The spiritual and psychosocial gender specific stories of adolescent orphans affected by HIV and Aids in the absence of a father figure.

A Postfoundational practical theological approach

By

JUANITA (LOUBSER) MEYER

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PROF. JULIAN MÜLLER

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DEDICATIONS

In doing research in the context of this study, I came to the realisation that this study is also a constructed narrative with a life, plot and climax of its own. This study, as a constructed narrative, is a narrative of exploration; an exploration which aimed at understanding not only the context and experiences of the co-researchers, but also understanding my own experiences within this context and within my own relation with the co-researchers and their unique attributes. Therefore, this study is not constructed in isolation. Many people, inside and outside the context of this study contributed to my unique growth as a researcher and as a therapist. Therefore, I would like to thank the following people who made it possible for me to construct this narrative:

First and foremost, I give all my appreciation and all my gratitude to the Lord, my Saviour and my Father for providing me with the strength, endurance and patience in completing this research. From my relationship with Him I came to the realisation of the important role He plays, as Heavenly Father in the creation of my own future narrative, and that I use His story with His people to guide me in the living out of my narrative in this world. It is He who blessed me with the love and the support of my family and friends.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at addressing uncertainties about the type and nature of the relationship between HIV and Aids and adolescent male orphans affected by this disease and all its aspects, such as poverty, exposure to crime and stigmatisation, and lack in parental figures, more specifically the lack of the father figure. Subsequently this study aimed at dissecting the orphan's life experiences in the midst of HIV and Aids and how these experiences will influence his sexual and power relations with women and his role as future father and husband, in the absence of a father figure. Moreover the researcher wanted to explored ways in which these past and future narratives influence or affect the male orphan's view of, and relationship with God, and if it is it just this view of, and relationship with God that influence and affect his relationship with his past narrative and writing of his future narratives.

The researcher believes that the study into the world of orphaned boys and their experiences of and with HIV and Aids, opened up a whole new world of insights to us. In moving closer in understanding the contributing factors of future men and their behaviour, of their thoughts, believes and experiences of this pandemic as well as their view of God admits this pandemic and in the absence of a father role model, we might have just moved a step closer in winning this battle. There are thousands of orphaned boys out there alone in this world, but sadly they are often judged and sometimes forgotten because history has already written their story on their behalf – a story where society expects boys to become the men we know: Men who fail us.

This study employed research methods from the qualitative research design and more specifically from Practical Theology and Narrative Therapy, in exploring the above issues. With the use of the metaphor of Tree of Life and the David narrative, the researcher journeyed with the co-researchers in the construction of a preferred alternative narrative, which in turn functions as a guiding metaphor for aspiring to the future, and living their lives in a preferred and satisfying manner.

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KEY TERMS

Adolescent male orphans

David and Goliath narrative

Father-figure

Heartbeat

Hermeneutics

HIV and Aids

Interdisciplinary investigation

Metaphors

Narrative Therapy

Non-probability sampling

PEN

Postfoundational notion of Practical Theology

Postfoundationalism

Postmodernism

Poverty

Practical Theology

Qualitative research

Seven movements

Social Constructionism

Tree of Life

View of God

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CHAPTER 1

THE DAVID OF MAN VERSUS THE GOLIATH OF PANDEMICS: WILL DAVID'S FAITH PREVAIL?

1.1 Introduction: Arise Afrika, Arise!

Arise Afrika, Arise!

- Nape 'a Motana -

Yesterday Afrika ran red

With freedom fighters' sacrifice

Today, under the jaws of man-eater AIDS, red

As vicious viruses colonise black blood

Afrika, stop AIDS!

He who pussyfoots towards

The lion of sexual temptation

Must be armed with a burning spear!

Unarmed it shall be:

"Dust to dust..."

A funeral ox bleeds;

A dead man wears a casket;

Survivors taste custard.

Today AIDS laughs

With reddened teeth,

Coffins coughing death

Tears tearing Afrikan cheeks.

(Rasebotsa; Samuelson and Thomas 2004: 103)

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1.2 Research interest and context

[1] Our story starts somewhere in the heart of Africa, almost 60 years ago, where the people of Southern Cameroon (cf. Kanabus and Allen 2010) went on with their business in relative peace. Mom cleaned the hut and prepared food for the children. Dad met a few other men of the village, and continued their hunt for meat. Evening came and dad entered the hut with a proud smile on his face. The children shouted in their African tongue: "Are we having meat for dinner, Daddy?" And so the days passed and the seasons changed. The people of the village were unaware of a new *Visitor* preparing his journey into the village and into their huts. Darkness befell their village as one by one people passed away. A silent sadness crept into the hearts of the people – a sadness which spread to the ends of the world as one by one, husbands are losing their wives, and children are losing their parents. Yes, this *Visitor* did not stay in the village – this *Visitor* continuous his journey into the homes and lives of millions of people, still today.

This most unwelcome *Visitor* is known as the HIV and Aids virus and has left devastation along its journey. Specifically in South Africa, more than 5.7 million people are living with HIV and Aids which includes about 300 000 children, and is subsequently one of the countries most affected by the pandemic (The UN 2008: Global Report on the HIV and AIDS Epidemic). To make matters even worse it would seem that the most common victim of this virus is young women, already suffering from the effects of dire poverty and unequal power relation, living in disadvantaged social communities (Cf. Naidoo, Matebeniand Pietersen-Snyman 2004: 45). This would seem to be the same globally as Avert.com (Women, HIV and Aids 2009) reports that by the end of 2007 about 30.8 million adults worldwide was living with HIV and Aids and that more than half of this number is estimated to be women. Sub-Saharan Africa is reported as the worst hit region and it is estimated that by 2007 there were "...around 12 million women living with HIV and Aids, compared to about 8.3 million men" (UNAIDS 2008: Report on the global AIDS epidemic). It is estimated that in South Africa one woman for every two men are infected with the HIV virus and that the difference is greater for women between the ages of 15 and 24 years (cf. Aids Foundation South Africa [AFSA]: HIV Prevalence in South Africa); therefore it is apparent that women face a greater risk of becoming infected with the HIV virus.

---

[1] Fictitious story created by researcher.

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The fact that the mortality rate for HIV positive **women** is higher than for men affects not only the statistics, but also leaves thousands of children to fend for themselves: "Millions of children have been orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. The most affected region is sub-Saharan Africa, where an estimate 12.3 million children have been orphaned by AIDS" (Children on the Brink 2004: 3). UNAIDS (2008) estimates that in 2007, 1.4 million children up to the age of 17 were orphaned in South Africa alone, which means that more than 10% of children in South Africa were orphaned in 2007 due to HIV and Aids (cf. AFSA: HIV prevalence in South Africa). Most of these orphaned children are left behind in "deeply impoverished households .... [and] face inadequate nutrition and poor access to education and health care (AFSA: HIV prevalence in South Africa). Deininger, Garcia and Subbarao (2003: 1202) confirm this by asserting that "... the impact of losing one or two parents is likely to increase the risk of having to leave school and/or engage in child labour in order to generate resources, a possible decline in nutritional status, and the risk of being discriminated against and exploited".

Barolsky (2003: 16) ironically states that amidst these circumstances many social structures still believe that "children should live a life of innocence, nurtured, untouched by responsibility"; the fact of the matter is; however, that too many children in South Africa are battling with responsibilities not only allocated to adults, but also the additional responsibilities and concerns generally allocated to the poor. Therefore, for many of these children a childhood marked by innocence, nurturing and no responsibility will only be an idealisation, something which happens only in their fantasies: "HIV/AIDS, which is leaving many children without even a semblance of parenting, is bringing these idealisations into stark relief" (Barolsky 2003: 16).

Of the global number of orphans, it is estimated that about 55 percent of these orphans are aged 12 to 17, or *adolescents* (Ruland, Finger, Williamson, Tahir, Savariaud, Schweitzer and Shears 2005: 5). This is significant because adolescents are in a different developmental stage and at an age where they should engage in activities which prepare them for adulthood. Children at risk (2004: 18) reports that in many countries, some adolescents have less access to school or that the economic loss in income, due to the death of a breadwinner, may reduce the chances of an adolescent to stay in school because they "... have to assume new responsibilities for supporting the family". This in turn reduces their chances of getting adequate education and training which they need, to get a stable and secure job. Furthermore, the "...economic hardship can also deprive adolescents of much needed recreation and participation in community

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activities. Depression, hopelessness and risk behaviour can be common reactions to these circumstances that need special attention and strong protective measures" (Children at risk 2004: 18).

On a psycho-social level *adolescents* are less inclined in expressing their emotions, worries and fears, and might feel some resentment and anger at the death of a significant other. Therefore, adolescents are left vulnerable to experience feelings of depression, hopelessness, alienation, desperation and abandonment which in turn make them more vulnerable to engage in risk-taking behaviour as they also feel out of control and as if they are not coping well (cf. Children on the Brink 2004: 17). Many adolescents also fall prey to the legacy of their infected parent and might experience discrimination and stigmatisation because of their parent's HIV status. Of course some adolescents are HIV positive themselves and are left alone to cope with the disease or to make sense of their status and the loss of their parents, without any caregiver to guide them or without any access to health and social services. This can become too much for any child to bear.

Therefore, it would seem that HIV and Aids have "... joined a host of other factors – including extreme poverty, conflict, and exploitation – to impose additional burdens on society's youngest, most vulnerable members" (Children on the Brink 2004: 4).

Over and beyond the direct consequences of the HIV and Aids epidemic, lays the devastation of the *family structures* that a society must bear. The family structure as an institution is naturally a safe harbour for children to be nurtured and guided into ways of being, a space where gender and personal identities can be developed. "People are born into families and it is in families that they make sense of themselves and the world around them (CSA work in progress)" (Barolsky 2003: 14). Within the family structure a child has an opportunity to explore his/her environment in the confinements of safe and secure boundaries. "The family is associated with a series of assumptions and idealisations about the nature of the identities individuals should assume through the family life-cycle – as child, as teenager or as youth, as adult, and as an 'elderly' person" (Barolsky 2003: 15). In the context of HIV and Aids; however, where important care givers fall ill, where parents die and where children are orphaned; the family structure is placed under an immense burden and its ability to "...operate as an agent of socialisation, economic support, nurturance and care" is compromised (Barolsky 2003: 14). The fact of the matter is that the "way in which these identities are actually lived out is at all stages fundamentally shaped by economic and social imperatives which make

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possible and impossible the realisation of certain identity presuppositions embedded in the social fabric" (Barolsky 2003: 15).

In referring to the family as an institution, Barolsky (2003: 15) states:

> ... at the heart of the HIV epidemic is this difficult institution. This is where the consequences of the epidemic are played out, where those who are sick hope – but do not always find – nurturance through illness and death, where family members not infected themselves are faced with an irrefutable reality which challenges familial bonds in hitherto unforeseen ways and makes denial, if not impossible, at least more complex.

The fragmentation of the family structures can only partly be explained by mothers who die because of opportunistic diseases. The General Household Survey (2007: 74) reports that:

> Forty percent of all children — more than 7 million children — live with their mothers but without their fathers. Only 3% of children live in households where their fathers are present and their mothers.... 43% of African children live with their mothers and without their fathers.

This indicates that most children have been left fatherless before they lost their mothers due to HIV, which puts even more strain on women to cope and might even play a role in further spreading this horrible disease. As (Barolsky 2003: 15) states: "The epidemic, with its disproportionate impact on women, will therefore have a particular effect on the ability of the family to adapt to the demands of the epidemic". Therefore, admits dire poverty, more than half of South Africa's family structures depend largely on women, mothers and young girls.

As we are losing a generation, this burden of caring for the sick, looking after the young children and struggling to find finances to make ends meet, mostly fall on the next woman in line: the grandmother. Recently UNICEF found that "... extended families have assumed responsibility for more than 90 percent of orphaned children .... [O]rphans are increasingly more likely to be living in female-headed and grandparent-headed households (Children on the Brink 2004: 10).

This is a now, old woman who worked her whole life to give her children food; to make sure that they got an education which she was not allowed to get; also abandoned by her husband, or separated because of migration, who now prepares herself for retirement so that she too could find rest for her soul; who now needs to start from the beginning.

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> The reality, exacerbated by HIV/AIDS, is more often a life of even more grinding poverty combined with loss of economic power, the burden of rearing the small offspring of sick and dead adult children, and a reduction in their social status.
>
> (Barolsky 2003: 16)

Therefore, at its core, the battle against HIV and Aids entails many unjust and unequal social practices which increase women's vulnerability to HIV and Aids. The agents of these practices are many times men, as traditional concepts of masculinity inherent in sexuality and within the traditional family structures, are still the dominant discourse. "Power is fundamental to both sexuality and gender. The unequal power balance in gender relations that favours men, translates into an unequal balance in heterosexual interactions which increase both men and women's vulnerability" (Rao Gupta 2000: 1-2). Despite all of this, many men do not step up to their responsibilities as fathers, and desert their families, as Mtimkulu (2006: 28) states:

> It has been estimated that about 50% of African men are absent fathers. This is due to circumstances such as labour migration, unemployment, illness and death, as well as divorce and desertion.

Besides the consequences of leaving woman with financial burdens and the children to look after the ill parent, the high rate of father absence is an impediment to proper child-raising and has many negative psycho-social consequences on a child's development: "The absence of the father means that children are unable to develop properly on many levels: psychologically, materially, emotionally, cognitively and physically" (Mtimkulu 2006: 39).

In considering all the above mentioned results, consequences, and sometimes causes to HIV and Aids, it becomes apparent that we as a country, as a nation, have a war to face. This war is not only a war of the healthy versus the unhealthy, life versus death, or poor versus rich, but also against justice versus injustice, grace versus judgement, responsibility versus desertion, acceptance versus stigmatization, freedom versus oppression, love versus antagonism, and the individual versus the community. It is not just a war of the physical, but also of the social and the cultural.

1.3 Research question

This study aimed at addressing uncertainties about the type and nature of the relationship between HIV and Aids and adolescent male orphans affected by this

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disease and all its aspects, such as poverty, exposure to crime and stigmatisation, and lack in parental figures, more specifically the lack of the father figure. Subsequently this study aimed at dissecting the orphan's life experiences in the midst of HIV and Aids and how these experiences will influence his sexual and power relations with women and his role as future father and husband, in the absence of a father figure. Moreover the researcher wanted to explore ways in which these past and future narratives influence or affect the male orphan's view of and relationship with God, or if it is just this view of and relationship with God that influence and affect his relationship with his past narrative and writing of his future narratives.

More specifically the research question can be divided into the following sub-questions:

- What are the adolescent male orphans' psychosocial and spiritual experience of the HIV and Aids environment and the loss of parents, within the vicinity of Pretoria Gauteng? What psychosocial and spiritual coping styles have they employed?

- The environment surrounding HIV and Aids is not limited to the effects of the disease only. Moreover, the HIV and Aids environment is infected with various secondary results of the disease such as poverty, exposure to crime and stigmatisation, growing up without parental figures and; therefore, lacking in a family structure and parental guidance. What psycho-social skills, if any, do they employ in coping on a day-to-day basis within this context? What narratives have they written in understanding the loss and/or death of parent[s], and what future narratives are they writing for themselves from within this context?

- Developing from the above question, how does their experience within the above stated context influence their future narratives about sexual and power relations towards women and how might these narratives contribute to the exploitation and abuse of women, and subsequently to the spread of HIV and Aids? How does this experience influence their future narratives as future fathers and husbands, in the absence of such a father figure? Is it possible that these boys might also desert their own children one day?

- Finally, how does this experience of growing up without a father figure influence their view of and relationship with God, who is often seen as a Father Figure Himself. Is there any truth in some of the theories who speculate that one's experience with one's father, influences one's view of and relationship with God (cf. Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Erik Erikson), specifically from the experience of these boys? How do

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they understand and experience God in the context of HIV and Aids and the loss and/or death of their parent[s]? Do their relationship with God act as a "coping" style with the loss and/or death of parent[s] and future challenges they might face?

The research question can be illustrated as seen below.

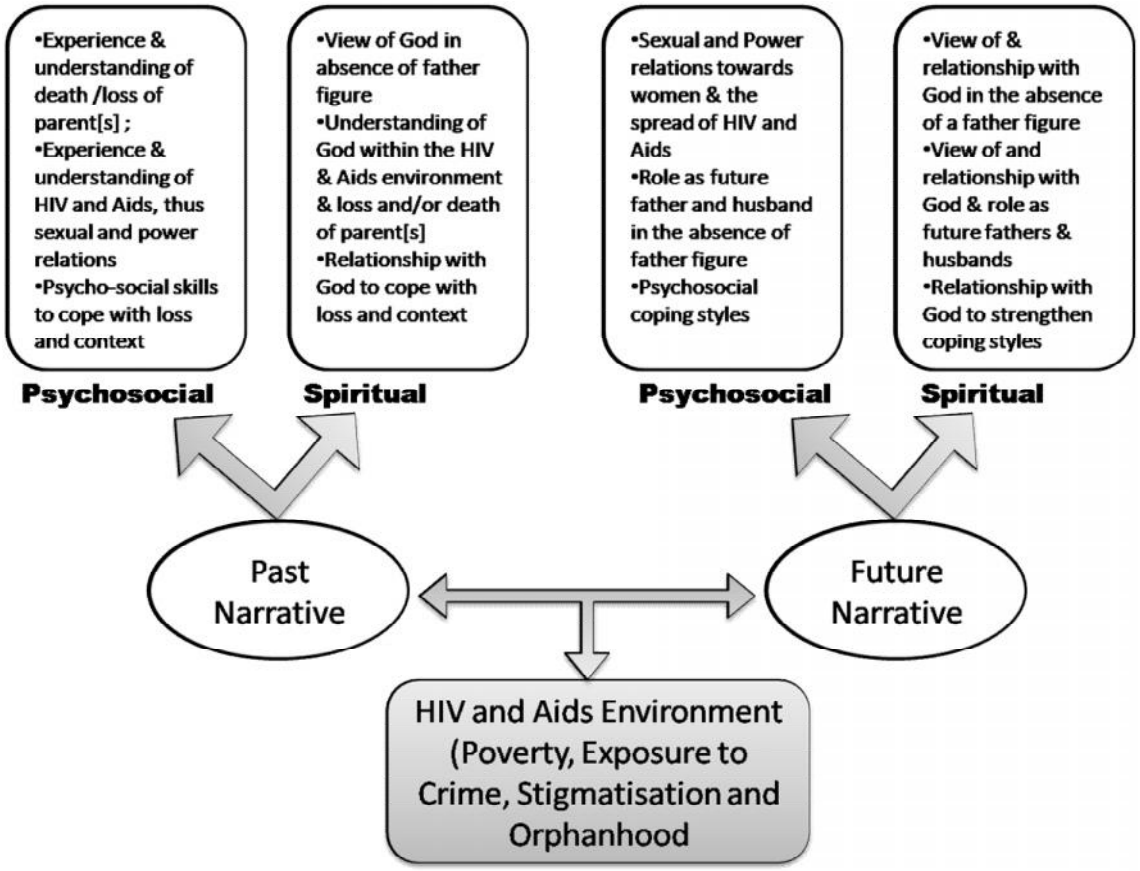

Figure 1: Deconstruction of Research Question

1.4 Research gap and relevance of study

According to the *Worldwide HIV and Aids statistics commentary* (2008), about 2.5 million people became infected with the HIV virus in the year 2007. In the same year about 2.1 million deaths resulted from the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Aids). To complicate the statistics even more, about half of the people who are infected with HIV, have acquired this disease before the age of 25 and eventually die of this disease before they turn 35. One would note that this is the prime age for people to have children and extend their family. Despite this however; this pandemic still left behind about 15.2 million Aids orphans by the end of 2005 worldwide. More specifically, the *2007 General household Survey* (Statistics South Africa 2008) has found that in 2007 "... there were

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approximately 3.7 million orphans in South Africa" which indicates approximately 20% of all the children in South Africa. As a result many of these orphans struggle with various psychosocial and economic factors when left behind alone in this world.

In Sub-Saharan Africa women are drastically more affected and infected by HIV and Aids than men. Various reports and articles confirm this and emphasise the fact that in Sub-Saharan Africa "women account for almost six out of every ten persons living with HIV and Aids" (UNAIDS 2004). It is also true that Sub-Saharan Africa "... is the only region, globally, where more women than men are infected with the virus" (Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa [CHG] 2004: 5). It is also stated that the high levels of orphan-hood results specifically from the high levels of maternal mortality (cf. CHG 2004: 7). The fathers are known to have abandoned their families from very early on in the lives of their children. It is estimated that by the year 2010 the number of orphans will reach a high of 50 million alone in sub-Saharan Africa (CHG 2004: 7). Sadly, this generation is known as the "skipped generation" of the African continent.

The consequences of the above are devastating both on national and household level. The orphan crises in Africa leads to changes in the household composition as the number of children, caregivers and elderly caregivers who should head the household are rising by the minute (cf. CHG 2004: 7). This in turn exacerbates gender inequalities, as female orphans are overworked and often sexually exploited by their caregivers. This makes them more likely to drop out of school (cf. CHG 2004); consequently they are less educated and less likely to find a career which will enable them to provide for their family. A lack of education also leads to lower social status. Therefore, women become economically dependent on men and in turn become "... dependent on the men's goodwill for their upkeep and livelihood" (CHG 2004: 7). Often men exploit this vulnerability by not respecting women's rights. This lack of respect leads to various forms of abuse and exploitation which again in turn make women powerless to "... resist their husband's or partner's demands for unprotected sex" (CHG 2004: 7). Therefore, as one can note, various social constructions of femininity and masculinity and subsequent power relations, underpin the spread of HIV and Aids. This phenomenon is captured in the concept "the Feminisation of HIV and Aids" (cf. UNFPA State of world population 2005).

There are a multitude of reasons which can be explored for the fact that women are more susceptible for contracting HIV and Aids; however, this is not the focus of this study. There are several studies focussing on the plight of women affected and infected

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by HIV and Aids, and rightly so; but this raises the question of where the African male's voice is in this narrative. While the world is overtly making an effort to study women and the ways they are exploited and abused by men, we are ignoring or perhaps missing men's active role in this scenario. When we talk about women and marriage; women and sexual exploitation; women and abandonment; women and lower social status, we are explicitly implying women versus men.

This is exactly where the vacuum in the research of gender and HIV and Aids lie. We are so busy with the feminisation of HIV and Aids that we tend to forget that on the other side if the pendulum lies another important factor which forms part of the equation, namely – men. Without men there wouldn't be any concept of feminisation or even the need for such a concept. Research is directly implying that men play a very big role in the spread of HIV and Aids as well as its other facets, but for various unexplored reasons no one is exploring men's side of the story. In fact, for every orphan in the world, there is also a father out there somewhere.

This study did not aim at advocating any specific gender as such, or to do a comparative study of the two genders' experience of HIV and Aids; instead this study aimed at making visible the voices of the unheard. When we speak of orphans, we speak of both male and female orphans. If we acknowledge such discrimination then we are forced to uphold the dignity of all the orphans, independent of their gender. However, we are also forced to search for and understand these two very unique, but very different experiences. While acknowledging that women and girls live one experience, we have to acknowledge the possibility of a different experience by men and boys.

Therefore, this study aimed at exploring and describing these unique and different experiences of orphaned boys affected by HIV and Aids. The researcher believes that the study into the world of orphaned boys and their experiences of and with HIV and Aids, opened up a whole new world of insights to us; and by moving closer in understanding the contributing factors of future men and their behaviour, of their thoughts, believes and experiences of this pandemic as well as their view of God admits this pandemic and in the absence of a father role model, we might have just moved a step closer in winning this battle. There are thousands of orphaned boys out there alone in this world; but sadly they are often judged and sometimes forgotten because history has already written their story on their behalf – a story where society expects boys to become the men we know: Men who fail us.

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Through this study the researcher and co-researchers have been provided with an opportunity to take some of these boys by the hand and offer a new life with new insights to them – a life where they have the opportunity to become good fathers, good husbands and good leaders of their homes and their country.

1.4.1 Motivation behind gender specific narratives

In 2006 I did my Magister Artium (MA) dissertation in Pastoral Family Therapy regarding adolescent female orphans affected by HIV and Aids. During this study I found information easily attainable for the experiential context of women and girls, as many studies have been done regarding women and their disadvantageous position in gender relations and their stance in society. Already then I started to wonder about the experience of men and boys during this narrative and found it peculiar that men's voices are so silent or silenced. I found that many studies speak on their behalf and that they come to seemingly impartial conclusions; which nevertheless blame men as the perpetrators in the HIV and Aids global narrative. Naidoo, Matebeni and Pietersen-Snyman (2004: 46) also found that much literature studies have been done regarding women's experiences, but it seems that either men are not seen as vulnerable, or no attempts are made as yet to listen to their stories which might contain issues of vulnerability or the like:

> Most of the burgeoning literature in the field of HIV and Aids, in considering gender inequality and its link to the spread of HIV, has dealt almost exclusively with narratives and analyses of women as victims of HIV. Men are viewed primarily as perpetrators of the disease and, as such, little attention has been placed on attempting to understand their 'vulnerability' or capture their voices on how they are responding to, or making sense of, the HIV/Aids pandemic.

During the same year (2006) I taught at a high school in Johannesburg and interacted much with boys and girls from the townships. Because I taught Life Orientation we had many opportunities to discuss various life issues and challenges, including HIV and Aids. I found the input of the boys very valuable, perhaps because we do not usually listen to them and realised then that if we ask for their opinions we might just be surprised at what insights they can provide us with.

With this I am in no way arguing that the conclusions of the various studies done within the HIV and Aids environment is not founded; I am merely asserting that as postmodernists and narrative therapists, we have an imperative to listen to all sides of the story, especially if we want to rewrite a narrative in such a way that everyone can

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benefit. Therefore, an active effort to extract and listen to the narratives of men, or at the very least, providing men with opportunities to state their story, albeit one of patriarch power or oppression, can provide men also with resources which they can use for the gaining of personal insight and put them in a voluntary and empowering position of viewing their behaviours, their actions, their choices also from the paradigm of powerful discourses. This at least gives them the *option* of making use of the opportunity to understand themselves, understand the consequences of their behaviour and then actively and responsibly making adaptations, if the need arises.

Just because men are in the majority in maintaining gender inequalities and abuse or oppression, does not necessarily mean that they are satisfied with the ways they handle these challenges. When researching the issue of gender identity, one becomes painstakingly aware of how masculinity, too, is a powerful constructed discourse. Little boys are made aware of their masculinity from a very young age (more than girls) and as such is taught that men 'don't cry', men 'don't express their feelings' – this might seem to be a cliché, but the destructive power of this cliché is seen in every women and child who has been abused by a man.

Therefore, if feelings are not to be *expressed*, then feelings are not be *explored* – this is a powerful disadvantage that men have compared to women, as they are taught to react on feelings with masculine approved behaviours such as aggression. I postulate now, that if men never received the tools to understanding feelings, they also never received the tools in understanding or exploring the *causes* of their behaviour, thereby gaining tools to change unwanted or destructive behaviour. Naidoo et al. (2004: 46) also argue that if we want to reduce the infection of women, we need to motivate change with men, because they are after all, the ones in power:

> Women in sub-Saharan Africa are at greater risk of dying of Aids, hence the urgent necessity to understand and 'combat' biological, social and cultural phenomena that increase their chances of becoming HIV positive. Since men in South Africa, as in all patriarchal societies, generally hold more power in the private and political domains of sexual and domestic relationships, *considering their practices and discourses*, albeit in case study settings, can enhance understandings of where, if at all, gender-based interventions and social change are possible.
>
> (Emphasis placed by researcher)

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For all we know, men in general might be unhappy about their behaviour, but might never have received the skills to change behaviour and never received the skills to ask for *help* in changing behaviour. Surely it cannot be acceptable for *all* men to be labelled as 'abusers', or 'rapists' or 'poor fathers' or 'bad husbands'.

Therefore, I decided to listen to the voices, not of the marginalised this time, but of the *accused* – I strongly believe that change is possible amidst the HIV and Aids epidemic, *only* if we listen to the stories of both genders, only if we acknowledge the role men can play in making a change because we acknowledge the power positions they are in. I believe that we can change current narratives about negative and unequal power relations into future narratives of positive and equal relations if we deconstruct the discourses underlying the concept of masculinity and manhood, if we make men more aware of the powerful influence of these discourses, so that they can for themselves decide what behaviour they want to display, and not be mere puppets at the mercy of the dominant puppet master. HIV and Aids are *not* favouring anyone – to die early is *not* a favour, to die painfully is *not* a favour, even if fewer men are dying than women, they are still dying with an unnatural rate – I do not believe that there is an advantage for men in behaving the way they do, not amidst a prowling murderer like HIV and Aids. I do believe that most men too are caught up in a web of a discourse and they do not know how to escape.

1.4.2 Background of the researcher

The researcher is a PhD student at the University of Pretoria, who completed a BA and Honours degree in Theology, a MA degree in Pastoral Family Therapy and an Honours in Psychology. She is currently working at a nongovernmental faith-based organisation which has two centres for orphaned and vulnerable children living within the vicinity of Mamelodi West and Soshanguve. At this organisation the researcher is employed as counsellor, trainer and operational manager of the Mamelodi after school centre.

The researcher is from a white middle class background and lives in a suburb in Centurion, Pretoria with her husband and four pets.

The researcher has had much experience with various townships in South Africa and has done research in the townships of Nellmaphius and Thembisa since her master studies in 2006. She was a teacher for various township children for almost three years and also worked for another NGO as children's empowerment manager; thus her experience with disadvantaged and orphaned and vulnerable children is extensive.

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The researcher has compassion for working with disadvantaged and marginalised people and therefore chose to equip herself in such a way that she can be of assistance in empowering disadvantaged and marginalised people so that their human dignity can be restored and that they can have access to their basic human rights. The researcher believes as soon as human dignity has been restored, people will have access to their own skills and abilities in regaining control over their lives and choices. The researcher wants to assists in this process so that people can find their identity in God and realise their God-given potential.

The researcher also acknowledges that there are certain cultural, language and gender barriers in doing research with adolescent African boys, but believes that most of it was overcome by open and honest dialogue; a willingness to move out of her comfort zone and be open to experiences from the research context; and acknowledging and re-positioning held biases and prejudgements.

1.4.3 Context of the co-researchers

As part of this research journey, seven adolescent boys were chosen as research companions; five of whom are registered with the NGO PEN, situated in the inner city of Pretoria and two of whom are registered with the NGO Heartbeat, who has a centre in Thembisa, Gauteng. Two of the PEN boys live in a place of safety, known as Precious Pearls and one boy lives in a flat in the inner city of Pretoria with some friends. Two of the remaining boys at PEN currently live in Thembisa, but they formerly also resided at Precious Pearls.

The two co-researchers chosen from the NGO Heartbeat were guided by another co-researcher, a social worker employed at the centre in Thembisa by Heartbeat.

Six of the boys chosen as co-researches had lost their mothers to death, at least four years prior to this study. Five of the boys were abandoned by their fathers and two boys (twins) have lost their father during a gun fighting incident when they were very young; therefore, they did not know their father. Subsequently all the boys, except one are double orphans.

All the boys live in conditions of extreme poverty and are registered with one of the abovementioned organisations as ‘orphaned and vulnerable’ and receive material support, such as monthly food parcels and have access to the organisation’s psychosocial support services, such as weekly support groups or therapy and counselling, and academic support services such as assistance with homework and

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studying. All of the boys have been exempted in paying school fees while they were in school (some of the boys were in school with the start of this study, but completed matric in 2009) and are at the mercy of the two organisations in receiving material and other donations.

It might be noteworthy to state that three boys completed matric in 2009 and only one boy passed, while the other two boys failed two subjects and are doing re-examinations in 2010. The one boy who passed got a bursary to study information sciences at a college in Pretoria and is doing quite well.

All of the boys are from a black African background and most of them were born in rural areas outside the city of Pretoria. Most of their mothers moved to the city in search of job opportunities, and some only came to live with their mother later in their lives.

It cannot be stated with full confidence that all the boys' mothers died of Aids, as it is difficult to obtain such information – the death certificate always indicates an opportunistic disease as cause of death, as opposed to directly ascribing death to Aids. Some of the boys state that they think their mother died of Aids, two boys state 'cancer' as cause, while the remaining boys do not have an idea what was wrong with their mothers – they only known that the onset of the illness and that death was unexpectedly sudden.

