges of becoming adult and the financial challenges of self sufficiency. In independent South Africa, people expect more from social structures and interactions, but their life experience all too often does not meet these expectations. Amazingly, in the midst of these struggles the young people of South Africa do not lose all hope for the future. "Many young people in South Africa were highly positive in their outlook even though many felt that they would not be able to fulfil their potential. The main reason for this feeling was indicated as a lack of financial resources; there may of course be a range of other reasons such as the lack of facilities" (Steering Committee 1994:20). This study shows the positive attitude of young people in South Africa in the post-apartheid era. They are more enthusiastic about building up the nation. But as explored above, social forces put many of them in illegal and hopeless situations. After 12 years of freedom, though many improvements have been made in South Africa, the rising numbers of homeless and jobless people and of those involved in drugs are jeopardising the future of South Africa.

The homeless youth in Pretoria differ in their attitudes towards society and their own experiences. These attitudes are formed by their adverse life experiences. Their narrative conversations vividly reveal that they all have the potential to be positive and constructive. They are ready to construct new, alternate hopeful stories for their lives. Joy characterises his experiences of homelessness and its economic adversities using the word 'powerlessness'. Financial nothingness, lack of job opportunities, absence of friends and loss of self confidence supplement his feeling and experience of powerlessness. Through narrative intervention Joy can be aided in retelling his life story and exchanging powerlessness for power. When he acknowledges powerlessness as his problem

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he empowers himself to view his problem from outside. Through making an alternate story, he affirms that his power is inside his mind and his experiences and that he can uncover this power and brings it into his life.

This is not an isolated example; all the storytellers show potential for empowerment. This supports the findings of a study by HSRC about the youth of South Africa, that "in so far as the majority of youth, including black youth, want to participate actively in the process of transformation and to contribute to a 'new' South Africa, their role is constructive" (Steering Committee 1994:19). However, we should be cautious about generalizing this finding.

5.4.2 Economic factors involved

The descriptions in the stories of the homeless people give insight into the history of South Africa as well as into the country's current cultural and economic conditions. Ultimately the lost dignity of many of the homeless people can be traced back to the negative economic factors that influenced the development of African countries adversely. The homeless people at the Street Centre are from various provinces of South Africa, and various neighbouring countries including Burundi, the Congo, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In all these countries tribal war and economic exploitation have devalued people's quality of life especially that of youth. This situation pushes young people to leave their homes to seek better life situations, and results in large numbers of refugees and migrants. "Impediments to human development include: apartheid, 'cross-border conflicts, ethnic upheavals and civil strife'. All of these result in six million refugees and 50 million disabled people, whilst a further 35 million people are displaced through natural disasters and 'difficult economic conditions' " (Griffiths 2001:32). These displaced people mostly come to urban centres seeking jobs, but lack of job opportunities and accommodation leave them homeless and jobless.

The young people arriving on the streets of Pretoria have nothing with them for survival. Their stories show the depth of the economic adversity they face. Government policies and social action groups' interventions are not enough to free the homeless people from their economic trap. Even though the selected story tellers did not share any experiences with alcohol and drug abuse, many young people do live as drug users. They use drugs to forget about their homelessness, but this habit of course only worsens their poverty.

Because of economic deprivation and lack of employment, most of the young people struggle to establish a firm identity for themselves. "Adolescents are barred from the economic sector by the inability to find full-time employment" (Scarpitti & Datesman (eds) 1980:19). This gives them a feeling that they are not worthy to be members of society, and they struggle for find meaning in life. The stories they tell about economic disempowerment show that they often lack awareness of their self worth. They do not seem to feel that they have any power to transform their own economic situation or that of society. They use the word 'powerlessness' to describe their hopelessness about the future. Theological explorations or exhortations about hope will not have much impact on their concept of hope. A meaningful narrative interaction leads them to deconstruct their meanings and retell alternate stories of hope for their lives.

Trends show that the global economy is growing at a moderate pace, an improvement on the slowing growth in recent years. However, "irrespective of [this] moderately fast growth of output, growth of employment has been lagging, and high rates of unemployment and underemployment threaten the goal of poverty reduction in much of the third world" (Thomas 2006:14). These economic trends offer no hope for the unemployed youth in the villages and cities. Those in African countries are particularly vulnerable. The homeless people in Pretoria are not aware of global economic growth, though growth in some of the businesses around them is visible to them. They feel angry towards the economic system because it helps the rich grow richer and leaves the poor to suffer.

Unemployment and survival in the streets are themes that often interact in the social and economic discourses of the homeless people. If proper dialogue between these discourses is not maintained this can contribute towards the creation of new discourses of anti-social attitudes. A narrative approach to such interactions can help the young people explore all the implications of these discourses. This manner of story telling leads them to better awareness. The deconstructive questioning of the facilitator and the formulation of unique outcomes helps the story teller move forward to new alternate stories.

5.4.3 Religious outlooks

Some people define religion as a person's opinion about metaphysical matters, and others as the guiding force for a good practical life. Religious interactions, whether metaphysical or practical, are essential and unavoidable in human life. Every country in the world has a variety of religious and spiritual concepts and outlooks. Christians in various cultures create their own Jesus from their particular life situations and experiences. Unique forms of worship have developed from specific social experiences and interpretations. Since they live in South Africa, with its history of oppression, many of the young people I spoke to understand Jesus as their political liberator. Apartheid taught them great lessons of suffering and they are in dire need of liberation. Even after gaining political freedom they suffer from social and economic oppression. "The struggle against apartheid in South Africa affected the images of Jesus in ordinary people's minds…. In South Africa, the interpretation that Jesus was also a political liberator, and that he is in solidarity with the oppressed and those who revolt against the white government, came as a shock to many Christians, especially white ones" (Pieterse, Dreyer & Vander Ven 2000:53,54). When they accept Jesus as their liberator, black people often also see him as their political and social saviour.

The hardships of life in the streets confuse some homeless youth. If Jesus is the liberator why are we still economically oppressed and marginalized? This confusion arises from the realities of their practical lives. In the discussion sessions after the Bible devotions I lead at the Street Centre, heated talk always arises if I interpret Jesus as the provider of food and material things and care-giver for the sick. The young people know that the Bible says this, but their life experiences teach them the opposite.

Through narrative counselling the young people come to understand these religious teachings in a different way, and so these traditions can be integrated into their discourses of homelessness and economic matters. In other words, they re-tell their stories and reframe their religious outlooks, in the process coming to a new awareness of their quality of life. When people evaluate life on only the basis of material benefits and wealth, using a quantitative approach, they do not judge wisely. Quality of life depends on more than material and physical wellbeing. It lies more in relationships, unconditional love and affection. "Christians, of course, know that affluence does not guarantee love, beauty, acceptance, and joy. Our deepest joy comes from right relationships-with God, neighbour, and the earth" (Sider 1997:24). This does not mean that only without material things we can enjoy quality life. For daily living, we need money and material things, but money is not the factor that decides life satisfaction.

The story tellers participating in this study shared their struggles and strife in the streets. Theology must not try to present their poverty and homelessness as ideal. The preachers can preach that the poor are blessed (Lk. 6:20), but this is no comfort for those suffering the effects of poverty, nor will it help them change their situation. Rather we should teach about a God who always challenges the jobless and homeless to work for change, in themselves and in the living out of biblical truths. There are tensions between cultural discourses and religious outlooks in some storytellers, between tribal and biblical values. Because of language problems these tensions are not always easy to trace, but by listening

carefully and patiently to the unique outcomes that emerge from the stories of struggle, the facilitator can help the story teller to retell the story and gain a new and better understanding.

5.4.4 Experiences of the story tellers

The way in which the story tellers describe their experiences show that various traditions inform their discourses and influence their problems, though this influence can vary from person to person. In all cases therefore we cannot neglect the impact of one or more traditions.

An example is Andre, who repeatedly mentions his habits. He wants to be a fruitarian, and links this desire with his homelessness and joblessness: because of his situation he does not always have money to buy fruit. He hopes to have a small house with a garden in which he can plant fruit trees and have fruit always. Thus he feels the lack of a home and its facilities. Andre is sometimes confused about spiritual traditions. The Bible says you do not have to think about tomorrow, that God will provide everything, yet his practical experience is that God does not provide. Yet the biblical tradition predominates, so that Andre is lazy, uncreative and unproductive. This worsens the effects of homelessness.

Others of the youth have the same perception of God's providence, but it does not make them lethargic, but pushes them forward to seek and find God. Thus both negative and positive influences of spiritual tradition are visible in stories of the homeless youth.

One of the young people has a concept of 'being independent'. This comes from the social discourses he grew up in, especially those formed during the transition from apartheid to freedom. Before 1994, black people could not be independent. Their tribal culture also lacked this concept, instead stressing togetherness as a family, clan or tribe. Self identity in this tradition is defined only in relation to the

community. In the new South Africa, however, independence becomes valued, because of varying other discourses and influences, such as the influence of western individualistic approaches, wider job opportunities, of the decay of the family system and the availability of more housing. All these shifted focus to the worth and dignity of the individual. Also, many of the organizations working to uplift the human dignity of South Africa's poor stress this individuality. The objectives of the Pretoria Upliftment Project (POPUP) include "to empower the homeless and unemployed in Tshwane; to restore the human dignity of the people" (The Objectives of Pretoria Upliftment Project 2006). This suggests the possibility of individuals' being independent, which is impossible for the homeless youth.

Independence has both positive and negative implications as well. It is a good thing to be independent and work hard to earn a livelihood and contribute to the development of the nation. However, extreme consciousness of the worth of independence can cause negative effects such as young people leaving or running away from home, families breaking apart and work situations being disrupted. "Independent living does not mean that we want to do everything by ourselves and do not need anybody or that we want to live in isolation" (Ratzka 2003). This can be seen in the young man with whom I spoke. He had such a strong belief in 'independence' that he left his home and came to the city. How, however, his experience of homelessness has helped him develop a more positive understanding of the concept. He wishes to plan for the future and work independently to better his life and society.

5.4.5 Evaluation of my experiences

My experiences as a person and as a researcher are also influenced by various traditions, such as spiritual traditions with cultural implications and practices. My biblical interpretations and moral values may sometimes differ from those of the homeless youth with whom I converse. This can cause me uneasiness

sometimes. There is always a temptation to 'correct' their interpretations and the discourses evolved through such interpretations. But I have to remember that I am on a narrative journey with the homeless youth, that I must move with them, listening to their interpretations and their meanings and discovering the discourses in their stories and the impacts of various factors in it.

Listening to the experiences of the homeless youth also gave me deeper insight into the possibilities of language and of using my own language basics for discursive interaction. The seeming disadvantage of using a second language, English, became an advantage, since it forced me and the young homeless people to correct every point through further interactions and feedback, a process which heightened our consciousness of the discourses and traditions involved in our experiences. "By entwining raised consciousness into already existing language, discourse can exceed the prevailing ways of imagining ourselves and our world" (Devine & Irwin 2006:22). My experiences in interactive conversation with the homeless youth led me to new awareness of myself and the world. I discovered new possibilities of imagining life experiences with hopeful alternatives. It gave me immense joy and pleasure to move to new findings, realities and its meanings with the story tellers.

5.5 RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

Almost all the homeless people have some sort of spiritual traditions which continually influence them in their daily activities. Some of these traditions are fundamentalist and some are revolutionary. "As research has documented repeatedly, increasingly large numbers of young people, leaving their villages to live in overcrowded cities which offer them limited prospects of meaningful participation in the global economy, are prime candidates for fundamentalistic religion and revolutionary ideology" (Stackhouse & Browning 2001:41). Because of the modern trends such as individualism and the profit-making motives of globalization many youth are confused about spiritual ideas and biblical

teachings, as mentioned above. Through discussion and patient interaction I try to guide the young people to develop their own spirituality. "Religious tradition is seen as dogma, is whereas spirituality is seen as a universal free spirit of discovery related to meaning and values" (Ross 1999:38). The counselling process offers the youth a chance to reflect upon the Bible and religious traditions in light of their particular contexts. This leads them to discover new meanings. Thus as researcher I am part of the wider spiritual tradition as I listen to a particular person speaking from a specific faith tradition. Listening to the stories of the young people with their own specific personal religious contexts and interpretations leads me to new insights, since every religious faith offers hope and salvation though its interpretations may vary. The value of spirituality is its power to reveal God as provider, as participator in the salvific act, God who helps us to survive the harsh experiences of life, God who inspires us to help each other. These are some of the interpretations of the young people with whom I spoke. "We access that religious dimension of our being that enables us to ask questions of meaning in relation to our experience. We are enabled to answer these questions in the context of pastoral counselling through the experience of revelation which is made possible by the pastoral counselling relationship" (Ross 1999:40).

5.5.1 Language that leads to the God experience

Language has a special role in communication. The peculiarity of the words selected, the arrangement of words and the construction of a sentence with specified meanings all have a role in communication. Also, the socio-political and cultural background of the story teller and facilitator is important, as is the setting in which the conversation occurs.

Deliberate use of biblical language does not necessarily promote a language for sharing the God-experiences of the story teller. In moving with the story teller, it is the duty of the facilitator to listen to the glimpses of religious experiences

revealed in the story. The experience of the story teller is more important than the biblical language used by the facilitator or his/her religious interpretations. "If there is a culture that belongs to the kingdom of God and transcends all other cultures, it is a culture of true humanity as the gracious power and presence of Christ in a structure of human social and personal relations. This culture of the kingdom of God has no other language and no other custom other than that of the particular people and society who become its manifestation" (Anderson 2001:170). Thus as facilitator I have to be sensitive to the language of the particular persons I deal with, which was formed and retained by their customs, beliefs and social experiences.

Because the people I deal with belong to different tribal settings and different social strata, this sensitivity requires that I understand them in their own social, political and spiritual context. They may share their stories in the language of hopelessness and powerlessness, and I as facilitator have to respond in the language of liberation. "When Jesus healed on the Sabbath, ate with publicans and sinners, and asked a Samaritan woman to minister to his thirst, he penetrated through all racial, sexual, social and cultural barriers to restore true humanity to others" (Anderson 2001:174). His very acts are the language that leads to the liberation of the people. Narrative interventions that emphasise social, political, and economic diversity will give the young people opportunity to externalize the negative facets of their experiences and ultimately lead them to liberation.

The homeless youth in Pretoria have differing spiritual traditions and beliefs, yet they are similar in that as they share their stories many of them want to tell about the work of God in their lives, against the background of their present experience. This is not surprising, since I met and engaged with these people after the Bible study sessions I lead at the Street Centre. Thus the specific context of our interactions predisposed the street people to ask questions about biblical

narratives and my interpretations of these, and to link their life stories to God and their God-experiences.

Empathetic listening is a primary motivation for story tellers to link their experiences with God. Their fear that nobody is there to listen to their stories of suffering is removed through my sympathetic presence, and they are able to externalize their problems and reach towards understanding God as provider in their economic crises. Narrative interventions lead story tellers to a better understanding of God and of their experiences. An illustrative example is a conversation I had with Andre, which shows a shift in his God experiences.

Renjan: Thus what are your future plans?

Andre: God will guide me.

Renjan: So you changed your position from God will provide you to God will guide you.

Andre: God will guide me to receive his provision.

Renjan: That is a good understanding. Why do you believe that God will guide you and provide you?

Andre: It is my experiences, even from my present situation. God guided me to start a business. People are buying sweets from me because God guides them.

Renjan: You are speaking like a good theologian.

Andre: My experiences make me to speak.

This conversation shows a development in the God experience of the story teller. He is interpreting his theological understanding and shifting from his previous position to a new understanding. Over-emphasizing the theological phrases used by the storyteller and neglecting his/her God experiences are two traps into which a narrative therapist may fall. This often happens when the facilitator compares his/her theological position with that of the story teller, rather than focussing on understanding the spiritual traditions informing the story teller's theological position, experiences and story. This does not mean that the facilitator should be a passive listener for the other person's God experiences, but rather that he/she must always be sensitive to difference when facilitating God talk.

5.5.2 Facilitating God talk

Is it necessary to talk about God in all counselling situations? If the story teller is not saying anything about God, is it relevant for the facilitator to instigate God talk? These are valid questions for facilitators engaged in narrative conversation, both when the story teller is silent about God and when he/she speaks eloquently about God. Both situations raise questions for the facilitator about facilitating God talk.

Facilitating God talk in a narrative conversation is a creative art. If the facilitator has a special research goal in mind, he/she may be tempted to prompt the story teller to such talk. This approach however goes against the real aim of narrative intervention. "A postfoundationalist notion of rationality thus creates a safe space where our different discourses and actions are seen at times to link up with one another, and at times to contrast or conflict with one another" (Van Huyssteen 1999:250). From a social constructivist perspective it is not fair to correct the experiences of the story teller, because he/she is the researcher who directs the realities emerging through the social interaction.

The constructivist perspective, then, proposes that meaning emerges from the shared interaction of individuals within human society. From this viewpoint human behaviour and understanding are seen to be an active process of construction and interpretation in which human beings together endeavor to define the nature of their particular social situations and encounters and in so doing make sense of and participate appropriately in their social, psychological, physical and spiritual environments. (Swinton & Mowat 2006:35-36)

Thus facilitating God talk is only permissible through participatory intervention, in the social constructivist paradigm.

Some homeless youth do not see any relevance of God in their lives, and others see him as a deciding factor. If they mention some interpretations of God or spiritual experience the facilitator can initiate conversation about these things without making judgmental comments. Through shared constructive conversation new theological understandings can emerged, which are not dictated by the facilitator. For example, when one of the homeless youth shared his negative attitude towards friendship, saying that God is his only friend, this was an opportunity for me to facilitate 'God talk'. In the ensuing conversation he came to realise that his interpretation of his God experiences as 'God is my only friend' was preventing his making friends with other people. He then saw that he should rather use his God experience to make more good friends. His first interpretation has evolved into a better understanding of his spiritual experience. He has been searching for friends with the same good qualities as those which he attributes to God, but he realizes that only God has these perfectly. Human friendship requires unconditional love. Thus he does not have to compromise his values, but only reinterpret human relationships and their possibilities.

5.5.3 My God experiences and narrative therapy

I attended Sunday school at a traditional Indian church. The church has its own way of interpreting theology and biblical teachings, which is not interactive, but rather dictated by century-old tradition. Though superficial reformation is possible, the church's basic spiritual practices and belief systems do not change. God is the God of hosts, powerful and mighty, who protects and cares the poor. This traditional theological understanding influenced me greatly in my youth. However, when I encountered the life realities of poor people in society, new thoughts challenged my theological understanding. There is another side to understanding God from the perspective of the poor and oppressed. This change in my understanding of God is reflected in my social relationships, especially my experiences with the poor. "Beliefs about God and the cosmic order have consequences for human social relationships" (Furniss 1995:5).