All of the boys are religious but do not ascribe to a specific denomination. The five PEN boys used to go to the church services provided by PEN (protestant reformed); while the two boys at Heartbeat do not go to church often. None of the boys are particularly interested in ancestry worshipping or using the services of a Sangoma (traditional healer), but at the same time none of the boys deny these practices. It might be that the lack of an African parent might cause them not to be exposed to these traditional practices as much as those children living with their grandmothers or mothers

1.5 Challenges facing this study

In staying true to the principles of Postmodernism and Social Constructionism as stated by Freedman and Combs (2002: 25) "... we [need to] situate our ideas in our own experience and make our intentions apparent". It is; therefore, imperative to acknowledge the challenges that I, the researcher, came to face during the research process. The challenges can be divided into three separate categories, namely differences in socio-economic and cultural experiential context; challenges pertaining to

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language barriers; and differences in psychosocial and spiritual experiences pertaining to gender differences.

1.5.1 Differences in socio-economic contexts

The researcher comes from a white Afrikaner middle class background, living in a suburb in Pretoria and was trained and educated according to the Western Paradigm.

All of the co-researchers come from an African low socio-economic background, residing in the inner city of Pretoria or in the informal settlement named Thembisa. Five of these co-researchers; however, are educated in a double-medium suburb school in either the inner city of Pretoria or the East of Pretoria and the remaining two go to a so-called "Township" school in Thembisa.

The experiential difference between a middle-class suburb, the inner city of Pretoria and the informal settlement in Thembisa differs in terms of exposure to crime and; therefore, the level of security and safety experienced and also in terms of the level of autonomy. The researcher is only exposed to dangers of crime in terms of burglary or possible hi-jacking at different sections of the suburbs. The co-researchers are exposed to all forms of crime, also because they have to make use of public transport and walk in dangerous areas at any point in time, where they can be robbed or physically assaulted. In the townships the possibility of domestic, physical and sexual abuse is higher also because most of the co-researchers are still under the age of 18 and living with relatives, neighbours or other care givers which make them vulnerable to abuse from authoritative members of the community. To live in a "shack" or in a RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) house in a township also makes the co-researchers more vulnerable to burglary (because of a lack of formal security companies) and natural disasters, which reduce their sense of security and safety.

The co-researchers are also exposed to much more poverty than the researcher every day of their lives. This also reduces a sense of security.

The researcher moved out of her comfort zone in entering the townships or the inner city of Pretoria during the research process and have many times experienced feelings of threat as her sense of safety and security was compromised.

The researcher also noticed children in the townships were much more autonomous than children in the suburbs. Many times small children will be seen walking on their own in the streets which means that much less control of the co-researchers' time and

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activities is exercised by adults or authoritative people than in the suburbs. This of course also exposed them to crime and possible risks/ harm.

Therefore, the differences between socio-economic status, sense of security and safety is impossible to eliminate; however, the researcher entered the context of the co-researchers open-minded and without prejudgements, so that she could be open for the true experience of the co-researchers within their own context and how it influences the creation of their past and future narratives.

Additionally, the researcher observed the research environment intensely, focussing on aspects of how these children are provided in their basic physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs, by engaging in collateral observation and informal conversations in an attempt to come to grips on how these adolescents live. Informal interviews were also held with caregivers where they provided the researcher with additional information on the services that PEN and Heartbeat provide to these children, to empower them to become well-adapted and fulfilled adults.

1.5.2 Language and Cultural barriers

The researcher is an Afrikaans speaking individual, while the co-researchers are all African mother tongue speakers. As a result of people moving from the rural areas to the city in the search of work, some of the adolescents do not only speak one African language, but a mixture of isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sesotho and Setswana.

The language barrier has partially been overcome by only selecting adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18, who can read, write and speak English fluently. The researcher and her colleague took the co-researchers on a week-end camp, once in 2008 and once in 2010, where various conversations, through semi-structured group sessions, between them took place. All sessions were held in a group of ten participants who know each other well and are comfortable in each other's presence. Therefore, if and when one child did not understand a question or answer, some of the other children quickly jumped in and explained it in their language.

With the two participants from Heartbeat the language barriers were overcome by using an interpreter who is also Setswana speaking and a social worker. Therefore, her understanding of English was very good and she could explain concepts and questions in Setswana to the participants. In using a social worker, one also minimises

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compromising of the material and the support session, as she is well trained in the skills of a counsellor and working with sensitive issues.

Working within the paradigm of the Narrative model, implies that communication is central within this context. Social constructionism also assumes that realities are constructed and maintained through language. Therefore, the use of language and different metaphors facilitate effective communication as well as the construction of an alternative narrative (cf. Freedman and Combs 1996: 27-29).

Within this study many metaphors were used to explain certain concepts and ideas, as well as to facilitate the writing of an alternative story, irrelevant of the mother tongue of the participant. Nevertheless, the participants were invited to use concepts and words from their language if they felt that it can better communicate their opinions, ideas or even feelings. Every participant then chose a pseudo name for him/herself and all of them chose to choose an African pseudo name, which had a particular meaning to them.

One must also realise that two new sub-cultures, other than those stated in the literature, were constructed during the process of this research. The first sub-culture is the one created within the cities and city “townships” between various cultures from rural areas (note that rural townships also have distinct different cultures than city townships). Not only are new ideas and concepts invented within this culture, where African languages and traditions also interact with each other in a dynamic way; but the western paradigm is also incorporated within their traditional African views. Therefore, any researcher entering this new sub-culture cannot enter it with presupposed ideas gained from literature, especially outdated literature.

Furthermore, a new sub-culture is established in the interaction of this research group, not only between the researchers and the co-researchers, which entail both a mixture of black and white, a mixture of Afrikaans and African and with an age gap of at least ten years; but also between the different co-researchers, which entailed girls and boys, Sesothos and Zulus, different schools and different traditions, where everyone engaged in open and honest dialogue, maybe for the first time ever in their lives. With all honesty, it was beautiful!

On the note of culture, although almost everyone was from different cultural backgrounds, no apparent barriers were experienced. This might be because of South Africa’s diversity, in that everyone is already used to openness to different cultures and

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customs on the one hand, and on the other that with this new "urban-township" created culture, that all these diversities were infused into one so that everyone actually experienced one culture. During the conversation; however, many questions were directed about cultural differences, concepts and customs. These were discussed in honesty and with an open and honest attitude of reaching true understanding; however, the conclusion was that the many different cultures share more similarities than differences, especially because the Afrikaans culture is also very traditional at its roots. The differences were embraced with eagerness and excitement and everyone felt bound by a mutual learning process.

One other aspect important in combating language and cultural differences is an openness and honesty about one's intentions and interpretations. During all conversations and group meetings the intentions behind the questions were made clear, and understanding was questioned and confirmed during the whole process – no assumptions were made. This was in essence, the closest that we could come to true understanding.

1.5.3 Psycho-social and spiritual differences pertaining to a specific gender

One irrefutable difference and barrier was the difference in gender, as both researchers were female and the participants of this study were all male, and then the age difference, or otherwise stated as a generation-gap. In reference to this it must be stated that these two variables were the primary motivators in doing research in the HIV and Aids environment as the researcher were specifically interested in *adolescent male*'s experiences and narratives of the HIV and Aids environment. Therefore, these were the areas of interest, because the researcher lacks knowledge.

Nevertheless, the fact that the boys were adolescents, in the development stage of middle to late adolescence, made conversation relatively easy, as all the boys were very articulate and expressive. Also the fact that all the boys knew each other, made them more willing to express their opinions with ease. With reference to the two boys at Heartbeat, communication was also easy because they knew the social worker for a while prior to the research.

The difference in gender can never be eliminated, but it is this difference that made communication possible. The boys were able to see that the researcher is genuinely interested in their gender specific narratives and experiences, and expressed this interest without any prejudgement or biases. It was stated clearly before the

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commencement of research that their identities will be anonymous and that they will not be judged or reprimanded in any way in terms of what is said during the group conversations.

However, it must be stated that during the second camp, the flow of conversation was much better and much more vibrant. The boys were also much more expressive. This might be explained by the fact that they knew us better by then, they trusted us as they saw that after the first camp we did not give out information to their caregivers about the information shared, and the fact that they were at least a year to a year and a half older, and therefore more mature. We also kept contact with them after both camps.

1.6 Ethical issues

1.6.1 Evaluation of risks and benefits: Protection from harm

Before the execution of interviews and group discussions with co-researchers, the researcher and her colleague reflected upon the possible risks or harm to which the co-researchers might be exposed to during the interviews and/ or discussions as well as through the research material (workbooks). The researcher and her colleague acknowledged that some of the research questions might solicit sensitive information which might "trigger" traumatic past memories. Therefore, the researcher and her colleague decided to create private and individualised opportunities to discuss the information and to be available immediately afterwards for debrief counselling. Information retrieved from the "Tree of Life" group was exchanged within the safe and confidential environment of a support group with co-researchers who are closely related and wherein trust has already been established between both the researchers and the co-researchers and between co-researchers themselves. The second camp also acted as a follow-up and a debrief camp for emotions experienced during the initial Tree of Life camp. Co-researchers were also informed beforehand that sensitive issues will be discussed and consent was provided accordingly.

Excluding the sensitive issues that were discussed and the experience of past emotions, the co-researchers were not exposed to undue physical or psychological harm.

Benefits of the research for the co-researchers were identified and as such includes opportunities to deal with "unfinished business" (Gestalt concept), to receive debrief counselling regarding the loss of a loved one and the experience of other psychological

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and socio-economic sufferings due to the loss of a significant care giver. Co-researchers were provided with guidance in making sense of their current circumstances, past experiences and to create a future alternative narrative for themselves (A narrative therapeutic concept).

1.6.2 Selection of Participants

Participants were selected according to probability sampling methods and secondarily according to the methods of snowball sampling, as is the case where a list of suitable participants is unavailable. Selection of participants happened on the basis of recommendation of the care workers for the co-researchers, as they looked at the research sampling criteria and chose ten suitable adolescents from PEN and two from Heartbeat, who were then offered the opportunity to take part in the research. The research intents, interest and outcomes were made available for the perusal of the co-researchers in a clear, visible and understandable manner; therefore, the decision to participate was voluntary after all intentions and uses of data were made clear and visible – this indicates that that selection of participants happened in a just and dignified manner.

Adolescents were chosen instead of younger children, as they are mentally more mature to handle the content of the research and because they are at a stage of life were understanding is necessary before alternative future narratives can be constructed, which is vital for their mental and emotional growth before moving into the stage of adulthood, thus presenting a benefit for them through the research. Only adolescents who were cared for by formal care workers or social workers who have the authority to scrutinise the effects of the research and the conduct of the researchers were chosen, as these care workers or social workers act as authoritative figures to ensure that no undue harm is caused. They also have the authority to withdraw the co-researchers at any time during the research process if they feel that undue harm is caused in any way. Therefore, they act as the legal guardians for these children who fall into a minority and vulnerable social group.

1.6.3 Voluntary Participation

The participation of the co-researchers was voluntary after the necessary information of the research was made visible, clear and understandable so that an informed decision could be made not only by the adolescents, but also by their care workers/ legal

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guardians. It was made clear to the co-researchers and their care workers/ social worker/ legal guardian that they had the right at any time during or after the research has been conducted to withdraw their consent, should they feel the need.

1.6.4 Informed Consent

Research intents, interests and outcomes were made clear and visible to the co-researchers and their care workers/social workers and/or guardians in a language understandable to them. The co-researchers were given an opportunity to make an informed decision and decide if they would like to participate in the research, and it was communicated to them that they have the right to withdraw their consent at any time during or after the research process, should they feel the need. All the co-researchers signed a consent form before the research was conducted and information was tapped from the co-researchers. All benefits and possible risks/harms were made visible to the co-researchers and their care workers/social worker and/or legal guardian.

1.6.5 The right to Privacy and Confidentiality

The co-researchers were informed beforehand of their right to privacy and confidentiality. They had a choice of providing a pseudo name or to be presented in an anonymous way throughout the research report. They were also informed that certain specifics of their macro location would have to be made visible, although certain information such as their exact location or address will not be made visible. They were also informed that sensitive information gained through the research process will be made visible in the research report and in academic contexts. It was explained that no visual material of them, such as photos will be used in the research report, thereby protecting their personal identity. Co-researchers were informed of their right to access the research findings and report at any time. Co-researchers had to agree to the above in the consent form given.

1.6.6 Honesty with professional colleagues

The researcher has reported her findings in an honest fashion, without misinterpreting what she has done or intentionally misleading others as to the nature of her findings. She has under no circumstances fabricated data to support certain conclusions. Under no circumstances has she used another person's idea or words without the full

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acknowledgement of the person's work (See Invitation letter and indemnity and consent forms attached in Annexure 1).

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research design

This research study has its departure from the *Qualitative Research Strategy*. To do qualitative research means that the researcher is "… interested in understanding the issues being researched from the perspective of the research participants" (Struwig and Stead 2007: 12), in this study referred to as the 'co-researchers'. The researcher and the co-researcher engage in various opportunities for conversation that will increase the understanding of the researcher and assist in the description of understanding. Qualitative research has four specific inherent characteristics (cf. Struwig and Stead 2007: 12-13):

2.1.1. The participants' and researcher's perspectives

Qualitative research is very much interested in the perspectives of the co-researchers; their experiences of phenomena and their understanding of their experiences of specific phenomena. Therefore, all activities included within the qualitative research design are aimed at exploring individual experiences and understanding.

2.1.2. Contextualism

Qualitative research functions within a specific context and assumes that understanding of experiences cannot be reached if the context, from which the experiences function, is not understood. Therefore, all contexts are taken in consideration, including the macro-, meso- and micro context, as well as the historical context. Qualitative research also assumes that a person's understanding of experiences is formed within a specific personal and social context and that true understanding cannot happen if this context is not described and understood fully. A context always consists of *actions* and *agents* (role players); therefore, interaction between the different contexts, the co-researchers and other role players is a dynamic, continuous and circular process.

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2.1.3. Process

Qualitative research emphasises the *process* as an action of research. This means that qualitative research is specifically interested in interrelated events and how it develops along a continuum. Struwig and Stead (2007: 12) state the following regarding process research: "It is necessary to understand how prior events play a role in the individual's thoughts and behaviours. Social events are not static and therefore understanding change and process is imperative".

Therefore, this research also followed a circular process with the use of paradigms and models which guide a specific process.

2.1.4. Flexibility and the use of theories

Qualitative research stems from the postmodern philosophy about knowledge and reality, and; therefore, does not put much emphasis on theory at the beginning of the research process. Qualitative researchers believe that they should be open to be guided by the co-researchers and the research results, before committing to one specific theory; thereby avoiding the danger of forcing one's data into one's frame of reference. Therefore, qualitative researchers start their research with a relatively open and unstructured research design as to remain sensitive to unexpected events and the meaning-making process of the co-researcher. However, this does not imply that theory is not important in qualitative research; qualitative researchers rely much on theory to increase the process of description and understanding.

2.2. Data collection and analysis

Within the Qualitative Research Strategy, the researcher has chosen the *Case Study Design* as point of departure when collecting data: "A case-study is an in-depth, usually long-term, examination of a single instance of a phenomenon, for either descriptive or hypothesis-testing purposes" (Yin 1993, 1994 in Bernard and Whitley 2002:37). The case study design is one of the few designs which can be utilised to study a single instance or an individual's personal experiences and behaviour and is mostly not aimed at the generalisation of results. However, Bernard and Whitley (2002: 39) state that there are indeed two approaches to the study of human behaviour, also within the Case Study Design, namely the *nomothetic* and the *idiographic* approach. Whereas the nomothetic approach is more used to develop general principles of behaviour, the

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idiographic approach focuses more on the study of the behaviour of individuals. Therefore, the Case Study Design within the context of the idiographic approach proofed most useful for the purposes and interests of this study, because the researcher was specifically interested in describing and understanding an individual's experience of a phenomenon. This research study did not aim at comparison, testing or generalisation of results or findings.

In using the Case Study Design the researcher utilised various methods of data collection, such as:

- Group and individual interviews;
- The use of individual case studies;
- Development of a thematic based workbook (which consists of two parts: a thematic narrative and a questionnaire which was used as the point of departure of discussions) which was conducted with the co-researchers in both-group and individual sessions;
- Collateral observation;
- Participatory observation; and
- Literature study

Within the Case Study Design, various theoretical paradigms and models were utilised to assist in the process of meaning-making and understanding during both the data collection and analysis phase. More specifically the theoretical and methodological paradigms used included postmodernism, postfoundationalism, social constructionism and narrative hermeneutics. Within these paradigms two models were used to collect and analyse data, e.g. the narrative approach and the postfoundational notion of practical theology, which follows seven movements.

Data analysis did not happen in isolation, but in collaboration with the co-researchers themselves. It is important to note that data analysis was not the primary goal of the research process and did not naturally follow data collection (if we understand 'analysis' from a positivist point of view which is focussed on diagnoses); instead, understanding was the primary goal and was reached as the researcher and the co-researchers deconstructed personal narratives and was; therefore, directed in the creation of

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alternative narratives. Therefore, this research study did not focus as much on *analysis* as it did on the *description* and *understanding (meaning-making)* of experiences and narratives.

2.3. Sampling and Selection of participants

The researcher did qualitative postmodern and postfoundational research, based on the models of the narrative approach and the seven movements of the postfoundational notion of practical theology.

The postfoundational notion of practical theology allows the researcher to be embedded in a specific context so that true understanding can be reached, but also allows us to move beyond a specific context so that we can understand how wider macro discourses influence our current narrative, as Demasure and Müller (2006: 417) state:

> This way of thinking is always concrete, local, and contextual, but at the same time reaches beyond local contexts to transdisciplinary concerns. It is contextual, but at the same time in acknowledgement of the way in which our epistemologies are shaped by tradition.

In turn, the narrative approach to research and therapy postulates that people make sense of their experiences through constructed self-narratives; therefore, in understanding how meaning was constructed the researcher needs to listen to these stories so that it could be understood how future events and experiences are interpreted:

> ... people, in attempting to make sense of their lives, arrange their experiences of events over time to arrive at a coherent account of themselves and their surroundings. Such self-narrative gives each person a sense of continuity and meaning, and in turn becomes the basis for interpreting subsequent experiences.
>
> (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 369)

In line with postmodern and postfoundational qualitative research, the researcher used elements from the case study strategy to select participants or co-researchers. Congruent with this strategy participants were selected according to the *non-probability sampling* (cf. Whitley 2002: 394) method, because of the unavailability of a list of HIV and Aids orphans. The researcher selected two nongovernmental, community based and faith-based organisations who work specifically with orphaned and vulnerable children affected by HIV and Aids. However, because of basic human rights and the right to privacy, as well as in an effort to combat stigma and discrimination, no

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organisation can specify whether an orphan is specifically an Aids orphan. Therefore, the non-probability sampling method had to be used, as these organisations were asked to approach some orphans within a specific age group and gender to participate in this research. Some of these children then suggested more children who they thought would be interested in also participating in this study, within the given criteria, thereby using the *snowball sampling method* (cf. Whitley 2002: 395) within the overarching non-probability sampling method of qualitative research. Furthermore, when the researcher received a list of possible participants and their details, she used the *purposive sampling method* (cf. Whitley 2002: 395) to select participants using her own judgement of which participants are the most appropriate for this study according to listed criteria, which are:

- Orphans (single or double) registered with and in the care of the organisation PEN or Heartbeat;
- Adolescents who have an absent father, either due to death or abandonment;
- Adolescent orphans between the ages of 14 to 18;
- Only male adolescent orphans;
- Male adolescent orphans who live in the vicinity of the greater Pretoria area (or east Johannesburg);
- Adolescents who are fluent in English and who can read and write in English, thus reducing the effects of any language barriers.

In the end, seven participants were chosen and invited to take part in this study as co-researchers.

Five participants were from PEN, of whom two moved to Thembisa in the third year of this study, one moved to a flat in the inner city of Pretoria and two resided in Precious Pearls, a safe house of Pen. All five boys had resided in Precious Pearls at the start of this study from 2007 – 2009.

The two remaining participants are under the care of Heartbeat and reside in Thembisa as well; one lives with his grandmother, while the other lives with an aunt. Both have lost their mother due to death, one boy also lost his father due to death and the other boy has been abandoned by his father. Both boys are 14 years of age.

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Six of the boys chosen as co-researches have lost their mothers due to death, at least four years prior to this study. Five of the boys are abandoned by their fathers and two boys (twins) have lost their father during a gun fighting incident when they were very young; therefore, they did not know their father. Subsequently all the boys except one, are double orphans.

2.4. Theoretical point of departure

As stated before, this research followed the design of the qualitative research approach, which means that specific theories both underpin and motivate the methodological approach which has been followed. In this section various theoretical paradigms will be discussed in indicating the manner in which the researcher views the ontology and epistemology of this research context and has; therefore, inevitably influenced the way that this research has been conducted, the manner in which data has been collected and analysed/ interpreted.

2.4.1. Modernism versus Postmodernism

Postmodernism is the overarching paradigm used in this study to explain how we as narrative therapists and researchers and as social constructionists understand our reality, and the way that knowledge is developed, applied and maintained in a specific society. Postmodernism was in many ways created against the notion of power of modernism; therefore, we cannot really understand postmodernism without first understanding both its predecessor and *vis-à-vis*, modernism. Comstock (1989: 196) also argued that the term 'postmodernism' can only be explained by contrasting it with modernism. In describing the term 'modernism' Comstock stated that modernism reveals itself especially in the belief that the rationality of science is super ordinate to that of other knowledge domains and as such is the sole road to truth (cf. Comstock 1989: 196).

Thus, in reading Comstock's description of modernism, two characteristics of this worldview immediately become apparent. First, modernism believes in *science* as the only modus operandi of coming to true knowledge. Secondly, modernism believes in *absolute truths*. This is indeed the essence of the modernistic paradigm of viewing reality, that we as human beings are capable of knowing absolute truths with the use of carefully developed scientific methods. Trigg (1993: 25f) states that at the heart of the modern world lies the idea that science is the only source of all explanation. He states

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that the modern worldview has a deep seated confidence in science as the supreme authority and exemplar of human reason and knowledge (cf. Trigg 1993: 25f).

Freedman and Combs (1996: 20) affirm this by stating that modernism is a worldview which believes that it is possible to find essential, objective and absolute facts. Moreover when combining these facts, we can create general applicable theories that can bring us closer to an accurate understanding of the real universe. This worldview postulates that theories are "representations of general truths about a basic, underlying reality that we all share" (Freedman and Combs 1996: 20).

One can almost analogue modernism with the policies and procedures of a company, telling people what knowledge is and how to obtain absolute knowledge and truth. Once obtained, these 'procedures' can be used to explain all universal phenomena. If the phenomena cannot be explained by the founded and embedded true knowledge, then the phenomena must not be true. This is the process of reasoning and rationalisation that the modernist worldview follows.

Van Huyssteen (1999: 29) explains this type of reasoning quite well by showing how it is used in different disciplines:

> ... in epistemology it is the conviction or "story" that knowledge rests on a few unquestionably certain beliefs; in ethics it is the conviction that morality rests on unquestionable rational principles; in science itself it is the belief that scientific progress and true discoveries are the result of adhering to a universally accepted, value-free, and objective methodology.

It is important to understand how modernity emerged and to not just judge it in the face of its counterpart which offers new possibilities. When modernism emerged, it emerged with a sigh of relief for people and communities whose actions and choices were dictated by one absolute authoritative power. Modernity emerged from an age where every human being was collectively viewed as the sum of the community's parts, and never seen as an individual with his/her own capacity of rationality and reason; hence named the 'age of reason'. Van Huyssteen refers to Rosenau (1992: 5) when making us aware that "modernity, in its response to premodernity, entered history as a progressive force promising to liberate humankind from ignorance and irrationality" (van Huyssteen 1999: 22).

Cahoon (1995: 19) explains how this shift in direction emerged through the people's flight from authority by abandoning any guidance by the past. This included a turning

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away from even the immediate past. Van Huyssteen elaborates by stating that "[c]losely aligned with this is modernity's plea for the rationality of the autonomous subject" (van Huyssteen 1999: 22). Therefore, it is clear that modernism too, strived for a breakage from authority and a sense of freedom where every person can be seen as knowledgeable and reasonable. Thus, in the centre of modernism lies the notion of *rationality* and *reason* and that it can be used as a pipeline to finding absolute truths: "… rationality of modernity thus resides in a centred human subject, functioning as an epistemological foundation from which all justification of knowledge claims proceeds" (van Huyssteen 1999: 22-23).

It is then clear, as van Huyssteen (1999: 22-23) states, that modernity seemed to portray a "distinct and profound confidence in the claims of human reason". This claim to human reason gave way to an age of 'representational knowledge' which in turn gave way to what have become to be known as 'individualism', 'rationalisation', 'technical control', and 'secularisation' (cf. Schrag 1989: 84f).

Another characteristic of modernism is its tendency to create certain *bodies of knowledge* which guide all areas of life, and thereby institutionalising every domain of living. Van Huyssteen (1999: 23) states that when knowledge was found, it was immediately categorised into bodies of knowledge which in turn prescribed how knowledge is affirmed and disaffirmed. These domains and practices of knowledge, once institutionalised, were then unified by a universal idea of what constitutes human rationality (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 23; Rouse 1996: 49). Van Huyssteen (1999: 23) refers to Jürgen Habermas, who defined modernity by its tendency to separate the notion of culture into different specialisations of science, morality and art. He states that Habermas aimed at solving this problem of a fragmented culture with the use of the idea of a communicative rationality (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 24).

The notion of *universal truths* also has its roots in modernism. Modernism ultimately aimed at unifying science by integrating and refining the specialisation of objective knowledge in all knowledge domains. This was done by the formal representation of the idea of theoretical rationality and by stating and institutionalising universal and international values which should be used by all to determine what constitutes as universal truths (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 27). Joseph Rouse (1991: 148) confirms this by stating that modernism established both the epistemic autonomy of the specialisation of knowledge domains, and the conjugation of formal rules and procedures which is supported by specific methods of reasoning which leads to the justification of this

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conjugation. Therefore, modernism thrives on this notion of one universal and absolute truth which results in a position of authority which no one dares to question.

Van Huyssteen (1999: 28) postulates that it is just this justification of universal and absolute knowledge claims that postmodernism questions and challenges. He states: "... one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the postmodern is jettisoning of all attempts at the unification of knowledge, a rejection of metanarratives ..." (van Huyssteen 1999: 28).

This notion of universal claims, in turn, gave rise to the constitution of the concept of *ideologies*. Many postmodernists have spoken out against this notion of universal absolute truth and objective value-free reality by stating that these concepts are all but objective and value-free. They claim that the idea of objectivity, value-freedom and absolute and universal truth is only a form of idealisation and that this too, is laden with much discourse of power and oppression. Foster (2004: 1-7) explains the word ideology as derivative from its Marxist heritage and that it refers to ways in which meaning "serves to create and sustain power relations of dominance".

Foster (2004: 1-7) explains the notion of ideologies by stating that ideologies are visible through certain discourses and practices which subjugate both the ruler and the ruled, thereby maintaining certain positions of power and dominance. These discourses contain specific messages of dominance which create a sense of inevitability, compliancy and resignation which leave both the ruler and the ruled with limited possibilities of rationality and reason (cf. Foster 2004: 1-7). Thus, these ideologies provide people with specific and limited understandings of who they are and who and what they can be in the future, in the reality of the dominator, as this dominator (which is not limited to persons but can also be expanded to institutions and metanarratives) use ideologies to hail people as particular forms of subjects (cf. Foster 2004: 1-8). I postulate then that the postmodern manner of looking at certain modern concepts in fact refers to this process of idealisation and exposes with it the power relations of dominance inherent in concepts such as objectivity, value-freedom and absolute truth.

Therefore, it is clear that the issue and choice of paradigm or worldview is not an innocent and naive action. It creates a whole framework wherein one functions and whereupon choices are made – choices which inevitably affect our behaviour, our relations with others as well as the construction of our future realities. On a large scale, these paradigms affect the creation of a society's episteme and ontology, which in turn

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affects the possibilities available to individuals who function according to the ideological propagandas distributed within that society or community. Society and individuals within a society base all their decisions upon the metanarratives available to them. Unfortunately during the modern times, these decisions were never as value-free and objective as scholars would have liked us to think. The way that they viewed reality and knowledge had tremendous consequences for those individuals and communities who pulled on the shortest end of the rope. It has been found that this type of knowledge is indeed "power", as the slogan states; however, the question is: power for whom?

In summary we can state that modernism:

- implies that reality is objectively knowable
- implies that absolute truths (facts) can be discovered by the human being
- implies that discovered facts can collectively be combined into theories which are representations of general truths about one basic, underlying reality
- creates metanarratives from these theories which are used to guide and explain all human behaviour and phenomena
- creates ideologies from these metanarratives which serve to create and sustain power relations of dominance.

2.4.2. The move from modernism to postmodernism

David Paré (1995: 3) described how we have moved from a modernist worldview to a postmodernist and similarly how we have moved in understanding reality and the construction of knowledge in a different way. He states that understanding has "... been evolving from a focus on the observed world as object, to a focus on the observing person as subject, to a focus on the place between subject and object, that is, the intersubjective domain where interpretation occurs in community with others".

Freedman and Combs (1996: 20) explain the above statement by dividing the movement of the various worldviews into three different instances:

> (1) reality is knowable – its elements and workings can be accurately and replicable discovered, described and used by human beings;
>
> (2) we are prisoners of our perceptions – attempts to describe reality tell us a lot about the person doing the describing, but not much about external reality; and

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> (3) knowledge arises within communities of knowers – the realities we inhabit are those we negotiate with one another.

When we look at the above development of understanding the nature of knowledge, we come to the conclusion that modernism cannot be disconnected from postmodernism, as postmodernism has its rise from modernism. Also modernism has not been completely extinguished in our society and still underpins many power relations and discourses, thus any attempt to ignore its existence is a movement of naiveté and puts one in danger of getting swooped away by its charms and comfort. Similarly Calvin O. Schrag (1992: 7) argues that we should not only look at postmodernism as a strong reaction against modernism, but should also view it as part of the modern. He states that in moving from modernism to postmodernism we also imply a refiguration of the notion of what is rational and reason. He suggests that the answer probably lies between these worldviews, rather than distinctively belonging to either. In a similar way "… postmodernism shows itself best in the to-and-fro movement between the modern and the postmodern [...] in the relentless interrogation of our foundationalist assumptions in all our reasoning strategies ..." (van Huyssteen 1999: 59). In showing the embeddedness of the postmodern in the modern, van Huyssteen (1999: 59) states:

> Rather, as we saw, it is important to view the postmodern challenges as an opportunity for an ongoing and relentless critical return to precisely the questions raised by modernity. From this perspective, postmodern thought is undoubtedly part of the modern, and not only modern thought coming to its end.

In direct opposition to the stated claims of absolute truths and universal realities of modernism, postmodernism emerged in making us aware that multiple views of reality exist and that absolute truth can never be known (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 341). Higgs and Smith (2006: 131) state that "Postmodernism tells us in various ways, that we need to rethink our belief in science and progress itself". Many scholars emerged from the age of modernism to challenge the notion of absolute truths and that reality is one-dimensional. Moreover, scholars postulated that knowledge is never free from value, in fact, they stated, that most knowledge is created to serve some form of power within the context that it is created.

The primary differences between modernism and postmodernism are that postmodernism rejects the notion of one universal truth to explain human behaviour and phenomena, and even more rejects the idea of reality being one-dimensional.

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Freedman and Combs (1996: 21-22) state the differences between these two paradigms quite rightly:

> Postmodernists believe that there are limits on the ability of human beings to measure and describe the universe … [T]hey differ from modernists in that exceptions interest them more than rules. They choose to look at specific, contextualized details more often than grand generalizations, difference rather than similarity. While modernist thinkers tend to be concerned with facts and rules, postmodernists are concerned with meaning.

In essence, postmodernism holds certain assumptions regarding the nature of reality and the nature of knowledge. Postmodernism states that reality is not one-dimensional, meaning that multiple views of reality can exist within each individual who has a subjective perspective on various phenomena and events which take place within that person's constructed reality. Hence the importance of the word 'constructed'. Postmodernists assert that reality is constructed, not only by an individual him/herself, but also by the social system or discourses within which he/she functions. We are not born into a vacuum of a reality. No, we are born into a specific social reality which functions according to certain accepted, but powerful discourses. In a sense we are the 'actors' within a 'stage' which is created by 'choreographers' and our narrative is not solely written by us, the actor, but also by a wider system of scriptwriters.

Similarly, postmodernism asserts that knowledge does not exist 'out-there' somewhere and is waiting to be discovered. Knowledge is also created or constructed and similarly maintained. Moreover, knowledge is not free from value, prejudices or biases. As with anything manufactured, knowledge is also created with a certain intent, or purpose that it must serve.

Postmodernism sees the attempts of modernism to unify or categorise instances as a way to simplify very complex human behaviour and motivations. What happens during this process of unification is that people and behaviour become objects to categorise or label:

> The 'objectivity' of the modernist worldview, with its emphasis on facts, replicable procedures, and generally applicable rules, easily ignores the specific, localized meanings of individual people. When we treat people with this kind of 'objectivity', we regard them as objects, thus inviting them into a relationship in which they are the passive, powerless recipients of our knowledge and expertise.
>
> (Freedman and Combs 1996: 21)

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As a result, people are not provided with an opportunity to gain insights into their own lives, thoughts and actions and the powerful discourses which partly dictate these thoughts and actions, so that they can gain control over their future narratives. People are provided with a bipolar prognoses which inevitably announces one's fate, as either 'yes' or 'no', 'good' or 'bad', 'hope' or 'no hope'. Van Huyssteen (1999: 24) refers to Schrag (1997: 8) when he, as well, rejects the notion of unification:

> Post-modernists, of course, see this whole project of modernity as contrived, and reject any need to unify [these] culture spheres. In fact, the whole idea of unity, totality, identity, sameness, and consensus [were] radically rejected by postmodernity in all its various constructive and deconstructive forms. Instead, pluralism heterogeneity, multiplicity, diversity, incommensurability, and dissensus became the chief interpretative categories of the postmodern mind.

Modernism is inevitably marked by a universal idea of rationality and reason. This too postmodernism has challenged, not in an attempt to do away with rationality or reason, but in an attempt to show that this concept is also subjective and personal in nature:

> However, not only have postmodern philosophies of science now shattered the prestige and alleged unifying power of this kind of natural scientific rationality, but the emergence of new and richer notions of rationality are sensitizing us to broader definitions of (even scientific) rationality, and to the fact that the standards of what we accept as rational thought or behaviour may, in very important ways be radically domain- and person-dependant.
>
> (Van Huyssteen 1999: 26)

In principle, postmodernism challenges the modernistic worldview of universal and total metanarratives, which "… anticipate all questions and provide predetermined answers (cf. Rosenau 1992: 3ff)" (van Huyssteen 1999: 30). People tend to live by these metanarratives, consciously or unconsciously, thereby understanding their past narratives from the thin descriptions provided by the metanarrative, such as 'I am not good'; 'I am too fat' or 'I am not worthy'; moreover people create their future narratives from this universal-personal paradoxical created past narratives which serve in the creation of more thin descriptions.

Rorty (1979: 315-94) expresses this wish to move away from a foundationalist epistemology to a reconstruction of knowledge, hermeneutic in nature, which will assist people in living with plurality, change and discourse which is incomparable.

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When viewing postmodernism as a movement or a hunger which yearns for change so that people can find the true meaning of events in their lives and true purpose for living, it can be stated that postmodernism is not a doctrinal platform which lends itself to systematic survey, but rather, it is a cultural attitude and frame of reference which cannot be applied universally and linearly (cf. Schrag 1989: 84). Postmodernism is a way of living, a way of not only viewing *the* world, but also *your* world. It gives structure to the seemingly chaotic, as does modernism, but it is humble in its movement, as it acknowledges that people cannot be explained by a universal set of criteria or rules. It acknowledges that not only do people differ physiologically, but also in terms of their perspectives. More than this, it acknowledges the stage in which our perspectives are set, and this stage is called society and culture. It would indeed be wonderful to think that each human being did exist in a vacuum and that every aspect of our physiology and neurology is specific to us and a creation of our brilliantness, and that this brilliantness can be used to dominate and control, because some people are superior; but the fact is, it is not.

Similarly van Huyssteen (1999: 29-30) refers to Nancey Murphy when explaining how postmodernism moves away from this foundational perspective and the superiority of the individual when compared to the community:

> Nancey Murphy, for instance, has correctly pointed out that the move beyond modernity is always a move beyond epistemological foundationalism, the representational or referential view of language, and the typical individualism of modernity which takes the individual to be prior to the community.

The fact is that superiority is a social construct which is primarily measured by the amount of control and power one exerts; not actually because you are more brilliant and; therefore, have deserved the status of superiority and subsequent privileges. As such, these statements explain another concept embedded in the nature of reality and knowledge as held by modernist; the concept of power, and more specifically power of an individual over a community. This is also then the primary reason for the up rise of the movement of postmodernism, not because of the way reality is viewed and the creation of knowledge is viewed *per se*, but rather in the way that it is maintained, which is through power relations and dominance. One can only think about the power and control of the Catholic church over a community, where the pope was the sole executer of this power; or when thinking of the second world war where one very powerful man, Adolf Hitler, was ‘god’ over life and death, and where the SS voluntarily followed his

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absurd instructions, because of the power entailed in these instructions for the privileged over the unfortunate.

In concluding this section, van Huyssteen (1999: 30) states the goals of postmodernism quite accurately: "... it rejects epistemological assumptions, refutes methodological conventions, resists knowledge claims and obscures all versions of truth".

Three specific historical contributions to the paradigm of postmodernism must be noted; e.g. the contributions of Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault and Jean-Francois Lyotard.

Jacques Derrida is the father of the concept of *deconstruction* which is a method of reading text; text in this sense can be any person, event, institution etc. Derrida postulated that multiple readings of text are both possible and justified, which opposes the idea of modernism that only an authoritative interpretation of text is allowed, by a person in a so-called 'expert' position (cf. Lötter 1994: 153).

The imperative of deconstruction is prompted by the notion that text, or discourses carry with it some form of power, which in turn influence the way that we interpret our world and the way that we construct our future: "Power is acquired as people participate in the different discourses creating a society" (Demasure and Müller 2006: 413).

Deconstruction is a method of revealing these power relations, also by making us aware that language itself is the locomotive of this constructive power. Language in turn creates *ideologies* as ideologies are dialectic in its nature. Ideologies create relations between the self and the other which work positively and negatively in either giving one a 'voice' , as to qualify one as an expert on a topic, or negatively as to subject certain people to subordinate positions (cf. Foster 2004: 1-8). Foster (2004: 1-8) continues to state that ideologies are "... not just a reflection of economic or political forms – but may well be linked to them. He states that it might also include practices "... and is a dynamic ever-changing process which constitutes subjects, and is taken up by people as everyday 'lived experience'".

Therefore, deconstruction is a critical analyses of text or various discourses and thereby shows how certain text imposes certain images and ideas of the world and its relations on its 'readers'. In essence deconstruction is "... concerned with the historical and cultural production of knowledge and how a certain construction contributes to power and social action" (Demasure and Müller 2006: 413).

In turn, Michael Foucault elaborated on the concept of deconstruction by making us brutally aware of its purpose in exposing 'regimes of knowledge' as forms of social

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practices that reverberate power relations within the existing social order. Van Huyssteen explains that for Foucault tradition and its continuity preserve these power relations who underlie tradition's conventions and oppressions (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 32).

Michael Foucault specifically asserted that every institution, cultural, traditional and social domain inhibit some form of power. He inevitably states that we cannot escape these forms of power as power and knowledge are fundamentally integrated with each other. Therefore, to dream of a time where power will not exist is to live again in ideology, as knowledge will never cease to exist as well "... it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge; it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power" (cf. Foucault 1980: 52; van Huyssteen 1999: 32). With the coming of the modern epistemological paradigm, the power in the domain of reason was highlighted and this inevitably influenced the way 'meaning' and 'reference' were experienced, as modernism used these two 'common' concepts as their foundation of maintaining power (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 32), in turn it is just this idea of 'common sense' which is the main vehicle of conveying power.

Following the thought of Foucault, Flynn (1989: 188) shows us how the concept of 'politics' is engrained in every discourse of society:

> If politics, according to the received wisdom, is the art/science of governance, if governance is the directing of power relationships, and if power, for Foucault, is all-pervasive, then so too is the 'political': Every facet of human life carries a political dimension and stands subject to 'political' analysis. One should be able to construct a 'politics' of science, of reason and, indeed, of truth itself as well as study the power relationships operative in governmental institutions ...
>
> (Flynn 1989: 188)

Flynn explains how Foucault, as Heidegger, offers us an ontology which is a descriptive analysis and not a causal explanation, of the nature and functioning of *relationships* of 'power'. It is important to note that Foucault did not necessarily refer to power as a unipolar concept, but stated that in its function, not its existence, it can act as representations of reasoning and creations as well. In this way Foucault speaks of power as he speaks of language: "... that language in the Classical era does not exist. But that it functions; its whole existence is located in its representative role and finally exhausts it. Language has no other locus, no other value, than in representation; in the hollow it has been able to form" (Flynn 1989: 188-189).

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Therefore, we can safely state that Foucault meant power to be a representation – it has no other function or value other than to represent and lay bare functionalities of the societal and cultural context. Language here is the representation of power. Therefore, Foucault then states that in this way, language also has a powerful functionality representation inherent in it. Language reveals the subtleties and facticties which make social life possible; albeit a life of power.

> Foucault, in effect, is committed both to a 'transcendental historicism' that enables him "to explain how scientific discourse is possible at all and to an empirical analysis of technologies of power that are meant to explain the functional social context of the science of man ...
>
> (Flynn 1989: 190)

In the same way that knowledge and power are interrelated and cannot be made loose from each other; language and power also stand in an important relation that cannot be removed; language, as does symbolism and myth, acts as the representation of power (cf. Flynn 1989: 189).

Foster (2004: 1-9), in turn speaks of the capacity of power to act in a relational form upon the conduct of ourselves and others. He states that individuals became involved with a form of governance of the self, through constant self-reflexivity and self-scrutiny, in accordance with the stated norms and standards created by institutions of the "new pastoral power". He elaborates:

> New institutions and officials of 'pastoral power' emerged – medicine, welfare, philanthropists, the family – which developed new knowledge and disciplines ... [T]hese new knowledge forms operated power through 'disciplinary' means, involving settings of norms, standards, discourses, guidelines, warnings and techniques of 'surveillance' – a shaping of individuality – so that individuals involved themselves in self-regulation. Instead of forcing people to do anything, these disciplines produce ideas by which people voluntary judge themselves.
>
> (Foster 2004: 1-8 - 1-9)

In this sense people voluntarily accept these ideas and actively and willingly manage themselves according to them. Therefore, power in this manner can be viewed in a more positive light and it seems then that we cannot easily escape power as it is in part "… what enables us to constitute ourselves as subjects, always within an 'ensemble' of social relations" (Foster 2004: 1-9). Foucault states that this then in turn explains why it is so difficult to change social conditions. However, it also makes us aware that people

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are constantly actively resisting and struggling against grand forms of power "… to promote new forms of subjectivity" (Foucault 1982: 785).

Therefore, Foucault and others make us aware that power is not only to be discovered and revealed, but also to be acknowledged as a social construction which cannot be evaded. Therefore, the malevolence of power does not lay in its existence, but rather in its *functionality* or its intent, to exert either positive or negative power relations or domination. In summary, Foster (2004: 1-9) then states that we must be alert to two forms of power:

> One is where we are subject to someone else's control, shaping and dependence ... [T]he second is the Foucauldian view in which power is more pervasive, subtle, enmeshing, is impossible to break free of, but which may be transformed in terms of new power/knowledge and new relations of subjectivities.

In elaboration Flynn (1989: 194) makes us aware that we must distinguish power relations from relationships of communication. The latter transmits information through the use of language which consists of symbols and signs; while the former is a production and a circulation of meaning which results in certain realms of power. He adamantly states that "... the latter are not simply an aspect of the former" (Flynn 1989: 191).

In conclusion, Flynn states that Foucault's assertions meant us to turn away from all discourses or projects which claim to be global or radical, so that we can identify instances where change is not only possible, but also necessary. He concludes that a responsible and conscious decision must be made about the form this change should take (cf. Flynn 1989: 193-194).

Finally, Jean-Francois Lyotard speaks of these global and radical projects as metanarratives. He asserts that metanarratives function as dominant discourses of explanation that serve the ideals and intents of people or institutions in power – metanarratives justify these people's or institutions' behaviour and choices. Thus, postmodernists tend to be sceptical of these metanarratives or grand narratives and their function in society in interpreting history (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 30).

Therefore, I have illustrated through the use of dominant movements from modernity to postmodernity how people came to view reality and the creation and maintenance of knowledge, radically different. Freedman and Combs (1996: 22) state that in accepting the postmodern paradigm as the paradigm to view relations and events in both the

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present and history, we can gain insights into how "... power, knowledge and 'truth' are negotiated in families and larger cultural aggregations".

Van Huyssteen (1999: 30) in turn, referring to Murphy and McClendon (1989: 191ff) states that postmodern thought presents itself through a variety of focuses: a focus of *holism* in epistemology, *meaning* as use in the philosophy of language and *tradition* and *community* in ethics. He further states that added to this are the five interrelated marks of postmodernity, as given by Schrag (1989: 84ff):

- The decentring of the subject as epistemological foundation
- The recognition of the social and contextual resources of rationality
- The embeddedness of power and desire within the claims of reason
- The undecidability of meaning and the inscrutability of reference, and
- A celebration of radical historicism and pluralism (van Huyssteen 1999: 30).

In conclusion, postmodernism gives us a framework through which we as subjective people, can accept or reject the seemingly 'truth' of epistemologies as truth for *us* or not; it makes us aware that we as subjective beings in totality – our behaviours, decisions and identity – have largely been constructed through social organisations of rationality and reason. It gives us an opportunity to deconstruct these social organisations so that we can consciously decide to accept or reject, once again, the power it holds over us. It makes us aware of the meaning we create through our interaction with certain events, people and institutions, that this meaning can be accepted from global universalism or our own creation which empowers us in reaching our own potentials as subjective beings; and finally it provides us with an opportunity to embrace the diversities in our societies and within ourselves, and it frees us from the notion of conformity.

2.4.2.1. Postmodern Therapy

In the same way that modernism controlled every sphere of life and every domain of knowledge, postmodernism re-infiltrated thinking in these spheres and domains. Therapy is an area which did not escape this influence. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 345) give us several implications of a postmodern way of doing therapy:

Firstly, postmodernity gives the therapist permission to not be an expert thereby taking the pressure away from the therapist in being responsible for the client and his/her

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decisions. It also allows the therapist to gain from the journey. In not being an expert, the client regains control and is empowered to be accountable for his/her own decisions and creation of his/her life story. In contrast, within the modern paradigm, the therapist becomes the sole executer of all decisions made, which in turn makes the client dependent on the therapist for creating a story on his/her behalf, which then ultimately results in a fraudulent created narrative which has no power in directing a subjective future narrative. Many times the modern way of doing therapy resulted in an overly dependent patient who exerts no control over his/her life or future narrative.

Secondly, postmodernism makes way for a greater acceptance of eclecticism, which provides both the client and the therapist with various options in creating a life narrative.

Furthermore, because postmodernism acknowledges a variety of factors, discourses or realities which influence the writing of a self- and life narrative, the likelihood of attending to diverse issues are increased.

Finally, through the course of such a therapeutic paradigm, the client and the therapist are empowered by believing their situations are changeable. This is deduced from the postmodern assumption that a variety of realities exist within both the greater macro and micro context; therefore, one is not only limited to a minimalist, narrow descriptive reality for the writing or re-writing of a life narrative. Therefore, because "... each of us invents our own reality, we also have the option of creating it differently" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 346).

2.4.2.2. Postmodern Science

The above also holds true for the postmodern researcher. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 347) state that doing research in a postmodern manner means that he/she is subjective with the topic at hand, and; therefore, views his/her findings to:

> ... be the creation of the inquiry process rather than some extruded fact regarding how things really are or how they really work; [inevitably] realities exists only in the context of each person's set of constructs for thinking about it.

In the same manner that postmodernism exposed the invalidity of the notion of one absolute body of truth or the supposedly one-dimensionality of reality, postmodern science in turn exposed the theory-ladenness of all data collected and maintained during the positivist 'regime'. It also made clear that scientific theories cannot solely be

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determined by facts and that both epistemic and nonepistemic value judgements inevitably shape the scientific process (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 34).

Postmodern science holds that science itself is a cultural and social phenomenon and; therefore, also contains a hermeneutical dimension (cf. Bernstein 1983: 30ff; van Huyssteen 1999: 34). Therefore, any type of research done is also subjective and open to multiple interpretations. Postmodern research, as stated by van Huyssteen (1999: 34-35) means that the researcher then moves from being an objective spectator to a participative agent within the research context. Postmodern research or science; therefore, opens up multiple opportunities by breaking down traditional boundaries and allowing for a cross-disciplinary conversation (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 34-35). Thereby research can also get access to multiple explanations and understandings of a phenomenon. This in turn creates a much more holistic view of the phenomena being studied, considering each and every angle of influence and 'constructedness' and will probably be the closest we can get to obtaining a *notion* of truth.

Ultimately, postmodern science and research rejects the idea of one omnipresent metanarrative which explains all seemingly similar phenomena – it emphasises the importance of the locally embeddedness of a context and the various narratives which are created within such a context and the importance in obtaining a local inquiry of such a context. Van Huyssteen (1999: 35) concludes:

> As such it refuses any overall pictures or grand narratives that would want to explain science as the kind of modernist, unified endeavour with an underlying essence that we discussed earlier, and makes sense of the everyday praxis of science by seeing it as unfolding within a set of narrative enterprise that will give scientific endeavour its focused, local intelligibility.

2.4.3. Postfoundationalism

As with postmodernism, postfoundationalism emerged in response to the assertions of foundationalism, antifoundationalism and nonfoundationalism, as it became clear that an interposition was needed. Van Huyssteen (1999: 33) states that postfoundationalism is a refigured *notion of rationality*, or a model of rationality which enables a better understanding of various epistemological and hermeneutical concerns with the use of the epistemic skills of responsible, critical judgement and discernment. In essence, postfoundationalism helps us to discover the value of a variety of resources from different domains of knowledge, in coming to a better interpretation and understanding

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of a phenomenon or event, which is embedded within a specific context and informed by various traditions (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 33).

Like postmodernism, postfoundationalism is a model which can be used to look at a phenomenon through the eyes of *various disciplines*, thereby aiming to understand a phenomenon while in conversation with various disciplines, thus there is no claiming of an absolute expert knowledge from one discipline or body of knowledge. Postfoundationalism assumes a certain attitude towards knowledge and the use of knowledge in coming to a specific understanding. It has an attitude of inclusion and non-judgement, taking almost a humble position of acknowledging that various disciplines can in fact contribute to a more holistic understanding or rationality.

Another crucial aspect of postfoundationalism is the assertion that *all forms of knowledge are embedded in a specific local context,* which contains discourses of tradition which inevitably influence the way knowledge is created and maintained. As we have seen, the ontology of knowledge has much power in influencing the behaviour and the exhibition of a phenomenon. Van Huyssteen (2006: 25) states: “Because of our irrevocable contextuality and the embeddedness of all belief and action in networks of social and cultural traditions, beliefs, meaning, and action arise out of our embedded life worlds”.

Consequently the postfoundational model situates itself primarily within *context* and at the same time acknowledges the way that *traditions* shape our epistemologies (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 418). It aims at moving beyond an objective relation with this context, and beyond a relativist attitude towards all traditions that shape the epistemology of such a context to a place where we can interact as rational beings with the context, the tradition which shapes our notions of knowledge, in conversation with other disciplines, so that we can reach a form of rationality which makes way for additional interpretations. Therefore, van Huyssteen (1999: 130) specifically argues for a postfoundational model of rationality which agrees with an interactionist model of knowledge, which makes this move beyond objectivism and relativism possible.

Van Huyssteen furthermore suggests Jerome Stone’s (cf. Stone 1992: 128) ‘transactional character of all interpreted experience’ as the epistemological foundation for the postfoundational model. This transactional character states “... experience is always a complex interaction between the self and the world, between the environment and lived feelings” (van Huyssteen 1999: 130).

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Therefore, the postfoundational model is always a model of *transaction*. This transaction is then made during interdisciplinary and cross-contextual conversation where the agents of this conversation presupposed a relational or interactionist view of knowledge. During this conversation we can still put some trust in our ability to make responsible and trustworthy contextual and cross-contextual choices, in the absence of a secure epistemological foundation (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 131). Van Huyssteen (1999: 131) states that the resources for this trust "... are found in a broader notion of postfoundationalist rationality, and in the cognitive, evaluate, and pragmatic resources that will always be presupposed in this relational [...] view of knowledge". It is important to note that such a transactional postfoundational model does not suggest the elimination of rationality, but rather a refiguration of a rationality, which in turn acknowledges that we all have a share in the resources of rationality. This then enables us to reach beyond the boundaries of our own explicit contextual epistemologies, to a type of transactional conversation between different contexts and different disciplines (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 174).

> On this view postfoundationalism therefore clearly appropriates a constructive postmodern awareness that all our reasoning strategies are practices within specific contexts and for particular purposes.
>
> (van Huyssteen 1999: 147)

It might be suggested that in this cross-contextual and interdisciplinary conversation with the aim of reaching intersubjective understandings, that postfoundationalism might be in danger of falling back to the modernist idea of grand narratives, or universalism. Furthermore van Huyssteen (1999: 140) states:

> ... that a universal social relativism, one that denies any cross-textual mode of cognition, cannot be coherently defended: if we cannot consider claims whose import goes beyond the confines of our own group, we cannot begin to explore that context, culture and language play in determining beliefs.

Therefore, our understanding is not aimed at universalism or globalism, it is aimed at accurately understanding with the use of multiple rationalities that reaches beyond our own context, so that we can understand how this interplay influences cross-contextual beliefs, notions and experiences:

> In a postfoundationalist notion of rationality, the narrative quality of one's own experiences, therefore, is always going to be rationally compelling. And if this is taken seriously, the postfoundationalist notion of rationality itself could never be

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> some sort of superimposed metanarrative, but will itself develop as an emerging pattern that unifies our experience without in any way totalizing it.
>
> (van Huyssteen 1999: 177)

Accordingly, the rationality of postfoundationalism is a circular process, unlike the linear rationality of modernism and foundationalism. It finds its primary source in the embedded context, invites other rationalities into this context, and then moves out of the embedded context to the cross-contexts of the different epistemologies and then moves back to the embedded and local context. It is confined by neither the boundaries of one universal context nor by the boundaries of one absolute notion of rationality or epistemology; instead it is moved from a specific context, beyond and back again. This circularity always stands in a degree of relation – a relation of interaction, interdisciplinary, cross-contextuality and even reflexivity.

Additionally, van Huyssteen differentiates between *context conditioned* and *context determined* which will influence the development of moral and epistemological judgements: "Although conditioned by its context, human thought is nonetheless able to transcend the particularities of its social and historical contexts" (van Huyssteen 1999: 147), thereby meaning that we are bound by the constructs of our contexts, embedded in our rationality and epistemology, nonetheless, we are able – if willing – to also move beyond these contexts, at least in terms of our own society or community and the history thereof. He states that "... although we cannot think and act except through engaging with our local contexts and traditions, our task is always to stand in a critical relation to tradition precisely by stepping beyond its epistemic boundaries in cross-contextual conversation" (van Huyssteen 1999: 116).

Müller (2009: 204) in turn makes us aware that the postfoundational notion of rationality propels us first and fore mostly to listen to the narratives embedded in a real-life situation and a specific and concrete context – this makes the postfoundational model *situational* embedded in epistemology and methodology. When true understanding of the specific contextual narrative has been reached, and then only, may one move beyond this context in an interdisciplinary and cross-contextual conversation.

Finally, when looking at how this postfoundational notion of rationality affects theological reflection, Müller (2005: 76-77) refers to the statements of van Huyssteen (Lez Eyzies Symposium, May 2004), in positing that it revolves around three primary movements:

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First, as postfoundational theologians, we should acknowledge that all our intellectual work is inevitably contextual and interpreted by our own epistemological experience. In addition to this, we should recognize "... the way that disciplinary traditions shape the values that inform our reflection about God and what we believe to be God's presence in the world" (Müller 2005: 76-77).

Secondly, we should be aware of the imperative of a postfoundationalist to attain an epistemology that moves beyond the boundaries of our "... own discipline, our local communities, groups, or cultures" (Müller 2005: 76-77) toward credible ways to engage in interdisciplinary conversation.

And finally, as postfoundational scholars we should acknowledge that it is specifically shared traditional resources which are the motivating force which enables interdisciplinary dialogue. This interdisciplinary dialogue is most often expressed through the idea of *transversal reasoning*, which...

> ... promotes different but equally legitimate ways of viewing specific topics, problems, traditions, or disciplines, and creates the kind of space where different voices need not always be in contradiction, or in danger of assimilating one another, but are in fact dynamically interactive with one another.
>
> (Müller 2005: 76-77)

To properly understand postfoundationalism, one must view it from the position that it takes within the broader discourse of foundationalism. Some confusion can easily exist in understanding the concept of postfoundationalism, as it is not a movement in opposition to foundationalism, in fact, such a movement is called *antifoundationalism*. Therefore, four movements relevant to the concept of foundationalism exist: foundationalism, antifoundationalism, postfoundationalism and additionally nonfoundationalism. If illustrated graphically it can be seen that three of these concepts are organised on a scale of polarity, foundationalism being posited on the one end, antifoundationalism on the other opposite end, and postfoundationalism, neatly organised in the middle, while nonfoundationalism frees itself from the relationship of polarity by postulating an attitude of antagonism (see figure 2 below).

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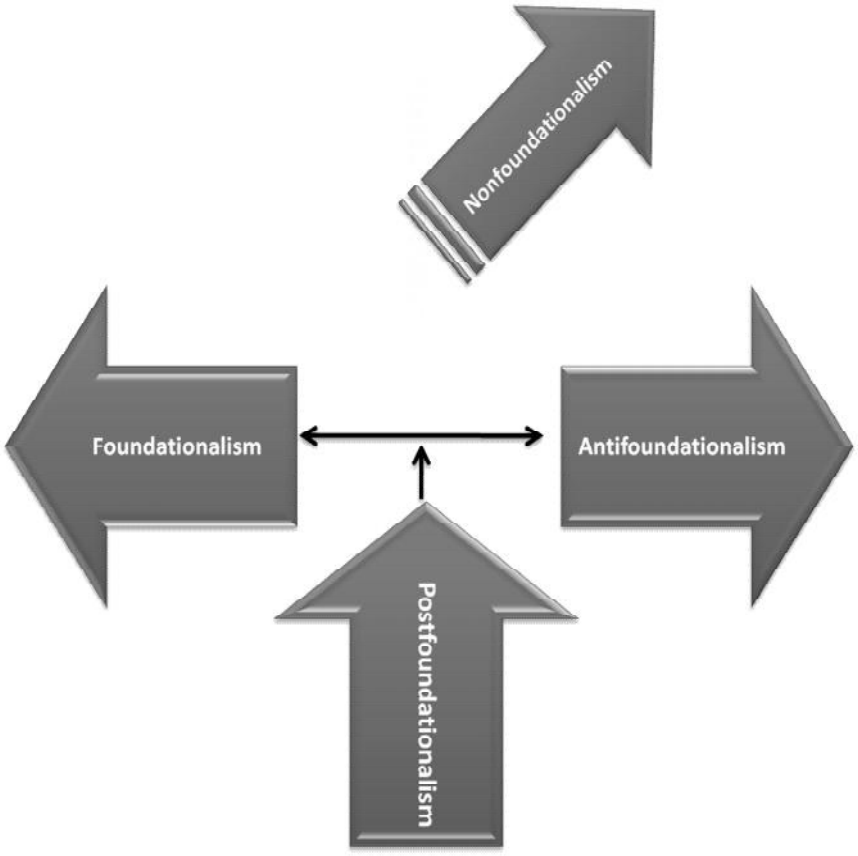

Figure 2: Polarity of the concepts of foundationalism

Foundationalism is a model of modernism which assumes that all true knowledge is embedded in specific beliefs or notions and; therefore, provides a metanarrative for which its foundational beliefs would be a crucial prerequisite. Van Huyssteen (1999: 29) explains the model of foundationalism by stating that "... foundationalists specify what they take to be the ultimate foundations on which the evidential support system for various beliefs is constructed".

Foundationalism, furthermore, can be identified by certain "epistemic features", such as being self-evident, being impervious to correction, being beyond question or doubt, and being evident to the senses. Additionally, it tends to be self-authenticating thereby providing foundations upon which wider networks of beliefs are built (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 29). It is clear that foundationalism does not provide opportunities for questioning and that once certain foundational beliefs are established, it becomes the 'be-all and end-all' which provides a basis upon which all behaviour and choices shall be built and regulated. Foundationalism is extremely value- and power-laden and becomes a superior form of epistemology which provides no opportunities for cross-discipline conversations.

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Van Huyssteen (1999: 63) points out that in Theology foundationalism takes the form of biblical literalism or is a "positivism of revelation", whereby religious experience is seen as an unmediated and unique dimension of experience, thereby excluding theology from other reasoning strategies in the denial of the crucial role of interpreted religious experience. Once again, here the religious person, or even scholar, does not have a voice and may not question the basis upon which any of these foundations or literalisms is build.

Müller (2009: 202) states that a "...theory built on such a presumption could be referred to as a "universal rationality". This is a rationality that is based on the idea of a universe of knowledge that functions as an overarching frame of reference". Here, people are indoctrinated with one universal truth which is to be held and to be lived by. This type of model restricts people as being subjective beings, creating meaning for themselves in the constructs created not only by a society, but also by the church. Hence, meaning and purpose also become the creation of this universal truth or foundations, thereby postulating that people are in no way different from each other and that all narratives, including self-narratives, are built on the same foundations:

> The foundationalist approach takes it for granted that absolute truth is available to all of us. This would be a perspective faithful to the true foundation and which therefore would provide us with the 'God's eye view' ... [A]ccordingly there is only one theoretical truth and that must be pursued.
>
> (Müller 2009: 202)

The idea of superiority or authoritative truth is clear within the assumptions of foundationalism. This sense of superiority is created by the establishment of unquestionable foundations, thereby giving more power to the ones who created these foundations. This is dangerous domain to move in, as all behaviour, all choices or decisions can then be justified by using these unfaltering foundations. Domination and oppression then becomes a function of the sovereign and is easily dismissed as part of the "greater good", as van Huyssteen points out;

> To claim that our knowledge rests on foundations is to claim that there is a privileged class of "aristocratic" beliefs ... which as such, are intrinsically credible and which are able, therefore, to serve as ultimate terminating points for chains of justification.
>
> (van Huyssteen 1999: 62)

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In opposition to foundationalism, postfoundationalism aims to move beyond foundations and the search of more foundations, which will construct a reality of universalism, to a point in time where various bodies of epistemologies and multiple forms of rationalities can coalesce so that more holistic and multiple understanding(s) of a specific locally embedded context, can be created. In relevance to this, Schrag (1992: 57) states that a postfoundationalist rationality is about the shifting and deconstruction of modernity's epistemological paradigm. In theology, holistic understanding can be achieved "... not through foundationalist notions of revelation, tradition, or inspired texts, but through responsible judgements about the explanatory role of those beliefs that are part of our interpreted religious experience" (van Huyssteen 1999: 115).

Consequently, opportunities to engage in cross-disciplinary conversation with such a model are limited, if not impossible. Müller (2009: 202) explains this difficulty by stating that foundationalism:

> ... leads to a process of assimilation, through which the other's point of view is integrated into one's own domain of knowledge. With this approach the ideal is a unified perspective, with the aim to achieve and strengthen a universal rationality. A combination of perspectives into a collage of different meanings is regarded as a threat to the truth.

Antifoundationalism is a model which forms part of the antimodernist theme which aims at removing the superior position science had in culture by recognising the influence of its dogmatic and belief system and its exclusive interest in certain communities. Therefore, antifoundationalism then aimed in replacing science's formal rules, method and radical criticism with modulatory and unanalysable language (cf. van Huyssteen 1989: 24 – 71 and 1999: 28; Rouse 1991a: 148).

Where foundationalism builds its movement on set, unquestionable and fixed foundations, antifoundationalism sees foundations as useful only when it serves a certain practical function. Therefore, foundations do exist, but is relative only to the period that it is useful, and then can readily be replaced with another, new useful foundation. Therefore, antifoundationalism's foundations are not fixed, thereby contradicting the very definition of the concept of 'foundation'.

Van Huyssteen (1999: 64) affirms this by stating that "[t]he antifoundationalist move to a more local and functionalist perspective on meaning, where meaning is the use to which sentences are put contextually, not only reveals how senseless it would be to speak of

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foundations for such meaning, but also how easily foundationalism can steal into our broader conceptual scheme on epistemic claims".