In my theological studies I was introduced to liberation theologies, in varied forms. Then I encountered narrative therapy and the narrative approach to interaction, which opened further possibilities, making me see that realities are socially constructed. All these developments nurtured my God experiences. I am strongly convinced that God called me for a special purpose, as the Church was sent into the world (Mt. 10:7). I have to be with the poor to work for their liberation. Christian ministry is a hope-giving ministry. A narrative approach to Christian ministry makes it a hope-evolving ministry. God created human beings with creativity to interact with himself and his meanings. "If creativity means 'to bring the new into being', man is creative in every direction-with respect to himself and his world, with respect to being and with respect to meaning" (Tillich 1988:256). This creativity enables us to change being and meaning. By taking a qualitative, narrative approach to understanding the discourses of the homeless youth in Pretoria, I was led to new realities of life and a wonderful world of interpretations. I discovered the impact of economic factors in the discourses of the homeless youth. Swinton and Mowat say that "conversion relates to a turning

to God in a way that decisively changes one's life from an old way to a new way of life. In our case this means qualitative research moving from a position where it is fragmented and without a specific telos or goal, to a position where it is grafted into God's redemptive intentions for the world" (Swinton & Mowat 2006:92). Thus my intention, to follow God's call, evolves into various opportunities for redemption through the diverse interactions and interpretations I encounter with the homeless youth.

My experiences with the homeless community, my experiences as a pastor and my God experiences interact in continuous dialogue and allow the evolution of new realities. My theological position is continuously regenerated through these interactions. This is the basic idea of the narrative approach. "Narrative ways of working are based on the idea that people's lives, and relationships are shaped by the 'stories' which individuals and communities of people develop in order to give meaning to their experiences. These 'narratives of meaning' do not simply reflect or represent our lives – they actually shape and constitute our lives" (White & Denborough 1998:3). My God experiences and the God experiences of the story tellers also interact. My role is not to impose my interpretations of my God experiences on the young people, but to supplement and promote their interpretations of their God experiences.

5.5.4 The God experiences of the youth

Many of the homeless youth have lost their sense of self worth and dignity because of their harsh life experiences. Despite this, some of them basically still believe that God will help them towards a better future. Many of them do not know how to think of their experiences in a positive way, and many do not have a proper relationship with God. Their lack of God experiences leads them to the use of drugs and social misbehaviour. They are exploited by drug and alcohol sellers, whose concern is not the healing and survival of the street people, but only profit. This recalls the story from Acts in which Paul commands the evil spirit

to come out of a slave girl, whose owners used her as a fortune teller. With her liberation the spiritual and economic exploitation also comes to an end. The slave owners began to make false accusations against Paul and Silas (Ac. 16:16-23). As in Paul's day such exploitation must be conquered by God's freedom.

Some of the homeless youth suffer from a deep feeling of guilt, and want to repent before God of their trespasses. One of the homeless youth wrote a poem to declare and affirm that he is coming back from his evil ways and will live in the future as God wants. In the midst of joblessness some believes that God will open opportunities for them if they repent.

Another of the young men has been led through his God experience to believe that that God is guiding him to change his food habits and to start new ventures in his life. His confidence in God exemplifies his willingness to do something better, and helps him to move into new endeavours.

Even in the midst of the hardship of the streets, one homeless youth has discovered the possibility of practicing spiritual values such as peace, joy and sharing. In his narrative journey he began with negative feeling towards other people, arising from his particular context and experience. But his God experience has taught him new, alternative spiritual values which prompt him to work to make the street a better place.

Another of the homeless youth, as mentioned above, has learned through his experience of God's friendship to begin to move out of the loneliness of life on the street into new relationships with the people around him, especially other homeless people.

The young man mentioned above, who uses cultural stories to understand his situation, was lead by his God experience to give up his anger towards his uncle

and turn to a more gentle approach of caring his family, with the resources God provides.

5.5.5 God experiences in dialogue

God experiences vary from person to person. The spirituality of homeless people is closely related to their economic needs. They tend to focus on God as provider. Sometimes this is taken to excess, as when a person believes that God will provide everything he/she needs without any effort on his/her part. This is one interpretation of the biblical passages that suggest that we do not have to think about tomorrow, since God knows our needs, or that we must renounce everything and follow Jesus (e.g. Lk. 14:33). However, these texts must be interpreted in light of the context in which they were written. The economic conditions of first century Christians were particularly severe. Food was very costly and the tax structures of the Roman Empire were crippling. In addition, pious Jews had to pay a tithe for the priests, and a second tithe to support poor co-believers. It is easy to see why people living under these conditions had to be encouraged to trust in the protection of God. However, this does not imply that we do not have to work for our livings.

Another common religious discourse in the stories of the homeless youth is political; God is a liberator God, who liberated South Africa from oppression. God was powerful enough to liberate South Africa from the apartheid regime without war, so God is powerful enough to liberate the homeless people from oppression in the streets. This discourse can help the young people move from feelings of powerlessness to consciousness of empowerment. As the Archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndungane rightly points out of his prison experience, "that same Spirit (spirit of the Living God) developed in us an unshakeable faith in the God of Freedom, the God of Justice, the God of Hope who had touched our world of sad oppression with God's healing breath" (Ndungane 2003:5). Nelson Mandela and other national leaders share the same spirit of freedom and

liberation. This spirituality helped them to work and even sacrifice their pleasures in the struggle for freedom. The spirituality of liberation is essential for freedom. Liberation theologians agree about the fullness of Jesus' liberation, and argue that theology has a primary commitment to human liberation. "The God of liberation theology is a Redeemer who intervenes in history to free the poor from social and political oppression. Just as God once had delivered the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt, God will liberate the poor today from bondage" (Batstone 1997:161).

The youth in the streets are aware that they have political freedom, but that in reality they are oppressed in so many other ways. Economic oppression keeps them on the streets, and unable to enjoy the fruits of national freedom. The hardships of the streets are as harsh as any under the apartheid regime. It is so ironic that these young people find themselves oppressed in a free country. But Lack of employment and housing keeps them jobless and on the streets. But their spirituality and the spirituality of the Bible are in dialogue and this gives them a new spirituality of hope in the midst of all their adversity. This is not primarily the hope of eschatological salvation, but a more practical hope experienced in a new way as they retell their stories as stories of hopeful alternatives for the immediate future. "As a pastoral relationship develops, the opportunity increases for exploration of alternative definitions of the situation" (Furniss 1995:5). Out narrative interviews and discussions helped them to externalize their negative spiritual discourses and see a hopeful future in a new spirituality. This rewriting of their spirituality was not a deliberate process; it happened spontaneously in the course of their narrative journey.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Various traditions influence the narratives of the homeless youth, and so with or without the knowledge of the young people decide the discourses that form these narratives. Such discourses inescapably influence the story tellers'

interpretations and their journey of discovery as they move towards understanding the meanings of their experiences. This three-way relationship between tradition, narrative and discourse means that all three factors must be considered in the description of experiences. Socio-political discourses, cultural traditions, traditions of modernity, spiritual traditions and so on all make the description of experiences more thick. Dominant discourses are revealed by tracing the impact of the traditions that continually inform these discourses. In this study this process involves tracing the informing patterns and strategies of those traditions which influence the young people's experience of homelessness and its discourses, especially economic discourses. More thickening of this description is provided by interdisciplinary investigation, as the next chapter will explore.

CHAPTER SIX

THICKENING STORIES THROUGH INTERDISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Interdisciplinary approach is a key characteristic of the seven-movement methodology used in this study. Qualitative research cannot ignore other disciplines, but must rather draw on the ever-growing, developing body of knowledge yielded by the various fields of investigation. Interdisciplinary investigation will help us to understand the contextualised experiences of the young homeless people in a more comprehensive way.

Specialists in various disciplines used to set firm boundaries for their theoretical frameworks and practical investigations. Trespass into the fields of other disciplines was frowned upon. This approach fits the paradigm of modernity, which sees realities as historically and traditionally given. The post-modern approach has changed in many disciplines. For example, "[h]istorians once claimed to proceed without theory, but they are now much more ambivalent about this point. Economists used to assert the neat boundaries of their discipline, but those boundaries seem less sharp today" (Hall 1999:16). The post-modern paradigm assumes a "transversal rationality", to use Calvin O' Schrag's term. This word suggests the interrelated meanings of lying across, extending over, intersecting, meeting and converging without achieving coincidence (Schrag 1992:149). Van Huyssteen uses this concept of transversal rationality to argue for interdisciplinary theology. "True interdisciplinary reflection in theology will only be achieved in a postfoundationalist mode where the interdisciplinary conversation proceeds,… and where both the strong personal convictions so

typical of religious commitment, and the public voice of theology, are acknowledged in interdisciplinary conversation" (Van Huyssteen 1998:32). The seven movement methodology is also interdisciplinary, which suits the methodology's social constructionist approach and postfoundational base. According to Müller, postfoundational practical theology (2005:78):

- is locally contextual,
- is socially constructed,
- is directed by tradition,
- explores interdisciplinary meaning and
- points beyond the local.

Thus interdisciplinary investigation is essential for postfoundational narrative research. We cannot search the various dimensions of truth using the methods of only one discipline. Rather, assuming some degree of coherence we can search for truth in different disciplines in order to view all its possibilities.

6.2 INTERDISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATION OF STORIES

Interdisciplinary investigation does not imply interpreting the words, phrases or experiences in the stories of the homeless youth and making deductions. Rather it involves dialogue between relevant aspects of the various disciplines and the particular experiences of the homeless youth. Any definition applied to a particular experience will produce error if the story teller interprets that experience differently. Interdisciplinary investigation must supplement the new meanings given by the story teller to his/her experiences, that is, must thicken the interpretation.

The postfoundationalist epistemology underlying the seven movement methodology assumes an approach to practical theology in which the expertise and approaches of different disciplines are used in active narrative conversations. In these conversations, the youth are helped to thicken their accounts of their personal experiences of their particular contexts, informed by their dominant discourses. This is a balanced approach to practical theological research.

6.2.1 Selecting other disciplines

How to select the disciplines with which to engage in the course of the narrative conversations is an important question. Philosophical factors may motivate the selection, according to the primary area of research. For example, research in one social science may suggest the choice of complementary social sciences. Then the nature of the data gathered will also suggest which disciplines would be relevant or useful. This study assumes a postfoundationalist epistemology, which understands knowledge as evolving through interactions. Thus an investigation of epistemology is relevant for this research. Also, the data is gathered in a particular social setting, that of the homeless youth of Pretoria. Therefore the engagement of sociology will yield a better understanding of the context and its meaning. Thirdly, since the story tellers are from different ethnic and tribal settings, dialogue with anthropology should help in understanding their belief systems. Fourthly, since this study investigates experiences of homelessness as unemployment, it will involve investigating the political factors involved in these situations. Thus political studies will inform this investigation. Fifthly, the telling and retelling of stories is a psychological exercise; the homeless youth create their stories and meanings through intra-psychic interrogation. Counselling has a direct link with the field of psychology, and so this field too must be involved. Lastly, the main aim of this study is to discover the impact of economic factors in the dominant discourses of the homeless youth. Thus it is necessary to balance the knowledge evolved from their subjective experiences with relevant economic

theories. All these interdisciplinary conversations function like the beautiful colours of a painting interacting together to give the picture clarity.

Besides this philosophical reason for involving many disciplines in my research, I am also motivated to use an interdisciplinary approach because of my evolving experience with the homeless youth. Through my gradual and patient interaction with the homeless community, I have been helped to discover the realities of their stories and the discourses that inform them, and the richness of these, I believe, can only be grasped through a wide-ranging research method. As I mentioned before, we once talked after a Bible class about the beauties of our homelands. The wonderful descriptions people gave included not only simple geographical sketches but details of culture, human interactions, attitudes and interpretations, political factors, economic conditions and so on. Through these narrations the homeless people were trying to create alternate worlds of reality in which to search for the history of their present difficult experiences. In listening to these stories I have to appreciate factors as varied as cultural stories, sociological interventions, psychological interactions in the community and the philosophical frameworks behind all of these. Using the insights of other relevant disciplines to supplement my theological approach gave me a much more complete insight into the realities the youth were trying to share. In this chapter therefore this interdisciplinary approach is described.

6.2.2 Philosophical investigation

If philosophy stays in the theoretical level it is not much use in narrative research. Theory must come down and be incarnated in real life experiences. The preoccupations in our understandings may negatively or positively influence the meaning-making process. "As contemporary philosophy detached itself through the 'linguistic turn' from substantive and metaphysical questions about what is essential and what is best, and turned to questions about meaning, truth and reference, a gulf opened up between current preoccupations and former

preoccupations" (Wilson 1998:33). This contemporary study, which investigates meaning and discourses using a narrative approach, exemplifies this shift of focus.

"[C]onstitutive of the values of philosophic practice is the organizational principle that empirical matters are for psychologists, sociologists, cultural theorists or economists and that the philosopher ought to be content with an examination of the intelligible or the rationality of other sciences" (Howie1998:118). This study, because practical, does not remain completely within the bounds of philosophy. Rather it seeks new areas of rationality in the knowledge shared by other disciplines. It may not be possible to investigate experiential knowledge in an empirical way. Thus philosophy is helpful in discovering new forms of knowledge and investigating the meaning-making process.

The traditional approach of philosophy to experiences and social realities is to look for a particular meaning in a given set of interactions. In the post-modern paradigm, the social constructionist approach searches for varied deeper meanings in experience and its articulation. Plato argued that analysis is interminable in principle, lacking completeness. By the very nature of things we cannot get to the core of any reality. We cannot hope by digging deep into language to get to the isolated meaning of an utterance, but only a succession of more or less meaningful translations. Searching for the different meanings in the same text is the post-modern philosophical approach. An interdisciplinary approach is part of this, since it supplements the meaning-making process with alternate interpretations and thickens the experience and its meanings. This approach is thus suited to narrative counselling and research.

Sometimes philosophical theories can be more directly used in interpreting the stories of the young homeless people. For example, Joy's story of powerlessness can be interpreted using a philosophical understanding of power. Joy's father was a drunkard who tried to exert oppressive power over his family. Joy was not

allowed any power in his family and so was deprived of individual growth. This still affects him now, because though he wishes to start a business he fears that he will fail. He is terrified of trying something on his own. Now Foucault examines how power operates within everyday relations between people and institutions. In his theory "power [is] seen as something which has to be constantly performed rather than being achieved" (Mills 2003:35). The role of the individual in power is not that of oppressor or oppressed, but as player in a continuous relationship with others and with institutions. This role is constantly performed. We can see this in Joy's story; he does not remember his father's exerting power over him at certain specific points in his history, but rather as a continuous experience in his past. Now in the streets he lacks confidence, because these power relationships of the past still oppress him, though his father died years ago. Thus Foucault's theory of power throws light on the experience that Joy narrates. Joy now visualizes the people in the streets as similarly powerless, rather than as more powerful than him. This can be interpreted as his attempt to overcome this old power relation, by coming to a new understanding of his problem and entering into new relationships with the people around him.

Another useful philosophical theory is that of social responsibility. This approach argues that the community has a great impact on us, moulding our lives. In the community therefore my responsibility for other persons is important. "Therefore, I'm responsible and may not ensure that the other is responsible for me" (Rötzer 1995:59). In light of this theory, homelessness can be understood as the result of a breach of social responsibility, arising from irresponsible modes of living on the part of the homeless and the settled.

6.2.3 Sociological investigation

Sociology is the science of society. Society comprises a group of people with their own patterns of interrelatedness and interactions. Thus no characters in society can be excluded from sociology. As a border definition, "sociology is the scientific study of society, of groups, institutions, and organizations, and of the interrelationships among members of societies" (Stewart & Glynn 1981:9, 10). Sociological studies traditionally use empirical research methods, considering behavioural patterns and social experiences as empirical data. This approach does not consider the particular mindset of the researcher or the informant as relevant. "Social scientific approach… assumes the objectivity of social sciences research and hence pays no attention to the mindset of the researcher, nor to his or her insertion in a social setting" (Baum 2001:6). This approach totally neglects the emotions and mindset of the researcher. Sociological research tries to quantify the behaviour, mindset and responses of social characters. But because man is a social animal with feelings, characteristics, behaviour and thinking power we cannot negate these characteristics and count man as an empirical figure. "Max Weber pointed out that human action consists of behaviour plus the meaning of the actors assign to it" (Baum 2001:7). No sociological research should avoid human interactions and interpretations completely.

Thus a qualitative approach is needed in the sociological field. Such an approach conducted with a mind open to new realities is better for thickening our account of an experience in a specific context. In the narrative approach, the stories told are the data available for analysis. "The primary focus of a narrative approach is people's expressions of their experiences of life" (White 2006:1). Sometimes these expressions are thin and narrow. Through facilitative interaction we can help the teller move to thicker description, part of which is sociological investigation.

The post-modern sociological approach emphasizes the plurality of reality, instead of advocating the position that there is only one reality. "[S]ociological theory today, like the modern society it seeks to describe, is pluralistic. This fact complicates our task in explicating the value of the 'sociological perspective' for pastoral care, for there is not one, but several perspectives" (Furniss 1995:8, 9). Though such an approach complicates our task of researching human experiences, it opens up immense possibilities of meaning. By plurality is not meant other areas of knowledge but rather insights into the different dimensions of reality within the field of sociology. It affirms that social reality is multifaceted.

In my narrative approaches with the youth, we open up their experiences in story form using their own interpretations. By narrating their experiences, they are constructing stories and endowing these with meanings. This opens the way to new insights for me as facilitator into the meanings evolving in the interpretations of the story teller. "Narratives can be used by people to 'construct' reality for other people by providing representations of events beyond their own personal knowledge. People also individually and jointly compose 'scripts' and 'scenarios' to make narrative sense of projects that they plan to undertake in the future" (Hall 1999:90). However, the experiential nature of interpretation in the narrative approach means that we encounter the danger of reducing and simplifying the social reality. Overemphasizing the personal nature of the act of story telling can result in avoiding or neglecting the possibility of cultural dialogue. " A gap is thus created between culture-as-experience, between meanings absorbed from living, and the prospect of legitimately using that experience to sustain, enliven, and illumine the cultural dialogue" (Berger 1995:57). Care must be taken to moderate the role of personal experiences, by keeping in mind the social role of such experience, and seeing the narrative interaction as an opportunity to construct new social realities. Personal experiences are reconstructed in the telling and retelling of stories, and the thinking pattern of the teller changed and enabled to create new, alternate, hopeful stories. "Replacing experience as a basis for thinking are consciously constructed conceptual or statistical categories designed

in the first place as a means of comprehending the variability of complexity of events and experiences, and as a corrective or control on the inherent biases of any personal angle of vision" (Berger 1995:57,58). These biases are the dominant discourses which affect the tellers negatively in their outlooks and their present personal experiences. The facilitator cannot promote the reconstructing of values and understandings by dictating interpretations of existing stories, but rather by helping the tellers to think about these discourses in the creation of new stories.