Therefore, antifoundationalism fixes its conditional foundations within a specific context, where it serves the functionality and praxis of that context. When it may be found that the context and its needs change, a new foundation is sought and implemented for the development of a new epistemology and rationality. In theology this might be clear where biblical foundations are used to serve the ever-changing needs of society – it used to suit the praxis of a community, instead of the community serving the praxis of the Word of God.

Nonfoundationalism is in its turn a reaction against the modernistic notion of universalism within rationality. It postulates that every historical, cultural and social group has its own distinct form of rationality, thereby stating that every human activity could then function as a paradigm for rationality. This type of mindset can then easily lead to a relativist notion of rationality (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 63).

Van Huyssteen (1999: 64) further more elaborates on the nonfoundational notion of rationality by stating that it depicts human epistemologies as ever-evolving social phenomena which are dependent on the praxis of ideas within a larger web of thoughts. Therefore, any type of truth is then foundationless and relative to context and praxis. He states that this might be visible through the philosophies of pragmatism, which in turn state that practical consequences are the criteria of knowledge, meaning and value.

The consequence of such a paradigm for the self is that a person is "... capable of experiencing only that which can be experienced within historical space and time" (van Huyssteen 1999: 65-66). The self then is completely foundationless meaning that it transcends history and any reality and it disqualifies any form of subjective structures which are inherent in all people (cf. Huyssteen 1999: 65-66). Here people are left guideless and on their own, with no form of stability or security to hold on to:

> With this complete rejection of foundationalism, new historicists like Richard Rorty therefore embrace pluralism and pragmatism: a pluralism that is unlimited because, as long as foundational realities are not experienced, there are no things beyond the plurality of particulars that could be experienced; a pragmatism that is an answer to confusion introduced by the absence of criteria for truth formerly provided by foundationalism, realism and the transcendentalized subject.
>
> (van Huyssteen 1999: 66)

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The influence of this model on our belief systems is that they are constructed with a context which is itself foundationless or groundless. The result is that questioned beliefs are justified by an accommodation thereof by another body of accepted beliefs (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 64). Furthermore, any theological reflection as well as any human or social activity can then be used to legitimise rationality. The consequence of nonfoundationalism therefore, is radical relativism of rationality (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 80), which in turn makes contextualism also relative which in turn makes any attempt to interdisciplinary discussion relative and; therefore, useless. In reference to interdisciplinary conversation and nonfoundationalism, van Huyssteen (1999: 80), referring to Brown (1990: 113) says: "Since each context can therefore claim its own criteria of rationality, there can obviously be no independent, cross-contextual framework for deciding whether or not one framework is more rational than another".

In conclusion, possibilities for interdisciplinary discussion with both non- or antifoundationalism are limited, if not impossible, because any attempts at mutual understanding will be approached with either a sense of scepticism or relativism, as Müller (2009: 203) states "...constructive discussions are difficult in a situation where everything is relative and subjective".

Because of the above stated models' inadequacy and antagonism to explain reality and knowledge in such way that a mutual and shared understanding can be reached, postfoundationalism aims to move beyond the objectivism of foundationalism and the relativism of nonfoundationalism. This move will be motivated when we rediscover the embeddedness of our rational reflection in the context of living, evolving, and developing traditions (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 113). In turn, interdisciplinary conversation is made possible when we accept an obligation to reach beyond our own local context, towards a cross-contextual situation which will enable us to explore some positive epistemological resources. These shared resources can then be utilised to enhance the process of interdisciplinary conversation (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 113).

2.4.3.1. Rhetoric

The subject of rhetoric was chosen to be discussed here as its important role in both the discourse of language and postfoundational rationality has been mentioned by various scholars such as van Huyssteen (1999) and Schrag (1992).

Schrag (1992: 116) states that rhetoric is an important aspect of rationality, as it acts as a mediating factor between action and discourse. Rhetoric binds the two factors of

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discourse, e.g. written and spoken word, and it links specific discourse with action. Van Huyssteen (1999: 133) explains that rhetoric is important within rationality as it "… weaves together the cognitive, evaluative and pragmatic aspects of rationality". He furthermore states that it is in fact one of the most important aspects of rationality as it is representative of the rationality inherent in our judgements and connects our deeds and our words with each other. It also helps us to justify the reasons for having certain beliefs and subsequently taking part in certain actions. As such, rhetoric is central to our position in a community and transports the process of intelligible communication.

Van Huyssteen (1999: 133) furthermore describes rhetoric as "... the interweaving of discernment, judgement, deliberation, and action and thus emerges as at the heart of human rationality". Therefore, rhetoric acts as an integrating force within our communications and reflections of the interdisciplinary conversation and is as such utilised as a rational tool for coming to terms with a reason which has lost its false sense of security in the foundationalist episteme (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 133). Rhetoric helps us to develop a broader notion of rationality which:

> ... not only implies rational accountability, but which also necessarily focuses on historical and social contexts, on praxis, and on the crucial epistemic role of interpreted experience.
>
> (van Huyssteen 1999: 133-134)

2.4.3.2. Judgemental Rationality

Another crucial aspect within the postfoundational notion of rationality, which is embedded in our conversation with other disciplines and contexts, is that of *judgemental rationality*. Van Huyssteen (1999: 118) states that our understandings are fundamentally shaped by our judgements, which function as prejudgements in our conversation with other disciplines or contexts. These prejudgements are; therefore, indicative of how much we as human beings and our thought patterns are embedded in our communities which are underpinned by social and historical discourses. Schrag (1992: 65) refers to this embeddedness of our understandings in discourse, as a distinctive pragmatic form of rational understanding, where this rationality is in turn refigured or shaped by praxis. Therefore, rationality functions through *discourses* and *rhetoric*, but rational choices cannot be made in the absence of our prejudgements. In the same way no understanding, no form of judgement and no form of a rational choice can be made without our prejudgements which ultimately shape the forms that these

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concepts will embody. Hence one can state that we are already orientated towards a specific form and type of understanding and meaning "by virtue of the values that we adopt" (van Huyssteen 1999: 118):

> None of our various forms of knowledge, however diverse the different modes or inquiry, are therefore possible without this background of contextualized prejudgements, habits, and skills that inform our participation in a communal world.
>
> (van Huyssteen 1999: 118)

Therefore, contextualised prejudgements do not only influence the way that we reason and our language of rhetoric, but also the manner in which we participate in our world. Inversely, it is just this participation in our world, which shapes our prejudgements which will then influence our rationality.

The imperative for theological scholars is; therefore, to acknowledge the role and the shape of these prejudgements or value judgements before we engage in conversation, so that we can commit ourselves to specific viewpoints, theories or philosophies which we judge as the best possible reasons for our actions and our decisions (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 118). We are thereby also obligated to engage in honest discussion and reflection by admitting when some of these judgements might contribute to some form of irrationality.

2.4.3.3. Transversality

Transversal rationality is a term which refers to the postfoundational notion of rationality, which assumes that true rational conversation is only possible through interdisciplinary action and a movement beyond one's own embedded and local context to a cross-cultural space in time. Van Huyssteen (1999: 136) states that:

> Transversal rationality thus emerges as a place in time and space where our multiple beliefs and practices, our habits of thought and attitudes, our prejudices and assessments, converge, the texture of this transversality, thus resides in the domain of our social, communal and institutional practices.

Therefore, this *transversality*, or transversal postfoundational rationality motivates us to move between the two polarities of modernism and postmodernism, so that we can find a space and a place in time where we can engage in a rational manner, with our interpreted experiences and communicated praxis which will eventually bring us to a

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satisfactory point in time where we can communicate and articulate praxis critique, give historical judgements, and make assessments to arrive at a narrative of disclosure. The advantage of this method of rationality is that at the end of the journey we do not find ourselves in an empty space of universalism or globalism; or at a place which is built on faltering and endlessly pluralistic foundations or even at a place with *no* foundations and relative concept of reality (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 139). No, transversal rationality "... 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: 139). It takes us to a place where we can engage in conversation so that we can come to an intelligible, responsible, liberated, and just understanding.

Van Huyssteen (1999: 136) makes us aware that different degrees of transversality exist, and that the degree which will be attained depends on how effectively we can communicate across the boundaries of different contextual and epistemological domains, as well as the quality of understanding that is reached amidst our interactions. Van Huyssteen (1999: 136) states; however, that we must be aware of the goal of transversal communication, which is:

> ... to discover or reveal, the shared resources of human rationality precisely in our very pluralist, diverse assemblages of beliefs and practices, and then to locate the claims of reason in the overlaps of rationality between groups, discourses, or reasoning strategies.

Schrag (1994: 69ff) in turn, argues that reason operates or functions during transversal thought and action, and manifests itself during the transversal processes of evaluative critique, engaged articulation and incursive disclosure.

Evaluative critique is a process of critical judgement where this judgement or discernment is signified by a process of separating, sorting, distinguishing, contrasting, weighing, and assessing of the different options available to us. Transversality is only at work during this process when one of three things happen: first, when different practices are merged with each other through processes which shows a clear continuity between these different practices; or when a collision of different practices takes place which changes or transforms the nature of some of these practices; or finally when no merger or collision is possible between these practices to such an extent that differentiation or no commensuration is at the order of the day (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 137; Schrag 1994: 69-70).

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Engaged articulation is to take part in a discourse which provides a meaningful or significant account or reasons for reasoning with a specific rationality (cf. van Huyssteen 1999: 137).

Finally, *inclusive disclosure* owns a claim of reality: "...it is disclosure that keeps articulation from circling back on itself to a space where there is nothing outside of language, nothing beyond the text" (Schrag 1994: 72). Van Huyssteen (1999: 138) states that this type of disclosure makes us realise that we can only stand in a relation with our world through our own interpreted experiences; therefore, we realise inversely, that the world also reveals itself through our human interpreted experience.

Therefore, the distinct characteristics of transversality are revealed during its use through multidisciplinary conversations:

> ... the dynamics of consciousness, the interweaving of many voices, the interplay of social practices are all expressed in a metaphor that points to a sense of transition, lying across, extending over, intersecting, meeting, and conveying without becoming identical.
>
> (van Huyssteen 2007:19)

Transversal rationality changed the way that we view the human subject as part of its own innate structures, such as his/her 'ego' development, to a place where the human being is placed in the space of communicative praxis. In placing the human person in this space, he/she is "... now fused with consciousness and self-awareness, and this consciousness is then unified by an experience of self-presence, emerging over time from a remembering self-awareness/ consciousness in which diverse past experiences are transversally integrated as we reach out to others" (van Huyssteen 2006: 21). This model turns our focus from the innate self, to the praxis of communication and relation.

Some *critique* on the concept, or the model of transversality is uttered by Wildman (2008: 490), where he states that the transversal model of rationality seems to favour certain transversal connection in the place of other possibilities, which leaves unfavoured conversations muted. He postulates that van Huyssteen might find this model comfortable because of the option to choose whom to communicate with (cf. Wildman 2008: 489; Müller 2009: 222). Osmer (2006: 343) gives a similar opinion, by also stating that this model lacks a principle of selection. However, he admits that applying such rules or criteria to this model, might contradict the philosophy of postmodernism and postfoundationalism.

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In response to these statements and criticism, van Huyssteen states that transversality was not meant to randomly choose who to converse with and with whom not, as he states, that there will be natural limits between disciplines where conversation might not be possible. However, he states that transversal rationality primarily aims at opening a critical conversational space, which will allow critical *self-evaluation* and understanding. Thus we can conclude that transversality is about opening up one's own mindset by allowing other disciplines to reflect critically on one's own rationality and episteme, thereby extending one's own boundaries.

However, I (the researcher) think that one should not let critique such as that from Wildman and Osmer pass one by – it might be the exact critical reflection that transversality wants to elicit. Hence, I do agree that as a postfoundational theologian or scholar, one must be very aware of who and how one chooses the conversationalist; this selection might make one aware of one's own biases and prejudices and might act as a motivator to choose conversationalists who will provide the least comfort, and the biggest challenge. Growth does not happen without effort – it is amidst struggle and pain from which one learns the most.

Similarly (Müller 2009: 226) stated in response to critique he received from a disciplinary discussion regarding the questions he asked, that "... it wasn't the approach or method of transversal rationality that created limitations. The limitations have rather been created by my own short-sightedness in the way I formulated some of the questions".

I conclude then that the model of transversality can indeed provide one with many possibilities and widen one's horizons and that of one's discipline, but that this conversation must be approached by a full awareness of one's own biases and prejudices, both in the selection of conversationalists and in the formulation of discussion points or questions. If this awareness does not take place, one runs the danger of falling into another modernist constructed episteme and rationality which provides comfort and security, but not much willingness to be evaluated and assessed.

2.4.3.4. The postfoundational notion of Practical Theology

Inherent to this study's epistemology and methodology is the paradigm of Practical Theology, and more specifically, a *postfoundational* notion of practical theology. As this study is born from the discipline of practical theology, it is imperative to understand where the researcher comes from and where she is going, by looking through the lenses of practical theology and its 'vision' and 'mission', if you want.

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Firstly, Gerkin (1991: 13) states that the practical theological inquiry is concerned with both a theological concern as well as practical considerations. This means that through the imperatives of practical theology, we are interested in serving people and their concerns through their daily communications and relations within a specific cultural and social setting, by showing continuity between the story of the Bible and the story of the particular person at a particular place within a particular point in time. Practical theology; therefore, aims also at acting in the world, or in the paradigm of the social world, through the paradigm of Christian theology, traditions and language; thereby closing the 'gap' between a person's day-to-day experiences and concerns and his/her religious experiences which are most often allocated to Sundays only, or to a particular social-spiritual *genre*. Practical theology aims at addressing specific ambivalent or paradox social issues, such as struggling with loss and death or inflicted trauma, divorce, poverty, sexual abuse of a parent and the like; through not only the Word of God, but by also encouraging and emphasising the imperative of action; hence, it is the *logos* through, within and by *praxis*. Practical theology is also propelled by elements of liberation, justice and reinstating human dignity.

Pattison (2000: 42) states that practical theology is an enterprise which gives special attention to specific situations, and is; therefore, known "... for the delicacy of its distinctions not the sweep of its abstractions" (Geertz 1991: 25). Pattison (2000: 42) furthermore states that practical theology emphasises the seeing and understanding, first listening and then carefully speaking; it is sensitive to context and situation and; therefore, is modest in its claims and postulations. Finally he concludes that "[t]his is a welcome feature amidst the past grandiosity of many theological enterprises which have sought to control and order the world rather than to understand it and to set particular individuals and communities free" (Pattison 2000: 42).

Here it is clear that the understanding of a specific context is central to the practice of practical theology. Müller (2005: 78) goes a step further in emphasising this contextual imperative of practical theology by stating that practical theology is indeed "... only possible as contextual Practical Theology". He stresses that practical theology cannot move away from this specific, local context; it also cannot function in a general universal context as the very essence thereof is to be focussed on specific, localised and concrete contexts; otherwise it runs the danger of regressing into a type of systematic theology (cf. Müller 2005: 78; Willows and Swinton 2000:42).

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The second aspect within this focus on a specific context is the practical theologian's *truthfulness* to the context. Müller (2005: 78-79) states that practical theological actions should not only be truthful to the specific localised context, but also within the methodology utilised to understand the dynamics within such a context – such a methodology must always be purposeful in its circular movement by moving from theory to context, back to theory and again, back to praxis (context). Browning (1991: 34) refers to this movement as 'the circle of practical wisdom'.

Another additional characteristic of the discipline of practical theology is its varying levels of functioning. Practical theology can be formal and informal, practical or academic:

> It can be very spontaneous, informal and local. It can also be very formal, systematic and organised. It can be part of ministerial activities on the congregational level, or it can be highly academic on university level.
>
> (Müller 2005: 73)

Whatever level practical theology functions in and on, it must always be driven by the lyrics of locality, embeddedness and situatedness (cf. Müller 2005: 73). This context will then contain four specific actions which prompt the 'mission' of practical theology, as Müller (2005: 73) states: "Practical theology happens whenever and wherever there is a *reflection on practice*, from the *perspective* of the *experience* of the *presence* of God" (emphasis placed by researcher). Thus, embedded within the locus of practical theology, are four insistencies, namely: reflection, perspective, experience and presence.

> Practical Theology is the one theological discipline that can never afford to be detached from basic forms of theological reflection.
>
> (Müller 2005: 73-74)

The above statement is made by professor Julian Müller to illustrate the importance of integrating the model of transversal reasoning into the philosophy and subsequent methodology of the discipline of practical theology, in enhancing understanding. The statement emphasises that reflection has always been part of the episteme of practical theology, and that we are now provided with not only a paradigm/ model, but also a method – through the emergence of postfoundationalism – which ensures that both reflection and continuous evaluation of our episteme becomes the imperative of practical theology.

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Additionally Müller (2005: 73-75) states that adding the notion of postfoundational rationality to the practice of practical theology, constitutes a rediscovery of the basic and most simple imperatives of practical theology. In explanation he states:

> It is an effort to move beyond the modernistic boundaries of Practical Theology, which tends to be formal and rationalistic. On the other hand, it is also an effort to avoid the relativism of antifoundationalist theories, which are a real threat to Practical Theology.
>
> (Müller 2005: 73-74)

Another important model used in the past during the praxis of Practical Theology, is the hermeneutical approach (explained in detail later during this thesis). Müller (2005: 74) states that the model of postfoundational rationality should be seen as another useful 'instrument' in coming to understanding, within the hermeneutical approach. However, he also states that that the postfoundational notion of rationality additionally moves beyond hermeneutics as it is also used as a metaphor for Practical Theology. This metaphor illustrates a specific view of understanding, by including not only local contextuality, but also working *from* and *within* this local contextuality (cf. Müller 2005: 74; Bons Storm 1989: 63). Within this context provided by postfoundationalism, it becomes important to first listen to the narratives of people who are struggling with real life issues. After listening, a description of the context needs to be made; however, note that a description of the general context will not do – the description must be relevant and applicable to the person's specific and concrete situation. Therefore, one would note that this approach is much like hermeneutics, except that it is more *reflexive* in nature (cf. Bons Storm 1989: 63; Demasure and Müller 2006: 417).

Some of the ideas of social constructionism and the narrative approach are also incorporated within Practical Theology; however, by adding the model of postfoundational rationality and transversality to this paradigm, some relativistic tendencies of social constructionism and narrative therapy can be combated. The postfoundational notion of rationality helps us to also better position ourselves within a theological world (cf. Müller 2005: 80; van Huyssteen 1997: 180-192), because it takes the movement of practice-theory-practice seriously, thereby bringing the model into operation. Consequently, by incorporating the postfoundational notion of rationality and the ideas of both social constructionism and narrative therapy, practical theology becomes a 'doing theology' which 'does' within a specific and actual context; a 'doing

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theology' which is interested in the detail of a "particular person's story" and not in generalisations or abstraction (cf. Müller 2003: 295).

In conclusion to the influence of postfoundationalism and social constructionism, Müller (2003: 297) states that although these two positions have been developed in different fields, both have the same aim in mind, namely providing us with: "... *a third way,* a way out of being stuck in modernistic or foundationalist (fundamentalist) science and theology on the one hand, and the fatalism of some postmodernistic approaches, on the other". Müller (2005: 74) concludes:

> 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.

As stated previously, the postfoundational notion of rationality does not only influence practical theology's philosophy, but also its *methodology*: "This practical theological narrative is not only a paradigm-story, but also a method-story" (Müller 2005: 86). If this philosophy does not eventually move into methodology, it will contradict the imperatives of the model. Therefore, a postfoundational notion of rationality provides us with an integrative narrative which includes the theologian in both processes of 'story-telling' and 'story-making' (cf. Müller 2005: 86). This participation should be very sensitive and descriptive in the deconstruction of problematic discourses, as well as in its development of alternative discourses/narratives (cf. Müller 2005: 86). Thus, with the use of this model, a prerequisite, before moving into method, would be to attain a certain attitude of sensitivity and discretion, as well as openness to the context and being unbiased so that specific cues of discourse can be heard.

This type of theological reflection or attitude, circles around three specific movements (cf. van Huyssteen 2004: Lez Eyzies Symposium):

First, an acknowledgement of contextuality, the role of interpreted experiences and the influence of disciplinary tradition in the values people hold, and how these values are used to reflect upon God and His presence in the world (cf. Müller 2005: 76-77).

Secondly, an increased awareness of an epistemic duty which extends the boundaries of, and our boundedness to our specific discipline, community, groups, cultures etc. so that we can partake in a reflective and effective interdisciplinary discussion, whereupon shared resources can be discovered (cf. Müller 2005: 76-77; van Huyssteen 1999).

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Finally, these newly discovered shared resources can be expressed most effectively with the use of the notion of transversality:

> In the dialogue between theology and other disciplines, transversal reasoning promotes different but equally legitimate ways of viewing specific topics, problems, traditions, or disciplines, and creates the kind of space where different voices need not always be in contradiction, or in danger of assimilating one another, but are in fact dynamically interactive with one another.
>
> (Müller 2005: 76-77)

The use of the notion of transversality is most useful to practical theology because it creates new possibilities for discussion through the imperatives of reflection and action, while at the same time keeping us humble in our endeavours as we gain new respect for various and diverse reasoning strategies (cf. Schrag 1992: 148ff; Welsch 1996: 764ff; Müller 2005: 77). It guides us by keeping us concrete, local and contextual while reminding us of how our episteme is shaped by tradition (cf. Müller 2005: 77).

Based on the elaborate discussion thus far regarding the postfoundational notion of practical theology, Müller (2005: 78) developed a list of minimum requirements for a corresponding methodology, which enables us to meaningfully reflect on the experiences of the presence of God. Accordingly, practical theology must be:

- Locally contextual
- Socially constructed
- Directed by tradition
- Exploring interdisciplinary meaning
- Pointing beyond the local

These requirements are then applicable both to the epistemology and methodology of a postfoundational and transversal notion of practical theology; thereby ensuring that the discipline of practical theology remains a discipline of 'doing' (cf. Müller 2005: 78).

2.4.4. Structure, System and Social Constructionism: History, Development and Impact

Another important impact on the discipline of Practical Theology, as well as on family therapy – which is one of the praxis fields of practical theology – is the development of the notion of structures and systems, which, in a much more transformed nature, are

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today mostly recognised through the paradigm of social constructionism. To fully understand the underlying epistemological and methodological assumptions of social constructionism, a step back in history is appropriate so as to look at the concepts of structure and system and how it determined the development of the notion of social constructionism.

Before the emergence of the field of family therapy, most scholars focussed on psychoanalysis and intrapsychic conflict within individuals, such as posed by Sigmund Freud, to explain both personal and relational conflict that people experience. These theories were all firmly based within the modernistic view of epistemology and ontology. After some years of struggling a new paradigm emerged which regards the larger social and familial context as the focus point and departure of not only episteme and method, but also therapy. These movements, collectively, are firmly rooted in the postmodern view of the world.

Thus, today's broader view of the problems people experience focus more on the familial and social context in which human behaviour occur, than on recollected memories of the past, without diminishing the significance of individual internal processes and intrapsychic dynamics. This paradigm sees all behaviour as part of a "… sequence of on-going interactional, recursive, or recurring events with no obvious beginning or end" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 13). Additionally the therapist's attention is directed to transactional patterns which take place within the family or other macro and micro social processes (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 13). Therefore, the current postmodern notion of constructionism and family therapy has its roots in the [2]structural view and within the system theory.

Freedman and Combs (1996: 1) speak of metaphors that we use to organise our work and our life with, and the influence it has on how we perceive things, people and events, as well as the influence it has on our conduct and behaviour. In a similar way, paradigms or worldviews also hold certain metaphors as key to building epistemological

[2] It must be noted that although constructionism and constructivism has its roots in certain structure and systemic theories, that some scholars still use the paradigm of structure and system to guide their work, while excluding its development into constructionism as part of their paradigm. During this study, these theories are only used to show the historical development of social constructionism, and is thus not part of this study's or the researcher's theoretical departure and/or methodology.

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and ontological assumptions and thus, the first metaphor in the historical development of the constructionist paradigm, was the metaphor of 'structure'.

When structure is used as a guiding metaphor in family therapy, people or family members are seen as being part of an inflexible and geometrical arrangement, which in turn guides a therapist or a scholar to be concerned with concepts such as 'rearranging', 'strengthening' or 'loosening' existing familial or other significant social structures. They state the disadvantage of this metaphor in paying too little attention to the relational aspects of people, which are ever-changing, and the fact that people and their interactions are much more complex. Therefore, this metaphor is used to oversimplify the processes of relation and being, which can lead to the objectification and dehumanisation of people (cf. Freedman and Combs 1996: 2).

The structure metaphor was followed by the metaphor of 'systems', where the existence of people and related events were seen as standing in a reciprocal relation, where they influence and interact on and upon each other. Therefore, it was seen that participants share in each other's destiny and that people "… are embedded in a network of relationships ..." (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 14). Here, a therapist or scholar would be interested in changing such a social group's structure, relation patterns or even belief systems, as this would then promote the changing of behaviours. Such scholars are; therefore, more interested in the 'what' than in the 'why'; they are more interested in the process of transactions than in the content of those transactions (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 14).

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 14), in stating what we have learned from the systems metaphor, say that it allows us to identify recurring patterns of behaviour in relation to the individual's interaction with other people in the system. The rephrasing of the individual into a unit in a larger system, allows us to not only look at the individual, but also the people who form the social circle of the person. It is interesting to note here how the use of language ['rephrasing the individual'] carries a certain discourse/ message which influences perspective.

Freedman and Combs (1996: 2) have also identified advantages gained by the systems metaphor:

> The 'systems' metaphor has served the field well. It has given us useful ways to talk about the process by which people connect in patterns that transcend individual bodies.

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Freedman and Combs (1996: 2) also state; however, that the systems metaphor can limit us in thinking about larger cultural and societal influences on an individual, by keeping the focus only on an individual and other significant people and not allowing possibilities of other cultural, traditional or even political societal influences, in enhancing our understanding.

Following the development of systemic theories, was the idea of people functioning as a cybernetic system, during the 1950s, thereby creating a paradigm shift from the systems theory to the idea of *first order cybernetics*. This metaphor aimed at understanding how families, or a member of a specific closed social group, sustain stability within their social group(s), and was first mentioned by Bateson (1972). Bateson postulated that a family, specifically, seem to utilise self-regulating feedback mechanisms so that it can maintain its balance and stability (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 17; Freedman and Combs 1996: 2-5). Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 16) explain the dynamics behind this shift of paradigm:

> ... this conceptual leap focuses attention on the family as subject matter. It is the family as a functioning transactional system, as an entity in itself, more than the sum of the inputs of its participation that provides the context for understanding individual functioning.

One must take note that the systemic theory must receive accreditation for this shift, as their concerns regarding patters and processes led to the proposal of a cybernetic epistemology. This epistemology proposed an alternative to our customary rationality regarding 'knowing' and thinking', thereby providing new possibilities for our epistemology (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 16).

Theorists following the assumptions of first order cybernetics focussed on the stagnation of people in specific patterns of unfulfilled and repetitive behaviour, or how they get stuck in unbalanced hierarchical structures. These theorists will then find ways of interrupting such patterns so that the social group can develop and maintain a healthy stability. The first place of departure in interrupting patterns of behaviour was to get a common goal from the family or social group, to which they could move during the process. This imperative was underpinned by the assumption that because people get stuck in specific repetitive patterns of behaviour, and because they apply the same ineffective 'solutions' in attaining their goals, they most of the time do in fact not attain their goals, thereby moving into stagnation and are left unfulfilled (cf. Freedman and Combs 1996: 3).

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Although this new paradigm opened the way for the field of therapy, in retrospect it still contained some irregularities, as it

> ... presupposes that the therapist are separate from and able to control families, that they can make detached, objective assessments of what is wrong and fix problems in a way analogues to the way of a mechanic fixes a malfunctioning engine.
>
> (Freedman and Combs 1996: 3)

Freedman and Combs (1996: 5) state furthermore that this view focussed too much on what was seen as 'dysfunctional' in people's lives, limiting our view of other factors that might contribute to the dissatisfaction and frustration of a person. Therefore, people realised that they need to focus as much on change as they do on stability.

Hence, the development of the *second-order cybernetics* – a less control-orientated model which places the therapist inside the family's or [3]social group's dynamics and process, instead of outside or above (cf. Freedman and Combs 1996: 5, Hoffman 1988: 112). With this model the therapist would look for interactional patterns which contain specific meaning to the people involved in this interaction. This 'seeking' was focussed "... on identifying a premise or 'myth' that was shaping the meaning of a family [group] member's actions ..." (Freedman and Combs 1996: 6). With the development of the second order cybernetics, theorists stated that there cannot be an outside observer of such a system, as that person will inevitably partake in the changing of the system, and will inevitably be changed by the system; therefore, the therapist is by definition, a participant of the system (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 21). As such a participant, the therapist must be well aware that many people; therefore, form a system, and each one of these people have their own perspectives, view of reality and descriptions of this reality. Thus, the 'reality' of the family or other social group, is in actual fact the "... agreed-upon consensus that occurs through the social interaction of its members" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 21). This perspective, in other words, sees the family or social group as a system with many perspectives and multiple realities, and the therapist forms part of the reconstructing of the realities of the members and the group as a whole, as he/she observes certain patterns and

[3] Additional to the family as a normative group, the researcher refers to other social groups as to include the possibility of other, close and interdependent groups which might not be defined by the criteria of a normative family, but which might function on similar principles and perspectives.

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perspectives. The second-order cybernetic model; therefore, argues for a model where the therapist and the family or group members, search together for multiple meanings, and together they re-structure, or re-develop a new narrative of reality and relationships (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 21-22).

Another important development of the second-order cybernetics, is its move towards an inclusion of a non-hierarchical relationship between the therapist and family or group members. This in turn, theorists believed, will encourage different family or group members to engage in regular self-examination without cleaving to specific goals set by the therapist. Within this view, the role of the therapist is one of *inquisitiveness* where he/she must invite members of the family or group to examine their own meaning making process as well as the different options available to them. The therapist will then, together with the family or group members, co-construct a paradigm which includes a new way of looking at the choices available to them, the idea of discovering unexplored ways of viewing their situation and new ways to look at the altering of the situation and their perspectives (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 345).

The idea of *circular questioning* developed from the model of second-order cybernetics, and includes a specific skill in facilitation where the members or participants of the process can see themselves as part of a relationship or within a relational system, and where they listen to the other members' perspectives on the situation. This way awareness of the relational aspects as well as the influence each member has on the other members, or the idea that 'my behaviour affects someone else', are increased (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 345). Additionally Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 345) state:

> ... the questioning process itself is an intervention, defusing the family's emotional intensity and allowing its members to hear other views of the problem.

The significance of the second-order cybernetic model lies in the assumption that the therapist never tries to directly change the system (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 346). Firstly, with the use of objective observance and then the mechanical implementation of recommendations; he accompanies the family or the social group on their journey of exploration and self-discovery, as to empower each member and the family or group as a whole, in taking control not only over their own lives, but also in the solving of accompanied problems.

As a final remark on this model, Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 23) refer to Minuchin (1991) who utters his concern regarding this model's ability to acknowledge the

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extent of external or macro systems' influence on a micro system, such as the family. He states that there are other institutions and socioeconomic conditions that influence the way people live, their perspectives and the decisions they make and points out that impoverished families, for example, are not empowered to construct their own stories, being paralysed by their disadvantaged socioeconomic position.

We have now arrived at the emergence of **social constructionism**, as it developed from not only the systemic model, but also from the emergence of postmodernism. During the 1980s, scholars argued that absolute truth cannot be known to the human being. They also explored the notion of 'taken-for-granted assumptions' in most academic disciplines and developed a way to deconstruct these fixed ways of thinking as to explore new assumptions and to develop new constructions. Hence the birth of the constructivist epistemology which postulated that people actively take part in the construction of his/her own perspective and interpretations as he/she experiences different events, also in relations with the wider social context (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 341).

This postmodern constructivist epistemology directly challenges the ideas of the systemic model, by postulating that we must rather examine the assumptions made by people regarding the challenges they face, than to only view these challenges in terms of interactional behaviour and transactions. The idea of constructionism suggests that the therapist must accompany people (clients) in finding the meaning behind their behaviour and decisions, collaboratively seeking new meanings through mutual inquiry. The vehicle for this exploration and gathering of knowledge – in line with the assumptions of postmodernism – is language (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 341). In essence, postmodernism uses the "... construct of constructivism to emphasize the subjective construction of reality" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 344).

An essential characteristic of a postmodern constructionist is an attitude that values diversity and appropriates preconceived notions of functional or dysfunctional to the subjective family or group members only, stating that they are the experts of their own lives and their own constructs. Therefore, such a therapist will never impose normative standards and criteria on a family or group (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 342).

A brief note on the difference between constructivism and constructionism is necessitated. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 342) state that *constructivism* finds its roots in the neurobiology of Humberto Maturana (1978: 27-63) who postulated that our perceptions are limited by each person's individual nervous system and as such, nothing

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is perceived directly. He states that each person has different assumptions or perspectives regarding the same situation as we construe reality differently. This is a result of "... our own mental and symbolic processes and meaning-making structures" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 342).

In turn, Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 342) state that *social constructionism* also denies the existence of objective reality and postulates that our constructions, such as attitudes, beliefs, memories and emotional reactions, which arise out of our observations, are created from our language system, culture and relationships with one another:

> It is through language that we inculcate the prepackaged thoughts of our society, and in the process of socialization we learn to speak in acceptable ways and share the values and ideology of our language system...
>
> (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 342)

Another important distinction is the distinction between micro- and macro social constructionism. Demasure and Müller (2006: 413) state that *micro social constructionism* is a discipline which falls under discursive psychology and as such focuses on how microstructures and language affects interactions. They mention two different uses of micro social constructionism, one being Gergen who emphasises the interaction as having constructive power and how our thoughts and actions are embedded in these interactions; and the other being Shotter, who investigates the process of interpersonal construction in local conversation.

Macro social constructionism on the other hand, focuses on the macro linguistic and social structures, as posited through the Foucauldian discourse analysis. Here language is seen as having constructive power which is the result of social and material constructions, relations and institutionalised practises. This constructive power of language is seen as setting the stage for the performance of our social and psychological life. Therefore, for macro social constructionism the idea of power and power constructions or discourse is essentially important (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 413).

In continuing with the assumptions held by social constructionism, it is important to state that crucial to this movement is the subjective (or personal) experiences of the individual in relation to his/her larger social network and systems. These experiences must thoroughly be explored and described during the therapeutic process. Therefore, the

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therapist's prejudgements may never be considered as objective or unbiased, as he/she will be a crucial participant in the process of discovering and unveiling discourses underlying current constructions and in the reconstruction of new constructs (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 343). These prejudgements must be acknowledged beforehand so that the influence thereof can be minimised. Therefore, social constructionist therapists tend to take a 'not knowing' position, so that the therapist – now equal to the family or group members – can discover and examine, together with the family or group members, the various belief systems used to understand and view their reality (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 343).

The power of the different belief systems that people construct and use to live by or to view their world, is continuously emphasised in the assumptions of social constructionism. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 344) state that these constructed beliefs "... are kept alive and passed along through stories or narratives we share in conversations with one another". People organise specific experiences and accompanied memories in their own created 'self-narratives' which provides them with a sense of order, continuity and meaning; these constructed self-narratives are used, in turn, to organise and maintain a specific view of ourselves and of the events that we have experienced (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 344) which will again influence the construction and creation of future narratives which is a reflection on how we view our world. Parry and Doan (1994: 24) affirm the power of these constructed narratives by stating that each of us view the world "... through the lens of a succession of stories – not only a personal story, but also gender, community, class, and cultural stories".

Thus, in accordance with the assumptions of social constructionism, people tend to create narratives based on two types of knowledge: a personal constructed knowledge about the world, and a socio-cultural constructed knowledge about the world. We use these two primary knowledge sources to make choices and decisions. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 347) state that these life choices and decisions are not only possibilities, but "... merely reflect our biases regarding how things are and what constitutes our options". The primary role of the therapist is thus, to guide people to become personal agents of their own choices and decisions, to urge them to tell their narratives, so that it can be deconstructed with the help of the therapist, and finally to assist them in reconstructing new narratives, preferably one that would empower them in having a sense of control over, and meaning of their lives (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 347; Freedman and Combs 2002: 12-13).

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In essence then, social constructionism encourages us not to focus on problems and the symptoms of the problems, but to search together for new possibilities in the creation of life narratives. This paradigm looks for possibilities instead of pathology (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 343). The longed for goal then, is for people to find meaning amidst experienced life events, so that they can create and recreate new narratives which will liberate them from the suffocating power of dominant socio-cultural discourses (cf. Doherty 1991: 38).

Social constructionism as a paradigm has a specific view regarding certain concepts. Some of these ides will now be briefly discussed.

The first view of social constructionism is the view about the concept of '*discourse'*. This concept is central to the assumptions of social constructionism as it has a primary influence on the way that we construct new narratives and ideas about the experiences of certain events in the world and the meaning of those experiences to a person. A discourse; therefore, refers to a specific 'representation' created by the socio-cultural and/or political world which conveys a specific message or interpretation regarding certain events. A discourse is usually internalised by people who did not necessarily take part in the creation of that discourse. Some examples of a discourse might be generally accepted meanings, metaphors, images, narratives, statements, texts, symbolisms, traditions etc. (cf. Burr 2004: 64; Demasure and Müller 2006: 413-414). In actual fact, a discourse can be any socio-cultural construction which has the power to influence the narratives of the individual in some significant way. Social constructionism is particularly interested in how discourses are maintained and then utilised by the individual and his/her social context, in the creation of a self-narrative. Demasure and Müller (2006: 414) state that the individual person tends to be the mouthpiece of the prevalent discourses in his/her culture: "What people say or write is part of a certain discourse and is conducive to that particular discourse". Macro social constructionism might focus specifically and significantly more on the power relations inherent in some discourses which are circulated amongst specific social and cultural groups.

I (the researcher) would like to propose an extension on the idea of discourse and the creation of a self-narrative as pertaining to this study. As stated previously, not all power related to discourse is necessarily negative – meaning that a person might find the guidance provided by a discourse as constructive for his/her own personal growth. In a similar way, I found that many people and especially the co-researchers of a study would listen to a story and lay claim to that story as reflective of some of their own

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characteristics, which eventually results in a better understanding of oneself, on the one hand, and on the other hand, they gain a feeling of connectedness, of "I'm not alone" and "I'm not all that different". I would like to state that yes, subjectivity must always be acknowledged as all experiences, eventually is subjective and as such interpreted in that way so that meaning can be attained; however, people find meaning also in communalism, not necessarily referring to community, but maybe to a sub-group, where they feel they belong. This feeling of belongingness is primarily established during the first contact with another by finding an overlaps of different self-narratives, they find connectedness in the exclamation of: "I know what you mean! I feel the same way!" or by finding subjective meaning in a metaphor used in a different story, such as the David narrative. One might argue that it is like reading a story about yourself, especially if one could never find the exact words to describe oneself or one's experiences – this feeling of discovering yourself in a story is very liberating. As soon as a connectedness between an external story and the feelings and aspirations of the individual takes place, an exhilarating feeling of "I am understood" and "I understand" is created. This might be because we are essentially social beings and that our identity must be created as individuals, but must also be embedded in a social context where I can find a purpose, meaning for myself. The concept of meaning is very rarely an isolated action – it usually functions in a context where I can add meaning and can be of meaning, which, in turn, is a circular process – as soon as I am meaningful in a context, I find meaning for myself.

The second important concept inherent in the assumptions of social constructionism is the concept and the function of *language*. Demasure and Müller (2006: 414) postulate that language "... provides us with a structure that enables us to give form and meaning to our experiences". Therefore, because language is a social structure, and because social constructs can be changed, once again by the use of language, it opens up many possibilities of constructing an alternative construct through the use of language. In *Truth and Method* (1975), Gadamer refers to a dialogic relation where the original understanding is replaced by a new constructed understanding. Gergen (1999: 144) in turn, states that meaning is created and altered during a communal relationship. However, he states that if one wants to enter a dialogic effort, one must first put aside one's own 'fore structure of understanding', so that the text, or the discourse, can lead the discussion and ask its own questions (cf. Gergen 1999: 144; Demasure and Müller 2006: 414).

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Thus, language in its essence is performative and enables action and can; therefore, easily also channel different power relations that lie at its base (Demasure and Müller 2006: 414).

Another concept influenced by the paradigm of social constructionism is the concept of *identity*. Demasure and Müller (2006: 415) state that social constructionism suggests the idea of a 'relational self' where specific characteristics given to a person attains its meaning from the relationship which a person functions within. This means that an identity, or an idea of oneself is co-constructed from the various discourses provided to us from a specific socio-cultural context and that identity cannot function in isolation, or has no meaning or function in isolation. Baron and Byrne (2000: 159-160) confirm this by stating that "… one's self-identity, or self-concept is acquired through interactions with other people – beginning with the immediate family members and then broadening to interactions with those beyond the family". Although this might sound like a person has no control over his/her own identity development, this might not all be true. A person acts as an integrating being and evaluates him/herself in relation to his/her various relationships. The development of an identity, relational and social, is a process of adaptation to one's context and follows a circular movement while functioning as a feedback mechanism in the later stages of this circular movement. An identity or self-concept is an active frame of reference which determines how a person processes information regarding him/herself, and includes concepts such as motives, emotional states, self-evaluation and abilities (this list is not exhaustive) (cf. Baron and Byrne 2000: 160). Therefore, it is clear that a person integrates various information received about self from the context and relations so that he/she can actively make decisions based on this frame of reference, or very valuable 'centre of resources'.

Baron and Byrne (2000: 160) explain the theory of Sedikides and Skowronski (1997) on the development of an identity according to its adaptive characteristics. They state that the first characteristic of the identity emerges as an increased subjective awareness which includes the ability of a person to discern him/herself from the physical and social context or environment. The first aspect to emerge was *subjective awareness*; this involves the ability of the organism to differentiate itself to some degree from its physical and social environment. Following this awareness is a shift of attention from 'others' to 'self', where the person becomes the object of his/her own attention (cf. Baron and Byrne 2000: 160). The last stage of identity development, one which is characteristic only of humans, is also the stage which functions as a feedback loop providing

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information to the self for continuous formation in relation to one's context and relationships. This stage is characterised by a 'symbolic self-awareness' which enables people to form an abstract cognitive representation of self through the use of language (note again the performative function of language). The emergence of this representation enables a person to communicate with others, to evaluate the outcomes of behaviour and decisions and to develop attitudes related to self and the context (cf. Baron and Byrne 2000: 160). Very importantly, Baron and Byrne (2000: 160) state that "Throughout each person's life, interactions with others in multiple contexts continue to influence and to modify the specific contents of that person's self-identity".[4]

This means that identity is constructed by the interaction of personal, historic and relational factors as well the contemplation of the meaning of this interaction to the person – to a certain degree people still actively choose what ideas to keep and what to discard, we after all do not *consciously* blindly follow a certain discourse without having the capacity to reflect and evaluate the influences of our identity and subsequent behaviour on our lives (which is the product of our discourse-influenced constructs) irrelevant of the idea that one's identity and behaviour is socio-culturally constructed . Most people have the capacity to the rationality of what is 'good' and what is 'bad', for oneself and the society, notwithstanding the awareness of the concept or functioning of discourse in the context, as Baron and Byrne (2000: 131) state:

> The *theory of reasoned action* [...] suggests that the decision to engage in a particular behaviour is the result of a rational process that is goal orientated and that follows a logical sequence. In this process we consider our behavioural options, evaluate the consequences or outcomes of each. And reach a decision to act or not. That intention is then reflected in our behavioural intentions which are strong predictors of how we will act in a given situation.
>
> (Baron and Byrne 2000: 131)

Therefore, to state it differently, or to propose that a person does not play a role in his/her identity formation, would be to reduce the layperson to the level of an animal who only reacts on immediate desires (or instinct) without contemplating the consequences

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[4] Take note of the interdisciplinary discussion between practical theology and psychology – although psychology is developed within a modernist paradigm, it can still make valuable contributions to our understanding of human behaviour. We immediately note the overlaps of rationality between the two disciplines.

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of these actions and decisions. No, a person still takes some accountability for the construction of self. Nevertheless, I propose that the awareness of the influence of discourses will greatly enhance a person's capacity to accept or discard discourses which will eventually succeed in providing that person with a safe and secure frame of reference and subsequent guidance of how to function both as a fulfilled and goal directed individual and as a responsible and purposive member of his/ her social group, which will benefit both.

Demasure and Müller (2006: 415) state that one's identity is not a set-in-stone construction, because meaning contained in a word or concept can always change. Thus, according to social constructionism the constitutive power inherent in language makes the identity of a person quite fragmented, changing and temporary which can be altered as new meanings are incorporated into this frame of reference. Meaning, in turn, is created as we interact with our experiences, with the past and in relation to other significant people.

Our final thought on social constructionism would be on its *relation to therapy*, or to the pastoral conversation, as laid out by Boyd (1996) and Demasure and Müller (2006). Boyd (1996: 219-222) specifically mentions three implications of a constructionist view for the pastoral conversation, the first being the view of language as seen by social constructionism on the pastoral conversation. Boyd states that therapy is also a meaning-generating system within a specific reality and that language is central to the creation of that reality. During the pastoral conversation much focus will; therefore, be placed on the socially constructed meanings for a person as seen in relation to the problem being experienced.

Boyd furthermore states that the therapist will join the conversationalist in exchanging of new ideas and new meanings, thereby participating in a dialogical process where new constructs is formed in partnership with the therapist, but never with the therapist standing in a hierarchical relationship with the person. This points to the third implication, which is that of a 'not-knowing' position of the therapist. The therapist, as a social constructional aid, may never take a position of an expert in therapy. The therapist here must put all preconceived therapeutic knowledge aside, as to not challenge the client's version of reality or understanding of an experience, by instead exhibiting an attitude of curiosity – a sincere interest in the client's experiences and understanding. In doing this the therapist conveys a message to the client that a joint

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action, a joint endeavour will be taken so that new meanings and understandings can be discovered and constructed (cf. Boyd 1996: 219-222; Demasure and Müller 2006: 416).

Demasure and Müller (2006: 416) add another implication, by stating that a social constructionist therapist must be aware of the notion of discourse and how it leads to the acceptance of the narrative approach, or of the importance of listening to the life stories of a person. Such a therapist must, therefore, also acknowledge how language and action is connected and explore this relationship during the conversations. They warn us; however, against too much optimism and a realisation that not all people have the privilege to act according to new insights of the influence of dominant discourse in their lives (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 416) and that yet, another alternative narrative, which works around or even with this influence, should be explored. However, with the use of deconstruction as a method to reveal underlying power relations in metanarratives, the client will get new insights into the narratives which are dominant in his/her society or community, how they were created and what the consequences are of these narratives in the life and the choices of the individual person. This will provide him/her with an opportunity to question the legitimacy of these narratives and to voice his/her own opinions and experiences, thereby liberating the person by giving him/her both a 'voice' and an opportunity to construct alternative narratives (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 416) which will free him/her from the oppression of these dominant narratives. The realisation of dominance is sometimes just as liberating as physically being freed from oppression.

Another vital concept for the pastoral conversation, derived from social constructionism, is the idea of '*local wisdom'*. Local wisdom implies that true expert knowledge regarding personal experience, is inherent to the person him/herself: "The key to the good progress of this type of conversation is not the scientific knowledge of people's lives the therapist-pastor has, but the local wisdom of the person seeking help" (Demasure and Müller 2006: 418). The acknowledgement of this local wisdom should come from the therapist or pastor, whereby he/she verbally acknowledges this resource inherent in the client and whereby he/she literally takes a step back and do away with the professional status often given to the therapist. Demasure and Müller refer to this as the 'professional selfreducing of the pastor' or therapist (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 418). The implications of this for the outcome of the pastoral conversation is that the therapist or the pastor cannot lay claim to the insights gained or the successes reached, and this in turn has a great influence of empowerment for the client. Demasure and Müller (2006:

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418) explain the role of the therapist or pastor during the conversation or therapy: “The task of the pastor is to facilitate a conversation where this local wisdom can be re-told and reinvented in order to construct a new preferred reality”.

Another crucial role of the social constructionist therapist or pastor, during the pastoral conversation, is the understanding of the embeddedness and subjective understanding of experience: “Experience is situated and experience is always interpreted” (Demasure and Müller 2006: 418). Therefore, the therapist or pastor must be very sensitive to the client’s interpretations of experiences, by also understanding the context in which these experiences and subsequent interpretations took place. Note here that the therapist or the pastor is not interested in a general understanding of a context, but specifically in the client’s perspectives and interpretations of his/her experiences, within the specific local context. The only channel to this understanding of context and interpretations of experiences within such a context, is by sincere and active listening of the client’s narratives, as these narratives will convey such a perspective and understanding (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 418).

The final remark on the influence of social constructionism on the pastoral conversation is that of *tradition*. Both the postfoundational and social constructionist paradigm place emphasis on the way that our epistemes are shaped by tradition. Therefore, during the pastoral conversation, the therapist or the pastor must invite a reflection on the context of the client from the perspective of religious traditions (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 418). Demasure and Müller (2006: 419) state that such a reflection is often very meaningful for the client, as it gives a sense of belongingness to the client and it provides an opportunity for the client to see him/herself as part of a tradition, which offers another frame of reference wherein further interpretations can be made and understandings can be reached. It can be stated once again that meaning is not a self-constructed activity and most times happens in the context of a being part of a meaningful and purposive goal or action, in relation with other people who are co-constructing each other’s sense of purpose and meaning, or identity.

In conclusion regarding social constructionism and therapy, one can state that this type of therapy is primarily concerned about the assumptions that different people have regarding a problem or a challenge experienced. The role of the therapist is then to explore these socio-cultural and historical constructed narratives regarding the self, as to unveil the dominant power relation which underpins the construction of the self-narratives. As soon as insight is gained about the consequence of these dominant

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narratives on the construction of the self-narrative, the therapist together with the client can explore new and empowering ways in constructing an alternative narrative which is not focussed on pathology, but rather on possibilities. Because our assumptions regarding reality arise through communication, the client is provided with an opportunity to share his/her perceptions through language, and because language is performative and changeable, new realities can be created through communication and conversation (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 347).

Social constructionism acknowledges how people tend to believe that their constructed narratives are the truth about the world and of themselves. Therefore, people tend to confuse their personal and subjective map of the world, with the territory that it is instead, intended to represent. This fixed way of looking at themselves and the world, offers no possibilities of change and; therefore, no possibilities of hope, and leave people despondent and disappointed. These then desponded narratives influence the writing of another despondent narrative (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 348). Therefore, a social constructionist therapist is in essence:

> ... interested in expanding the client's rigid and inflexible views of the world ... [C]lients' views are mirrored in the language they use in constructing their takes on reality. Language – conversations – in turn becomes the therapeutic vehicle for alternating old behaviour by considering new explanations leading to new solutions.
>
> (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 348)

2.4.4.1. Postfoundationalism and Social Constructionism

It is imperative to show the relation between social constructionism and postfoundationalism as these two paradigms are central to the methodological departures of this study. When first looking at the postfoundational notion of rationality and then comparing it with the views and assumptions of social constructionism, two similarities become evident. First, is the idea of interpretations regarding reality and subsequent experiences, as well as the contextuality or embeddedness of our local context in our understandings and in the meaning-making process.

Transversality states that we relate to our world only through *interpreted experiences* (van Huyssteen 1999: 138) and that diverse disciplines offer alternative interpretations of our experiences (cf. Müller 2003: 299), as interpretations inevitably will differ. Similarly social constructionism states that all experiences and realities are embedded in a

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specific local context and informed by various traditions which influence the subjective interpretation of the individual of different experiences. Therefore, an individual's interpretations and identity (view regarding self) is in essence constructed by personal, cultural and historical factors. Therefore, "... the idea of socially constructed interpretations and meaning is clearly part of the postfoundationalist approach" (Demasure and Müller 2006: 417).

Both postfoundationalism and social constructionism convey the idea of 'received' interpretations, which implies that interpretations and understanding are received through various traditions and socio-cultural discourses. Postfoundationalism emphasises the importance of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary conversation which will inquire into the different constructed interpretations of similar experiences. Social constructionism similarly, emphasises the role of context and traditions in shaping the understanding and meaning making process of the individual. Therefore, interpretations are not constructed individually and in isolation, but are in essence co-constructed and received through the various constructs provided by the wider socio-cultural and traditional discourses, and if true understanding wants to be reached, one needs to point beyond one's own discipline and context, so that various interpretations can contribute to the meaning-making process (cf. Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000: 17; Müller 2003: 299-300). Hence, both postfoundationalism and social constructionism see interpretations not only as received, but also as socially constructed. Müller (2003: 299) states that postfoundationalism does not view these varying social constructed interpretations "... in the sense of competing or conflicting interpretations, but of complementary interpretations of the manifold dimensions of our experience".

Another similarity between postfoundationalism and social constructionism, probably because both have their roots in postmodernism, is the importance of language and its performative function in conveying discourses and transformation. Van Huyssteen (2006: 21) states that patterns of discourse and action are embedded and conveyed through the praxis of communication and conversation. We saw how language can contain and convey power relations, but also how the changing of meaning of a word can stimulate the transformation and change of constructed understanding, and play an important role in the re-construction of narratives and interpretations. Language also makes it possible for different and varying disciplines and contexts to take part in interdisciplinary and cross-contextual conversations which inevitably also contribute to

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the transformation of understanding and meaning-making. Therefore, language contains the notion of possibilities.

Finally, both postfoundationalism and social constructionism acknowledge the embeddedness of the local context in the construction of interpretations and understanding. Van Huyssteen (1999: 113) states that our rational reflection is embedded in the context of living, evolving and developing traditions; an acknowledgement of this embeddedness is needed before one acts on the obligation of moving beyond one's local context so that one can enter in interdisciplinary and cross-co contextual conversation. He furthermore states that because of our embeddedness in a specific local context, all our beliefs, meanings and actions arise from this embedded context (cf. van Huyssteen 2006: 25). In a similar way, social constructionism also states that our identity and subsequent meaning-making process is embedded in a specific socio-cultural and historic context, and that this embeddedness influences the construction of the self-narrative. Müller (2003: 299-300) confirms this by stating that when we realise that our identity (and rationality) is socially constructed we are liberated from the urge to defend our rationalities over other more accepted universal, empiric modernist rationalities.

In conclusion, the congruous assumptions made by both postfoundationalism and social constructionism guided this study in how it approached the co-researchers and their understandings of their experiences in their specific embedded context, by paying special attention to the various socio-cultural discourses which underlie their self-narratives and how these narratives were informed by various traditions. This study took the concept of contextuality further by moving beyond its local and specific context, to an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural conversation, with the aim of exploring various rationalities and understandings regarding the specific experiences of the co-researchers, which took place in a specific embedded context. The co-researchers were accompanied by the researcher in exploring not only various discourses which influence their meaning-making process, but also various possibilities in re-constructing a new meaning making narrative. Therefore, in its epistemology and methodology, this study aimed at staying true to the assumptions of both postfoundationalism and social constructionism, because it provides the researcher with a framework whereby a holistic account of all the influencing factors in the creation of the self-narratives can be taken in consideration (micro and macro context); while at the same time providing the co-researchers with an opportunity to come to an understanding of their own lives and the

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discourses which have an influence in the construction of their narratives, thereby laying claim to the construction of their own self-narratives.

2.4.4.2. The Metaphor of Narrative

> We seldom think about it, but we spend our lives immersed in narratives. Every day, we swim in a sea of stories and tales that we hear or read or listen to or see (or some combination of all of these), from our earliest days to our deaths. And our deaths are recorded in narrative, also – for that's what obituaries are.
>
> (Berger 1997: 1)

The idea of narrative as a functioning frame of reference in organising one's experiences and understandings emerges directly from the paradigm of social constructionism. However, the idea of narrative was already visible in the postmodern theory of Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984: 29f) where he proposed narrative and scientific knowledge as two different types of discourses. He stated that both these discourses have legitimate functions but that only the narrative provides knowledge which cannot be had in any other way and as such can also legitimise scientific knowledge, without the use of the former universal and absolute grand narrative. If science; however, does not utilise the narrative in the creation of their epistemes, it would fall back on its own epistemic validity and once again continue in creation knowledge infiltrated with prejudice (cf. Lyotard 1984: 18ff; van Huyssteen 1999: 34). Therefore, already in the emergence of postmodernism, the idea of narrative in the construction of an alternative epistemology was proposed, as it can serve as a platform where a multitude of realities and knowledge can come together to create holistic understandings.

Paul Ricoeur also acknowledges the usefulness of the model or metaphor of the narrative, by stating that stories provide an opportunity for both the creation of identity and the transformation thereof (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 412). He affirms this transformative quality of the narratives by explaining that it is made possible through the way in which facts and events are selected and linked. This selection and connection is based on many possibilities available to the narrator and happens by chance; not because it is the only way that these facts and events can be selected and connected, but also stating that the content of a narrative is not arranged as a *cul de sac*. Therefore, the model of a narrative provides us with many possibilities of construction (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 412).

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Narratives are reflective of the dominant discourses of one's society or social group, because of the constructive nature inherent to it. People construct stories about themselves and their experiences, as well as the meaning of these experiences for them in a specific context, influenced by various traditions. Thus, when a narrative is told, multiple dimensions of influence are unveiled. Demasure and Müller (2006: 412) confirm that narratives reveal much more than just concepts, it contains the life story of a person and when an inquiry is made about a person, that life story is put on the centre stage. Therefore, each person has a narrative identity, which serves as a resource centre for understanding events and experiences, both in the past and the future. However, note how the concept of narrative identity is not only applicable to a person, but also to a social group (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 412) where various people interact in the co-construction of a narrative identity. Hence, it is clear that a "... dialectic movement between texts with their symbols and metaphors and the active contribution of people" (Demasure and Müller 2006: 412), exist in the construction of both a self and a social narrative.

Gergen (1999: 158-159) states that social constructionism prefers the telling of stories to an argumentative discourse because of the tendency of argumentation to see the conversationalist as an opponent and not as a co-constructionist of meaning. Argumentative discourse also tends to manifest perspectives and meaning one-sidedly which in turn leads to the oversimplification of a perspective wherein the possibility of reaching an agreement is then limited (cf. Gergen 1999: 158-159; Demasure and Müller 2006: 415). The sharing of narratives, on the other hand, creates a context where people are provided with an opportunity to identify with the characters of the story, thereby involving every person in the audience because of the recollection of former images and feelings (cf. Gergen 1999: 158-159; Müller and Demasure 2006: 415). In listening to a story, people tend to celebrate or suffer with the character, thereby imagining themselves in the position of the character(s) – this enables people to see and experience something from the perspective of the conversationalist. As soon as different perspectives are experienced and appreciated, agreement becomes possible and the possibility of resistance is limited (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 415). The telling of stories also opens up various possibilities of meaning-making, as people realise that many characters contribute to the construction of a story, and that a story can be told and retold in many different ways.

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Demasure and Müller (2006: 413) mention the importance of context of both the narrator and the auditor of a narrative, by using the notion of horizon, a concept coined by Gadamer (1982). They state that both the narrator and the listener is marked by his/her own embedded context, which in turn means that this context affects the way the story is told and interpreted, or understood. Gerkin (1991: 20) explains that Gadamer (1982) first used the concept of the fusion of horizons in explaining how text, or other discourses such as the narrative, is interpreted by different people. The term horizon "... suggests that every humanly constructed text or artefact [...] emerges from, and is an expression of a horizon of understanding or meaning" (Gerkin 1991: 20). Therefore, either the narrator, or the person who constructed a narrative, and the person who aims at understanding this narrative is guided by a specific, and different horizon of meaning. Gerkin (1991: 20) states:

> ...the interpreter comes with certain preunderstandings – prejudices in Gadamer's language. Yet the interpreter's desire is to allow the text or artefact to speak to the interpreter out of its own horizon.

This points to another important directive of a narrative, that is to allow for multiple understandings and interpretation, which in turn guides a person to the construction of a subject meaning-making narrative. Therefore, people are not bound by the idea that only one interpretation is correct and acceptable and that their thoughts and actions must be directed by this universal accepted notion of meaning and purpose, but that they can attain the freedom in choosing an understanding which will function as a motivator of transformation and change, thereby resulting in a better possibility of reaching one's full potential. People are also liberated by the possibility of change; that one's narrative is not carved in stone. Thus, instead of a clash of horizons, such as presented by modernism, a *fusion* of horizons is now proposed. Demasure and Müller (2006: 413) explain the advantage of such a fusion:

> The fusion of their horizons enriches all the conversational partners ... [I]f stories are the most appropriate medium to achieve transformation, we have to conclude that (more) stories should be told in order to create an opening for people to change.

In summary, the notion of narrative provides us with an opportunity to enter a conversation where all the characters of the narrative can voice their perspective, their experiences and their subsequent understandings, without entering an argument where the participants are in competition about who is right and who is wrong. In such a

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conversation a multitude of meanings are possible, which provides people with a selection of 'tools'; to enable change, both on a personal and social level. These multitudes of meanings and possibilities are liberating for the constructed identity, which now realises that transformation is not only possible, but even acceptable.

The *praxis* of narrative therapy; therefore, directly emerged from this *notion* of narrative, which in turn has its roots in poststructuralism and deconstruction. Poststructuralism rejects the idea that every phenomenon has a deep structure at its roots, and that the complexity of the phenomena can be broken down to a few basic elements (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 367). Instead, today's thinking regarding therapy revolves around the metaphor of meaning and narrative, which postulates that our ideas about reality are organised and maintained through the narratives we use to gain knowledge regarding ourselves and the world that we live in: "... the [...] metaphor of systems [...] has been replaced by the metaphor of language, stories, and the way people organize, interpret, and assign meaning to their experiences" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 365). In accordance with this metaphor, narrative therapists believe in the liberating power of new alternative constructive narratives which provides clients with new options and possibilities for their futures. This assumption is derived from the acknowledgement that people tend to get stuck in destructive, limiting and problem-saturated narratives which hinder them from moving forward and reaching their potential (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 365).

Narrative therapy postulates that people arrange different experiences of events in a coherent narrative in an attempt to make sense of their experiences. This narrative gives a person a sense of continuity and meaning and is used to understand subsequent following experiences (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 369). However, this narrative is not constructed in isolation, but is embedded in a context which in turn provides the person with a certain dominant metanarrative which is incorporated into this self-narrative. In turn, this socially constructed narrative has a great impact on the person's actions and future behaviour and choices (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 365). As stated before, this narrative is many times focussed on pathology rather on possibilities and leaves a person in a context which is saturated with problems. Hence the need for a new alternative narrative which provides the client with new possibilities and new insights.

Thus, narrative therapy, working from the assumptions of social constructionism and postmodernism, aims at guiding a client in deconstructing a self-negating narrative with

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the use of deconstructive listening and deconstructive questioning methods. He/she then accompanies the client in the process of externalising the problem and searching for unique outcomes, so that eventual new interpretations of a narrative are possible. Narrative therapists believe that these new interpretations should be privileged over other narratives, before it can act as a guiding metaphor for living one's life. The end result of successfully establishing and maintaining an alternate dominant narrative and; therefore, alternative interpretations, is the reshaping of a person's outlook, attitudes and future behaviour (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 367).

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 365) state that before an existing narrative can be changed or discarded, the person must be provided with an opportunity to examine the various values, assumptions and meanings which dominate their view of themselves and the problem being experienced. Therefore, permanent change can only be achieved when the newly created narrative has been internalised and when the new assumptions they hold about themselves and their futures serve in opening new possibilities to them. Thus, the reshaping and changing of lives can only be achieved when a new future narrative has been written (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 365).

The role of the narrative therapist during this process is to accompany the person in exploring and discovering more rewarding possibilities for living their lives (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 365). The narrative therapist, in assuming that people are the experts of their own lives, must accept a 'not-knowing' position, which puts the therapist equal to the client, extinguishing all notions of hierarchy and subsequent power. This in turn empowers the client in laying claim to all achievements made. Narrative therapy, thus, involves a "... respectful, non-blaming narrative conversation, in which clients are the experts in their own lives and are assumed to have the skills and competencies needed to construct more positive stories about themselves" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 365-366).

The metaphor of narrative provides us with various sub-metaphors to both understand and explain how people experience their different roles throughout the narrative of living life and affirms how people see themselves as both actors and narrators of their lives. Cochran (2007: 7) in building on the theories of James (1890) and Sarbin (1986) states that the linguistic distinction between 'I' and 'me' refers to a person's view of him/herself as narrator and as actor. He states:

> As a narrator, a person draws upon past and future to interpret and organise the present. As an actor, a person lives the present, attempting to get something

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> done or having something done to him or her. The webs of meaning that the narrator spins might enrich or impoverish action.
>
> (Cochran 2007: 7)

Therefore, this assumption implies that to fully act one's life, one's script needs to be written. We might state that the genre of this script will determine the actions of the actor. If the genre is 'tragic', then the actor will act accordingly. People then take part in the writing of the script (constructing a narrative), in the acting of the script (internalising the narrative) and in the narration of the script (reflecting upon the dominant narrative).