Another danger in social interactions is the possibility of being deaf to inner discourses while listening to external discourses. Most inner discourses are those facets of the experiences which are taken-for-granted. Listening to such inner overlooked realities is part of narrative counselling. This occurs in a sociological framework. "The sociology of knowledge deals primary with the 'taken-for-granted' world of everyday life. …[I]t is the common knowledge – the shared understandings – of the adult population of a society" (Furniss 1995:17). By searching for and discovering this taken-for-granted knowledge the facilitator can help neutralise the dominant discourses and free the way for alternate stories of the experiences of the story teller. Drawing on their inner discourses people can formulate their attitudes to life and construct their life stories for the future.

Industrialization and its economic and social effects helped cause the mass migration of people to the cities. The process of urbanization involves movement both into and out of the cities. Higher and middle income families tended to move out of the cities to quieter places, since they could afford transport back into the city for work. Lower income families moved into the cities to find more options for their lives. These movements caused great difficulties in the management of cities, especially in the area of accommodation and job opportunities. These realities can be interpreted in several ways, according to various sociological theories, and these interpretations can inform the discourses of homelessness in

various ways. For example, Comte's positivistic approach can contribute a hopeful discourse, since he "saw society moving in a straight forward progression toward perfection" (Stewart & Glynn 1981:21). However, other social discourses suggest negative interpretations of the experiences of the homeless youth. Thus careful examination of the discourses in a persons' story is needed to facilitate the telling of more hopeful stories.

An example from our data is the discourse of powerlessness in the stories of Joy that negatively affect his physical and economic condition. Joy needs to re-tell the story of his past in light of the social discourses inherent in his experience and the telling of it.

Similarly, sociology can throw light on Joseph's story, which describes how the conditions of life on the streets leave no room for thinking and acting in better ways. Joseph is basically using the discourses of life in an urban setting, in which our actions are determined by authoritative institutions using the strategies of power. Thus Joseph feels that he lacks the quality time and space he needs to work out a better plan for his life. His concept of time and space is restricted, following a modernist framework of set boundaries. What he needs is a more post-modern sociological understanding, a more fluid concept of social time and space. "Our neat and orderly classifications notwithstanding, the world presents itself not in pure black and white but, rather, in ambiguous shades of gray, with mental twilight zones and intermediate essences" (Zeruavel 2001:141). Without such an understanding Joseph sees time and space negatively, as restrictions to his moving forward to a better understanding of his experience. Thus he cannot create a new hopeful story about future plans.

6.2.4 Anthropological investigation

In anthropology, socio-cultural inquiry is unavoidable. Culture and its discourses are the main areas of investigation for anthropological studies. Investigating and

analysing the social behaviour and cultural impact of social phenomena add new dimensions to our understanding of the self in a cultural setting. As with sociology, anthropology is also undergoing a reframing in the context of postmodernity. Post-modern anthropology is an inquiry into alternative constructions of reality. "[B]eyond basic distinctions, the cultural significance of inquiry makes conceptual constructions inevitable, and any sociohistorical ontology amounts to a one-sided accentuation that throws into relief certain aspects of a phenomenon" (Hall 1999:49). Thus possible investigations of meaning constructions are almost infinite.

Such construction of meaning occurs in the dynamic interaction of discourses about homelessness and its economic impacts, and these constructions are the focus of this study. Anthropological investigation of the stories of the homeless youth involves dissecting these discourses while maintaining sensitivity to the multiple coherences between these discourses.

An example from our data is Michael's story. As mentioned above, cultural artefacts operate in his stories, and these artefacts suggest approaches to interpreting the cultural truths inherent in the stories. Though he is a Christian, Michael believes that the spirit of his dead father disturbs him and his family. His family believes in ancestor worship, which is part of traditional African culture. Thus tension exists between this tradition and Christian belief in Michael's story. Also, Michael believes that his uncle killed his three sisters by taking them for traditional healing by a *sangoma* rather than for western medical treatment. In this part of his story he believes that traditional culture is fraudulent, yet its dominant discourses still control him. He is not able to objectively deal with these cultural discourses. As facilitator I did not try to force him to rethink his position, but rather focussed on helping him to understand the cultural discourses involved in his stories. He links his economic deprivation with his cultural helplessness. The narrative intervention helped him to formulate a new story saturated with

economic possibilities and a better discursive relation with these cultural discourses.

Gender roles also feature prominently in cultural anthropological investigations of the stories of homelessness. The gender roles of male and female in a family are socially constructed. Modernity constructs these gender roles different to traditional roles. "The institution of parenthood splits up into a clash between motherhood and fatherhood, and children with their naturally intense bonding ability become the only partners who do not leave" (Beck 1992:109). These tensions can be seen in the stories of Sam, a widower. He shares his frustration at losing his partner. He used to have clear concepts of male and female gender roles, but the death of his wife forced him into a sort of gender confusion. He finds himself having to play the role of mother as well as the role of father. This has been really hard for him. Before his wife's death Sam was very irresponsible; he was a drunkard who wasted money and was not interested in religious matters. But now he has had to become a responsible mother and father. He tries to earn money for his children and to care for them when he goes home. Sam feels that bathing and caring for small children is the duty of a mother, but now he has to do it. This is why he felt hurt when one of his friends commented that "You are good with children!" Sam's response, "If your wife dies, you will also be good with children" reveals the effect of the gender discourse in his experience of hurt. He knows that his response was curt, but he responded to express his pain. Narrative therapy helped him become aware of this pain and its source in gender role confusion. In his alternate stories he takes full responsibility for his children and decides to work for their future.

6.2.5 Psychological investigation

"Without the understanding of human psychology, it is difficult to understand human activities and inter-relations. Similarly, without the knowledge of social relations, processes and phenomena, many of the secrets of human psychology

remain unknown" (Vatsyayan1986:41). This shows the interrelatedness of psychology and sociology. They are not contradictory but complimentary. This means that all social relations and experiences can be understood psychologically, and that all psychological behaviour involves some kind of social experience. One particular branch of psychology deals with the interrelatedness of psychology and sociology. "Social psychology studies the relationship between the individual and society and focuses on attitude-formation and the 'social self' " (Furniss 1995:8). When the homeless youth tell stories about their experiences, they are interpreting those stories both psychologically and socially. The economic deprivation they are experiencing and the harsh life they are undergoing have psychological repercussions, often expressed in particular behavioural patterns. All these levels can be better understood using psychological theories.

A common feature in the stories of the homeless youth, already discussed above, is a mistaken understanding of independence. Some of the young people left home to be independent, and now regret this decision. In psychological terms, internalized norms and social expectations manifested in them as feelings of strong pressure to achieve self sufficiency and separation from the family. Such separations are supposed to promote the development of the person and his/her autonomy. However, in realistic social terms, "there are some social obstacles that have to be overcome if independence is to be achieved: lack of jobs, lack of apartment, a bleak outlook as regards advancement to a position in which self-sufficiency will in fact be possible – all this may inhibit the completion of the developmental task" (Reykowski 1988:56). Social and psychological factors have to be understood together.

An example from our data is Salin's story. He stresses survival in the midst of hardships. He has experienced harassment, mockery and physical assault from other homeless people, yet he is not ready to condemn everybody on the street. He longs to leave the streets, yet feels that homelessness is his inescapable fate.

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Salin thus shows the effects of a negative discourse of survival. Survival for him was a mental adjustment he had to make to help him face his problems. He believed he was powerless to prevent suffering, so concentrated on surviving. Through narrative therapy Salin moved towards a different understanding of survival. He now hopes for the help of others in his survival, and has decided to share what he gets and help others to share. The result is that he views the streets as a better and more beautiful place, in which if street people are ready to envision their experiences in fruitful ways they can effectively participate in change. Salin's experience dramatises how the telling of alternate stories gives homeless people a new attitude towards their experiences and rearranges their psychological conditions.

6.2.6 Economic investigation

The various reasons for young people's being homeless, including poverty, joblessness, family problems and different life struggles, can be interpreted as the malfunctioning of the social system. "Homelessness, at its most elementary level, is caused by a series of adverse events. These include eviction, loss of job, discharge from an institution, personal crises (such as divorce or domestic violence) and withdrawal of financial support" (Dear & Wolch 1987:197). According to Dear, about half of the people who are currently homeless are victims of adverse economic circumstances. This is the case for the young people investigated in this study.

Economic factors have great impact in social processes. Almost all human interactions are now based on money, markets and financial transactions. The rich people in society have their own economic transactions; the poor people have their own economic desperations. Multinational companies use all sectors of society and make profit out of all situations. In the globalized economy, market needs control macro-economic decisions and the needs of the poor are sacrificed. Transnational corporations and international financial institutions

control the world market and through that the world economy. "Market-mediated development is a system that excludes the so-called poor, or less endowed, the property-less or any one without exchange entitlements from participating in the market. Therefore they who have the purchasing power decide the pattern of production" (Oommen 2000:54). Technological change in modern society has massively shrunk the world, enabling as never before the converging of all nations into one giant world supermarket and bank. Because of this shrinking, the world economy is controlled by the agents of the globalization. The decisions of such agents have great effects in villages as well as in the urban centres of the different countries of the world.

In post-apartheid South Africa, globalization is interacting with the after-effects of the apartheid regime to worsen the socio-economic conditions of the poor. The number of people forced onto the streets is ever-increasing. "While globalization has increased opportunities for economic growth and development in some areas, there has been an increase in the disparities, and inequalities experienced especially in Africa" (Henriot 2000:67). This is visible on the streets of Pretoria, and can be detected in the stories of the homeless youth of Pretoria. All of them suffer from some kind or other of economic adversity or deprivation. They all agree that it is because of their negative economic conditions that they are on the streets. Joy attributes his powerlessness to the financial exigencies of his situation. He believes that money is power and that without money he is powerless. Through externalizing this belief in conversation realizes that he is not powerless, but that belief in powerlessness is his problem. Thus he deals with his problem by forging a new relationship with the problem. When he deals with his problem he is dealing with his inner economic discourses. He was brought up in an economically poor family. He was powerless in the family because he had no money and no access to the resources of the family. So he developed some negative discourses about money. His attitude to money and power has not totally changed, yet he at least now sees possibility in his getting a job and so gaining the money (and so the power) he needs to survive. This example shows

that narrative therapy does not always lead to completely new stories, but sometimes rather to identifying new dimensions of existing stories, and creating a new relationship with existing inner discourses.

Michael's story, which seems to revolve around cultural issues, also in fact involves economic realities. He thinks he was not able to tackle the problems caused by cultural discourses in his family because of his economic poverty. He had to leave home because of his family's poverty. If he gets a job his family will be helped financially. But he knows that the improvement of his financial position will not completely free his family from various negative practices of his tribe and culture. However, economic freedom would help. Through the narrative journey with a facilitator, he has gained confidence that by enhancing his economic conditions he can help his family by visiting them more often, and so by his constant care encourage them to turn away from the traditional practices which harm them. He believes in an alternate story of his life which alters its cultural discourses by adapting its economic elements.

6.3   BALANCING OTHER DISCIPLINES WITH THEOLOGY

The knowledge gained through other social sciences is discursively interrelated with theological knowledge in this study. Completely unifying this knowledge is not necessary, since the different approaches reveal different dimensions of the same experiences. Since this study is in the field of practical theology, such multi-faceted knowledge is appropriate. As Edward Wilson points out, "Consilience points to an integration, literally a 'jumping together' of knowledge by the linking of facts and fact-based theory across disciplines to create a common ground work of explanation" (Van Huyssteen 1999:236). The disciplines chosen for this study are closely associated with the field of theology, which was itself constructed through the centuries in various and different social settings.

Understanding God and God's work begins with philosophical enquiry, since it is a form of metaphysics. Since various theologies are formulated in particular societies, research into the dynamics of societies is essential. Similarly, since people develop theology, anthropology supports theological findings and helps to form new theological positions. Since the contexts of biblical and other sacred writings are always political, understanding politics and its science will enlighten theology. Theological interactions require human participation, and so psychology is necessary study. Any theological position depends partly on the economic status of the particular community that formulates it. Liberation theologies, theology of the poor and dalit theologies are examples of theologies that make explicit this relationship. Thus theology is arguably intrinsically interdisciplinary.

All these disciplines are also directly related to the experiences of the homeless people in Pretoria. Though they may not be philosophers in the technical sense, they each have their own ever-evolving philosophies of life, which were formed from their life experiences. Sociology is relevant in their influence on their social setting and the influence of social conditions on their status. The homeless youth have their own particular tribal, racial and religious frameworks, which have anthropological implications. Political decisions play an important role in the betterment or deterioration of the condition of homeless youth, so a dialogue between political science and theology in relation to their experiences is relevant. Their stories are directed by their psychological conditions and mental condition. The anger, grief, laziness, powerlessness and all the other feelings that appear in their stories reflect their psychological condition. Finally, economic factors are clearly important, since the defining characteristic of their suffering is their poverty. They are desperately poor, homeless and alienated. Their economic deprivation pushed them on to the streets. Even their God talk revolves around their expectations that God provide something real and concrete to better their economic condition.

6.3.1 Philosophy and theology

Philosophy and theology are intimately involves. Philosophy involves various fields, including the study of how we try to find meaning in given realities, how we define the human self and the community and its interactions. Christian theology was based on the Jewish and pagan philosophies of the beginning of the first century, engaged in interactive discourse with Hellenist philosophies, and has interacted with philosophy ever since.

In modernist philosophy, the text and its meaning were given. In the postmodernist paradigm, texts find new meanings as they are read and re-read. Despite dangers such as a tendency to relativism, these post-modern approaches have proven very fruitful for philosophical investigation. "Theology has frequently sought to borrow from elsewhere a fundamental account of society or history, and then to see what theological insight will cohere with it" (Milbank 2001:380). Theological interpretations are ever being renewed on the basis of developing and ever shifting philosophical concepts.

Philosophy can be applied to discourses to uncover new ideas about society and its functioning. The discourses of homelessness have philosophical implications in the God experiences of the homeless youth. With or without their being aware of it, these discourses force their thinking into a rut of desperateness and distress. Through developing such discourses they affirm that there is no alternative for their life stories. However, listening to the Bible classes held at the Street Centre helps them to link their discourses and stories with their God experiences. The theological insights I share are subjective, directly linked to my own context and discourses. But through discussion and interaction the young people take these theological insights beyond the boundaries of my context and make interpretations of their own. Thus they are able to formulate their stories of God experience. As mentioned above, one of the story tellers views his father as a powerful man who oppressed him and did not allow him individual freedom.

Because of this, this young man understands God as an oppressive master who does not give him freedom to grow. It is not easy to understand God in a different way. However, through my Bible classes and later discussions this young man discovered another theological discourse about God. He came to understand God as a caring and providing parent through the insights he gained from the stories and experiences shared by other members of the community in the discussion sessions.

Theology is innovative in promoting God experiences. The philosopher Levinas explains his God experience: "How does God occur to me? I don't deduce him from causality or from the first ground of being, from the origin of being, but from the look of the other. I come closer to the other, so that his face takes on meaning for me. What's meaningful in the face is the command to responsibility" (Rötzer 1995:61). This is the practical side of theology. Some forms of social philosophy emphasise social responsibility, and this philosophy comes close to theology in the issue of homelessness and the social responsibility. Jesus reinterprets the Mosaic law and teaches, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt. 5:44). This is relevant for the homeless people, and is reflected in the need to "come closer to the other, so that his face takes on meaning for me". This is the process of empathetic listening, facilitating the other to tell a story and interpret it. These interpretations help the story teller and the facilitator to discover new meanings in the stories and their discourses.

6.3.2 Sociology and theology

Urbanization opens up possibilities for creating new contextual theologies. Social changes directly or indirectly affect existing social theories, which sometimes give way to new theories. Social changes in the village context will affect the equilibrium in the urban settings and vice versa. New cities form as a result of the rapid movement of people from their villages, for whatever reason. In these new cities face-to-face personal interactions are controlled by personal motives of

profit and cash contracts. This meant that traditional beliefs and practices were changed also, including the structure of the church and its theological constructs. "Industrialization and urbanization were accompanied by a new sociological phenomenon, known as secularization, in which churches lost members and influence to other social forces, influences and actors" (Northcott 2000:156). In light of these phenomena churches have to formulate new theological outlooks and standpoints. "[P]olitical theology tends to leave behind ethics and political theory altogether, by locating its reflections in the space of a narrative of salvation that is really the story of an 'economic providence' " (Milbank 2001:245). Postmodernity and its constructs become relevant when society undergoes such transitions, and reality is being reconstructed. In the context of this study, such transition is happening in the lives of the homeless people, and so new theologies must be constructed for their context. Useful theories here are the theology of poverty and the theology of liberation.

Sociology finds various reasons for homelessness such as eviction, joblessness, personal crises, domestic violence and family dysfunction. Theology supports all these reasons and adds theological interpretations for homelessness. For example, the economic irresponsibility of the rich and the lack of self worth of the poor can both be traced to a lack of commitment to God, to the ignoring of God in personal and family life. In sociology, the disengagement of social systems and supporting institutions is partly responsible for homelessness. A theological exploration of this would go back to the Old Testament, which describes caring for the community not only as a social responsibility, but also as a theological commitment. For example, one commandment reads, "At the end of every three years you shall bring forth all the tithe of your produce in the same year, and lay it up within your towns; and Levite…and the sojourner, the fatherless and the widows, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled…" (Dt. 14:28-29). As one of the young people pointed out, to say that "God will provide everything" does not mean he will do so by magic, but rather through the theological commitment and social responsibility of human beings to each other.

In the day-to-day experiences of the homeless youth, new theological outlooks transformatively influence their understanding when they try to respond to such theology creatively. "The attempt to understand and respond to contemporary human issues from a theological perspective is likely to affect people's views of themselves and the world, however infinitesimally. This represents a kind of transformation or change" (Woodward & Pattison 2000:10). I saw this happen at the Street Centre. In the Bible classes the homeless people responded creatively, sharing their theological positions in their particular contexts of background and life experience. The search for human dignity is inherent in all human beings, though adverse social and economic conditions may place them in indecent situations and even make them lose their human dignity. The struggle to reclaim this dignity is visible in all the stories of the homeless youth. Joseph's story, for example, reveals his conception of human dignity. He often feels desperate in the streets. He longs to return home to his loving sisters and family, but chooses to continue living in homelessness to help his family financially. He complains that human dignity is not valued on the streets.