The above then indicates the stage upon which we life the narratives that we construct regarding ourselves. It must be noted that the writing of the script does not happen in isolation – it is indeed constructed by incorporating the dominant discourses which are received from our deeply embedded lived context. If the writer of the script; however, is aware of this social construction of the narrative, he/she might have more control in choosing which discourses to include, and which to discard.

Another sub-metaphor of the metaphor of narrative is that of meaning or of 'life plot' as Cochran (2007: 10) states: "This forming composition of meaning is called a life theme or life plot". The life plot indicates patterns of meaning which a person creates in the acting (or living) of the narrative. These strands of meaning are already written in the life script; however, a significant disruption of this pattern of meaning elicits yearning or leaves the person with a situation which is problem-saturated – indeed a tragic story (cf. Cochran 2007: 10). It is here that the role of the narrative therapist becomes important in guiding the client in exploring other possibilities for a life plot, and as soon as this has been discovered "... a central task (mission, project) crystallises that enables a person to frame an active role in the world. Through enacting this role, a person fulfils meanings of the life plot and yearnings of prior experience" (Cochran 2007: 10).

Cochran (2007: 11) makes us aware of the variations in composition of a life plot, thereby stating that an understanding of story and the ingredients that make up a story, is needed. These life plots are formed in the context of life histories, and; therefore, a wide variety of these life histories must be collected and examined before an understanding of the creation of a plot can be reached. Life histories are rich in resolutions and shift in meaning, sometimes striking, sometimes delicate. The creation of meaning is generally marked by a movement through the history of life, and progress towards the formation of a life plot. Furthermore, life plots can differ in degrees of

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resilience, vulnerability and constructiveness (cf. Cochran 2007: 11). The narrative therapist must accompany the client in determining the characteristic task of his/her specific life plot, as for some plots "… the central task that emerges is destructive ..." (Cochran 2007: 11). Therefore, it is important for the narrative therapist to understand the type of plot the client is facing, as well as its composition, then only can the therapist and the client discern what transformation is needed (cf. Cochran 2007: 11).

Cochran (1990; 2007) provides us with a different perspective of looking at the metaphor of narrative in therapy. It is clear; however, that here the emphasis is also placed on the role of dominant discourses through a person's life histories and that a thorough understanding of the socio-cultural creation of meaning is gained, before transformation, or the rewrite of a new narrative, or a new plot can be attempted. This perspective also shows how a person is both the actor and the narrator of his/her narrative, and that true transformation must start with conscious efforts and insights gained by the person him/herself, and not the therapist. The therapist acts as a guide, a companion in the exploration of new possibilities.

Therefore, in essence, the narrative metaphor "... leads us to think about people's lives as stories and to work with them to experience their life stories in ways that are meaningful and fulfilling" (Freedman and Combs 1996: 1).[5]

2.4.4.3. Hermeneutics

Earlier I have mentioned how Demasure and Müller (2006: 416-417) referred to the notion of postfoundational practical theology as a way of understanding within the paradigm of the hermeneutical approach, although it also moved beyond this approach in being more reflexive in its epistemology and methodology (cf. Bons Storm 1989: 63; Demasure and Müller 2006: 417). Therefore, an understanding of the hermeneutical approach is needed in understanding the postfoundational notion of practical theology, and also to see how it is utilised within the discipline of practical theology in coming to a better understanding of the meaning-making process of the experiences of people.

Hermeneutics in general and in its very basic form can be defined as "... the theory of philosophy of the interpretation of meaning" (cf. Bleicher 1980: 1; Thrift and Amundson 2007: 40). As a discipline, hermeneutics and its specific focus, has evolved in its

[5] A more elaborate explanation regarding the methods of narrative therapy will be provided in 2.5.2

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movement through history, but has first emerged in a context where it became necessary to unveil the meaning and message in text where it was not immediately transparent, such as the text of the Bible (cf. Thrift and Amundson 2007: 40).

A major shift in the discipline of hermeneutics came as a result of Martin Heidegger's (*Being and Time* 1962) work, which proposed a change in focus from method to ontology. Heidegger argued for the embeddedness of a person's reality in culture, history and time. He proposed that people "... are born into a world of concepts, structures and stories that predate us and, for the most part, we interact with that which we encounter with implicit understanding" (Thrift and Amundson 2007: 40). Therefore, we only inquire into things when they are not as we expect them to be, thereby taking it for granted. It is only when things are not as we expect that we stop to think about those things that we normally take for granted (cf. Thrift and Amundson 2007: 40). Heidegger's concept of people's embeddedness in context, history and time, proofs particularly useful for the notion of a postfoundational practical theology. He stated that people and events are inseparable from their meanings in a specific and local context, and; therefore, we are tied to the past, present and future. He also argues that although we are provided with many possibilities from the past regarding our notion of reality, these discourses are not entirely deterministic, because we as human beings have the ability to take part in a continuous dialogue between the messages of the past and the present. Finally, he states that people continuously participate in existential projects whereby we seek guidance in how to be in the world, as a specific subjective being grounded in a specific context and time (cf. Thrift and Amundson 2007: 41).

In turn, Hans-George Gadamer in *Truth and method* (1975) focussed more specifically on the question of epistemology and the preconditions of understanding, thereby seeking to invalidate the assumptions held by methodologism mostly used in the field of social science. Gadamer contends that an attitude of objectivity in methodology is not possible, because it is in essence, not possible to step outside the influence of one's culture and history in gaining and interpreting knowledge. He attains that it is precisely culture and history which provide us with a foundation to understand and interpret experiences. Similarly, he states that a moment without prejudice is not possible, as we cannot remove ourselves from history, and that we should rather be aware of the prejudices that we do bring to the forefront (cf. Thrift and Amundson 2007: 41). Furthermore, Gadamer suggests that we can increase the understanding of our prejudices by looking at the historical and cultural narratives which contributed to the

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construction of our shared presuppositions. In turn, this understanding can only be reached if we are willing to engage in a dialogue with the different voices from the past which contribute to the construction of our present understanding and interpretations (cf. Thrift and Amundson 2007: 42). Thus, it is clear that the insights provided by Gadamer connect with the postfoundational notion of practical theology in stating that multiple realities exist, and that our subjectivity is embedded in our local and specific context. He also states that the only way to know reality is by communicating with the past which is also embedded in context and culture – this is similar to the idea of postfoundationalism which encourages interdisciplinary discussion in gaining understanding of the various epistemes arising from different contexts and influenced by different traditions. Moreover, Gadamer agrees with postmodernism that absolute truths and universal realities are not possible, because the idea of objectivity will always be an ideology.

Another influence on the movement of hermeneutics, which is of interest to this study, is the notions postulated by Charles Taylor in his book *Sources of the self: the making of the modern identity* (1989). Taylor provides us with hermeneutical insights specific to the notion of being, or of forming an identity by proposing that the development of identity evolves in relation to our interpretations regarding moral issues, which is shared within a communicative context and praxis. Taylor argues that our identity is based on our response to moral issues; that these moral issues are dependent on our ability to articulate and interpret the various issues that we come to confront and that this articulation and interpretation is in turn, dependent on shared understandings. Finally, the process of identity formation which stands in relation with the moral frameworks available from our communicative context, is developed in the form of a narrative (cf. Thrift and Amundson 2007: 43). Taylor refers to the communicative context as a 'web of interlocutions' (Taylor 1989: 36) which means that a self can only be a self in relation to other selves. Ultimately, Taylor proposes that our identity is formed with a specific context who shares a similar understanding regarding moral matters. These understandings were passed on through generations from the past and; therefore, are not particularly or exclusively attributed to subjectivity (cf. Thrift and Amundson 2007: 43). Therefore, he argues that a person does not have the ability to judge what is good in isolation and without reference to contextual sources, instead, he argues, a person engages in "... the search for moral sources *outside* the subject through languages which resonate *within* him or her, the grasping of an order which is inseparably indexed to a person's vision" (Taylor 1989: 510).

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Taylor's argument; therefore, supports the social constructionist notion of a socio-cultural constructed idea of oneself, and that a person incorporates what he/she gains from personal interpretations of experiences, history and culture into his/her concept (construct) of him/herself. In a similar way the hermeneutic approach regards:

> ... the self as dialogical, relational, interdependent, self-interpreting and agentic, within a context of pre-established meanings and issues of significance ... [A]lthough human beings actively work to make sense and ascribe meaning to their lives, this always, happens within the confines of history and culture.
>
> (Thrift and Amundson 2007: 44)

Later in this study, it would become clear that such a framework of identity formation proofs valuable in understanding the development of a particular gender identity of the adolescent co-researchers, overwhelmed by messages of masculinity and manhood from their specific gender embedded context.

In nearing the end of the hermeneutical approach, we consider the contributions of Paul Ricoeur (1976) specifically in the way that we approach text; or in the language of postmodernism, various discourses. Ricoeur proposes three phases in the approach and interpretation of text. The first of these phases is the phase of *prefiguration*, when the text is approached by a person who brings certain feelings, presuppositions and prejudices with him/her. As soon as the text is read, a meeting takes place between the reader and the text; this meeting is called *configuration*, and marks the second phase. During this meeting, the reader starts to develop a new perception regarding the world and his/her position within that world, and; therefore, marks the phase of *refiguration*. Therefore, the movement of coming to understanding is then completed. However, Ricoeur adds that if one of these phases does not take place, true subjective understanding did not take place; or at the very least, an understanding which motivates transformation, did not take place (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 411).

Let us take a closer look at each of these phases as it connects to the application of the narrative approach to therapy, as proposed by Demasure and Müller (2006: 411-412).

Before experiences can be organised in a narrative, action must take place, again before experience can be the result. Therefore, people first act in the world, and after an experience has taken place, based on these actions, it is recollected and retold in constructed narratives. This action before experience can be renamed as prefiguration.

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Similarly, Ricoeur states that actions have a prenarrative character and are; therefore, available for conversion into narratives (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 411).

The configuration phase of Ricoeur confirms with the construction of a narrative, where the person develops a plot and various characters which indicate the 'meeting with action', otherwise known as experience. During this configuration of the narrative, a person will bring together various elements as well as the inconsistencies of their own actions and that of others, with the goal of constructing a unity from the heterogeneity. This unity, constructed from heterogeneity, will always entail a continuous aspect of tension (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 411). Demasure and Müller (2006: 411) state that "...in a story, events occurring successively in time are put together in a causal connection". One must note that during the configuration phase the reader's horizon and that of the text is merged, which results in an enrichment of the reader's horizon – here merging of horizons indicate the process in which the text finds its origin in the reader's world, as if it was 'born' in the world of the reader. This opens up possibilities for refiguration, or the gaining of new insights where disclosure takes place (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 411).

Finally, when a narrative succeeds in becoming directive and meaningful for the person's life, refiguration has taken place, and this refiguration will inevitably result in a redescription and new understanding of reality, which will in turn result in a change of behaviour and thought. Ricoeur states that narratives have the ability to provide us with a chance of transformation, as "… transformation is most easily achieved through stories" (Demasure and Müller 2006: 412). These phases, as proposed by Ricoeur, are directed in a spiral motion, as refiguration directs the person back into the world of action, or back to the phase of prefiguration. Ricoeur refers to this motion as the hermeneutic spiral (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 412).

Demasure and Müller (2006: 412) state that metaphors can also carry the notion of a redescription of reality; however, unlike narratives which function on the level of action, these metaphors function on the level of feelings, values and aesthetics. They add that refiguration must be preceded with configuration which results in disclosure, as refiguration is dependent on the discovery of new insights. They also postulate that these phases of approaching a text serve as the basis and motivation for interdisciplinary work (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 412).

In conclusion, it is clear that the discipline of hermeneutics has much in common with some of the assumptions of postmodernism, postfoundationalism as well as social

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constructionism. It can serve as a supplementary resource in the deconstruction of current narratives as well as the construction of new narratives as it provides us with many insights regarding the influence of culture and history in the interpretation of text and the notion of the self. Müller (2004: 294) however states, that although he is in agreement with the philosophy of hermeneutics, he is concerned about the inadequacy of this approach in addressing certain concerns related to practical theology, such as the distortion of communication through the use of language (cf. Bleicher 1980: 191), its lack of emphasis on the socially constructed nature of knowledge-systems, as well as the inability to provide practical theology with contextual outcomes. It would seem then that hermeneutics can get lost in theoretical abstractions creating a gap between theory and praxis.

I postulate then that it is important to keep these inadequacies in mind, especially because this study is embedded in the context of practical theology and the notion of postfoundationalism, that adamantly state that theory must move over into action, and; therefore, praxis, and that the context wherein the praxis will take place, is co-constructed with epistemes which are very much value-laden. Otherwise, practical theology might face the danger of becoming a discipline of words, of theory and never of action or of praxis. This of course, will be disastrous as practical theology, above all theory, is always aimed at a reflection on practice and is always guided by the moment of praxis (cf. Müller 2005: 73). Practice in turn is both a noun and a verb, which indicates how the noun of action is transformed into the verb of act – this is the aim of the theology of a practical practice.

Nevertheless, we should not discard the contribution of the hermeneutical approach in confirming our notions of a socially and historically constructed reality which in turn influence the formation of an identity, or the notion of the self, which in turn influence the construction of the self-narrative. Both Gadamer and Heidegger paved the way for the notion of multiple truths and realities and prepared us for the battle against objectivity and value-freedom. The value of these theories in the construction of our narrative regarding epistemology and ontology, is indispensible.

2.4.4.4. The Cultural-linguistic Model of Lindbeck

Charles Gerkin (1992: 101-110) gives an elaborate outlay of George Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model, as a proposed model for pastoral workers in tending to the "... fragmentation of a consensual structure of meaning and value that can give order and

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purpose to people's lives" (Gerkin 1992: 101) which has infected and infiltrated, according to him, the foundations of our communities. He states that this fragmentation can result in crises which occur when former social structures do not assimilate new experiences adequately anymore. When this occurs, transformation is needed, but this transformation in turn will always be resisted by established patterns which provide continuity with the past. He states that this tension between continuity and change will always occur amongst individual and social relationships, but it is when the tension is excessively increased that it cannot be comprised anymore, that crises occur (cf. Gerkin 1992: 102).

Gerkin (1992: 103) states that a community of faith should serve the purpose of caring for its members by offering a narrated context of ultimate meaning, which can serve as a paradigm within which life can be lived. It should offer a grammar, a narrative, which can connect people's experiences with the ultimate metaphor of meaning which is contained in the Christian narrative (cf. Gerkin 1992: 103). He then states that this community of faith, through various models of care, should tend to the fragmentation of communities and the subsequent crises experienced. He thus proposes the cultural-linguistic model which should serve as a frame of reference for the pastoral worker, therapist or pastor, in attending to this fragmentation of meaning and ultimate loss of purpose.

It must be noted here, that the cultural-linguistic model is discussed in this study, as a theoretical point of departure because it extends our metaphor of narrative in connecting the socio-cultural and historical constructed self-narrative, with the narrative of the Bible, thereby extending the continuity of meaning and purpose which might also be embedded within this narrative. As pastoral workers and narrative therapists, we are obliged, in the accompanying of the client, in discovering new possibilities and constructing an alternative narrative, to also guide the client in the exploration of possibilities contained in the story of God with His people. As a matter of fact, the story of God with His people is one of the traditions which informs the creation of a narrative for the Christian client. In denying this, one is denying the assumptions held by social constructionism which postulates that narratives are co-constructed by an embedded context and the traditions which inform and influence the epistemologies created within that context. Therefore, the cultural-linguistic model provides us with a framework of constructedness which points more specifically to the imperative of the pastoral therapist in closing the gap between the story of the client in a specific social world, and the story

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of God with His people, so that the client can construct a narrative, which is influenced by the meaning of the story of God which can serve as a guide of purpose for his life and experiences within this specific social world.

Within George Lindbeck's (1984: 32) model of doing theological work, "... religions are seen as comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualized, which structure human experience and understanding of self and world". Within this model, religion corresponds to the concept of culture in its aims of depersonalising its specific culture and its incarnation into narrative and ritual (cf. Gerkin 1992: 108). Additionally, this model states that a specific religion, with its various narratives, rituals and symbolised meanings, becomes a 'cultural' context which functions and informs in the same way as any other cultural context. Gerkin (1992: 108) confirms this by stating that to belong to a specific religion means that one adopts a certain grammar, or language and an interpretive frame of reference from which one then understands oneself in relation to one's world. This leads to the connection of one's life narrative with the narrative of Christians.

Lindbeck (1984: 33) elaborates on the similarity of a religion to that of any other cultural context. He states that religion is not just about what one believes in or what symbolism is expressed through a specific attitude, feeling or sentiments; rather, religion functions like a metaphor [or idiom] which assists in the construction of a reality, in the formation of beliefs and in the experience of certain attitudes, feelings or opinions [sentiments]. Moreover, he affirms that religion is much like a culture or a language which becomes a communal phenomenon which in turn assists in the shaping of the subjectiveness of a person, as opposed to being a manifestation of the subjectivity. Religion also consists of a language, a vocabulary which entails discursive and nondiscursive symbols which are in turn used by the logic pertaining to that religion in utilising this language in a meaningful manner. Additionally religion, through its imperative of tradition, also correlates with a specific manner of living and contains both cognitive and behavioural dimensions, much the same as culture and language (cf. Lindbeck 1984: 33). Finally, Lindbeck (1984: 33) states:

> Its doctrines, cosmic stories or myths, and ethical directives are integrally related to the rituals it practices, the sentiments or experience it evokes, the actions it recommends, and the institutional forms it develops.

In the same way, Christianity as a religion, expressed through the Bible, is also seen as a source which contains the grounding narratives of this religious community which in

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turn guides people to structure their lives according to these sacred truths which is contained in the narrative of God with His people (cf. Gerkin 1992: 109). Therefore, Christianity functions as a culture in being directive, constructive and meaningful to people in the creation of their life stories.

Therefore, to become a member of a religious community (take note that becoming religious is always a communal act, as religion generally does not function in isolation), means that a person will internalise a set of skills and thoughts which guides one in feeling, acting and thinking in conformity with that specific religious tradition. One primarily does not gain knowledge about a religion, but rather one learns how to be according to that religion. Lindbeck (1984: 33) affirms that a religious experience is generally a communal experience. This communal experience is enriched with activities such as ritual and prayer which continuously remind its members who they are, where they come from and how they can be in the world (cf. Gerkin 1992: 110). I would like to add that the culture of a religion, just as another culture, provides a narrative which always entails a tension between the past, the present and the future. The activities entailed within a specific religion act as a balancing mechanism of this tension by providing feedback from the past which acts as a guide for future behaviour.

The epistemes of a religion provide its members with a truth which is grounded in the primary narratives of that religion; therefore, also socio-cultural and historically constructed. These narratives again serve as a paradigm in structuring people's behaviour and choices in the present world (cf. Gerkin 1992: 110).

Gerkin (1992: 110) explains that the cultural-linguistic model has great appeal for theological work because it acknowledges both cultural unity and cultural plurality; while simultaneously acknowledging the power of culture and language in directing a person's life or the construction of a person's narrative. Additionally, it invites intercultural dialogue, thereby providing its members with an opportunity in utilising traditional ways of ordering one's life to new experience (cf. Gerkin 1992: 110).

> For individuals buffered by a plethora of often contradictory values and ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, it offers an avenue of return to a grounding mythic narrative that tells them who they are in their deepest loyalty.
>
> (Gerkin 1992: 110)

Therefore, the cultural linguistic model of doing theology provides people with a narrative enriched context which can provide people with a framework of ultimate meaning in the

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construction of their narratives. These narratives, in turn, can be connected with all the multiple life stories of an individual and community in providing guidance for living and ultimate meaning for their actions and behaviour (cf. Gerkin 1992: 110).

Gerkin (1992: 111) concludes that if practical theology is seen from this model, its actions (praxis) are directed at maintaining the connections between the different narratives of people's lives and the grounding narrative of the Christian community, thereby making practical theology an expression of the grounding narrative. The cultural-linguistic model places emphasis on interpretation and the use of language in interpreting people's experiences and plights and; therefore, directs practical theology in embodying the primary language of the Christian community's story and tradition (cf. Gerkin 1992: 111).

Subsequently Gerkin (1992: 111-112) integrates the cultural-linguistic model with the model of pastoral care, and states that such a model emphasises both the human tendency to structure experiences according to narratives, and the power of interpretations in shaping these narratives and expressing care to its members. Pastoral care should then be placed in the centre of the dialogue between the narrative of the Christian community and the life narratives of its members. The role of the pastor then, is to facilitate the process of "... connecting life stories to the Christian story and vice versa" (Gerkin 1992: 112). He furthermore states that the fit between the specific life narratives of members and the Christian narrative is never exact, and; therefore, would always stand in some degree of tension. The responsibility of the pastor or the pastoral therapist is to facilitate a dialogue which includes the sharing of past narratives and accompanied feelings; facilitates mutual questioning, and to search for connections between the two poles of narratives. In doing this the tension can be comprised, as the person uses these new gained insights to structure the particularities of his/her present life (cf. Gerkin 1992: 112).

This facilitated dialogue will also entail "... the thoughtful reinterpretation of the tradition that shapes Christian identity as that tradition is brought into dialogical relationship with contemporary culture and its impact on the community of Christians as well as its individual members" (Gerkin 1992: 118). Therefore, to meaningfully talk about the Christian tradition, its members have to remember that their identity is shaped by the Word of God, but even more than this, they need to remember and retell the historical narratives of Christians in celebration of the events and acts which remind them that they are also God's people (cf. Gerkin 1992: 123). This corresponds to the narrative

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model which states that a newly constructed narrative must be strengthened by the retelling thereof, and the exploration of more unique outcomes. In the story of God with His people, many unique outcomes can be discovered by Christians, which remind them of their roots, and add meaning to their life narratives.

Thus, in utilising the cultural-linguistic model for pastoral care, or theological work, one needs to respect both the authority of the tradition of the faith community, as well as the movement of the historical process. Only when this is done, may we aim at interpreting these narratives meaningfully, in the aim of closing the gap between the two poles of the life narratives of people, and the narrative of God with His people throughout history (cf. Gerkin 1992: 146).

2.5. Methodological point of departure

This section contains an outline of the methods used in conducting this research with adolescent male orphans affected by HIV and Aids and poverty. The seven movements of practical theology indicate the research process, as contained in seven movements. Within each movement, a specific method of exploring, describing and constructing narratives from the Narrative model of therapy is used. During the sixth movement, which is the description of experience thickened through interdisciplinary investigation, the notion of transversality was employed in bringing the different voices of the different disciplines in dialogue. Therefore, first a discussion of the seven movements of practical theology is provided, followed by an outlay of the methods used within narrative therapy, and a short discussion of guidelines provided by the notion of transversality.

2.5.1. The seven movements of Practical Theology

We have already given an outline of the ideas of the postfoundational notion of practical theology; however, it must be emphasised again, that the methods employed by practical theological research should always be truthful to a specific, local and embedded context. Browning (1991: 34) states that a truthful practical theology method will entail a definite and purposive motion from context to theory; and back to context again. Müller (2005: 78-79) refers to this methodological process as "… the circle of practical wisdom" and accordingly developed several minimum requirements for doing research in the discipline of postfoundational practical theology so that we can reflect in a meaningful manner on the experiences of the presence of God. Accordingly, practical theology must always be locally contextual, socially constructed, directed by tradition,

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explorative of interdisciplinary meaning, and pointing beyond the local (cf. Müller 2005: 78).

These requirements have been extended in seven movements which, if conducted, results in achieving the outcomes of the minimum requirements for a postfoundationalist practical theology (cf. Müller 2005: 78). Additionally, specific methodological guidelines were developed for each movement which was conducted in the context of this study (cf. Müller 2005: 82).

Please take note that this thesis has divided the reporting of the research process into the five requirements of a postfoundational notion of practical theology. However, the chapters are divided in different groupings of the movements. Chapter four reports on movement one; chapter five reports on movements two and three; chapter six, reports on movement four, chapter seven reports on movement five; chapter eight reports on movement six; and chapter nine, which is the final chapter, reports on movement seven (cf. Müller 2005: 82).

The first requirement for a postfoundationalist practical theology is that of being locally contextual and entails **the context and interpreted experiences** within that context. Three movements were developed for directing exploration of this requirement:

(1) A specific context is described

(2) In-context experiences are listened to and described

(3) Interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with co-researchers.

The second requirement is that of being socially constructed, and refers to **the traditions of interpretations**. This requirement is elaborated and directed in movement number four:

(4) A description of experiences as it is continually informed by traditions of interpretations.

To be directed by tradition, is the third requirement and corresponds with **God's presence**, and is explored in the fifth movement:

(5) A reflection on the religious and spiritual aspects, especially on God's presence as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation.

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After reflecting on God's presence, this reflection and developed understanding must be **thickened through interdisciplinary investigation**, where the practical theological researcher must explore interdisciplinary meaning, as to meet the fourth requirement of postfoundational practical theology. This requirement is directed by movement six:

(6) A description of experience, thickened through interdisciplinary investigation.

Finally, the last requirement asks for a movement **beyond the local** and is directed by the seventh movement of doing postfoundational practical theological research:

(7) The development of alternative interpretations that point beyond the local community.

A closer look at how each of these movements was utilised during the research process of this study, will now be provided. Take note that each movement is accompanied by specific methods which were used to collect, describe and/or interpret the data.

2.5.1.1. A specific context is described

The first step in the research process aims at describing the context wherein the adolescent male orphans find themselves, and as such describes a context infiltrated by poverty, abandonment, loss and HIV and Aids; however, paradox events are also experienced within this dire context, and will be described as such in chapter four.

This movement is supported by the imperative of the postfoundational notion of reality: to first listen to the stories of people in real-life situations, before a description of context can be attempted. Müller (2009: 204) adamantly states that the aim is not in describing a general context, but a specific and concrete context. This type of description is only possible through a sincere interest in the stories of the people embedded in this specific and general context.

Therefore, empirical research was done based on the methods proposed by the narrative model and the notion of transversal reasoning which "... helps us to better position ourselves against the relativistic tendencies in some approaches within social constructionism and the narrative approach" (Müller 2005: 80; cf. van Huyssteen 1997: 180-192) with the aim of adequately describing and understanding the embedded context. Methods employed from the narrative model, such as using the tree of life narrative, assisted the researcher in facilitating a discussion and activities whereby the co-researchers could explain and describe their embedded context. The researcher aimed at carefully listening to these stories and employed the method of deconstructive

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listening in enabling her to be sensitive to any indication of dominant discourses inherent in the descriptions of context.

On the basis of social constructionism, every family member or wider system, creates a central narrative which gives them a unique identity, as there exists interdependency between the people in an ecosystem (cf. Freedman and Combs 1996: 2); therefore, every person who is involved in or around the specific context of this study, became important attestants of the researchers' description of the context. Various people employed by PEN and Heartbeat already established close relationships with the co-researchers and have much knowledge regarding the context they came from and the context they find themselves in currently. Therefore, informal interviews were also held with these participants, in affirming the description of the research context.

In summary, the methods used during this movement of the research process, include:

- Individual and group interviews with the chosen co-researchers
- The facilitation of the description of tree of life narrative, which entails a description of context, past and present (narrative therapeutic method) to the co-researchers
- Participatory observation
- Collateral observation
- Literature study

It is important to acknowledge that during the research process and the interaction with the context, the co-researchers and the researchers, a new sub-context was established, with its own specific dynamics and even constructed episteme. Within this new context, various cultures, different languages and even people with differing ages, came together and moved beyond the specific embedded culture of each, into a cross-cultural domain, which almost created a culture and definitely a context, of its own. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 347) state that the postmodern researcher is subjective with the topic under inquiry and sees his/her findings as the creation of the inquiry process, and not postulated facts about how thing really are. Therefore, it can be stated that the findings of this study is not the only result of the inquiry, but that the inquiry also created a context of its own, and; therefore, findings which are specific to that created sub-context as well. The researchers created a specific relationship with the co-researchers and provided them with a specific safe context where information

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could be shared and honest discussion could take place, and in turn, the co-researchers shared their lives with the researchers in a special manner, by being brutally honest and letting all guards down. These aspects of the newly created context must be admitted, so that the findings of this study could also be fully understood in the context that it was shared.

Therefore, the researchers, in doing research and observing, became part of this context and influenced the context in many ways and were influenced by the context in new liberating ways. This is affirmed by Müller (2000: 57) who states that the process of observance becomes a process of subjective observance.

Therefore, in the exploration and subsequent description of the research context, the researcher became part of this context.

2.5.1.2. In-context experiences are listened to and described

After the description of the embedded and lived context, a description of the experiences within such a context is needed. The assumptions of hermeneutics help us to understand that people are characteristically dialogical, relational, interdependent, self-interpreting and agentic, within a context which has its own pre-established meanings and events of significance (cf. Thrift and Amundson 2007: 44). We can; therefore, deduce from this that a context is needed before experience can happen, as experience is both action and context, and from experience meaning is created. Therefore, all experiences and all constructed meanings are embedded in context and the person's relation with that context. Thrift and Amundson (2007: 44) confirm this statement by stating that "[a]lthough human beings actively work to make sense and ascribe meaning to their lives, this always, happens within the confines of history and culture".

Freedman and Combs (1996: 1) state that using the narrative metaphor can help us to "... think about people's lives as stories" and in turn, Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 44) state that people tend to organise their experiences in the form of a self-narrative. Therefore, the narrative approach, through the suggestion of listening to the stories of people, makes it possible to use these narratives to gain useful information about how people experience their lives and significant events happening they come to face during their lifetimes.

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Therefore, during this second movement of the postfoundational notion of practical theology, the researcher aimed at listening to the narratives of the co-researchers, which indicate their experiences within their context in relation to significant events.

Some methods used in gaining information regarding in context experiences were:

- Using the metaphor of tree of life in guiding the co-researchers in describing some of their significant experiences, during group discussions (interviews) and group activities, such as drawing 'my tree of life'
- Additionally, using the metaphor of the biblical David in encouraging a discussion regarding similar experiences, or different experiences regarding similar events
- Engaging in responsive-active listening, which is embedded in a 'not-knowing' position/ attitude
- Facilitating and engaging in conversational questions
- Employing deconstructive listening

2.5.1.3. Interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with co-researchers

This study was particularly interested in the meaning, or interpretations of the co-researchers of their experiences. Postmodernism and social constructionism assume that each person constructs his/her own subjective view and interpretation of what they might be experiencing together (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 341). The implication of this statement for this study is that even though all the co-researchers are adolescents, and boys and orphans, they might have different interpretations of these events in their lives. Moreover, as postmodern researchers we believe that not only does each interpretation of these co-researchers differ, but they are also equally true and equally valuable (cf. Erikson 1998: 19).

Demasure and Müller (2006: 418) state that "[e]xperience is situated and experience is always interpreted. The person with whom the pastor [researcher] is in conversation has an interpretation of his/her experiences". Therefore, the researcher must be sensitive to these interpretations, by first understanding the context and then listening to stories of meaning. Meaning, in turn, is conveyed through language and as such is organised through constructed narratives of meaning.

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Therefore, the researcher provided the co-researchers with an opportunity to re-tell their stories in the form of what it means to them and how they interpreted the significant events they came to experience, especially in the light of their current daily experiences and challenges which they might come to face.

Various methods were used in elaborating on and developing meaning and interpretations of narratives, and include:

- Using the metaphor of tree of life, more especially the concept of 'fruits', 'blossoms' and 'branches' to elaborate on the meanings and interpretations of 'loss'
- Using the metaphor of David to elaborate on the meaning and interpretation of the concept of 'abandonment', 'fatherhood' and 'masculinity'
- Metaphors were used in group discussions and activities which provided an opportunity for a collaborate effort in constructing meaning and interpretation
- Both metaphors were used as feedback loops, were the co-researchers provided each other and themselves with constant feedback loops during to-and-fro discussions about and with the text. The metaphors were not given in isolation, but were integrated within a narrative context, which we might call the text. Various discussion points were given related to the metaphors, the co-researchers' interpretations of the metaphors in that given narrated context, and in turn, the co-researchers' interpretations of the impact of the text if applied to their own narratives. Therefore, meaning and interpretations were developed and elaborated during the constant and continuous movement and dialogue between the given text and the narratives of the co-researchers. This movement and dialogue were eagerly approached and initiated by the co-researchers themselves.