The work of the Street Centre aims to give homeless people back their dignity. But classes, coffee and interaction can only improve people's consciousness of their dignity. This dignity will only be fully respected and grasped when they get jobs, improve their economic conditions and are able to deconstruct their dominant discourses. Our discussions and narrative interactions helped them along this path.

6.3.3 Anthropology and theology

Theology can be understood as the experiences of persons and communities with God, recorded in texts with their own cultural background. "The word culture is derived from the Latin root *cultura* or *cultus* (to inhabit, to cultivate, or to honour). Anthropologists use the term to refer to the universal human capacity to classify experiences, and to encode and communicate them symbolically"

(Culture 2006). The bible includes such symbolic communications of cultural experience, and these have to be interpreted according to biblical history. The cultural experiences of Abraham in the Old Testament, for example, are very different from those of St Paul in the New Testament.

Changes in culture are reflected in theology.

> Culture is the interpretative and coping mechanism of society. It is the way in which people understand themselves, their world, as well as the proper way of interaction with one another and with the world they live in. Theology is a second-order activity that reflects on the meaning of revelation for a specific cultural situation. Any fundamental change in culture therefore necessarily leads to further theological reflection. (Rossouw 1995:75)

In the context of South Africa, cultural changes are visible in different expressions of life. Each tribe has its cultural artefacts and, roots and legacies. In post-apartheid South Africa, tribal customs and practices are changing drastically, despite efforts to protect them. The impact of political and economic transformations on cultural systems is not negligible. Oppression in South Africa led to the cultural and economic slavery of the majority of the population, and the transition to freedom has opened opportunities for reviving cultural values. Indigenous cultural systems define the self understanding and way of interaction in the community of many South Africans. Homeless people, who are now separated from their cultures, enter the subculture of the streets. Thus the theological outlooks of homeless people bear the imprint of all these cultures.

Culture must not curtail human freedom for development, but must open up the possibility of freedom in different areas of life. This is not the case in Michael's experience; his cultural discourses intimidate him, keep him from economic sustainability and affect his family negatively. He suffers the tension between traditional culture and new theological insights. Here Michael's life in the city actually is an advantage, because on the streets, among other cultures and

subcultures he is exposed to more ideas than he ever encountered in his village home. The search for an urban theology always includes the intermingling of culture, society and economic factors. Michael sees the artefacts of different cultural traditions in the street, and enters into a dialogue with these as he deals with the experience of homelessness in his particular context.

This experience is one of economic and social deprivation, which gives homeless people a particular understanding of society, God and their destiny. Michael now realizes that his cultural traditions are negatively affecting his family and his personal life. Because of such traditional beliefs he lost three sisters and fears to lose his other sisters or his mother. He does not know how to constructively face this problem. Narrative interventions lead him to new insights and understandings about his role and functioning in society as a transformative factor. Further than this, his exposure to other people from various cultures gave him more possibilities of retelling his story. It helped him to view his life apart from the discourses of culture, homelessness, joblessness and economic deprivation. Here I understood that the narrative journey is not an end in itself, but rather the path to new discoveries. The interpretations of the homeless youth do not arise only through the narrative counselling sessions, but also through their interaction with others in the Bible classes, in the discussions afterwards, and in the community through people's openness to each other. By searching the theological insights in their stories and listening to the economic factors in their discourses I also engage in the process of creating new understandings about the realities of life.

6.3.4 Psychology and theology

Christian theology is the rational reflection of the Christian tradition, and its dialogue with psychology focuses particularly on human nature. One key issue is whether one discipline should dominate, or whether they should both enter a dialogue as free-standing and relatively autonomous disciplines. How far should

such a dialogue go? Sometimes people speak of moving beyond dialogue towards 'integration'. If this means that both disciplines lose their distinct identities in some kind of merger, this is neither possible nor desirable. It is only through a sustained period of fruitful dialogue between two distinct and separate disciplines such as theology and psychology that significant mutual influence can be achieved. When considering the relationship between two disciplines such as theology and psychology, it is important to remember how diverse both are. In fact, it is often helpful to get beyond the question of theology 'versus' psychology, and rather focus on three dialogues:

a) General issues about human nature,
b) The nature of human religiousness and,
c) The concerns of systematic theology.

These dialogues arise from mainstream scientific psychology's investigation of human functioning, and include evolutionary psychology, brain processes, learning and development, cognition and consciousness. Though there has been a growing amount of research activity in the psychology of religion, there has so far been surprisingly little dialogue between theology and the psychology of religion.

"Theology and psychology can be seen, in some ways, as offering complementary perspectives on reality, even though psychology is concerned with only a fragment of the broader reality that is the scope of theology" (Watts 2002:8). Theology should be articulated by individuals or communities within their particular experience and context. "Insofar as theology makes statements about human nature and its fulfillment, about proper and improper human motivation, about ways in which the human spirit can develop properly and improperly, then a part of theology seems to *be* a kind of psychology, and one formally similar to 'personality theory'" (Roberts 1997:10).

Since the core content of theology deals with God and his actions it cannot avoid addressing human functioning in the community and our search for meaning. The meaning-making process is a challenge for psychology, since it requires understanding all the dimensions of the psyche and its deliberations. Thus the psyche is not simply the mind, but can also be viewed as behaviour and behavioural patterns. Theology is also a meaning-making process based on God and his works. All human behaviour is thus somehow related to theological convictions. Even if persons are not aware of any theological implications for their actions, these actions reveal their relationship to God (whether this is negative, positive or neutral). All the theological interpretations in the Bible are based on the experiences of persons or communities in their particular contexts. The relationship between the practical theology and practical psychology is especially visible here.

An example of the relationship of psychology and theology can be seen in Andre's story. Andre believes that God will provide him with everything he needs. He does not want to take much effort to make his life better. He bases this theology on his individual interpretations of the biblical teaching of providence. He understands this to mean that God will provide everything without human efforts. Therefore, when he attended a Bible class about God's providence, Andre was confused. He gained a new awareness of his role in and responsibility for making his life better. He explored his confusion in the discussion after the class. This discussion created new understandings about God's providence not only in Andre but also in other members of the community too. Later in one-on-one narrative interaction he tried to restructure his concept of God's providence in a different way. From this new understanding of his involvement in the betterment of his life, he made some plans for his future.

Such psychological healing and attitude shifts are needed by those who operate within a religious framework and those who think outside such a framework. Jesus' healing approach was integrated, concentrating on persons without losing

the integration of the community. "The kingdom of God is not primarily a religious culture but a power that liberates and frees persons within their existing culture to experience the 'human' culture that belongs by right of God's creation to each person. Jesus called for the integration of the entire self and pointed to the healing and purifying power of the inner life directed outward toward others and toward God" (Anderson 2001:234). Such integration requires that persons find their inner selves so that they can achieve integration into society. Their psychological deliberations help them gain an integrative approach to theology. The stories of the homeless youth are saturated with their theological convictions and understandings. Through the Bible classes, interpretations, discussions and interactions, they are helped to redefine these convictions about God and themselves. Thus a positive and transformative relationship between psychology and theology clearly operates here. The complementarity of these two disciplines helps the young people construct new social and economic realities.

Also, retelling their stories in the course of social interaction with new theological understandings helps the young homeless people to cultivate faith and hope. "The community, as the source of a person's moral dignity, provides that moral worth through concrete actions of social inclusion" (Anderson 2001:244). This can be seen in the story of Salin, who through narrative interaction intervention came to a decision to interact with his community in a new and better way. He decided to make the street a place where he can help others. Thus in resolving to build a better community, he affirms his faith in the transformation of society.

6.3.5 Economics and theology

Economic deprivation robs the homeless of hope. But tracing the economic factors operating in the dominant discourses of the homeless youth helps them see that their discourses can be reformulated within a dynamic of hope, so that helplessness can be overcome. Economists commonly speak of the 'means of production' namely land, labour and capital. All economic theories and realities

are related to or based on these means of production. Many biblical narratives show the effects of the exploitation of these means of production by a single section of the population. For example, the economic context of the gospels is life in first-century Palestine, which can be examined on macro and micro economic levels. On a macro economic level, problems included "the general tensions in the first-century economy of the Roman empire …. On a *micro economic* level, there existed the tension between the desire for economic self-sufficiency or independence and the necessity for some type of interdependence" (Oakman 1986:147). These tensions affected the real life situations of the middle and lower income people, who struggled with debt and day-to-day survival.

In this context Jesus' teachings and responses were revolutionary, challenging the existing economic order and offering hope to the poor. Jesus' theology of love and sharing is thus better understood against the economic context of his time. He proclaimed not a theoretical framework for theology but a theology relevant and necessary for the practical life of the common people, especially for the poor. His first speech at the synagogue in Nazareth proclaims this: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (Lk. 4:18). The practical implications of this theology terrified those in power, and caused them in the end to kill Jesus. Mary, the mother of Jesus, also proclaims an end to economic disparity and a shift in societal power structures in her famous Magnificat: "He has brought down the powerful from the thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty" (Lk. 1:52-53).

In light of these biblical affirmations and theological proclamations, the church must always keep its mission practical, in imitation of that of Jesus. "The Church is not a charitable society of people who have a certain amount to spare for others. It is a community of people who are always holding out their hands. Each one lives from the love given through Christ. Grace is the foundation of the community" (Boerma 1979:61). The Emmaus story is a good example of the right

approach to strangers and enemies (Lk. 24: 13-33). It is when Jesus breaks the bread that the disciples recognise him. "This is not a ritualistic meal, but the 'real meal' Jesus shared with lost ones, the little ones, and the forgotten ones of this world" (Sanders & Campbell 2000:35). This is the real meaning of communion with Jesus and living in the community of Jesus, a meaning not often practiced in the world today.

The policies and practices of globalization have turned the experience of love and sharing in the Christian community upside down. Ours is a profit-oriented market economy controlled by multinational organization and their market strategies. There is no question of concern for the poor. The rich control all the means of production and distribution. "The recent spate of partial mergers, joint licensing, co-operative ventures, and subcontracting is seen as a sign of new forms of multinational organization in which transnational business alliances and hyper-differentiation of functions allow greater flexibility in product development, production, and dispersal" (Stackhouse & Browning 2001:40). More and more markets are controlled by these multinational companies, who can fix the prices of their products and make them unobtainable for the poor. Thus the poor become poorer and the rich richer.

The homeless people on the streets of Pretoria are the victims of such economic globalization. All of them suffer economic marginalization. Their stories clearly reveal their economic needs. Lack of jobs, family and home trap them in discourses of helplessness. They think that nobody is there to help them. This is particularly obvious in John's story. For John, being homeless is being helpless. If you have a home, relatives, work and money many people are there to help you in different ways. When you are homeless and weak nobody is there to help you. John wants to search for alternatives for his life, and narrative intervention helped him believe in other options. He now plans to go to Centurion in search of a job there.

Like John, all homeless people want to change their life situations for the better. They do not want to be the slaves of their homeless experiences, and dream of a liberation experience. Their hope for work, for rejoining their families, for being better persons to each other on the streets reflect their attempt to regain a sense of dignity and honour. "The hope of a better future maintains a sense of honor and of self-justification. Against a background in which suffering is generally thought to be deserved, the disprivileged maintain their innocence by a strong conviction that their particular sufferings are the result of injustice and will soon be rectified" (Mealand 1980:42). John's story has a happy ending; he managed to go to Centurion and find a job. Creating an alternate story of his life helped him to realise this alternative. He rewrote his discourse about helplessness as hopelessness, and found that there are people to help you even in dire economic straits.

6.4 UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS IN LIGHT OF VARIOUS DISCIPLINES

The stories I heard at the Street Centre all reflect an ongoing stream of experiences or an array of experiences. These experiences are told, heard, understood and interpreted on the basis of discourses about homelessness and related themes. The experience of moving with the homeless youth through their stories is an experience of their homelessness. According to Derrida, all "experience is a traversing, a journey, a course, a way" (Rötzer 1995:54). To gain a rich and accurate picture of their experiences we have to draw on many different disciplines to explore the context and its meanings. The aim is not to interpret their experiences in the light of such disciplines but to better understand and thicken their stories. Many different reasons can explain the homeless situation of these young people, including personal, family

6.4.1 Personal reasons

Many personal reasons lie behind the young people's homelessness and their understanding of homelessness. Their discourses about their situation are varied, formed by their past experiences and their interaction with the society. "Knowledge does not simply happen or magically come to a person, but must be constructively assembled" (Bausor 1988:29). Their individual knowledge influenced them negatively in the past and helped drive them to the streets. Similarly, their personal attitudes now keep them on the streets. Some of them have been homeless and unemployed for years, and according to one of the young men, this is partly their own fault. They do not want to work, since they can find food from NGOs and charities, and sleep in government night shelters. This lazy attitude becomes their dominant discourse of homelessness. Not all homeless people are like this, however, since many long to escape their situation. These varying attitudes can be seen in the stories the young people tell. "The meaning that a person makes out of the people, places, and events encountered in life is most clearly heard in the story that the person tells about himself or herself" (Walsh 1992:1).

This does not mean that homeless people are solely responsible for their plight. The homeless are the poorest of the poor. If society fails to care for the poorest of the poor through proper economic policies, housing schemes and social welfare activities, then society is responsible for homelessness. This neglect is aggravated by society's own discourses, which characterise homeless people as hopeless drug addicts, mentally disordered people or people careless about their lives. It is true that some people become homeless because of their addiction to drugs, but also those others become drug addicts because they are homeless. "Homeless people are not, for the most part, people disabled by drugs, mental disease, or physical affliction but rather are people negatively affected by socio-economic trends and forces. The homeless are not deficient and defective; they are resilient and resourceful" (Timmer, Eitzan & Talley 1994:6).

Family relationships are also involved in homelessness. Some people are forced by poverty and their inability to support their families to leave home in search of employment. Poverty also prompts some to leave in a bid for independence. Others are left homeless when they lose their parents. Sometimes conflict in the family causes a person to leave home, as in the case of one of the story tellers, who now regrets his part in the conflict but cannot make it right because his estranged mother has since died, leaving him to unsatisfied hope and irreparable guilt.

Thus there are many personal reasons behind the reality of homelessness. These reasons care clearly reflected in the subgroups of the population that have been identified as having a particularly high risk of becoming homeless, including:

> those persons burdened with personal vulnerabilities such as mental disability, post traumatic stress syndrome associated with war service or victimization(especially domestic violence), chemical dependency, or health problems; those lacking sufficient social supports to tide them over potentially protracted periods of crisis (for example, people raised in foster homes, but also unattached people generally); and those least able to obtain jobs that pay enough to purchase housing (single women with young children, unskilled workers, women in general, and people of color) or to qualify for welfare support (single able-bodied persons, particularly men). The net result tends to be a homeless population that is disproportionately young, male, disabled and people of color. (Wolch & Dear 2005:160)

One of the personal characteristics that most significantly increase the risk of homelessness is substance abuse. Many of the homeless youth in Pretoria not only are addicted to substances themselves, but also act as agents for drug trafficking and illegal alcohol sale. Drug use and unprotected sex in an unstable and uncontrolled context makes these homeless youth vulnerable to

cardiovascular and neurological damage, HIV/AIDS and associated complications.

6.4.2 Family reasons

All homeless people originally belonged to families, which they left for various reasons, to their economic disadvantage. "Poverty, unemployment and homelessness are the experience of families of various different types" (Walrond-Skinner 1993:52). Even if the direct reason for a person's flight from home is unemployment or conflict, the background reason is usually economic poverty. If they had the money most of the homeless youth would return to their homes. Homelessness is directly related to family and community in various ways. Family problems, poverty and unemployment in the community, crime in their neighbourhoods, cultural beliefs and attitudes in the family are all possible reasons for homelessness, several of which are often present in any individual case of homelessness.

Some of the homeless youth are from families disrupted by marital problems. Some of the most prevalent effects of this instability are low self-esteem, inadequate or unhealthy separation from parents, and lack of awareness and understanding of gender and personality differences. All these have a negative impact on the children of these families, distorting their understanding of family, self-worth, God and society, and dehumanize them in their future interactions.

Many of the youth on the streets of Pretoria have their own family reasons for being homeless. Their attitudes and approaches to their situations reflect their family background, and simultaneously their dominant discourses affect their assumptions about their self worth and their family experiences. Theology provides a reason for the importance of family: "[f]amily is the context of primary relations responsible for the image of God. This is an intrinsic moral responsibility, with moral character determined by quality of life grounded in the

core social paradigm" (Anderson 2001:261). When parents fail to be good care givers for their children, this has a profoundly negative effect on the children's personalities and attitudes.

This effect of course interacts with that of the wider community. The family is one factor in the socio-economic discourses that shape people's interpretations of their selves and their experiences. In some cases, even though a person has a loving family in which he/she is well cared for and formed, that person has to leave the family because of poverty. Then economic deprivation can cause them to form negative discourses about their status, and their sense of self-worth, originally positively formed in the family, becomes damaged and their opportunities for development lessened. These young people can forget their early training and become involved in socially deviant behaviour.

6.4.3 Possible interactions between disciplines

An interdisciplinary approach will help me as social activist, social reformer, counsellor and narrative theorist in the various dimensions of social and personal intervention. One of the main reasons leading the people to homelessness and joblessness is their economic poverty. This can lead to extensive drug and alcohol abuse. All of this lessens the chance for economic growth and social upliftment in the South African community. Preventive measures should be taken to ensure the positive growth of young people economically, morally and socially. "There should be a concrete investment in South African youth through *inter alia* a) the facilitation of youth participation in preventive programs, and b) the continual and detailed monitoring of alcohol, tobacco and other drug practices/ attitudes of young people, as well as the extent of alcohol-, tobacco- and other drug-related problems among them"(Rocha-Silva & Erasmus 1996:91). Other possible interventions are narrative counselling, deconstructive interviewing, group discussions and interactive classes, programmes to equip and help the homeless to hunt for jobs, and creative economic empowerment plans focussing

on the youth. Rather than simply condemning them for their homelessness, we must strive to listen to the youth and journey with them through their experiences. That will equip them to find new possibilities in life and lead us to new discoveries about human experiences.

6.4.4 Economic theories in dialogue

Economic activities are directly related to the life experiences and psychology behind these activities, so the theory goes. Economic theorists create stylized models of the economic behaviour of individuals and the psychological impact of such behaviour. This approach is called psychological economics. My approach is similar, but I focus specifically on the impact of economic factors on the life experiences and discourses of young homeless people. In this project it is helpful to analyze the relation between the economic behaviour of individuals and the psychological intentions behind this behaviour. "Neoclassical economics is often thought to need an infusion of social psychology. There are two reasons for this. One is that economics should be able to recognize the social interaction between individual decision-makers; the other is that economics should recognize that the nature of an individual's utility function is essentially psychological" (Boland 1988:163). These psychological emphases prove that a positive change is possible for the economic order of society and the economic behaviour of individuals.

Globalization and its economic policies can limit an individual's economic behaviour, while seeming to offer wide alternatives. "The truth seems to be that many existing economic systems in the world provide entrapment, not opportunity; they ensure dependency, not autonomy; and they celebrate the status quo, not innovative and liberating change" (King & Woodyard 1999:31). This economic scenario inhibits social movements that try to eradicate the phenomenon of homelessness. Therefore such social movements and organisations should have both a local expression and a global vision. If the local

workers are totally unaware of the wider social changes happening in the world and their effects on homelessness, these workers will be ineffective in dealing with the local problems of homelessness. Similarly, if economists trying to understand and explain economic institutions and economic interactions ignore local social factors, they will only see human problems in relation to economic factors, and their findings will be distorted by the absence of psychological and theological factors. Thus dialogue between economic theories and the social reality of homelessness is needed for a better understanding of the discourses of homelessness and the finding of alternate experiences. Some theorists argue that globalization is a mortal threat to development and economic equality. Bello even argues for a process of 'deglobalization' to restore to the prominence of local economies over the global market (2004:109). Such macro solutions are beyond the control of most of us, including the homeless youth. Practically, therefore, dialogue between economic and other theories is our only hope for new alternate economic experiences. The minute detail of economic theory may not be relevant for the homeless youth, but their actions influence the economic reality of South Africa. "While lay people may not possess formal knowledge on the functions of the economy, they do reason about economic phenomena in daily decision-making regarding their finances" (Bastounis, Leiser & Roland-Levy 2002).

6.4.5 Interdisciplinary approach leads to hope

Thus an interdisciplinary approach enables a clearer understanding of homelessness and its discourses. The experiences of the homeless youth in Pretoria are diverse, as are their cultural backgrounds. A narrative approach helps them to develop new life goals, different from their old hopeless goals. "Human beings develop personal goals based on their (socially mediated) view of who they are ontologically and ethically, their own narrative, as well as their understanding of their capacities and potential" (Johnson 1997:152). Thus the homeless youth have to understand themselves, their stories and their situation if

they are to achieve liberation. Narrative intervention using an interdisciplinary approach can give them a new hopeful understanding of their future.

6.5 MY POSITION

I am a pastor from India, trained at an Indian university in a modern theological framework. My earlier theological position was totally grounded on a systematic theological approach, based on historical-critical interpretation of biblical realities. My approach tended to forget that "[s]ystematic theology needs a biblical theology which is historical-critical without any restrictions and, at the same time, devotional-interpretative, taking account of the fact that it deals with matters of ultimate concern" (Tillich 1988:36). Later I came to realize that the theology of ultimate concerns should be practical in nature, should deal with the life realities of the poor. Through interdisciplinary interactions with the particular contexts of poor and marginalized people, I experienced a shift in my theological position to a more praxis-oriented theology. Various liberation theologies gave me further insights and helped form my new theological position.

These interdisciplinary interactions included my conversations with the homeless youth at the Pretoria Street Centre. My involvement with them was inspired not simply by a desire to achieve social intervention, or theoretical inquiry or biblical education. Rather my three years of work with the homeless youth was inspired by an urge to make friends with them, and this friendship opened my theology to a world of new possibilities.

The homeless are human beings with a full complement of assumptions, concepts and discourses. "We are not denying, by any means, that the poor are part of an exploited social class, of a marginalized race, of a discriminated culture, of a gender not sufficiently appreciated. This expressions aims to make us realize that there is a world of the poor, and that the commitment to it means entering this world" (Gutiérrez 1997:72). The development of my theological

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understanding towards this position in relation with the homeless youth and their stories will be explained in the final chapter.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter described how our understanding of the experiences of the homeless youth in Pretoria can be thickened through an interdisciplinary approach. Such interrogation led to the discovery of certain factors in relation with different disciplines:

1. The disciplines of philosophy, sociology, anthropology, economics and psychology are not contradictory in a study such as this but rather complementary. Each discipline has something to share to enrich its own perspectives and those of the other disciplines.
2. An interdisciplinary approach gives new insights, awareness and convictions about particular human life experiences, not limiting the meaning of these experiences but opens up new meanings.
3. Using each discipline in dialogue with theology gives a more vivid and thicker description of the stories of the homeless youth. Though the homeless youth may not be aware of the theological implications of their interpretations, these implications are always there and can be accessed through the insights of other disciplines.
4. Such an approach also opens our eyes to the economic factors involved in the dominant discourses of these young people. Economic factors in their discourses of homelessness are inseparably intertwined with other cultural, social, philosophical and psychological factors.
5. The reformulation of concepts like survival, power and dignity through a philosophical approach allows deeper insight into discourses in the stories of the homeless youth which were not obvious before.

CHAPTER SEVEN

<u>ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS POINTING BEYOND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY</u>

7.1   INTRODUCTION

Human life experiences can be arranged and told as stories. This telling of stories involves interpretation also. The story teller is responsible for the interpretations. The role of the facilitator is to throw light on the unique outcomes in the stories and help the story teller to create alternate stories based on these unique outcomes. This process helps the story teller to view his/her life story differently and create hopeful new stories. Through narrative counselling, the homeless youth find alternate stories, which lead them to a better, more hopeful future.

"The stories that we have about ourselves not only determine the meaning of our experiences, but also select out certain parts of the lived experience for the ascription of meaning and are constitutive or shaping of our lives" (Dwivedi & Gardner 2000:32). These aspects are not immediately visible in the dominant story, and are known as unique outcomes. They are helpful for the construction of alternate stories. In this thesis I tried to narrate the total experiences of my journey with the homeless youth, through which we discovered the discourses of homelessness and the economic factors involved in these discourses. This process not only helped the youth to construct alternate stories, but also taught me to rediscover and reconstruct stories.

Through interdisciplinary investigation I helped uncover new realities in the experiences of the homeless youth. As I narrate my experiences in this journey

and my efforts to interpret their stories through interdisciplinary means, other unique outcomes evolve, which point beyond the local context. By becoming aware of my own experiences and searching the discourses that appear in this story, I sense a need to move beyond my personal experience. Therefore I will analyze the constructs that lie behind the unique outcomes, story lines and alternate stories I have reported, in an effort to bring my readers to more widely relevant realities.

7.2   TELLING AND RETELLING STORIES

Extracting the universal from stories is not the same as generalizing the context of stories. It involves challenging the reader to move beyond the particular context of the story. The creation and telling of stories has been used universally by cultures, communities and individuals to provide hope, meaning, purpose and understanding in life. Stories perpetuate knowledge and connect succeeding generations to the richness of their heritage. Traditional ways of telling stories promote specific goals of moral regeneration and spiritual revitalization in the community. When retold to the next generation a story takes on new forms which are relevant for this new generation and interpreted by them accordingly. When the same story is told in another place, far away from the original context, it finds new meanings to suit its present context. Thus stories are a vehicle through which people are able to develop understanding of and coherence in their worlds. Stories provide a very wide range of implicit communal resources for each individual facing the inevitable developmental conflicts posed by life. "It can be argued that every telling is a re-telling. Nevertheless, we can distinguish re-telling from telling by the degree of active reconstruction in a narrative account" (Dwivedi & Gardner 2000:27). A re-told story is a story that evolves. Story telling and listening together make up story making, the sharing of experiences as they emerge during the course of a narration. "'Narrating', therefore, turns out to be a more basic category than either explanation or understanding: unlike either of these it does not assume punctiliar facts or discrete meanings. …If textuality is

the condition of all culture, then narration – of events, structures, institutions, tendencies as well as of lives – is the final mode of comprehension of human society" (Milbank 2001:267).

7.2.1 Traditional story telling

In a traditional culture, stories are set and designed by the community to have certain goals and functions in society. The language used for this story telling is always a communal vocabulary. In order to understand, we need to know the meaning of the words and the rules of their use. "It is believed that language has a homogeneous sphere of understanding. It thus presents all participants with an overarching vocabulary allowing the 'sender' to transmit these universal meanings of words to other 'receivers'" (Van Wyk 1999:87). The rules and assumptions for interpreting the meaning of stories are not universal, but always unique to an interpretive community. The community decides what is right and what is wrong, what is legitimate and what illegitimate. Thus the members of a community are the custodians and interpreters of their truth.

Thus in traditional story telling itself we can identify postmodernist trends, which help the story teller to retell and externalize problems, to invent new meanings through telling and re-telling stories. Biblical narratives, which are examples of traditional stories, give new insights in the world of stories and paradigms of story telling. The Old Testament "provides the materials for the social construction of reality and for socialization of the young into an alternative world where YHWH lives and governs" (Brueggemann 2003:26). This possibility of new constructions leads us beyond the particular context of such traditional stories, and makes them universal.

7.2.2 Modern story telling

The modern paradigm of story telling is an orderly narration of fixed meanings and defined ways of interpretation. Questioning is not allowed. The leader tells the story and interprets its meaning. "The idea and implied possibility of an orderly world is a familiar feature of modernity as an accomplished form of social life, a form of life bound up with the growth of Enlightenment" (Smart 1993:41). The scientific approach and individualism, which arose out of technological advancement, promoted this way of giving meaning in a systematic social life.

Tester describes this modern paradigm by comparing the individual or the social group to a pilgrim engaged in a process of historical and spatial movement. On this journey the identities and the norms used to evaluate these identities are fixed givens. Thus "the basic difficulty for the pilgrim is that the individual or group which sets out on the journey does not possess the same identity as the individual or group which arrives at the destination" (Tester 1993:74). That is not the same understanding of identity shift through social constructions as in a post-modern paradigm. Rather, the leaders, individuals with greater access to the secrets of the journey than others, determine any change. This basic assumption of modernity makes any change in relation to a specific context or certain experiences impossible. All experiences are interpreted by the leaders of society using a given set of norms which match the design of the journey. From the modernist perspective therefore the leader is very powerful; he/she controls story telling and its interpretations. In the modern understanding, information flows from respondent to researcher and the researcher selects what is relevant. "[T]he story-based researcher must prompt and probe storytellers to provide adequate details to render the story meaningful to researchers" (Musheno & Maynard-Moody 2003:34).

7.2.3 Post- modern story telling

Post-modern thinking is based on the search for various possible interpretations of an experience. The facts in the experiences may vary according to the context. In post-modern thought, story telling and re-telling is not telling the 'truth' of an incident. Instead, it is telling the interpreted experiences of a person, which are influenced by the context of the story telling also. There is no question of telling a true story, but rather of telling a real story in the context of the story teller. As Van Rensburg puts it, the aim is not to establish a truth. "Thus we will never really be saying what we mean, we will not have to mean what we say and we will not need to worry about telling the truth because there is no truth, only a metaphysics of truth, a story behind the story, a multiplicity of meanings" (Van Rensburg 2000:48). The meanings will be decided on and interpreted by the story teller. When a story teller shares his experiences of powerlessness, for example, it is not for me as facilitator to define powerlessness. I may have my own concepts and understandings of power and powerlessness, but I must not let these influence the interpretations of the story teller. In this sense the story teller is the researcher, in that he/she is the sole author of the experiences and their interpretations. The teller has the full right to re-tell the story and reinterpret its meanings. The facilitator is a co-researcher, who can supplement the interpretations of the researcher through interdisciplinary investigations that thicken the teller's account.

"We naturally story our experience. The constructivist approach sees the person as putting together events in a way that makes sense to him or her. So in remembering the past, we do not simply recall events as they happened; rather, we selectively recall, narrating a story of the past that makes sense to us" (Burr & Butt 2000:201). The facilitator provides the conditions from which the teller can speak of him/herself, thus avoiding the possibility of posing as superior to the teller while still determining the form which action on the part of the teller might take (Mills 2003:77). This is how a narrative approach to story telling and

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listening functions. The question is not the degree to which the stories are true or the experiences valid and relevant. The story teller has the full right to create new meanings for his/her experiences and construct alternate stories. "In opposition to modernism's Utopian dream to create a universal life-experience and language based on reason's rule, postmodernism announces that incommensurability (persistent difference) between languages, experiences, histories, and discourses cannot and should not be overcome" (Amariglio 1990:20). This possibility of multiple forms of knowledge decentres the individual and results in an anti-humanist vision. One danger of this approach, which must be carefully avoided, is a tendency to make the experiences and story telling more important than the individual teller.

Post-modern story telling affirms the newness of each story in the telling and re-telling. "Once we have spelled out and committed ourselves to a new story, it often acquires the status of an insight, and yesterday's tale seems like a self-deception. The theme of foundationlessness insists that there is no story that ever captures the whole truth" (Burr & Butt 2000:197). This is clear in the story telling experiences of the homeless youth. In the second or third session with the same person, I noticed that the teller retells the same previous experience in different ways, with other interpretations. These interpretations sometimes contradict previous interpretations and sometimes complement them. To a modernist thinker, this inconsistency would be disturbing. But in a post-modern, post-foundationlist, social constructionist paradigm such inconsistency is simply an opportunity to construct alternate stories for my experiences as a facilitator.

7.3 DEVELOPING BY SEARCHING FOR DISCOURSES

Each counselling session in the narrative approach is a step towards developing new discourses of hope. Part of my experience is viewing the session from outside, and part of it is standing beside the homeless youth, moving with them in their journey to new realities. The sharing is like a wonderful and exciting journey

through woods for which there are no route map or guides, an adventure without any particular goals except discovering new realities and new experiences. The viewing from outside is another exciting experience of discovery, involving interpreting and writing down these experiences. Observing and tracing the development of discourses and seeing these discourses in closer and more intimate versions are glittering parts of this journey.

7.3.1 Identifying homelessness

It is easy to characterise homelessness in the particular context of the story tellers in this study. They all are in one sense or another homeless. My journey into their particular contexts and sharing in their journeys of discovering did not begin in any special intention of mine, but rather evolved out of creative social interaction. The opportunities I encountered at the Street Centre to interact with the homeless community were opportunities to discover the discourses that inform their experiences and the discourses that inform my experiences too. "The participants engage in processes of societal self-interpretation and self-diagnosis by means of which societal knowledge is produced about what the problem amounts to and how it could be dealt with" (Strydom 2006:56).

My special interest in interacting with the young people was being with and participating in the experiences of the poor. In this interaction I realized that homelessness is not only their experience but also their dominant discourse. Also I noticed the unavoidable economic factors inherent in the dominant discourses of homelessness. All the young homeless people have negative views about homelessness, which tamper with their lives and attitudes in different ways, constructing negative inner discourses that must be identified and deconstructed. Thus Joy's complaint of unemployment and economic powerlessness reveals his inner discourse about power and money. Joseph's story of feelings of desperation points to the harsh experience of homelessness. Andre's story of hope for a better future, of a successful plan for starting a

business on the street, shows how re-telling a story can open the way to more hopeful alternative discourses. Salin reveals an attitude of hate and desperation in his account of life on the street. All these discourses became clear through story telling and re-telling in narrative interaction.

7.3.2 My reasons for studying homelessness

I did not plan my involvement with the staff and visitors at the PCM Street Centre in Pretoria. I believe this was part of God's plan for me. Through my work at the centre I began the narrative journey with the homeless youth which led me to discover new realities. When I met Lizy, the staff worker at the Street Centre, and started mingling with the homeless community of Pretoria, I had no plan to do research among them. Instead, I joined them out of my concern for the poor, because I enjoyed being with them and because I was curious to know more about their lives. After some months I was admitted to the Masters course in Pastoral Family Therapy at the University of Pretoria. As a part of the course I had to work in a social organization so as to experience relationship with others. My first thought was the PCM street ministry, because I was already involved with the people there. So I gained further opportunities to listen to their stories and the discourses involved in these stories. My curiosity spurred me to search out their particular contexts of homelessness and the discourses involved in these, so as to understand them better. I found that my efforts helped the homeless community in various ways. They appreciated my presence, involvement and listening to their stories very much. This is the personal context and reason for selecting homelessness and its discourses as my research area.

Onset of my duties at the Street Centre was leading Bible classes for the homeless people. This gave me a chance to search for discourses of homelessness in the Bible and to interpret biblical teachings in the particular context of the homeless youth of Pretoria. I began this process by naming the problem, as in the externalizing process of narrative therapy. I named the series

of Bible classes as "The Homeless Jesus". In the course of the classes I traced various possible meanings of poverty and homelessness in the Bible and interpretations of these relevant for the homeless community. I taught that in the Bible, "the poor man is the man without rights, the man who no longer has any value. In the Bible poverty is never accepted; it is challenged at a variety of points" (Boerma 1979:29). I interpreted the Ten Commandments as teaching against the accumulation of possessions. I presented Jesus as a homeless person who had no roof over his head or bed to sleep on (Mt. 8:20; Lk. 9:58) from his very birth as a vagrant (Lk. 2:7) to his lonely death at the Place of the Skull, when all other places on earth were barred to him.

Then I encouraged the homeless people to interpret the Bible classes themselves, according to their own experiences. In the beginning I tried to correct them according to my own belief system. Later I came to realize that they have their own reasons for their interpretations. As I began to listen to their stories, I began to see vividly the various discourses of homelessness. In these discussions after the Bible classes, the homeless people sometimes questioned my views, sometimes interpreted and enlightened them and sometimes shared their experiences in the light of the teachings they had heard. All this lead me to new insights into the experience of homelessness, humiliation and poverty. These stories often reflected hopelessness and self-pity. This is not surprising, since "poverty is like a disease. It stigmatizes and humiliates. The poor man has to fall back on himself, and at the same time he becomes reserved. He begins to doubt his own capacity. Perhaps he is inferior; perhaps there is nothing he can do about his inferiority. He no longer believes in change" (Boerma 1979:76). When they hear the hopeful stories of the Bible, many homeless people become confused. The Bible stories teach a God who understands and cares for the poor, but their context seems to teach them they are helpless.

Through narrative interventions with the youth, in groups and individually, I created a platform for preparing them to reach towards a better, more hopeful

future. Their personal stories reflected their confusion about their life experiences and the hopeful interpretations of the Bible stories. By helping them to tell their stories more slowly and carefully and by patiently listening to these stories I could help them to come to a new way of telling their experiences. Homelessness and its discourses are clear in their stories, as are the economic factors involved in these discourses. The homeless youth's interpretations of these led them and me to new discoveries of their experiences.