Therefore, constant feedback loops were provided through the dialogue of the co-researchers with the text and their own narratives. The researchers facilitated this movement; however, the dialogue and subsequent development of interpretations were a result of the employment of the co-researchers' interaction with the text and insights into other possibilities of interpretations – one can state that a true postfoundational process took place.

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2.5.1.4. A description of experiences as its continually informed by traditions of interpretations

In the description of experiences it is imperative to consider the various traditions which inform and shape the interpretations made by the co-researchers, as Freedman and Combs (1996: 1) state:

> The metaphor of social construction leads us to consider the ways in which every person's social, interpersonal reality has been constructed through interaction with other human beings and human institutions and to focus on the influence of social realities on the meaning of people's lives.

Therefore, working from the assumptions of the social constructivist view, the researcher attended to the various socio-cultural and historical traditions which influence the construction of interpretations of the self-narrative. As a postfoundationalist, in turn, the researcher was obliged to acknowledge the way in which epistemes are also shaped by traditions. Throughout the description of experiences, the researcher guided the co-researchers in reflecting on their experiences from the perspective of their religious and socio-cultural traditions (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 418) with the use of open-ended questions and deconstructive questioning.

According to social constructionism there are specific traditions or discourses in certain communities which inform perceptions and behaviour. Therefore, in listening to the descriptions of experiences, the researcher once again, used deconstructive listening techniques in identifying some of these discourses which informed both the description and construction of interpretations. However, it is only through the honest dialogue between the researcher and co-researchers that these discourses could be identified and affirmed.

Thus, the methods used to guide the co-researchers in describing their experiences as it is informed by traditions of interpretations were:

- Using the metaphor of tree of life in describing the specific feelings, attitudes and interpretations of experiences
- Using the metaphor of the biblical David in comparing similarities and differences in experiences regarding similar events
- Interpretation of discourse as it became clear through the description of experiences, in collaboration with co-researchers

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- Revisiting research narratives, to be found in literature and other cultural phenomena
- Informal conversations with other people from similar backgrounds and contexts as co-researchers
- Exploring alternative notions of the specific context and experiences of co-researchers from significant others who work in the same context with children and adolescents, such as the care workers and care givers from PEN and Heartbeat, and their view regarding traditions of interpretations.

In conclusion, according to Mair (1988: 27) "[s]tories inform life. They hold us together and keep us apart. We inhabit the great stories of our culture. We live through stories. We are lived by the stories of our race and place".

2.5.1.5. A reflection on the religious and spiritual aspects, especially on God's presence as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation

In his book "Prophetic Pastoral Practice", Gerkin (2000: 21) describes how the pastor [researcher] might get a grip on the spiritual experiences of individuals. He states:

> ... it is necessary to get beneath the level of cognitive or reasonable logic to a level of experience that encompasses the intuitive, the emotional and affective life, and the relational affinities that emerge more from individual and communal living out of a story carried in the person's imagination than they do from intellectual reasoning and/ or other logical disputation.

This gives us a framework from which we can view the narratives of the co-researchers which reflect their understanding and experience of the presence of God, in their specific contexts. As stated before, the primary aim of Practical Theology is to search for a meaningful way to reflect on the religious and spiritual aspects of an individual's narrative and to look for cues in reference of God's presence. To obtain this, the researcher has to acknowledge the socio-contextual and historical influence on such a narrative as well as listen carefully to various discourses from the context which might inform the co-researchers' understandings regarding the presence of God. Also, when speaking of the spiritual, one cannot deny the constructiveness which comes to play in the meaning-making process.

Regarding this movement, Müller (2005: 84-85) states that the researcher should not force experiences and interpretations of God's experience into present situations; the

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researcher should rather listen honestly to the religious and spiritual understanding of God's presence in the narratives of the co-researchers. He adds that this movement should be incorporated with the process of social constructionism, as the researcher's own understanding of God's presence in a specific situation can also make a valuable contribution.

In accordance with the postfoundational notion of practical theology, the researcher used the following methods in identifying cues which point to a reflection of God's presence, or spiritual and religious aspects, as it is understood in a specific context or situation:

- Using the metaphor of tree of life, more specifically, the 'ground' metaphor, in elaborating on experiences of God in the situation of 'loss'
- Using the narrative of the biblical David and his relationship with God, as a point of departure in discussing experiences and thoughts regarding God and His story with each co-researcher
- Listening for cues in the co-researchers' narratives regarding experiences of God
- Respond to and interact with those cues through the world and the language of the co-researchers
- Using deconstructive listening and questioning techniques, as well as open-ended and transparent questions.

2.5.1.6. A description of experience, thickened through interdisciplinary investigation

The sixth movement of postfoundationalist practical theology has its roots directly from the postfoundational notion of reality, which states that we have an obligation to move beyond our specific embedded contexts, to cross-cultural and interdisciplinary conversation. Van Huyssteen (1999: 61) states that: "... although we cannot think and act except through engaging with our local contexts and traditions, our task is always to stand in a critical relation to tradition precisely by stepping beyond its epistemic boundaries in cross-contextual conversation" so that we can come to a better understanding of experiences and interpretations. Similarly Müller (2005: 76-77) explains the advantage of the interdisciplinary conversation by stating that:

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> ... transversal reasoning promotes different but equally legitimate ways of viewing specific topics, problems, traditions, or disciplines, and creates the kind of space where different voices need not always be in contradiction, or in danger of assimilating one another, but are in fact dynamically interactive with one another.

Therefore, this movement includes the active involvement of other disciplines to assist in the construction of the interpretations of the self-narratives of the co-researchers. This method of inquiry is known as transversality and ensures that the researcher does not impose her own subjective interpretation on the narratives of experience, so that the most holistic understanding can be the end result.

Müller (2005: 85) continues by saying that interdisciplinary work can be complicated and difficult at times, because of the differences across disciplines in language, reasoning, context and the like. This, however, is a crucial movement within practical theological research, as it makes possible true understanding of the various and vast experiences and interpretations, and is the only way to stay true to both the assumptions of social constructionism and postfoundationalism. This in turn means that practical theology should always work from a local and embedded context, while at the same time moving beyond to interdisciplinary, cross-cultural conversation (cf. Müller 2005: 85).

Therefore, after collecting different views regarding the co-researchers' narratives, the researcher listened carefully to the various narratives of understanding and made an honest effort to integrate them all into one. Accordingly, the methods used in this study to investigate interdisciplinary description of experiences were:

- A study of related literature
- Interviews with colleagues and scholars from different disciplines
- Participatory observation and action in the interdisciplinary field
- Interviews with care workers from the specific context.

2.5.1.7. The development of alternative interpretations that point beyond the local community

The final step in the movement of postfoundationalist practical theology is the development of alternative interpretations, or the construction of alternative, liberating narratives, which point beyond the local community, so that practical theology can reflect in a meaningful way on the experiences of the presence of God (cf. Müller 2005: 78).

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This idea as reflection beyond the local community does not refer to a generalisation of the narrative, but rather to the construction of a narrative which could serve as a meaning-making resources 'centre', which could be applied to various life experiences – experiences which could happen outside the local community, as one is not stationed just in one community or context, but stand in relation to various macro-contexts as well (cf. Müller 2005: 85-86).

In employing the methods of the narrative approach, one must keep in mind that the construction or development of alternative interpretations did not happen according to structured and rigid methods; rather it happened as a holistic understanding was reached regarding the co-researchers' lives, experiences and significant events, in relation to the discourses which were identified as having an influence on their understandings of these experiences and events (cf. Müller 2005: 86). Therefore, the construction of alternative interpretations, already took place from the first movement where a specific context was described. This description already assisted in the exploration of the various elements and epistemes contained within that context. Thus, movement seven is rather the result of the process from movement one to six, where all the different elements and insights are joined, so that a holistic alternative narrative can be constructed.

The methods used to finalise this process, congruent to the methods of narrative therapy, included:

- Externalising the problem with the use of the metaphor of tree of life and the metaphors contained in the narrative of the biblical David;
- Identifying unique outcomes and looking for thick descriptions with the use of deconstructive listening and questioning techniques;
- Thickening these descriptions with the use of various activities, such as writing letters of thanks and hope;
- Formalising the alternative narrative by writing it down as a narrative of self;
- Celebrating the process with a certificate ceremony;
- Conducting a second camp where this alternative narrative was investigated and furthermore thickened.

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In making the final movement lasting, the co-researchers need to internalise these newly created narratives so that it can serve as a basis of making new assumptions and opening themselves up to new possibilities for their futures (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 365).

2.5.2. Narrative Therapy

As stated before, narrative therapy emerged from the paradigm of poststructuralism and social constructionism, and as such rejects the idea that there is a deep structure which underlies all phenomena which can in turn be broken down to its most basic parts (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 367). Social constructionism, in turn acknowledges the complexities underlying all phenomena by stating that phenomena, ideas or rationalities are socio-cultural and historically constructed and integrated within the frame of reference of the individual, thereby forming a holistic understanding and interpretation of his/her life and significant events. Generally, these understandings are collected and organised in the form of a narrative, or various narratives. At times it happens that an individual finds him/herself caught up in a web of understandings or interpretations which is saturated with problem-related concepts. This is where narrative therapy comes into play, by accompanying the person in the construction of an alternative narrative, an alternative interpretation, which liberates a person from the suffocating effects of the problem-saturated narrative, by opening up new liberating possibilities for the future. Before this can be done; however, the therapist must guide the client with the use of many methods in the exploration of discourses which influence the constructing of present narratives and in the discovering of, what narrative therapy calls, unique outcomes which will open up new possibilities in creating an alternative narrative.

I will now continue with a discussion of the various methods which can be employed in guiding a client into the construction of an alternative narrative. These are also the methods used in this study to guide the co-researchers in the construction of their alternative narratives.

The first important concept in narrative therapy, borrowed from the movement of postmodernism, is the activity of *deconstruction* which developed from the acknowledgement that there is an indivisible connection between knowledge and power, and that this knowledge is latent in the discourses propagated by a specific society. Foucault and other scholars recognised that the discourses in a society determine what knowledge is true, or valid, and what is not; therefore, it is also this society who controls

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knowledge, and thus, power. Narrative therapists postulate that these discourses are disseminated through various socio-cultural narratives, and that some of these narratives dominate, while others marginalise (cf. Freedman and Combs 2002: 13).

Therefore, in following Foucault, narrative therapists, like Michael White and David Epston, believe that even the most marginalised and disempowered individuals have access to experiences which lay outside the dominant socio-cultural narratives, and have accordingly developed certain methods in which these discontinuous, specific and local narratives can be discovered so that these people can also lay claim to the many possibilities available to them which lay beyond these dominant socio-cultural and historical narratives (cf. Freedman and Combs 2000: 14).

Therefore, deconstruction, which refers to the disassembling of taken-for-granted assumptions, implies that "... the dominance of one meaning or one set of assumptions is an illusion, and that it is possible to apply a multitude of meanings or assumptions in understanding the same event or experience" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 368). Therefore, narrative therapists (or researchers) assist people in re-examining certain so-called truths about themselves, and assist them in discovering the dominant discourses which act in supporting these delusional truths, so that the person can be empowered in discovering new views of reality, and new possibilities available to them in the construction of their narratives (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 368). Deconstructing these discourses also helps people in not being blinded by a previous suffocating reality.

Another important concept in narrative therapy is the idea of '*thin descriptions'* and '*thin conclusions*'. Thin descriptions which often lead to thin conclusions, are ideas about oneself which are often created by other people, or by oneself in relation with other people and leaves little space for movement, for example, an overweight teenage girl might conclude that she is too 'fat' to be worthy of love and acceptance. This is a thin conclusion, derived from the thin description of the relation of 'weight' to 'acceptance'.

Alice Morgan (2000: 12) states that thin descriptions are very narrow and simple, which leaves little space for complexities and contradictions. Thin descriptions inhibited people in exploring and articulating their own meanings of their actions within a specific personal context. As such, thin descriptions lead to thin conclusions, which in turn are expressed as truths about a person's identity or character. These thin conclusions are very destructive and disempower people, as their identity and character or even their future narratives are then build on concepts which are negative and final. With these

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conclusions people are doomed to failure and stagnancy (cf. Morgan 2000: 12-13). Morgan (2000: 13) affirms this by stating that:

> These thin conclusions, drawn from problem-saturated stories, disempowered people as they are regularly based in terms of weaknesses, disabilities, dysfunctions or inadequacies.

In affirming the negative power of thin descriptions and conclusions, Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 368) state that "[p]ositive characteristics are obscured or hidden by the thin description-inspired story". Thin conclusions also have the power of affirming themselves, by encouraging the person to gather more evidence which support the dominant problem-saturated narrative and its related thin descriptions of the person. This increases the power that these descriptions have over the narrative of the person to such an extent that when positive characteristics are actually revealed by the person, that it passes him/her by without notice: "Thin conclusions often lead to more thin conclusions as people's skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies become hidden by the problem story" (Morgan 2000: 13-14).

It is clear then that after the deconstruction of dominant socio-cultural and historical discourses, the narrative therapist or researchers must aim at discovering the thin descriptions and thin conclusions people have over themselves, so that it can be transformed into 'thick' descriptions and conclusions.

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 367) refer to Michael White (1995), as postulating that the idea of thin descriptions emerged from the static surface/depth dichotomy which searches for underlying traits, needs or personality attributes. These dichotomous descriptions lead to thin descriptions, because it is a case of falling into one of two categories: one is either good or bad, either intelligent or unintelligent etc. Instead White argues that we should search for 'thick' descriptions, or descriptions which make the identity or characteristic description of a person more complex. In searching for such descriptions one must acknowledge that these thick descriptions are partly shaped by personal, historical, political, and cultural influences because our stories are inevitably linked with the values and beliefs of others (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 367-368); nevertheless, they act as enforcers of searching for more rich possibilities of being, living and relating, thereby opening up a world of hope. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 368) give the following description of the qualities of thick descriptions:

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> Thick descriptions on the other hand, are elaborately presented and multistoried, not simply labelled by others. They involve views of the person or people whose lives are being discussed, and are usually interwoven with the lives of others.

Thus, narrative therapists search for ways, in conjunction with the client, in which a person's life and subsequent narratives can be described in a rich way which includes the voicing of the fine details of a person's life, experiences and narratives (cf. Morgan 2000: 15; Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 367-368).

The exploration and elaboration of thick descriptions take form within the development of an *alternative narrative*. Narrative therapists are particularly interested in conversations which search for alternative narratives, which will free a person from the influences of the problem-saturated story they are facing. Alternative stories, enriched by thick descriptions, can dramatically reduce the influence of thin descriptions and open up a world of new possibilities for living (cf. Morgan 2000: 14). Narrative therapists and researchers; therefore, assist the person in the development of the alternative story through the method of re-authoring conversation so that the descriptions of the details of the alternative story can be enriched and elaborated (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 368; Freedman and Combs 1996: 16; Freedman and Combs 1990: 12).

This brings us to the *position and role of the narrative therapist*, which differs quite much from the traditional and modern notion of a therapist in an expert position. Narrative therapists believe that people are the experts of their own lives, thereby rejecting the expert notion of a therapist. Narrative therapists prefer to stand in a relationship of collaboration with the client, thereby acknowledging the socio-cultural and historical constructed narratives which the client brings to the conversation (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 368). Freedman and Combs (2002: 25) state that the role of the therapist during the narrative conversation is de-centered, but still influential, as he/she still participates in the conversation and journey as a person with a specific skill in facilitation and direction. Therefore, the therapist becomes part of the co-research project, exploring, discovering and constructing with the client. This co-research will involve the therapist in directing questions to the client which will expose contradictions and negations in their narratives. Freedman and Combs (2002: 25) explain this de-centring role of the therapist by stating that:

> We facilitate people's ongoing evaluation of the process by asking how the conversation is going for them and responding to their answers. At times, we

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> reflect and offer alternative directions for our conversations.... [W]e situate our ideas in our own experience and make our intentions transparent.

Demasure and Müller (2006: 418) state that the same attitude is expected of the narrative theologian-therapist/ pastor, who needs to admit that he/she does not have the only valuable and valid perspective on the context and that various perspectives can thicken the story. On the contrary, the theological perspective can be a very thin description of a person's life story. The narrative therapist-pastor will be looking for thick descriptions. Therefore, the idea of the de-centring of the therapist is also applicable to the researcher, where he/she needs to invite multiple perspectives into the creation of the alternative story (cf. Demasure and Müller 2006: 418). Demasure and Müller (2006: 418) state that "[t]his is indeed an interdisciplinary process, which can be conducted on an informal and non-academic level, or on a professional level where experts from other disciplines are invited to participate in the conversation".

This de-centring of the role of the therapist is supported by the attitude of the narrative therapist which should entertain a 'not knowing' position. This position entails that the therapist should refrain from asking questions which comes from a pre-understanding of the problem, and specifically not asking questions from which he/she expects particular answers (cf. Freedman and Combs 1996: 44). Central to this attitude is the idea that during the narrative conversation we should always move towards that which is not yet known (cf. Anderson and Goolishian 1988, 1990a, 1992; Hoffman 1991). Attaining this attitude of 'not knowing' is not always as easy as it sounds, as we are usually trained to know. However, Freedman and Combs (1996: 45) state that we can achieve this position by focussing on listening instead of talking – our talking should be secondary to listening. It is here that the skill of deconstructive listening becomes important, because as we listen we become aware of the assumptions that we hold, and this awareness motivates us to question these assumptions also during the narrative conversation by directing these assumptions to the client.

Finally, the benefits of accepting an attitude of 'not knowing' are that it fosters an attitude of curiosity in turn. By 'not knowing' we become curious about the conversationalist's unique responses and statements, and this curiosity guides us in developing these responses and statements into more detail – or into thick descriptions. Freedman and Combs state: "When an answer takes the conversation in an unexpected direction, we ask even more questions, following that new direction if it seems relevant" (Freedman and Combs 1996: 45).

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In deconstructing the various discourses which might influence the construction of a person's narrative one might become aware of the thin descriptions resulting from the influence of dominant discourses. This in turn makes one aware of the power of these thin descriptions in constructing a problem-saturated narrative. Therefore, narrative therapy has identified an approach called *externalising the problem*, which assists in the process of objectifying and personifying the problem, thereby separating the problem as an entity of the self. As White and Epston (1990: 38) state, this approach renders 'thin descriptions', or qualities which were seen as relatively fixed and inherent to the character of the person, as less fixed and less restricting. In externalising the problem, people come to face other possibilities open to them in describing themselves, as the problem is not seen as the only 'way' forward anymore. In elaborating on the advantages of this approach White and Epston (1990: 39) state that externalising the problem enables people to view their lives from a different vantage where they are able to see facts regarding their lives and relationships, which were previously obscured to them when their views were blocked by the problem-saturated narrative. The discovery of other possibilities provide a nuclei from which an alternative narrative can be constructed – a narrative which is much more satisfying and attractive (cf. Morgan 2000: 17-19; White and Epston 1990: 39).

White and Epston (1990: 39-40) have postulated several advantages for the therapeutic process in externalising the problem (cf. Morgan 2000: 24-25) and include:

- A minimisation of internal or relational conflict regarding the person responsible for the creation of the problem;
- A counteract of a sense of failure which develops in response to the persistent existence of the problem, despite efforts to resolve it;
- New opportunities of cooperation between people, or from the person coming for therapy, and to unite in the fight against the problem, as the problem is not seen as specific to a person anymore;
- An increase of will to take back control over one's life and relationships, in escaping the problem and its influence;
- A feeling of liberation and a sense of relieve as the problem is not equated with the person's identity anymore, which results in a less stressed approach;

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- An opening of a possibility for dialogue with the problem, as opposed to the former monologue.

Morgan (2000: 22-23) in turn mentions several things to consider in the externalisation of the problem. The first is the careful consideration in choosing the words which represent the problem. The language used should not reinforce ideas which support the problem. One should also be aware that some externalisations open up more possibilities than others. The second consideration is that the context in which a person's narrative is written should always be addressed during the externalisation conversation; and finally, the name chosen in externalising the problem, should actually address the problem. Morgan (2000: 23) gives an example, especially in the case of abuse, where the problem should not be named fear/terror/nightmares or the like, when the problem is actually abuse. If the problem is not named correctly, it cannot be addressed.

Michael White and David Epston (1999: 42) explain the technique of *relative influence questioning* as a way to help the externalisation of the problem. They state that the process of questioning should be initiated by the therapist from the very first conversation, in an attempt to make the person used to engaging in the activity of separating his/her life and identity from the problem. This technique of questioning contains two aspects: one the one hand, it encourages a person to locate the exact influence of the problem in his/her life and relationships; and on the other hand it gives a person the opportunity in determining what his/her influence is on the 'life' of the problem itself. By doing this the person or the client, is taken out from his/her world which is fixed in the problem-saturated story, into a world where new possibilities and opportunities are now available to him/her and where he/she is not bound by the problem, which is now extracted from his/her identity and being (cf. White and Epston 1999: 42).

The method of *deconstructive listening* has now been mentioned a few times and merits an explanation. Freedman and Combs (1996: 44) explain that deconstructive listening involves the action of listening in such a way that we understand what meanings they have derived from their narratives. It entails a movement of turning one's back on any notion of 'expert' or 'power' and putting oneself into the shoes of the person, so that one can see their worlds from their perspectives and their understandings. It means to adopt the person's language and to think in the same way that he/she does. One needs to understand why he/she has sought one's assistance. Only then can one identify

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alternative stories which will be liberating and of use to that particular person (cf. Freedman and Combs 2002: 26).

Deconstructive questioning on the other hand, are questions directed at the person or client with the aim of unpacking his/her narrative in such a manner, that the way that their perspective has been constructed, becomes apparent. Deconstructive questions will encourage the person to map his/her narrative in the framework of larger dominant discourses through time, so that history, context and its effects on his/her narratives are brought to the foreground. Only when one's problem-saturated narrative is seen from this perspective, can one's mind be open to the identification of other unique events which does not form part of the problem, as one's identity is not situated in the problem anymore (cf. Freedman and Combs 1996: 120).

Narrative therapists; therefore, believe that it is their responsibility to "... cultivate a growing awareness of the dominant (and dominating) stories in our society" (Freedman and Combs 2002: 27) so that they can join the co-researchers in examining their lives and relationships for any sign of influence from these dominating discourses.

Deconstruction questioning mostly takes place during the externalisation of the problem, although the intention of deconstruction is to deconstruct problematic narratives. Freedman and Combs (1996: 120); however, state that deconstructive questions are not aimed at an entire narrative, but rather focus in addressing elements of the problem-saturated narrative, which assist in the maintenance and the growth of this problematic narrative. Therefore, narrative therapists in the listening of narratives, identify various discourses which might underlie the problem-saturated narrative, and direct the deconstructive questions in unpacking these discourses so that their influence on the construction of life and self-narratives can be determined.

In summary of deconstructive questioning, Freedman and Combs (1996: 121) state that it is aimed at understanding the history, contextual influences, effects on, interrelationship with, and tactics of strategies of the beliefs, practices, feelings or attitudes of the person coming for therapy.

Deconstructive listening and questioning, as well as the externalisation of the problem, are ultimately directed at the discovery of *unique outcomes*. During the conversation, the therapist must listen for events or experiences which do not fit the description of the problem-saturated narrative, or the thin descriptions related to this narrative. Unique outcomes are many times discovered when the problem's influence was less apparent or even non-existent, and includes events, actions, thoughts or the like, which stand in

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contradiction to the problem (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 375; Freedman and Combs 2002: 31-32; Morgan 2000: 52). Subsequently, unique outcomes are anything that the problem story would not like to accept and that would be difficult to achieve in the light of the problem-saturated story (cf. Morgan 2000: 52; Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 375).

The discovery of unique outcomes is very important for the later construction of an alternative narrative, as it serves as the building blocks for the construction of a new, liberating and motivating narrative. Narrative therapists assume that unique outcomes do not exist in isolation and that other events can be discovered which can be traced back to the unique outcomes, thereby elaborating on the discovery of the first unique outcome. The discovery of just one unique outcome is to be celebrated, as narrative therapists, with their positive outlook on problems, believe that problems are never fully successful. Therefore, the discovery of a unique outcome is an opening, an opportunity for a different and more positive conversation which can lead towards thicker and richer descriptions (cf. Morgan 2000: 55).

Another advantage of discovering a unique outcome is that people come to consider their resistance to the effects of the problem, as well as their relationship with the problem, which comes to be seen as a relationship of dependence between the problem and its effects. Therefore, the person gains a new perspective of his/her relationship with the problem, and can actively refuse to cooperate with the requirements of the problem, which renders the problem ineffective (cf. White and Epston 1990: 63-64).

White and Epston (1990: 63-64) explain this revisit of relationship:

> Thus, in the process of performing new meaning around unique outcomes, persons revise their relationship with the problem. The description of this revised relationship contrasts markedly with the description of the relationship between the problem and person initially derived from the mapping of the influences of the problem.

Therefore, the problem and its consequences or effects stand in a relationship of dependence with each other, thereby making the problem dependent on its effects for its survival. In identifying unique outcomes, the client might acknowledge this and realise that he/she can feed the problem in giving in to its effects, thereby empowering the problem. When they see that the identification of unique outcomes liberate them from most of the problem's effects, they might decide to elaborate on these unique outcomes,

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to thicken and broaden it so that they can be freed from the effects of the problem, thereby rendering the problem ineffective.

Finally White and Epston (1990: 61) mention that imagination is very important in the identification of unique outcomes, which implies also that the narrative therapist must use his/her imagination in directing deconstructive questions and externalising the problem, as they encourage a broadening of the client's imagination.

After the discovery of unique outcomes in the context of the unveiled discourses and its influence on the problem-saturated narrative, the stage is set for the construction of an alternative story. Take note that this is more a co-construction than just an activity expected of the client, as the therapist still walks alongside the client, in putting all the pieces together. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 376) explain this co-construction quite beautifully:

> In a sense the therapist has helped build some scaffolding, helping people trapped in the basement of a multistory building gain access to the upper floors, with greater likelihood of enlarging their views and seeing the horizons that were denied to them in their previous location.

Freedman and Combs (2002: 32) state that the therapist must invite the client in developing an alternative story, only when both have agreed upon a preferred opening (unique outcome) which seems relevant, interesting and inviting to the client. The role of the therapist is to assist the client in constructing the alternative narrative by asking questions which will realise the narrative in his/her mind essentially, which will help the client in attributing meaning to the narrative. Once meaning has been grained into the narrative, it can be used as a directive source for living life.

Freedman and Combs (2002: 32) affirm this by stating that narratives only make a difference in people's lives when they tell them to other people, and it is during this telling that the performance of meaning occurs. Therefore, in therapy the therapist must create a space of ritual in which the performance of meaning can occur, by letting people relive the plots as they tell it. The role of the therapist is essentially to direct questions to the client which will help him/her in elaborating and developing the narrative into rich detail and meaning (cf. Freedman and Combs 2002: 32).

Another helpful tool in elaborating on the developed alternative narrative is the inquiry of the therapist into the *landscapes* of *action* and *consciousness*. White and Epston suggest that narratives of people's lives usually unfold in both of these landscapes (cf. Freedman and Combs 2002: 32); therefore, when the therapist enquires about these

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landscapes relevant to the alternative constructed narrative, it serves as an affirmation of the existence of this narrative.

Questions related to the *landscape of action* might include questions which aim at an elaboration of the viewpoints of the characters in a specific scene, such as what happened, in what sequence, involving which characters? The elaboration of the landscape of action includes a detailed description of the viewpoints of the various characters in a particular scene or setting in the narrative. These questions will help in the establishment of an 'agentic' self which will enhance those aspects which support the notion of 'personal agency'. This sense of personal agency is confirmed in the act of re-authoring, which demonstrates how people have accomplished what they have (cf. Freedman and Combs 2002: 32-33).

The landscape of action, alone, cannot bring forth change. Therefore, it must be embedded in the *landscape of consciousness*, or identity, so that it can contain meaning for the person. The landscape of identity, in turn, refers more specifically to an abstract place in the mind where people develop meanings, desires, intentions, beliefs, commitments, motivations, and values related to their experiences in the landscape of action. A reflection of the implications of experiences takes place within the landscape of identity (cf. Freedman and Combs 2002: 34). Therefore, the narrative therapist will direct 'meaning' questions to the person which invites the person to reflect on the various wishes, motivations, values, beliefs, learning, implications and the like, which is both a cause and a result of the actions which took place in the landscape of action (cf. Freedman and Combs 2002: 34).

Freedman and Combs (2002: 34) state that "[i]n co-authoring stories, we move between the landscape of action and the landscape of identity, weaving the two back and forth again and again".

Another suggestion in thickening the plots of the alternative story comes from Alice Morgan (2000: 69), where she suggests naming the alternative narrative in the same way that the problem was named. She states that this activity assists in creating even more separation between the effects of the problem and the person, and it also provides a framework for planned future events and actions. The therapist can also direct more questions related to the alternative story which will further result in rich descriptions of unique outcomes (cf. Morgan 2000: 69).

The process must not be abruptly ended when an alternative story has been developed and named, as the story must be strengthened and elaborated, so that it can be

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internalised by the person. If an alternative narrative is not internalised, it will not be strong enough in the memory and desires to bring forth real change in the person's life. Therefore, the therapist must encourage the client to tell and retell this alternative story, with much detail. The person must also map this new narrative in the lives and stories of other significant people, with whom the person relates, so that it can also be useful in the context of everyday living (cf. Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008: 376).

Morgan (2000: 74-75) provides some suggestions in thickening this story so that it becomes a reality for the client. Some of these activities include finding witnesses who will act as an audience to the performance of the narrative through remembering conversations with the person on a frequent basis; or through social gatherings such as leagues, networks or committees; or as people who celebrate in certain rituals and celebrations. Another way is to involve the client directly in thickening the narratives by encouraging him/her in writing therapeutic letters to significant people, or use other therapeutic documents such as declarations, certificates, handbooks, notes, videotapes, symbols, lists or pictures.

2.5.3. The use of the metaphor of the Tree of Life and the Narrative of the biblical David as method in this study

In using the narrative model in collecting and interpreting data, I (the researcher) have decided to specifically use the metaphor of the Tree of Life and the narrative of David as an analogy in guiding the co-researchers to reflect on their current narratives and in the development of a meaningful and purposive alternative narrative. This movement was motivated by the statement of Freedman and Combs (1996: 1) which shows the powerful influence of the metaphors we choose through which we organise our lives and work, on the construction of our perceptions and subsequent behaviour.

Demasure and Müller (2006: 412) speak about the "... dialectic movement between texts with their symbols and metaphors, and the active contribution of people"; which indicates that people move between various texts and its metaphors in constructing meaning and meaningful narratives which in turn guide their perspective and understanding of their own worlds. Thus, I chose the metaphor of the Tree of Life, as a departure point for the co-researchers in describing their current context and experiences within this context. The Tree of Life metaphor also provided an opportunity to reflect on possible unique outcomes within this context, which is mostly filled by feelings of loss and abandonment, which in turn provided the basis for the construction of an alternative narrative, through the re-drawing of another Tree of Life.

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In turn, the analogy with the narrative of the biblical David provided a basis for the co-researchers to deconstruct certain discourses within their context, which in turn influence the construction of the future narratives as future men, husbands and fathers. Therefore, this narrative was offered as an analogy to their own lives, of how their society or community assists in the construction of gender-related spiritual narratives.

The Tree of Life metaphor helped in the construction of a holistic life narrative; where the narrative of David, in turn, showed the socio-cultural and historical constructiveness of our gender-identity narratives. This narrative specifically provided the co-researchers to reflect on these discourses in the community and to reflect on their future roles, specifically as male human beings. I postulate that this opportunity would have passed them by, if they were not part of this research, as people in our society is not generally encouraged to reflect on such specific roles and the influence the embedded context has in the construction of such narratives. The co-researchers reported in turn that this reflection served as an 'eye-opener' for their specific future roles, and made them construct their alternative narratives while considering what is expected differently from them as from the female participants. Therefore, in using this narrative the co-researchers could thicken the descriptions of the alternative future narratives, in line with the methods of narrative therapy. Additionally, using the characters of the narrative, such as Goliath, David and Bathsheba, the co-researcher got an opportunity to externalise the problem in the person of Goliath, to put themselves in the person of David in facing their Goliath and externalising various 'temptations' in being a man in a specific context, in the personhood of Bathsheba.