7.3.3 Development of discourses

"We each carry a social discourse in our heads and, therefore, we have an internal controller and we risk being diagnosed as mad or bad if what we say is not part of the dominant narrative" (Milner & O'Byrne 2002:22). Thus the beliefs and affirmations in our mind which inform our daily activities and attitudes can be understood as the discourses of our minds. If I do not understand the inner discourses of a person to whom I speak, the social discourses we share and the discourses in my mind, I will not be able to understand that person's story.

The development of discourses during the story telling process is the mechanism by which understanding develops. John shares his feeling that there is nobody to help him. Thus his story reveals the innermost discourse of homelessness in his experience, namely homelessness as helplessness. He does not want to stay trapped by this discourse, but to deconstruct it, which is why he searches for a job and looks for other options. From his original position, the belief that nobody is there to help, he moves to a discourse that believes that somebody is there to help, through narrative interaction in which he discovers the possibilities in his story and seeks alternate stories.

All the homeless youth with whom I shared stories have similar dominant discourses of homelessness. Many of them are hopeless, because of the influence of these discourses. "[W]hen we look at discourses in their historical

context, it becomes clear that they are quite incoherent, and that as they are elaborated by academics and in everyday-life they become more carefully systematised" (Parker 1992:3). Thus a counsellor has to be very sensitive if he/she is to detect the scattered dominant discourses inherent in the stories told by the youth using their own language and context, and so help the youth in an effective way. Thus this effective help is not applying the techniques of traditional directive counselling, but rather identifying the discourses in their stories and searching for unique outcomes. As counsellor I have to move with them to new hopeful understandings of reality. "The researcher has to be aware of the different discourses in the community that have an impact on the action and the people involved. Awareness of such discourses could lead to a very wide spectrum of perspectives, which might make it difficult and even impossible to focus clearly enough on the action to be researched" (Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2006:5, 6). An example is my experience with Andre. When I first listened to his stories, I thought him to be confused. He shared his stories of changing from one religion to another and ending up nowhere, of swapping between jobs and searching for congenial employment. But as I journeyed with him I realized that this all actually springs from his interest in alternatives. He was and is searching for new realities with an innovative attitude. In listening to his stories I realized the development of his discourses into new directions and better understandings.

All discourses have a cultural context, and so our interpretations of experience according to these discourses will form our world view, and determine the course of our lives. The various factors that cause the youth to end up homeless and jobless are the same factors that create the discourses that entrap them. Through careful narrative intervention we can unwrap these discourses and help the young people to rewrite them better, as part of creating new alternate stories. "Although we are shaped by our context, there is always 'the more', lived in the body, about to be formed out of the person's actual experiencing now. No experience is a repeat of an already known patterning. In actuality, human living

is an interaction in which the organism can bring its own responsive order to cultural meanings such that a known meaning is transformed into a furthering of newly patterned living" (Katonah 2006:67).

7.3.4 Economic factors in discourses of homelessness

The stories of the homeless youth clear show that they became homeless because of some or other type of economic deprivation. The vocabulary that economists use to discuss economic realities differs from that used by the people who experience negative economic realities directly their particular life contexts. "As a mode of discourse, economics, the stories that economists tell, and/or the knowledge that economists purport to affirm are all affected by the structure and content of the words that they use – by their language" (Samuels 1990:4). Thus we have to trace in the accounts of the homeless youth the economic constructs and factors discussed in economic theory.

The stories of the homeless youth show the adverse economic effects of globalization, though the young people do not use this word. "Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion" (Iyer 2000:29). Homelessness is part of poverty caused by irresponsible global institutions which are less concerned with eradicating poverty or homelessness and providing job opportunities and affordable homes than with profit. Thus globalization results in increasing rates of homelessness all over the world, including South Africa. The homeless people experience these global trends in a much more immediate manner. They understand that they are homeless because they are excluded from economic resources. They feel inferior because of their poverty. They sense clearly society's judgment of poverty as a morally inferior status. Thus their

economic alienation becomes part of their self awareness and self concept, which are part of their inner discourses.

Thus economic factors unavoidably shape the discourses of homelessness in the stories of the youth in the streets. These factors are directly related to their experiences in the streets, and to the economic and social realities of South African society. "Unemployment affects the whole population in South Africa and averages over 50 percent among the black population. Population growth outstrips economic growth: …[T]here continues to be real suffering due to poverty….South Africa has been an endemically violent land, where it has been a cliché that 'human life is cheap'" (Carmichael 1996:187). Economic activities in South Africa used to be controlled by the apartheid regime, and then by new constructs of freedom, but are now increasingly shaped by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. "The impact of HIV is likely to result in substantial shifts in spending, changes in the distribution of income, and the use of savings in order to maintain living standards which are eroded by increased spending on health" (Farham 2004:63). Yet hope remains. Negative discourses can be readdressed and retold with new alternatives.

Another problem is the negative life situations that prompt the youth to live on the streets. "Adaptation is much easier for youths who have had the benefit of a sympathetic upbringing, but there are large numbers of youngsters who only find their course in life after repeated disappointments and several changes of occupation" (Venter 1959:25). Thus the young homeless people, who particularly need good adaptation skills, are often precisely the ones who lack these skills. Repeated disappointments may lead them to desperation. Discourses of desperation are easy to detect in the stories of the homeless youth. Thus these discourses must be identified so that they will no longer hinder the young people's liberation. Though they are not well versed in economic theories or strategies to overcome their economic deprivation, the young people have to be

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shown that they do not have to be satisfied with only the minimum of economic interactions, and urged to do better, and grasp the possibilities of their lives.

The experiences of the homeless youth include disappointment, hopelessness and anger. These feelings and experiences make it difficult for them to create a more positive outlook or believe in a caring community. The young people's morality will also differ from that of a well settled, economically advanced community. A good way to understand the morality of economically marginalised people is "to consider the possibility that economic behaviour might have some non-economic meaning or motivation. After this initial step it becomes possible to look at the effect of economic rationality on morality and to use morality in a critique of economic behaviour" (Fevre 2003:6). Friendship and meaning-making through community interaction should be taken seriously in the economic development process. My involvement at the Street Centre in narrative interaction with the youth thus helped them to improve their attitudes from hopelessness to hopefulness for a better participation in the society. Through a better understanding of their discourses they are equipped for creating a better community with higher morality and living standards.

7.4 INTERPRETATIONS OF RESEARCHERS

According to Furniss (1995:21-22), social construction theory defines the relationship between the individual and the society in terms of three generalizations about the social world, namely:
  a) society is a human product,
  b) society is an objective reality, and
  c) the human being is a social product.
These generalizations point to the importance of conversational interactions which must be interpreted within their cultural milieu. Social realities are constructed through language by the interpretation of the ones involved in the social interaction. Separating human beings and social issues help us to view the

issues from outside and understand their effects on people and on society. This will help us to deconstruct our inner discourses and tell new stories. In the stories of the homeless youth of Pretoria we have seen how interpretations develop as the story develops, based on their particular contexts and cultural backgrounds in the course of discursive experiences. In these interactions the young people construct themselves and their realities in a new, more hopeful way.

7.4.1 Social constructionism and stories

The modern paradigm emphasizes an objective world in which realities can be examined and verified through scientific methods. These realities are set, given and traditionally accepted. There is no question of innovation or multiple choices. The identity of the self too is seen as decided by existing scientific methods and social institutions.

Post-modern thinking, in contrast, celebrates plurality. Even if we tell our stories again and again the possibilities of construction are never exhausted but develop to new areas of knowledge. We will never attain a final and definite description of our experiences. We cannot perceive a reality without interpretation. Thus our perceptions about reality are all constructed socially. "There is no deep real self to be mined, no true inner feelings to be contacted. Social constructionism exhorts us to recognize the truly situated and relational nature of human experience and conduct" (Burr & Butt 2000:203).

Thus in stories tellers construct their reality. "The strength of the constructivist position is that each person's story is seen in its uniqueness and within its own particular context" (Neuger 2001:67). The basic problems of the story tellers in this study are homelessness and joblessness, with which are associated many other problems. The tellers' preliminary interpretations show that they tend to own the problem, to blame themselves for it and internalise it, which makes it ever difficult to correct. Many of them struggle to name their problem, because

they know deep inside that if they name it, they will have to face it. Thus externalizing the problem is needed. Dwivedi (2000: 90) narrates a story of a monk to explain the process of externalization.

> The monk asks his master, 'I have a terrible temper and I can't cope with it. Please help.' The master says, 'Well, bring it to me and I'll see what I can do.' The monk hesitates: 'I am sorry, at the moment I haven't got it.' So the master suggests, 'Next time, when you have got it, bring it to me.' The monk confesses, 'I am not sure if I can do that.' The master then declares, 'In that case it is not yours,' and suggests that if it comes again the monk should get hold of it and then beat it away with a stick!

Through externalization the problem becomes a separate entity external to the person or relationship, and so its various influences on the person and others can be easily mapped out. Such an exercise renders the problem less fixed and restricting. For example, in Joy's first formulation of his experience he is powerless, but in his second formulation he has a problem with powerlessness. This separation of the problem from his self enables him to deconstruct his discourse about powerlessness.

"Stories have the capacity to 'name the previously unnamed', and to personify the content of internal psychic functioning, thereby making the content of unconscious material, memories of repressed experiences and previously denied emotions communicable in a way which is not necessarily personally threatening" (Harper & Gray 2000:45). Joseph in his story talked of the love he feels for his family. He feels lonely when he is away from them. He interprets the love in his family as 'painful love' because of their poverty, and because he misses their love in his life on the streets. This interpretation can only arise when he makes the comparison he has been unconsciously maintaining between his past experiences of happiness with his present problem of loneliness. Once he has externalised this contrast, he can begin trying to think of his fellow homeless

people as more lovable, and turn his negative discourse into a positive motivation for him to survive on the streets and search for a job. On one side is his family's love and warmth and on the other side their poverty, and both motivate him to transform his condition of homelessness.

According to Bradley and Morss (2002),

> a central tenet of [s]ocial [c]onstructionism is that the ways we understand the world are formed by the ways in which we interact with each other in our local cultural milieu….[A]nother is that these relationships are lodged within traditions, being products of particular histories. The nature of these histories remain largely unspecified…but undoubtedly part of the constructionist project is to establish ways on which particular historically constituted social settings afford the specific relationships and understandings associated with them.

Michael's cultural milieu urges him to view the world as evil, because of his past experiences. He and his family are imprisoned in the cages of cultural superstition. Through narrative counselling he begins to realize the influence of his cultural background and to try to find ways to lessen its harmful effects on his family. Though Michael is a Christian he admits that he does not practice Christianity in its full sense, and he realises that this contradiction between his belief and his practice harms his family and disturbs his life in many ways. "[S]ocial constructionist research widens the interpretive horizons to include the cultural and historical context within which the study is located. Social constructionism seeks to understand the ways in which the world is co-constructed by persons living within a cultural tradition" (McLeod 2001:29). Thus an understanding of Michael's cultural background is essential for understanding his stories

7.4.2 Social constructionism and untold stories

Many of the young people's stories show a dimension of desperation, rooted in their family histories, identities, and other influences. These influences are

seldom explicitly mentioned in the dominant stories, but rather form the untold stories which underlie these main storyline. "Many of the problems that people experience may be better understood as products of the identities that they are unable to resist within the context of their family, social group, or society" (Burr & Butt 2000:204). These contexts determine some hidden storylines which have to be carefully traced in the story told.

Through interpretation these other storylines will become vivid. "[S]ocial realities can be recognized in the ways in which people share expectations about the storyline, the types of characters, and associated behaviors and feelings. These storylines or realities are often taken for granted until someone steps out of characters or violates expected routines" (O'Brien & Kollock 2001:362). Searching main storylines for hidden patterns and discovering the social constructions that underlie these give new insight into other aspects of the discourse of homelessness. Roul's story, a cry for 'assistance and guidance', shows the common negative discourses of homelessness. But under these lie the untold story of guilt, rooted in his conflict with his mother. Through the constructionist approach of counselling he became aware of this problem and was able to externalise it and affirm a positive attitude to life by writing down his feelings in a poem. He visualizes a reconciled life with his mother, even though her death has made this impossible in reality. "Often the events cannot be altered – either they are already past or beyond the client's control – however the client's view of them can change. If the clients changes their interpretation of events, then their perspective is changed and they have a greater range of choices" (Geldard & Geldard 2006:61). Roul's changed attitude shows that new meanings are evolving within his specific context through his re-telling of that context. When he externalizes the problem he becomes equipped to construct new meanings for his stories and also to construct new stories of hope.

Similarly, Michael's love for his mother and sisters form the untold part of his stories. When he tells about his struggles to escape his constrictive experience of

cultural traditions he is also telling a deeper story of concern for his mother and his sisters, and distress at losing his three sisters because of the mistakes of traditional healing systems. In his stories of distress, identifying his cultural and economic discourses will help him to construct new stories of hope, rather than concentrating on the tragic experience and remaining in bondage. "[O]nce people have a different picture of the world and believe in the possibility of change, they regain their self confidence and press for change" (Boerma 1979:85). Michael addresses his problem through an externalizing process and comes to see "a little light ahead" in his future. His untold stories become his unique outcomes and the seeds of alternative stories.

7.4.3 Social constructionism and the narrative approach

The narrative approach in counselling and research rests on the base social constructionism. The story teller constructs meaning and interprets it by narrating his/her experiences. Such a narrative session begins with problem-free talk in which the facilitator gets acquainted with the story teller. At this stage the facilitator does not know what the story teller is going to describe. The facilitator and the story teller establish a rapport, which enables them to communicate freely and creates the necessary conditions for conversation and meaning construction. This initial chatting may cover the tastes, habits, hopes and areas of interest of the story teller, and so resembles social chitchat, though it has a constructive orientation. At this stage the skilled therapist is listening carefully for strengths, skills and resources that can be useful later for understanding the problem and constructing alternate stories.

Social constructionism argues that realities are socially constructed by the members of a culture through social interactions involving beliefs, values, institutions, customs, laws and the division of labour. Its basic assumption is that there is no set or given realities, but that everything is evolved and discovered through social experiences. These evolving realities are interpreted and

described within a particular context. This can be called the 'storying' of experience. Thus combining a narrative approach and social constructionism as guiding metaphors for this study suggests that the stories that circulate in society constitute our lives and those of the people with whom we work. "Stories are a useful epistemology through which to understand how collective life comes to have recognizable patterns. Realities, like stories, do not exist unless people tell them to themselves and to others" (O' Brien & Kollock 2001:363).

Social constructionism as a post-modern paradigm offers new dimensions and possibilities for the narrative approach to counselling and research. Narratives or stories reveal the metanarratives that are the wider context of the teller's reality. "Metanarratives are not themselves stories or narratives as such, but rather those things that make my own self-narrating possible; they allow me to tell my story within a wider context, a context I can take for granted" (Hemming 2005:15). Thus narrative counselling in this paradigm is not simply the investigation of reality, but rather the process of discovering and realizing realities and their possible dimensions. "It will be rather quickly noted that our mapping of the world of narrative, which extends beyond narrational discourse, inclines us to an ontology of narrative, a notion of emplotment that stands in service of an articulation of our being-in-the-world" (Schrag 1992:91).

Thus in this study narrative interaction opened the way for the story tellers to find meaning for their stories and so of their individual selves. "The narrative approach recognises the narrator as a unique domain of skills and techniques, which enable such a person to derive meaning from his/her perceptions of the world; therefore they should be voiced and formulated through the research process" (Müller & Schoeman 2004:9). Thus my interpretations are all based as closely as possible on the homeless youth's own interpretations. Of course the possibility always remains for the reader of this report to detect in my story further unique outcomes and realities constructed through the social interaction I report and the reader's interaction with my account of these.

"Social constructionism is consensual meaning construction through language, thus language comes centrestage and people are seen as being disempowered by dominant narratives. …Thus while stories provide the frames that make it possible for us to interpret our experience, actively making meaning, we are embraced by the stories we have about life" (Milner & O' Byrne 2002:19, 20). The stories we construct need to be communicated in language. In my interactions with the homeless youth of Pretoria many different language traditions were involved, since we come from many different cultural backgrounds. Their constructions of their life stories are informed by the constructing style of their home languages and cultural experiences. My listening is informed by my formation in Indian styles of story telling and meaning making. But in a narrative conversation these factors are not necessarily contradictory. They open new possibilities of story making and understanding. For example, in my talk with Mzwasi, I found myself forgetting our language difficulties as his story progressed. We overcame communication difficulties through active conversation and meaning making. Mzwasi shared a story of economic deprivation and the government's neglect of the poor. His discourse about the government is not a discourse of protest but of sadness. "Crucial in pastoral exploration is not only understanding the feelings a situation generates but also identifying the worldviews that govern our reaction to the situation" (Furniss 1995:4).

The central idea in narrative analysis is that the stories told by informants or research participants can be treated as a primary source of data. A 'story' can be tentatively defined as an account of a concrete, specific event, with a beginning, middle and end, an active protagonist and some kind of dramatic climax. As in other branches of qualitative inquiry, competing ideas exist about how to analyze stories for research purposes. However, two general approaches have been developed in recent years. The first is concerned with analysis of the 'life stories' told by the people being interviewed. This approach is used in this study. The second approach concentrates on the task of understanding the process of story

telling in therapy, through analysis of session transcript material. My study uses interdisciplinary methods to explore the process of story making.

Riessman's narrative analysis method is built around a set of basic principles:

1. An interview schedule is used that encourages informants to tell stories.
2. Interview data are collected from a number of informants to enable an understanding of different experiences and themes.
3. A few key informants are selected whose stories can be viewed as 'typical' of broader themes in the data.
4. The interview material from these key informants is subjected to detailed transcription and closer reading.
5. Exemplar narratives from within these interviews are selected for use in a paper or report.
6. The paper or report is written *around* the intact narrative text, which is reproduced in full.
7. The goal of the analysis is to assist the reader to understand the meaning of the informant's experience.

My approach shares a number of features with conversation analysis and some forms of discourse analysis namely the display of an intact text and the use of a repertoire of analytic possibilities rather a rigid pre-determined set of procedures (Riessman 1993:105). "Narrative analysis is therefore an approach which combines a discursive emphasis on the construction of meaning through talk and language, alongside a humanistic image of the person as a self-aware agent striving to achieve meaning, control and fulfillment in life" (McLeod 2001:106). This research study has a background of pastoral care and counselling. By engaging in narrative conversation with the homeless youth I was trying to help them in many ways, facilitating their deconstruction of their dominant discourses and helping them make new discoveries. In this process I too discovered new realities and came to new understandings. "Emphasizing the dialogical character

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of pastoral care gives recognition that both care seeker and caregiver are transformed by the pastoral encounter….Care seeker and caregiver are engaged together in a joint activity of discovery" (Furniss 1995:3, 4).

For example, in my conversation with Patrick I gained new understanding of friendship and of God as a friend. Patrick had no friends and was not able to find any. When I asked him about friendship he said: "I am talking to all people, but there is nobody to be my friend. God is my only friend." Together we deconstructed his discourse about friendship, and Patrick realised that if God is one person's friend, he is everyone's friend and this helped him to change his conception of friendship. He realised that he had strict conditions for friendship, which other people could not satisfy. He learned, and I learned through him, that friendship must be without conditions.

In the narrative approach, the story teller is helped by the facilitator to discover hidden problems and discourses. This process is called externalization. "Externalising helps the client stand back from the problem and recover a sense of self-agency as ways of subverting it are discussed. Discovering the cunning ways of the problem helps clients to separate themselves from their own subjugation. It helps if the client can give the problem a name as soon as possible, but this is not always possible without some help" (Milner & O'Byrne 2002:40). Part of the research process is my naming of the research problem, in other words, my externalizing the research content. Thus I am able to evaluate its impact in my life.

7.4.4 Meaning in a postfoundational paradigm

Social constructionism and the narrative approach share the same inherent assumptions as theological and philosophical postfoundationalism. All these approaches question the construction of reality. "The idea of socially constructed

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interpretations and meaning is clearly part of the postfoundationalist approach" (Müller 2005:80).

Postfoundationalism has as one of its philosophical premises Schrag's 'transversal rationality', discussed above. The concept of transversality opens up the multiple possibilities of human interactions and stories. Reality and our interpretations of it are viewed as meeting at various points and converging at various points. This is in line with the narrative approach and social constructionism. Also, it provides theologians with better position against the relativist tendencies of post-modernity (Müller 2005:80). Thus a postfoundational approach proposes the reinterpretation of our social interactions and experiences, and the concepts behind these experiences. "Our political struggles, our artwork, our use of resources, our capitalist systems and discursive foundations, utility, happiness- without the individual, all are liable to radical reassessment" (Devine & Irwin 2006:22).

The basic aims of postfoundationalism, as defined by Van Huyssteen (1998:24) in relation to theology and science, are as follows:
 1) Fully acknowledge the contextuality of any human experience,
 2) Affirm the crucial role of interpreted experience,
 3) Creatively point beyond the confines of the local within an interdisciplinary conversation, and
 4) Conduct an interdisciplinary epistemological investigation into the biological source of human rationality.

"Over against the objectivism of foundationalism and the extreme relativism of most forms of non-foundationalism, what is emerging here is a refigured postfoundationalist model of rationality that is thoroughly contextual, but at the same time will facilitate an interdisciplinarity reach beyond one's own local group or culture" (Van Huyssteen 1999:139). Thus postfoundationalism's emphasis on contextuality prevents generalization of the experiences of informants. Listening

to people's stories about their real life experiences is an integral concept in a postfoundational approach. "It does not merely aim to describe a general context, but we are confronted with a specific and concrete situation" (Demasure & Müller 2006:9). Since I was engaging with youth from various cultural backgrounds, the postfoundationalist approach was vital in my dealing with multicultural experiences. Such an approach also provides an enlarged and comprehensive vision about the problem shared in the stories. The role of the therapist becomes important here not as an expert, but as a care-giving facilitator. "A social constructionist frame work has to contribute to non-discriminatory multi-cultural practice. The challenge is for therapists to understand and appreciate the cultural factors that shape the lives of the clients they meet, while being self-aware of their own personal cultural identity and how this impacts their therapeutic practice" (Sharry 2004:6).

7.5 INTERPRETATIONS MOVING BEYOND THE LOCAL

Socially constructed meanings have the possibility of moving beyond the local context and its meanings. "The shift of emphasis from individual to social, from subjective to discourse, which constitutes a new epistemology in the social sciences, is also part and parcel of the postfoundationalist movement. The idea of socially constructed interpretation and meaning is clearly part of the postfoundationalist approach" (Demasure & Müller 2006:10). Thus many possible meanings can be evolved from any experience. Thus a final conclusion is not possible for any story or interpretation. Keeping the story open-ended is better in the postfoundationalist approach.

7.5.1 Interdisciplinary contributions

It is not very easy to identify the disciplinary discourses involved in the stories of the homeless youth. Through interdisciplinary investigation, as described in the

previous chapter, I tried to highlight some themes of the discourses in the light of selected relevant disciplines. The selection of disciplines and the search for themes are the most extreme externalizing techniques used in this study. In the interests of accuracy we cannot ignore the subjective factors that influenced my selection of disciplines and my discursive analysis of the stories. But in a postfoundational narrative project such as this, these factors are part of the journey towards meaning, with their own contribution towards the development of the story and the meaning making process.

Interdisciplinary investigation is necessary for a better understanding of the truth of the stories. "A discipline is not the sum total of all the truths that may be uttered concerning something; it is not even the total of all that may be accepted by virtue of some principle of coherence and systematisation concerning some given fact or proposition" (Foucault 1996:347). Thus the limitations of searching for particular truth in one discipline are compensated for by the possibilities of other disciplines. Some disciplines have developed reputations for accuracy or usefulness over time in particular areas of human reality, and "[d]iscursive historical possibilities can be referenced to other mature discursive systems that have generated confidence over time, as well as to practical issues and possibilities" (Olssen 2006:74). Thus a discursive interaction with other disciplines will greatly help the meaning-making process in a postfoundationalist narrative study such as this one. This interaction does not involve searching for a shared base for the discourses. It is more of a dialogue of the disciplines about the themes inherent in the discourses dominant in the stories of the homeless youth. For example, a philosophical investigation can widen understanding of themes like power and powerlessness. Similarly, sociology sheds light on the area of social intervention. Psychology can help us trace the implicit feelings in the stories, which are part of the untold stories hidden within the told stories, as was the case in Patrick's story about his loneliness and longing for friendship.

The stories told by the homeless youth cannot be restricted to one way of telling or interpreting. This means that they cannot be restricted to the rules or assumptions of one discipline either. Postfoundationalism offers the possibility of negotiating between these various approaches and assumptions. "Informants engaged in all forms of interdisciplinary research ha[ve] to negotiate, albeit to varying degrees, disciplinary assumptions and methods" (Lattuca 2001:159). The informants may not be fully aware of the assumptions implicit in each discipline involved in the dialogue, so the researcher has to be alert when conducting counselling sessions and writing down the stories and interpretations. The insights yielded by interdisciplinary study of these stories can guide further investigation in similar contexts all over the world. The assumptions and understandings in this work must be translated and retold to make them meaningful in other contexts.

7.5.2 Beyond boundaries

Homelessness is experienced by people in different parts of the world, and so the meaning-making process and the discourses involved in the social condition of homelessness may vary according to different regions of the world. But the basic assumptions and themes involved in the reality of homelessness will be more or less same all over the world. Similarly, a narrative approach to therapy opens a wider world of possibilities wherever it is practiced, since the client takes the main role in telling and interpreting his/her experiences. "The therapist allows the client to take centre stage and lead the conversation. The therapist makes room for the client's voice and allows the client's know-how to come to the forefront. Therapy becomes a mutual search for options and possibilities" (Blanton 2005:95). This enables any client in any area of the world to interpret his/her story according to his/her assumptions and discourses. Theories formed in different parts of the world will in no way affect these interpretations. Thus, while the basic themes of the discourses of homelessness remain the same, more research into and understanding of similar journeys in other parts of the

world will thicken the experiences and stories of particular researchers in their particular contexts.

This process will also help the homeless person. By telling new stories he/she will be able to make sense of the experience of homelessness and visualize new possibilities for his/her life. In other words, the new story can help the person to reposition him/herself in relation to the problem. Thus this approach points beyond the local and particular towards better options. "The compatibility and application of post-modern family therapies to the spiritual lives of Christian clients has been described, illustrated, and discussed" (Blanton 2005:100), and this will be the same for clients from other religions. The description, illustration and discussion will help any clients from any faiths and social contexts to express themselves and interpret their stories with genuineness and freedom. The description, illustration and discussion mentioned in this quote can be understood as the telling, interpreting and discursive interaction of the narrative process. Where in the world this process occurs does not matter, because all human beings are constructed out of stories.

7.5.3 Interaction with similar contexts

In most African countries youth make up the majority of the population. Homelessness is a continent-wide urban phenomenon. Many factors contribute to homelessness and homeless people face many problems "Besides poverty and the other factors, some other indicators of street life were family discord, abuse, or neglect" (Nsamenang 2002:76). Our attempt to find general themes in the experience of homelessness is not intended to minimize the importance of the local context. As mentioned above, the experience of life on the street remains the same in many respects continent-wide and world-wide. As African countries used the image of the Black Jesus for their liberation from the bondage of colonialism, we can perhaps use Jesus the Homeless Man to help us visualise a shift from hopelessness to hope, from oppression on the streets to liberation. I

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used this image in the Bible classes I led at the Street Centre. The homeless community there comprises people from different parts of Africa, and they all responded to this image, interpreting the bible in their own way and formulating new stories of their experiences. This shows that the theme is relevant for people from all over Africa. These people share the common experience of homelessness and so a set of discourses, which were described and interpreted in this work.

Interaction among homeless people also helps them to retell their stories, and so events can be organised to promote such interaction and such retelling of stories. This is a form of narrative intervention, rather than definite narrative therapy. Such an interaction was the Cape Town Homeless World Cup Soccer Tournament held on Sept 24, 2006. "Research published by the organizers said that of the players in last year's tournament in Edinburgh, Scotland, 94 percent reported a new motivation in life, 62 percent were coping better with alcohol and drug dependency, 40 percent had improved their housing, 38 percent held regular jobs and 28 percent resumed their education" (Homeless World Cup Soccer Tournament 2006). These results show that the events themselves and research done before and after them are extremely valuable, and can contribute to the further efforts to enhance the lives of homeless people.

The demographic figures of homelessness in the United States point to the importance in the field of research among homeless people. Approximately 3.5 million individuals experience homelessness each year in the United States. The primary cause of homelessness is a lack of affordable housing (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2006), but additional reasons for homelessness vary according to the particular area. The particular experiences of homelessness will also vary. Jencks explains some of the harsh experiences of the homeless people, saying that "those who spend the night in public places are often robbed or assaulted while they sleep, and in winter they also run the risk of freezing" (Jencks 1995:9). Often the reasons for and effects of homelessness together

make up the experience of homelessness. These experiences are similar in many ways with those in South Africa. "People without shelter could easily get frostbite, get infections, or be victims of violence, even in public shelters. They are also more likely to cohabitate with drug addicts, alcoholics, and /or others with disease" (Home Page 2006). Thus research conducted in the context of homelessness of the United States can be very useful in understanding the stories of South African homeless people.

The number of homeless people in India is also considerable, suggesting that comparison with stories from India would also be illuminating for South African research. Descriptions of the experiences of homeless people in India, such as the homeless and slum dwellers of Mumbai, are identical to those of South African's homeless people: "the conditions of life under which they live are characterised by terrible poverty, squalor and deprivation which are not captured adequately by measures of income poverty" (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HAITAT) 2007:61). Powerlessness, lack of dignity, lack of friendship and widespread abuse are common themes in the Indian context, as in the South African. Listening to the findings of other researches will help Indian researchers to find new meanings in the stories of the homeless people of India and construct new interventions relevant to their particular context. This process would be equally useful the other way around, with South Africa learning from India. Thus research goes beyond geographical and sociological boundaries. "An opinion can be completely validated because the objective relationships whose existence it asserts are confirmed on the basis of experience and observation with unobjectionable instruments and logical conclusions, and it can moreover be of practical use to its holder or other people" (Horkheimer 1993:196).

Any research into homelessness also draws on the knowledge and experience of the reader of the report. "The considerate researcher identifies findings that seem to have implications for other settings, and, as often happens with case studies, suggests that it is for the reader to generalize on the basis of correspondence

between the research and the reader's understandings and experiences" (Arksey & Knight 1999:58,59). A dialogue between the research findings and the reader's understandings will construct new meanings for the themes of homelessness and lead the reader to new stories. It is through stories that those who listen come to know how others have made meaning, what their world looks like from their point of view. "Stories are a clear and simple way for one to see the other sees" (Walsh 1992:2). Though this inevitably involves a kind of generalization, it also helps us to move beyond the local. An empathetic reader does not simplify the local context discussed and discovered in the work, but uncovers its relevance for the wider community.

7.5.4 Dialogue within discourses

Discourses are part of the identity formation process of young people, in which identity confusion is a common feature. Through their particular experiences, through telling their stories and finding alternative stories, they design their identities. This process is often accompanied by frustration. "The frustration is probably most evident in adolescent's two most intimate areas of relationship – the family unit and the subculture. Here the youth are working their hardest to achieve identity, to accomplish self-determination, to become somebody" (Poerschke 1977:31).

Many factors come together in dialogue within discourses, including sociological, psychological and economic factors. Their influence in the discourses of homelessness of the youth in Pretoria was discussed in the interdisciplinary investigation in chapter six. The most important themes uncovered were dignity, powerlessness, friendship, loneliness, culture, gender roles, providence of God, helplessness, guilt, hardness in the streets, family love, plans for the future, feelings of unworthiness, survival and poverty. The interconnectedness of these themes and their implications in the lives and identities of the homeless youth were described and analyzed in this work.

This dialogue of factors also occurs between me as researcher and the homeless youth as informants. Our relationship is rather like that of a community development worker and the members of the community in which he/she works. "The development process is a convergence of stories. The story of the development practitioner is converging with the story of the community and together they will share a new story for a while" (Myers 1999:20). The homeless youth share their stories with me not only for psychological reasons, to find satisfaction or peace, but also because of economic factors, for example; they seek economic relief, asking for bread, clothes or even a job. These economic factors are particularly important. Even if family or other social factors like behind the young people's experience of homelessness, economic factors are most vivid in their experiences and the stories they tell. Being homeless they have to face the economic reality of poverty, joblessness and marginalization. By identifying these discourses and their economic impact the story teller is equipped to construct alternate life stories.

We can see this clearly in the case of Roul, who through the process of telling and retelling his story came to see his past as something to be condemned. 'I repent' is a phrase he often used about his past experiences. It is his interpretation of his past. In our first session, as I listened to his story I could see the reasons for this repentance implicit in his account, such as his irresponsible decision to leave his home while his parents were still alive, his addiction to drugs and so on. As I helped him to explore this history I helped him to re-engage with it. Through a shared re-reading of his story I facilitated his viewing of his future in a different way. The second time I saw him he was just recovering from an illness. He was weak and found it difficult to speak. However, even though he was not physically fit his outlook was much more positive; he viewed his life in the future as better with God and God's providence. Spirituality and God-consciousness were now prominent in his discourses. He interprets his future story in the light and strength of his spirituality.

7.6 REFLECTIONS: LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES

7.6.1 My effect on the limitations and possibilities of the study

As I am a pastor from India, I have particular limitations of language, culture and social background. I come from a land that has enjoyed political freedom for the last 59 years, and a province that boasts 100 percent literacy. I came to South Africa as a pastor to the Christian community here. The social, political and cultural differences I experienced challenged my perspectives and attitudes. English is not my first language, nor that of my informants either. Though India has a rich heritage of cultural differences from province to province, the diversity of South African tribal cultures differs in many ways from the diversity of cultures in India. I tried to overcome these limitations by reading about traditional African culture and seeking meaning in the traditional, modern and post-modern ways of story telling and retelling.

My personal motivation also affects my research. "For some qualitative researchers, the purpose of qualitative research is obligatory – something that has to be done because of a class assignment or a job. For most, however, it is a kind of personal passion: the satisfaction of a boundless curiosity about the social construction of our social worlds" (Warren & Karner 2005:26). I position myself in this second category, because this study is not intended to lead to any personal economic benefit or job advancement. Rather I hope to improve my job satisfaction through being better able to practice narrative counselling in light of my discoveries in the course of this project. I have been empowered as a person to help other people to be empowered. This experience has enhanced my knowledge, restructured many of my attitudes, revitalized my approaches and reconstructed my discourses. Listening to the stories of the young people, I felt both pained and privileged. When he/she invites people to share their stories, a researcher asks to hear the raw truth. The pain I felt stemmed from the young people's narratives of suffering and economic deprivation, the sense of privilege from my part in helping them to deconstruct their discourses and move to

alternate hopeful stories through the therapeutic process. I undertook this work out of my eagerness to know more and my curiosity to be among homeless youth. It was an exciting experience, from which still further possibilities of knowledge and experience continue to open.

The externalization that is part of narrative counselling helped me as a person to externalize my problems as I helped others to externalize their problems. "Externalising conversations, which occur all the time in narrative therapy, are ways of speaking that separate problems from people. Externalisation is the foundation from which many, though by no means all, narrative conversations are built" (Morgan 2000:17). Externalising is not a technique or skill, but an approach to stories. I came from a client-centred approach, which works by internalizing problems, but as I moved into narrative therapy externalization became part of my personality, not only in therapy, but also in daily interaction. Listening to and writing down the stories of the homeless youth allowed me privileged access to their experiences. Exploring their discourses and interpretations led me to new understanding. The interdisciplinary investigation of their stories and interpretations helped me to move beyond the local and its interpretations.

7.6.2 Limitations and possibilities of my role as a pastor

As a Christian pastor, I find that spiritual and biblical language and discourses dominate and in a way control my behaviour and conversation. In the process of narrative counselling, of course, I try to deconstruct spiritual meanings and concepts. A positive effect in this research study of my being a pastor is that I was able to lead Bible devotions at the Street Centre, since through these classes and the discussions afterwards I was able to interact closely with the community, and so engage in dialogue with my discourses and those of the homeless youth. After each bible class I got feedback from the community about the theological themes I had introduced and various interpretations of these.

Sometimes this discussion turned into the open sharing of experiences related to the biblical themes. This was inspiring and eye opening for me and enriching for the community as they shared their stories.

As a pastor I have some individual biases concerning pastoral care, counselling, homelessness and poverty. How I deal with these realities depends upon these individual assumptions and concepts. One danger in interacting with poor people and listening to their pathetic life stories is over–sympathising, which can hinder my work as a pastoral counsellor. Along my journey with the homeless youth, I realized that pity is not what they need. Rather, they need somebody to listen to them and move with them to new alternate stories for their lives. "While much popular theology suggests that we should look for real changes only in 'the world to come', the New Testament persistently affirms that God's reality, the realm where Jesus Christ is Lord and Messiah, has already begun to bump into, destabilize and threaten, and finally tear down the most cherished notions of reality our broken world can offer" (Sanders & Campbell 2000:32). Realizing that God is active in the contemporary world encouraged me to be active in the present, in my interactions with the homeless people. Our journey of discovery is not just towards the distant future, but rather involves moment-by-moment discoveries along every step of the journey.

Another lesson I had to learn involved hope. I came to understand that any deliberate effort I made to bring hope into the lives of the homeless people instead had the opposite effect, destroying the rapport I had with them and defeating the purpose of the interaction. This urge to be immediately effective is a problem for pastors and counsellors, who "have to find ways to cope with these high expectations to be a guardian of hope for people, and at the same to find guardians of hope in their own struggle" (Müller & Howell 2006:7). I learned that as a counsellor I must not overemphasize my active role as the counsellor, but rather let it evolve as I proceed on the journey with the client. This also involves resisting the high expectations the client may have of me as facilitator.

7.6.3 Limitations and possibilities of the methodology

The methodology used in this study is the seven-movement methodology developed by Müller. I did my Masters research using the same methodology, so I was confident about applying it to this project. "[T]he term methodology has to do with an overall approach to a particular field. It implies a family of methods that have in common particular philosophical and epistemological assumptions" (Swinton & Mowat 2006:75). I have already explained the basic concepts and constructs of the methodology, which is based on a social constructionist approach with postfoundationalist overtones. "A social constructionist approach is basically *critical* and non-foundational, in the sense of opening up all aspects of a phenomenon to interpretive scrutiny. A good social constructionist study, therefore, will strive to deconstruct the concepts used by both researcher and researcher participants, may question why the research was carried out, may look at the implications of how a paper is written" (McLeod 2001:29). This approach challenged me to formulate a clear research goal, namely to discover the economic factors in the dominant discourses of homelessness of the homeless youth. My approach is not directive, shaped by preconceptions towards any particular finding. Rather my research tried to be a continual process of discovery through a narrative journey with the homeless youth. This is thus also a journey to new possibilities of research. Analysis of the data gathered involved tracing the themes and economic factors in the discourses. As this is a qualitative study, to the discourses cannot be quantified or tested with standardized measurement instruments. "A common objection to qualitative research has been that the findings cannot be tested but have to be taken on trust" (Arksey & Knight 1999:15). But the meanings emerging through the narrative research are valid and relevant in the specific context of this study, and can illuminate and resonate with findings from similar contexts all over the world. A significant advantage of this methodology is that it was carried out in actual practical interaction with the homeless youth in their particular context, the Street Centre in Pretoria. "A research design that is fit for the purpose will be one that

has emerged as the best response to practical considerations" (Arksey & Knight 1999:59). Therefore the seven movement methodology's particularity and practicality suits and enhances the genuineness of this research.

Various practical methods were involved in this methodology, namely questionnaires, interviews, scripting of stories and interdisciplinary discussion. "Methods are specific techniques that are used for data collection and analysis. They comprise a series of clearly defined, disciplined and systematic procedures that the researcher uses to accomplish a particular task" (Swinton & Mowat 2006:74). Thus any method involves particular methodological assumptions. This study assumes a post-modern, social constructionist paradigm, and so the methods used must fit these assumptions. This is why structured interviews and set questionnaires are not used. "The methodology of constructivism does not sustain the method of randomized controlled trials" (Swinton & Mowat 2006:75). It is more experiential and story focussed. Thus unstructured interviews, scripting of experiences and narrative discussion are the most important methods used in this study. The interviews were qualitative, and because they aim to discover the in-depth meaning of stories, were extended over about 18 months. This project is thus a kind of "longitudinal research, where each informant is interviewed on several occasions over a period of months or years" (Arksey & Knight 1999:32). During this long period I experienced all the ups and downs of the lives of my informants, including their physical wellbeing and ailments, their psychological traumas and joys and their various economic experiences.

7.6.4 Limitations and possibilities of the study design

Various features of this study can be viewed as either limitations or possibilities, depending on one's understanding of the nature and purpose of sociological research. These can be briefly discussed.

Qualitative approach

This study uses a qualitative approach. Such an approach has a variety of unique possibilities for research, of which its openness to emerging realties is perhaps the most important. "All qualitative researchers struggle with what has been called the 'crisis of representation', the challenge of conveying on paper the richness of understanding that the researchers has developed, and the various 'voices' of informants" (McLeod 2001:146). Experiences are always difficult to narrate and record in writing, but this difficulty also opens great possibilities for interpretation. Thus the qualitative approach challenges me to accurately record the young people's stories and sensitively search for the discourses implicit in them. "From the point of view of the counselling practitioner, the appeal of qualitative research is that it provides the kind of detail and depth of analysis that makes its findings relevant to practice….However, virtually all of the qualitative therapy research that has been carried out has focused on process rather than outcome" (McLeod 1994:102). The positive thing in qualitative research is that it is not a unified or unitary approach to knowledge, but instead offers the possibility of various approaches.

Qualitative research demands confidentiality, and so I have tried to keep secret the identities of my informants, while publishing their life stories as accurately as possible. The names used in this report are fictional. In doing this I have tried to respect my informants and their human dignity. Of course, someone closely associated with the Street Centre in Pretoria might be able to identify some of the informants, but as time passes this will become more difficult; some of my informants may get jobs and stop coming to the Street Centre, or they may move to some other town, or hopefully they will find homes and will be living peacefully.

Interview method

The main method used in this project is interviews. These interviews are not structured, but rather counselling interviews in which I move with the informants to the new areas of story. The interviews followed a qualitative social interaction

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pattern. "[F]or the qualitative interviewer the interview is not only a method; it is a social interaction of the very type that qualitative methods were designed to study! Active listening is also recommended in past and contemporary discussions of how to generate (and not subsequently destroy) rapport between interviewer and respondent" (Warren & Karner 2005:137,140). This rapport helped me greatly in my effort to listen to the homeless people's stories without prejudice and help them to explore their stories in detail, so that the discourses implicit in them could be identified. Word-by-word analysis of data is not the focus of this research. Rather, I search for the themes of the dominant discourses of the homeless youth evident in our interview conversations.

Empirical data collection and interpretation

A very positive aspect of this project is the fact that the collection of the materials for analysis and the interpretation of these materials were both carried out during direct practical experience and interaction with the informants, rather than on previously formed assumptions or hypothesis. The meaning evolved from the practical context. My interactions with the homeless youth at the Pretoria Street Centre were a unique experience of loving warmth. I loved the homeless people and they loved me, and this love was not selfish, trying to get something. Rather both intentionally and unconsciously we exchanged love and knowledge, and so enriched each others lives.

Specific context

The specific context of the homeless youth at the Street Centre is very important for the interpretation of this study's results. Unofficial statistics say that there are around 3000 homeless people on the streets of Pretoria. The homeless people who come to the Street Centre number about 100 at a time, maximum, but these are not always the same people. Many of them sleep in night shelters, which they have to leave in the morning, and so they come to the Street Centre and use it as a kind of daytime shelter. In addition to shelter, however, at the Street Centre they get opportunities for personal development, including motivational classes,

Bible devotions, help in job hunting and personal counselling. Despite the difficulties to research caused by the erratic attendance of the homeless people at the Street Centre and the communication problems arising from their varying cultural backgrounds, I was challenged to help them in the plight their all share, their specific context of homelessness. The economic factors involved in their discourses still disturb me, and prompt me to more active involvement in economic and political reform.

Postfoundationalist approach

This study uses a seven movement methodology that reflects the postfoundationalist philosophy developed by O'Schrag and Van Huyssteen. This approach sees meaning as transversal, as created at the intersection of discourses. This transversality, according to my understanding, does not suggest a linear development for understanding, but stresses the immense possibilities of interpretation. In this project I found that it was not practical for me to investigate or record my interactions with the homeless youth using a linear progression of thoughts. Rather I tried to trace a variety of themes and interpretations scattered through the stories searching for each other, meeting together and making a myriad of colourful interactions. For some readers such a plural approach may be a limitation of this work, but I see it as a possibility. Using a postfoundational epistemology enables my study to escape the boundaries of context and individual bias, "to enter the pluralist, interdisciplinary conversation with our full personal convictions and at the same time be theoretically empowered to step beyond the limitations and boundaries of our own contexts or forms of life" (Van Huyssteen 1997:29).

Seven-movement methodology

The seven-movement methodology used for this research is in my opinion exceptionally rich and life-giving. I use these terms to express what I believe is God's power in the functioning of this methodology in this project. The externalization of problems involved in the narrative approach was a blessing for

the informants as well as helping me to trace the discourses inherent in their stories and discover the factors that form these discourses. Also a blessing was the effect of the God-talk we shared, which strengthened the positive features of the discourses of the homeless youth. "It seems clear that religious experiences are influenced by cultural background. Everyone seems to agree that there are different emphases among faith traditions in the way experiences are described, and that these reflect, in parts, different traditions about religious experiences" (Watts 2002:90). Searching out the cultural factors that influence their discourses enabled us to reach a more comprehensive understanding of faith, and of God's work. The interdisciplinary approach further expanded our views of these discourses. Deepening an experience lightens the burden of owning the problem, and so this methodology helped the young people to deal with their problems in a richer and more effective way.

In the narrative approach, the experiences of story telling and listening are important. The facilitator is not a social activist, agitating for social change. "For us, the aim of research is not to bring about change, but to listen to the stories and to be drawn into those stories. While the structuralist researcher has objectivity in mind by trying to be an observer from outside, and by trying to bring about change from the outside, the narrative researcher has subjective integrity in mind and strives for participatory observation" (Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2006:2, 3). Narrative research is an exciting journey with the story teller into the unknown. Though the facilitator works from an assumed position of ignorance, he/she is not blind to the development of the story and the inner discourses revealed during the journey.

Co-authoring

The story teller in the narrative approach is a co-researcher, because he/she actively constructs meanings for his/her stories. This approach is thus a kind of participatory research, which "provides a framework in which people move from being the *objects* of research to *subjects* and *co-researchers*. This goal is

achieved by ensuring that the individuals who traditionally have been the object of the research process are given an active role in designing and conducting the research" (Swinton & Mowat 2006:228). I thus take the role of co-researcher to the informant who is the main researcher, and we work together; I co-author the stories through scripting their stories and applying interdisciplinary methods to interpret them. Thus I avoid the role of counsellor with superior skills, and instead work from a position of ignorance. "The 'not-knowing' position on the one hand allows the co-researcher(s) to tell their stories as they live them in everyday life, and on the other hand allows the researcher to follow these stories of the co-researcher(s) as they have been constructed within a lived social reality" (Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2006:5). Thus a co-authoring approach opens the possibility of social construction of new realities for their lives.

Religious background

This study has a general religious background. The practical data collection occurred among the homeless youth at the Street Centre run by Pretoria Community Ministries, an organization supported and run by six inner-city churches. I am a Christian pastor by profession. The informants also all had some kind of religious affiliation. I am doing this research in the Department of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria, However, this does not limit me or the study, since practical theology is a field that employs "epistemological pluralism to explore, discover, and identify those conditions which would make it possible for the great truths of the various traditions to be living active, and effective in our contemporary context" (McCarthy 2000:202). This openness of practical theology enables me to approach the stories of the homeless youth within their unique context using the techniques of various disciplines.

Moving beyond the immediate context

The limitations of the Street Centre setting can be seen as restrictions for the homeless people. The Street Centre offers help with preparing CV's, contacting prospective employers, counselling and personal enrichment, it cannot provide

jobs and homes for all the people who come there. "Alternatives for inner-city youth are few, vision is limited, and the self-confidence necessary to 'make it' is often lacking" (McLaughlin & Heath 1993:214). This is the importance of the narrative interactions, because through them homeless people are helped to think differently, to hope for positive change. Even if they start out viewing their future as grim and their opportunities as almost nil, narrative counselling can prompt them to change their attitudes to their discourses and help them to reconstruct their stories. "Re-authoring conversations invite people to do what they routinely do – that is, to link events of their lives in sequences through time according to a theme/plot. However, in this activity, people are assisted to identify the more neglected events of their lives – the unique outcomes or exceptions – and are encouraged to take these into alternative story lines" (White 2002:9). These alternatives can extend beyond the local context, and the new story encompasses both new understandings and new convictions.

Personal experience

In my personal experience this is a wonderful journey of discovering meaning in the stories, exploring the impact of discourses in the stories and tracing the effect of both of these processes in me. In the beginning I had set goals that I wanted to reach but this journey disturbed my assumptions that I am not entering into some conclusion, instead passing through some discoveries and still discovering even after writing down of this research report. "The now is never fixed and it never acts as a given or even as a curse. In the narrative approach the now is action, and therefore dynamic in nature. To take the action seriously and to have it told is to open up a possibility, to create a new now for tomorrow" (Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2006:4).

In this work I took the freedom to rearrange the themes in their stories and themes related to discourses. There may be some overlapping happened; it is unavoidable because of the development of themes and search for an integrative move to new realities. Those themes are based on their struggle to be in their

particular experiences and their striving for liberation. The themes of survival, hopelessness, gender issues and cultural factors make it clear and they relate all with homelessness and their economic deprivation. At the closing of this research and experiences related to it, I have been transformed to a postfoundationalist thinking in my daily interactions. It encourages me to respect the other persons and their context with an attitude of listening to their stories with patience. It empowers me for searching other alternatives for the realities of life. Thus it becomes an enlightening and enjoyable experience to practice narrative therapy in a postfoundational paradigm.

7.7 CONCLUSION

7.7.1 Our journey through the chapters

The seven chapters in this report follow the seven-movement methodology applied in this study. Within each chapter, however the topics may not necessarily fit with the steps of this methodology, since I sometimes grouped aspects together in one chapter for better discussion of transversal possibilities. Thus some interpolation of ideas is unavoidable. Overall, however, the structure is as follows:

- The first chapter is an introduction to the narrative approach, the study's research model and theological context and my personal motivation.
- The second chapter gives a general overview of youth in the South African context, and the youth studied in this research in their particular context. It opens the discussion of the discourses of homelessness and the economic factors implicit in these.
- The third chapter sets out the general situation and particular economic conditions of the inner-city homeless youth in Pretoria, as reflected in their told and un-told stories.
- The fourth chapter presents these stories in a narrative framework, together with the interpretations of the informants.

- The fifth chapter explains the process of facilitating this story-telling, and sets out the traditions that inform these stories and interpretations, including religious traditions and God experiences.

- The sixth chapter is an interesting part of this work, since through an exploration of interdisciplinary possibilities of investigation, it thickens the interpretation of the stories, concentrating on specific themes directly related to or involved in the discourses.

- The final chapter is a final assessment of the whole work. This involves a discussion of the basic concept of story telling, and of the paradigms of social constructionism, narrative therapy and postfoundationalism. This enables the basic concepts buried in the stories and interpretations to be stated explicitly, so that their relevance beyond the local situation becomes apparent. The limitations and possibilities of this project are discussed.

7.7.2 The findings in a nutshell

The findings of this work can be summarized as follows:

1. Economic factors are directly involved in the stories of the homeless youth in Pretoria.
 2. Discourse analyses are based on the construction of discourses.
 3. The discourses of homelessness centre around specific themes, discussed in this work.
4. An interdisciplinary approach sheds more light on the stories and helps to identify and deconstruct the discourses contained within them.
5. Facilitating God-talk in conversation with the story-tellers prepares them for more hopeful stories.
6. Readers have to understand the paradigm, methodology and methods used in this study if they are to understand the discourses inherent in this work.

7. Detailed description of my theoretical position and practical experiences as co-researcher helps the reader to assess my interpretations of the young people's stories.

8. The transversality of meaning that arises when a post-modern interdisciplinary approach is applied to the stories creates a varied world of options for further interpretation.

9. The knowledge of economic factors yielded by this study of the dominant discourses of homelessness is universally applicable.

10. The limitations of this study and its methodology are opportunities for further study, of the discourses of homelessness and of the narrative methodology itself.

7.7.3 The experience of the homeless community

It seems to me that the homeless community in Pretoria enjoyed my presence at the Street Centre and interaction with them through Bible discussion classes and narrative counselling sessions. When I said good bye to them, the warmth of their greetings was very meaningful for me. They showed their appreciation of my service in many ways, by saying thank you, smiling, applauding or giving me a hug. They considered me as one of them, even though I am not homeless. Perhaps this reflects the fact that, in another sense, I am also homeless, because as a pastor in my church I always have to move from one place to another. Like the homeless people, I have to trust that God's providence will shelter me in each place in which I find myself.

7.7.4 My personal experience as researcher

My personal experiences with the homeless community have permanently enriched my pastoral ministry. I will remember their love for ever. In the Bible devotions, discussions, counselling sessions and narrative journeys I shared with them, I was exposed to multiple new experiences and possible interpretation for my life. I learned to view others and listen to their stories with respect, and to move into a wider world of new realities. The love and sharing of the homeless

people at the Street Centre challenge me to continue working among the homeless, helping them to construct and move into new hopeful stories of their lives. When I left the Centre the community gave me a present, a glass lamp on a metal base painted with variegated flowers. For me this lamp symbolises my experiences with the homeless people. The metal base symbolises the postfoundationalist paradigm on which this research is based, with its diverse flowers representing the transversality of meanings yielded by this approach. The glass part of the lamp symbolises the narrative interventions and discourses, which are so illuminating yet so fragile. The bulb inside the lamp reminds me to light the lamp of hope wherever I go. This allegory is my interpretation of my experiences with the homeless community in Pretoria.

7.7.5 Relevance of this study

Homelessness as a field of investigation and social action is growing in importance internationally. A better and more diverse understanding of the discourses of homeless people will challenge researchers all over the world to further study, and can enrich social action programmes implemented in homeless communities. This knowledge can also help political leaders to formulate better policies for eradicating homelessness through ensuring affordable housing and empowering the homeless by enhancing their economic possibilities. Also, the findings of this study are not an end in themselves. "Research creates its own story with new possibilities. Therefore, narrative research doesn't end with a conclusion, but with an open ending, which hopefully would stimulate a new story and new research" (Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2006:12). Thus the discoveries of this particular project must be placed in dialogue with similar studies in their specific contexts in other parts of the world, and the transversal possibilities of this dialogue explored to the full. My sincere prayer is that the lives of homeless youth everywhere in the world may become full and happy, so that they can play their part in invigorating society with the myriad possibilities of life.

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