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 365) affirm the influence of a meaningful metaphor by stating that our perceptions regarding our realties are organised and maintained through the stories (and related metaphors) by which we disseminate knowledge and truths regarding ourselves and our roles within the world. Therefore, both the metaphor of the Tree of Life and the analogue of the narrative of David, served as a meaningful metaphor. This could be incorporated within their alternative narratives, which enrich the understandings and meanings of their own lives, also because it is seen as embedded within a specific context – the context of the world which maintains a tension between the past, present and future narratives of ourselves and our relations with people in these contexts; as well as the context of the story of God, which were made more 'real' and 'relevant' by seeing it in the light of one's own narratives and by realising how God

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is involved with people whose lives are also embedded and constructed in the human world.

Therefore, by using these metaphors, I assisted the co-researchers in thinking about their own lives as stories and experience these stories in a meaningful and fulfilling manner (cf. Freedman and Combs 1996: 1).

The narrative of David, also contains epistemological significance for this study, as one realises that the narrative as it is told in the Bible, is also socio-culturally and historically constructed and acts as an example of a co-constructed narrative, which contains much significance in guiding the lives and practices of the Judeo-Christian traditions. Even today; however, it still remains a narrative created from a particular perspective, with the aim of serving a particular intention. Walter Brueggemann (2002: ix) states the following regarding the narrative of David:

> The main point was to see that the David narratives were neither reportage of historical reality nor descriptions of what had transpired. They were, rather, artistic construals and imaginative reconstructions; consequently the whole notion of 'truth' in the book is used playfully if not ironically.

Brueggemann (2002: ix) furthermore states that he became aware of the central position which David occupies in the imagination of ancient Israel and the influence his status had on the deliverance of faith and history in the Israel community and how David became the embodiment of the ambivalence the community of Israel experienced about guarantees and risks in the world that God, YHWH, governs.

Therefore, the story of David, carry many similarities for me with the context and the world of the co-researchers; not only in terms of superficial characteristics, but also in the way that knowledge is developed and maintained within even the traditional world, the ambivalence of dominant discourses, and the meaning that people consecrate into this knowledge to structure their lives. This narrative reveals how many types of 'truths' can exist, and that these 'truths' were generated by the person of David, throughout the multiple offices he embodies and the power in these 'truths' for David himself and for the people he liberated:

> David who generates many "truths" in many literary presentations, yields traditions that are competing and conflicting, thus a multi-voiced truth that does not have a settled, foundational truth behind or beneath these many renderings.
>
> (Brueggemann 2002: x-xi)

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Brueggemann (2002: xi) furthermore states that as he moved away from the historical critical methods, he saw the narrative of David with a sociological awareness which placed much emphasis on ideologies contained in the narrative. He states that for him the text is about tension and complexity, without which the truth can never be totally revealed. This tension is specifically pertaining to the practices of selves in contrast with a community which contains an equal intensity (cf. Brueggemann 2002: xi-xv).

The commentary from Brueggemann on the narrative of David, made me intensely aware of the power relations in the many discourses which inform knowledge and even revelation, and how people from the bible struggled with the same issues regarding the development and maintenance of a knowledge which served, also in this narrative of David, in liberating some people, while at the same time marginalising others. In a certain sense David embodied liberation and justice which freed the common person from the powers and dominance of truths contained in the narrative of Saul and other powerful people. It makes us aware that God does not miss these discourses, thereby choosing people who would maintain His discourses which focussed in turn, on liberty, justice and grace. Consequently I became aware, as Brueggemann (20002; xv) states, of the "… twin complexities of biblical truth and lived truth in our lives", and how the denial of this discourse prevents the constructive integration of the narratives of the bible with the narratives of people, which in turn prevents these narratives in acting as a directive and a source of meaning, for people's lives.

The narrative of David, as an analogy to the lives and identity of the co-researchers of this study, is of particularly interest to me because of the contradiction entailed in its initial message. Within the person of David, one does not only become aware of the idea that David was a nobody who became a somebody, or an insignificant figure judged too young and too small to reign victoriously, who despite his physical appearance nevertheless conquered the feared Goliath; within this person there is also a contrasting notion of fallibility – of imperfection – of a man who loved God dearly, but nevertheless thought he could hid a horrible sin from God; of a man who could conquer the most feared man in the army, but a man who could not conquer his own desires. Despite this, David still today embodies the personhood of *the* man, *the* male and is seen throughout history to point at the coming of the best Man ever. He was still worthy, despite his sins, because *he loved God, and God loved him*. This message, applied to the context of this study, revealed, to me, the peculiar position that the boys of this study find themselves in and will be elaborated on later.

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Another comment which needs to be made is one of the functions of the metaphor of the Tree of Life and the narrative of David, in helping to overcome language barriers. In reading a story or understanding a metaphor, language becomes universal. Metaphors and narratives which contain metaphors and analogies, have the immense power of moving beyond language, into a space where symbolism becomes enough to convey understanding. At the same time; however, a metaphor and narratives become language specific to each person, where his/her own meaning is derived, despite the supposed universalism of the metaphor and narrative. Language and its symbolism then moves from socio-cultural and historical constructs to being re-constructed subjectively, which is of course the aim of the use of language in the narrative approach and a postfoundational notion of practical theology. Therefore, not only is a narrative reconstructed, but also the metaphor and analogies contained within the narrative. This is significant because a critique on the methods used in this study, might be that the co-researchers did not name the externalisation of their problems and alternative narratives themselves; however, because metaphors and narratives are constructive in nature, it might be argued that the co-researchers nevertheless, constructed the direction and meaning of the metaphor and narrative in being directive for their own lives.

Accordingly, Brueggemann suggests a reading of the text where an engagement takes place with the tensive complexity of our 'best' truth. He states that:

> ... the interface of tensive complexity in the text and tensive complexity in life suggests that in communities of faithful interpretation, such texts as those concerning David are not only to be read, understood, and interpreted but also practiced as a way of attentive life, a life of fidelity with glaring "excepts" that cannot be finally covered over or denied ... something about the "truth shall set you free
>
> (Brueggemann 2002: xv-xvi)

Walter Brueggemann is interested in the 'truth' about David, as it is revealed through the communal narrative and the meaning of this narrative – not in literal global absolute truth. Brueggemann (2002: 1-2) is asserting that much can be learned about the community, the society and the culture by listening to the story of David as it is told by a community, and retold by another community. Here we are looking at the *deconstruction* of the story of David; looking at what powerful and sometimes oppressive truths underlie the story so that justice can prevail to the marginalised and vulnerable. We hope that by listening to Brueggemann's rhetoric criticism that we will be able to draw a metaphoric

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comparison to the modern-day Davids and their society, so that we might learn something about what truths underlie this modern society. It is many times said that we can know ourselves only by looking at our history, as history tends to repeat itself. It is important to note here that we can know history or truthful history only by the *narratives* which are told by the historical communities – the truth does not lie in the historical facts, but rather in the *meaning* of those facts for the community.

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CHAPTER 3

A SHOOT WILL SPRING FORTH FROM THE STUMP OF JESSE AND A BRANCH OUT OF HIS ROOTS

The use of metaphors and narrative analogies in this study have been explained in chapter two as a method of collecting, describing and interpreting data, in line with the narrative therapeutic methods of externalisation, identifying unique outcomes and developing an alternative narrative. This chapter; however, will give an explanation regarding the use of the specific metaphor of the Tree of Life and the narrative analogy of the biblical David, and the relationship with each other. It was also stated previously that the motivation for using the narrative of David, is applicable to both methodology and epistemological assumptions.

The primary basis for using metaphors and an analogy narrative is the statement of Freedman and Combs (1996: 1): "Using the narrative metaphor, leads us to think about people's lives as stories and to work with them to experience their life stories in ways that are meaningful and fulfilling".

3.1. The Tree of Life

> He is like a tree planted by a stream of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.
>
> - Psalms 1:3 (NKJV) -

The idea of using the metaphor of *The Tree of Life* was first introduced and developed by Ncazelo Ncune and David Denborough at the Dulwich Centre Foundation, Adelaide, Australia "... to assist African colleagues who work with children affected by HIV/AIDS in southern Africa" (The Tree of Life: An approach to working with vulnerable children: www.dulwichcentre.com). Ncune (2006: 4) has furthered this metaphor through his studies and work with vulnerable children in South Africa. He first used the Tree of Life tool during the Masiye Camp "during a training program that was run at the camp for practitioners who are involved in the care and support of children affected by HIV/AIDS in East and Southern Africa" (Ncune 2006: 6). Ncune (2006: 6) used this tool specifically in learning from children and their concerns during the different life crises they experienced and during times of change, such as HIV and Aids.

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Returning from the camp, Ncune worked together with counsellors from Hope World Wide at the Jabavi clinic in Soweto during their bereavement group therapy sessions, in introducing the theme of the Tree of Life to the children. He chose 22 children from the 43 who attended these group sessions regularly. Ncune mentions that the process involved four parts, namely (1) Tree of Life; (2) Forest of Life; (3) When the storms come and (4) Certificate and Song, which is also used in this study and will be elaborated on later.

In reporting on the first process, namely, the *Tree of Life*, Ncune (2006: 9) states that the "aim of the first two parts of this process ... is to build and acknowledge 'a second story' about each child's life. This second story consists of the skills, abilities, hopes and dreams of each child, and the histories of these" (Ncune 2006: 9). He then presented the tree of life metaphor to them, and asked them to draw their own trees. Ncune reports that when the children finished the drawing of their trees he invited them to put their pictures up on the walls, thereby creating 'a forest of trees'. He then offered a 're-telling' of their stories by drawing attention to the "… strong and firm roots that we all seem to have" (Ncune 2006: 12) and emphasising the dreams and hopes that everyone has. This stimulated discussion around the differences and similarities that the "trees" have in common, thereby establishing that we all have differences, but also similarities which make us a forest of people. Afterwards he moved into the third part, namely "When the storms come" by creating a space for all the children to discuss the difficulties they have experienced in their lives (cf. Ncune 2006: 12) and the various skills and abilities they used to overcome these challenges; thereby creating *unique outcomes* of 'strengths' and 'bravery' during pain and suffering. Ncune used this metaphor of Trees to assist the children to successfully elaborate on their past and present narratives, to identify *unique outcomes* and finally to *externalising* the *problem*. As he stated: "We then spent some time naming the problems and dangers that children experience" and then discussed "… at some length the effects of such hazards on children's lives" (Ncune 2006: 13).

The process was effectively rounded off by giving the children opportunities to think about people who make them happy and also about the contributions they make to other people's lives. This gave the children a sense of 'accomplishment' and 'purpose'. The whole process was formally completed by the handing out of certificates, which "… honoured the contributions of the special people in these children's lives" (Ncune 2006:

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14). Ncune (2006: 14) states that the children were very excited by these certificates and could not wait to proudly show them off to friends and family.

Ncune also suggested by way of example, additional activities which could be included in the process, thereby giving special meaning to the children, such as letting the children write letters to significant people and by giving them an opportunity for example, to write a song (cf. Ncune 2006: 14).

Because of the narrative significance and possibilities inherent in the metaphor of *The Tree of Life*, the researcher of this study and her colleague decided to use this metaphor in similar ways. We invited the ten participants (co-researchers) to join us for a weekend break-away in discussing the items contained in the developed Tree of Life (TOL) booklet. The metaphor was not copied in the exact same manner as used in the study above, as a few amendments and add-ons were created.

Firstly, the *Tree of Life* metaphor used sub-metaphors such as the *roots*, *trunk*, *branches*, *leaves* and *bugs* to indicate specific life events and significant people. Added to this metaphor was the *ground* in which a tree is tightly and safely grounded. In this manner the *roots* indicated the history of the children's lives, their familial history, their place of birth and their ancestors. The *ground* in which the tree grew and in which it is tightly grounded, refer to the "nutrients" a tree gets, the soil or the ingredients that make it grow. Therefore, the ground refers to one's spirituality, one's story of createdness or to God. The *trunk* of a tree refers to one's skills and abilities, or one's talents where the *branches* in turn refer to one's hopes and dreams that can "reach up to the sky". The *leaves* refer to the people in one's life, living or deceased – this metaphor can go more in detail by stating that the green leaves refer to significant people who are still alive, while the withered leaves refer to those significant people who one has lost, through death or another form of loss. The *fruits* or *blossoms* that a tree might carry, in turn refers to the things or gifts we have received from other people, such as love or kindness, while the *bugs* refer to those people who have not been kind to us. Finally, we refer to the *storms* trees can experience, which symbolises the difficult times we as people also experience, such as death, illness or poverty.

In our study we used the Tree of Life metaphor during the three day camp in Magaliesburg. We started the sessions by discussing the metaphor of a *Tree of Life* and its accompanied sub-metaphors. We then asked the children to draw their own trees of life, by including all the sub-metaphors (excluding the storms). It was pertinently stated that the children can include anything else they feel significant or meaningful to their

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story, thereby creating a space where they can use their own creativity. Afterwards, everyone had an opportunity to discuss their Tree of Life (Group discussion and activities, Friday 10 October 2008).

After an elaborate discussion of the events and people who had a great influence on the children's current narrative, the influence of *storms* and *bugs* were discussed. The metaphor of a storm was used to indicate that every tree faces some type of storm in its lifetime and is damaged by the storm in some way; however, because trees usually stand in a forest, they can protect each other from the worst blows of the storm. One of the children indicated how "every cloud has a silver lining" indicating that the storms do not last forever. Everyone then had an opportunity to put their trees on the wall, signifying that they are a forest. Thereafter, everyone also had an opportunity to discuss some storms they have experienced, as well as what talents, skills or abilities they used to combat the effects of the storm. The discussion went deeper, by allowing the children to identify the people who support them through these storms and thank them by writing a letter of appreciation. To illustrate the idea that we must not only accept support but also return it to other people who might be experiencing a storm, we asked the children to identify people who they have supported who went through a similar storm and what they did to help (Group discussion, Saturday 11 October 2008). This illustrated the concept of Ubuntu, or being there for each other and that they too can be active agents in helping other trees grow.

Finally, we discussed the metaphor of *fruits* or *blossoms*, indicating the gifts we receive from other people. Each child had an opportunity to think about and name the gifts they have received. This was followed by an activity where everyone sat in a circle, and a piece of paper was sent around with each child's name on it. Everyone had to write something nice about that person. Afterwards, each child received his/her compliment paper and read it out loud to the group. The children reported afterwards that this activity has shown them that they too are special and that it feels good to know that people see them in this way (Group discussion, Saturday 11 October 2008). This activity was especially successful because all the children in the group either live with each other in the house of safety, or meet together regularly at the PEN activities. Therefore, they also acknowledged during the camp how they are each other's support system because they went through similar life experiences.

On the Sunday (12 October 2008) the researcher and her co-researcher held a *Ceremony of Appreciation* where each child received a certificate specific to that child's

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unique characteristic in signifying their ability to fight the storms in their lives. For example, one of the children received a certificate for 'bravery' (see Annexure 2). Morgan (2000: 91) states the significance of using certificates to embed the influence of the alternative story: "Certificates help to celebrate the new story that emerges and to commemorate how the person has managed overcome the problem to regain their life from its influence".

During the Tree of Life camp, the researcher and her co-researcher acknowledged the idea that people make sense of their life and significant life events through the telling of narratives. As Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008: 369) state:

> ... people, in attempting to make sense of their lives, arrange their experiences of events over time to arrive at a coherent account of themselves and their surroundings. Such self-narrative gives each person a sense of continuity and meaning, and in turn becomes the basis for interpreting subsequent experiences.

Therefore, the researcher and her co-researcher provided an opportunity for the children to structure significant past events through a metaphorical self-narrative. Demasure and Müller (2006: 412) make us aware of the power of metaphors to help us restructure or re-describe our current narratives by stating: "New or unknown and surprising metaphors also carry a re-description of reality, just like stories do. However, they do not do this on the level of acting, like a story, but on the level of feeling, of values and of beauty".

It became clear through the use of the Tree of Life metaphor, that the children were able to use this metaphor not only to think about past events and connect them with the ways that it restructures their future narratives, but also to add value and meaning to these events, which in turn added value to the way they perceive themselves – they literary became aware of strengths and abilities they were not aware of before. Therefore, this metaphor assisted in the empowerment of the children; they used this opportunity to connect all the seemingly unrelated events and people in their lives into a holistic whole, which gave them a "bird's-eye view" of their lives. In seeing their lives as a holistic whole, they gained control over their own lives – a loss of control is usually signified by being lost in detail, or in chaos. This gaining of control, or empowerment, gave them the strength to restructure or re-design a new future narrative, which does not ignore their past and people in their lives, but incorporates them so that the future narrative becomes relevant to reality and; therefore, much more attainable than some 'dream' developed in fantasy.

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This metaphor; therefore, successfully helped the children to think of their lives as a story, thereby creating a central role for them as an active actor in his/her own life story, giving him/her control to position him/herself and the events in this story where he/she feels fit, and finally to relate all the events and people in such a way that understanding and meaning is attained.

A follow-up camp was organised for the weekend of 26-28 February 2010, where the same participants were invited to reflect on their experiences during the first camp and an opportunity was provided to thicken their alternative narratives, with the use of the analogy narrative of David. This narrative provided continuity from the metaphor of Tree of Life, but going into more detail with regards to the manner in which their narratives are constructed relevant to certain dominant discourses in their experiential context, and it provided detailed unique outcomes in the constructing of a future narrative.

3.2. The Tree of Jesse

In justifying the relationship between the metaphor of "Tree of Life" and the David narrative, I propose a closer look at the significance of trees as imagery in the Bible. The Bible[6] uses the Hebrew word for tree (*etz)* a 109 times and the plural of this word (*etzim)* is found an additional 28 times (cf. Katy 1998: www.jweekly.com). This in itself already shows the metaphorical significance of the word and the many ways in which it can be used. I have identified four significant uses in the Bible, illustrating the tree of life.

The first place we find the concept of the Tree of Life, is in the book Genesis where it signifies the concept of eternal life versus eternal death, e.g. Genesis 3:22-24:

> Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— [23] therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. [24] So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

In the book Daniel and Ezekiel the concept is use to indicate great men and their spiritual growth or power:

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[6] New King James Version

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> [20] "The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, [21] whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home— [22] it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.
>
> (Daniël 4: 20-22)

> [3]Indeed Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon, With fine branches that shaded the forest, And of high stature; And its top was among the thick boughs.
>
> (Ezekiël 31: 3)

Furthermore, the concept of the tree of life is sometimes linked to the crucifixion of Jesus in Deuteronomy 21:22-23 which states:

> If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance; for he who is hanged *is* accursed of God.

Here Jesus is taking the curse upon Himself and removes the curse of the tree of good and evil which leads to the last tree: the tree of life in the paradise of God, e.g. Revelation 22:1-3:

> [1] And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. [2] In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. [3] And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

Additionally, the concept of a tree and its fruitfulness is often used to indicate righteous people and the fruits they bear; when people celebrate this tree of life, they celebrate both the righteous among them and the fruits of their labours:

> The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
>
> And he who wins souls is wise.
>
> (Proverbs 11: 30)

Finally, the tree of life can indicate the spiritual life and growth of people as stated in Ezekiel and Isaiah:

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> And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the LORD, have brought down the high tree and exalted the low tree, dried up the green tree and made the dry tree flourish; I, the LORD, have spoken and have done it."
>
> (Ezekiël 17: 24)
>
> To console those who mourn in Zion,
>
> To give them beauty for ashes,
>
> The oil of joy for mourning,
>
> The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;
>
> That they may be called trees of righteousness,
>
> The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."
>
> (Isaiah 61: 3)
>
> But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.
>
> (Psalms 52: 8)

Paradoxically, the concept of a tree can also indicate wickedness and the extent of the disaster that evilness can cause, as stated in the book of Psalms 37:35:

> I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

The above verses extracted from various books in the Bible illustrate how biblical figures used the concept of a tree or the tree of life to compare human actions, and human features with that of a tree (cf. Musselman 2009: www.fao.org). Therefore, it is clear from the above passages that the concept of *The Tree of Life* has always indicated or symbolised some movement between past, present and future; between life and death; between growth and withering; between righteous and poisonous fruits; and as such functioned as a meaning making symbol in illustrating experiences of life-, and in developing life and self-narratives. The concept is; therefore, spiritually dynamic and significant and firmly grounded in the narratives of the Bible.

The concept of a tree, and more specifically the messianic Tree of Life, is furthermore illustrated in the Tree of Jesse, which links our metaphor of a tree with the metaphor of David, which in turn signifies the metaphoric prophesy of the coming King.

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The Jesse Tree is named in Isaiah 11:1:

> A shoot will spring forth from the stump of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots.

This verse narrates the story of God with His people (the Israelites) in the Old Testament and the promise of a coming King which will "branch" from the tree of Jesse. It is a story about God's faithfulness to a small nation across 4,000 years of history, who were many times unfaithful to Him and disappointed Him time after time. Therefore, the Tree of Jesse refers to the descendants of Abraham who were chosen by God to be a light to the nations. It tells the story of God's salvation plan from creation and throughout the Old Testament, to the coming of the Messiah. The Jesse Tree represents the family tree or genealogy of Jesus Christ and traces the genealogy of Jesus back to King David, to show His fulfilment of prophecy regarding the Messiah.

Matthew 1:1–17: The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

> 1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:
>
> 2 Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. 3 Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. 4 Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. 5 Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, 6 and Jesse begot David the king.
>
> David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife[a] of Uriah. 7 Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa.[b] 8 Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. 9 Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. 10 Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon,[c] and Amon begot Josiah. 11 Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.
>
> 12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. 13 Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. 14 Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. 15 Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. 16 And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.
>
> 17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.

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Matthew begins at the patriarch Abraham and traces a descent through David's son King Solomon, omitting several generations along the way.

Luke 3:23–38: The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

> 23 Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as
> was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, 24 the son of Matthat,[a] the son
> of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janna, the son of Joseph, 25 the son of
> Mattathiah, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai,
> 26 the son of Maath, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Semei, the son of Joseph,
> the son of Judah, 27 the son of Joannas, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel,
> the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, 28 the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son
> of Cosam, the son of Elmodam, the son of Er, 29 the son of Jose, the son of
> Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, 30 the son of Simeon,
> the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim, 31 the
> son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son
> of David, 32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon,
> the son of Nahshon, 33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron,
> the son of Perez, the son of Judah, 34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of
> Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, 35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu,
> the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, 36 the son of Cainan, the son
> of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, 37 the son of
> Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of
> Cainan, 38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Luke proceeds upward, through David's son Nathan, continuing all the way to the first man, Adam.

Therefore, God was faithful to His promise and a new King was born in Bethlehem. So we can exclaim with the old man Simeon: "My eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared before all people, a light of revelation to the nations, and for glory to your people Israel!" (Luke 2:30-32).

These genealogies show the significance of the Tree of Life, of our roots, our histories, not only for our personal stories, but also for the stories of the Christian tradition. Therefore, the metaphors used in this study, do not only contain personal meaning, but in fact, they contain meaning *because* they are is linked to our traditional Christian meaning of salvation: our salvation in Jesus Christ, who worked with and through people; who accompanied them through their storms; people who found identity in the promise God made to their ancestors; in their roots; who anticipated a future of Salvation, by rewriting stories of seeming disasters into one of hope (e.g. promise God

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made to David even though he sinned terribly: He will never depart from the house of David). The people of the bible found their identity in their roots, not only human roots, but in their roots firmly grounded in the person of God and they used the metaphor of a tree to signify the importance of these roots, to akin themselves with the roots of Jesus Christ. They showed through the metaphor, the fruits a tree will carry when its roots are embedded in the right ground. They tell and re-tell this narrative so that they can remind themselves where they come from, so that they can see – can hope – for a better future narrative.

Isaiah 11:1: refers to a 'branch', which was a biblical sign of newness, a sign to show that there will be a way out of their discouragement, which in turn became the way to talk about the expected Christ (cf. Jer 23:5). The branch of the tree of Jesse, was the people's *unique outcome*, a unique outcome which was used to write an alternative future narrative based on expectation and renewed hope in salvation (cf. Bratcher 2009: www.crivoice.org/jesse).

Thus, the narrative of David serves two metaphorical purposes. Firstly, to be a guiding metaphor in deconstructing dominant discourses still prevalent today and to examine our own roots and our trees; and secondly to connect the roots of David, with our roots, so that our narratives can be embedded in the bigger story of God with His people and His salvation and grace we got through the tree of Jesse – the coming of Jesus Christ.

3.3. The narrative of David

I would like to propose a parallel between the narrative of my co-researchers and the story of the biblical David, by way of illustrating metaphorically the subjective meaning of events (plots) in their narratives. I will use the plots in the narrative of David, and compare it metaphorically to the plots of both the contextual and spiritual narratives of my co-researchers. This illustration is pure fiction and; therefore, homiletically in nature rather than exegetic, and is used as a way of *externalising the problem*, developing a *unique outcome* so that an *alternative story* can be created.

Before using the metaphor of David and some of the significant plots in the narrative, my co-researcher and I explored the metaphor of "The Tree of Life". Ten co-researchers were chosen from the NGO FBO PEN, of whom five were boys and; therefore, relevant to the sampling of this study. A camp was organised for the weekend of the 10th to the 12th of October 2008, where the ten co-researchers were accompanied by me, the researcher, and co-researcher Amanda Richter to the campsite Sikele, in Magaliesburg.

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The main theme of this camp was “The Tree of Life” which signified an exploration into the co-researchers’ past, present and future and relevant life events and subsequently gained life skills. A second camp was then organised for the weekend of the 26th to the 28th of February 2010, where feedback was provided on the first camp and where all participants reflected on their journey from where they experienced “storms” to where they are today. As an extension on the theme of “Tree of Life”, the story of the biblical David was introduced. This theme elaborated on the metaphor of “roots”, “branches” and “leaves”, by exploring underlying gender themes incorporated from significant people and events – past or present – as well as the future directiveness of these gender-specific narratives for their lives. As with the Tree of Life theme, the Narrative of David also incorporates the view of and relationship with God and how this has been influenced by the co-researchers’ past and present events, and by significant others, deceased or still living.

The two co-researchers chosen from the NGO Heartbeat were guided by another co-researcher, a social worker employed at the centre in Thembisa by Heartbeat. She used the co-researcher manual: “David’s Battle, God’s Victory” as supportive material in exploring significant events in their lives and accompanied experiences as a way of debriefing (counselling) the co-researchers on trauma experienced as an effect of the loss or abandonment of parent(s) and as a directive to guide them in future decisions, by making them aware of dominant discourses which will influence future decisions.

Before commencing with the narratives of (Post)modern day Davids, brief comments on the significance and the relevance of the chosen metaphors, e.g. “The Tree of Life” and “David’s battle, God’s victory” are needed.

In the same way that the Tree of Life metaphor encourages a cyclic movement of relevance from the past, present and future, I propose that the narrative of David will also metaphorically/homiletically assist in connecting Christians’ current life stories with the narratives of the Christian community which is embedded in the narratives of the Bible. In the narrative of David, I have specified the actors of the story as metaphorical role models. I have also fixed the metaphor in three time lines (i.e. past, present and future). This will allow for a cyclic narrative movement between the story of God with His people and the story of my co-researchers. The primary reason for doing this is to offer pastoral care to my co-researchers through assisting them to give meaning to their life stories by connecting it with the story of faith which seems to act as motivator in creating alternative meaningful and purposive life stories. Furthermore, if and when the

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connection between the two stories have been made, the pastoral therapist will assist them to deconstruct their past stories in the paradigm of the deconstruction of the stories of the Bible in order to assist them in the creation of an alternative narrative. Charles Gerkin (1992: 103) states that the function of the pastor [pastoral therapist] lies in the action of offering a "… context of ultimate meaning with which life can be lived". Furthermore he states:

> Expressed another way, one of the fundamental structures of care that life in a community of faith can and should offer is a story or grammar – a way of speaking about people's circumstances – that can connect people's life experience with the ultimate context of meaning contained in the Christian gospel
>
> (Gerkin 1992: 103)

This metaphorical elaboration and deconstruction have; therefore, been done with the use of the Narrative of David (e.g. the rise of David). The main characters in this specific story are David the Sheppard, soon to become David the king; Goliath the feared one; Bathsheba the victim; and God who made an unconditional promise to the house of David.

In the collection of data (the narratives of my co-researchers) I have used the story of David as a way for them to compare themselves and events in their lives with the story of David, in the hope that they would see how similar the lives of the biblical characters were to their own lives and how God's offices are still relevant today, thus closing the gap between the Western/African contextual experience and the experiences and meaning making of the Christian tradition or other wisely stated as the story of God with His people. Gerkin (1992: 109) states: "The Bible is better seen as containing the grounding narrative of a religious community that seeks to structure its life according to the sacred truths contained in that narrative".

I postulate that children of God often lose hope and faith in God's grace towards them, because they might feel that they are not holy enough, or special enough like the characters of the Bible. By using the story of David, illustrating God's love for him, and his love towards God, admits his human fallibility. I, the researcher hoped to draw a cognitive connection between God's historical love and grace and that it is the same love and grace that embraces the Davids of modern day. I chose David because of God regarding him as "a man after His own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14); his humble beginnings; his bravery which emerged from his unfailing trust in God; his fallibilities as a man and human being; and God's grace towards him despite all these fallibilities. It also seemed

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a good metaphor seeing that the Messiah, too, was to come forth from the lineage of Jesse (Isaiah 9:5, 11:10) and; therefore, Jesus is a descendant of the House of David (Matthew 1:16). Because the theme of this study revolves around the theme of fatherhood – God is the Devine Father, His Son descended from the house of David, and people are seen as children of God; therefore, men and boys are the sons of God – I judged David a good metaphor to refer to men in general also loved by God, also from David's lineage, although not without fault.

3.4. The narrative of David: Truth in its strangeness

Besides the metaphorical and even homiletically significance of the narrative of the historical David, is also a hermeneutical significance given by Walter Brueggemann (2002). The hermeneutics of the narrative of David shares similarities not only with the metaphors used in this study, but also in methodology and epistemology, which makes this narrative relevant also in terms of philosophy. This means that besides the homiletic value given to the co-researchers, the researcher herself also receives ancient wisdom from this narrative, as explained and described by Brueggemann, which connects quite well with the principles of postmodernism and postfoundationalism.

It is important to furthermore note that David was a very important person who dominated the narratives of Israel. Israel was in essence "…fascinated by David, deeply attracted to him, bewildered by him, and occasionally embarrassed by him, yet never disowned him" (Brueggemann 2002: 1). This makes one think of the role of men in society. Despite the fact that, in the context of this study, fathers and husbands have failed their families and failed their communities, they are nevertheless still needed and even longed for. As a society we realise that without men, without fathers and without husbands, the family structure, as created and placed by God, cannot function healthily and our children will lose and miss out on that which is needed for them to develop holistically.

Brueggemann (2002: 1-2) states that we are not as much interested in the historical David, because we can in fact not isolate this David and identify him as the 'real' David. All we have of David is Israel's imagination which constructed David through literature, and we can in fact, not get behind this literary construction of David, by Israel. This also makes us more aware of the fact that we ourselves are nothing more than 'imaginative' constructions. Additionally, we have to be aware that this construction of David is done, not without a political agenda (cf. Brueggemann 2002: 1-2). In the same way the co-

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researchers of this study have also constructed an imaginary view of themselves, and I, as the researcher, as well as anyone else working with these co-researchers, also created an imaginary construction of the co-researchers. Although the title of the study suggests that we are interested in adolescent male orphans, specifically the chosen ones for this study, the fact is that in our minds we already constructed an idea of adolescent male orphans in general, hence the interest in these particular individuals' viewpoints. Therefore, we have multiple views of one person, and the aim of this study is also to get behind this imaginary construction, as to understand how these individuals experience their world, so that we as observers and subjective participators can move away from our generalisations and stereotyped assumptions, with the aim of understanding with empathy. Only with an empathetic understanding can we get behind the imaginary constructions. Getting behind these imaginary constructions means that we will not necessarily get behind the factual and historical co-researchers, but rather the meaning behind their, ours and others' meaning and interpretations of the collective imaginary constructions. As a matter of fact, it is these imaginary constructions which are lived and re-told; therefore, understanding these becomes more important than understanding the factual and the historical.

Brueggemann (2002: 2) postulates an exploration of ways in which we can participate in the imaginative construction of David, so that we can both participate in the further creation of the imaginative construction, and so that we can also be addressed by it. Therefore, Brueggemann indicates here that we also participate in the construction of the co-researchers' narratives, while we are at the same time being addressed by it. When listening and deconstructing the stories of our co-researchers, we are made aware of our deep prejudices and biases regarding African men in our South African context, thereby addressing these prejudices and biases and even stereotyped assumptions we have. Thus, in the process of creation and deconstruction, we are forced to revise our imaginary construction of African men, so that we can come to a better understanding and participate in the re-construction of our own narratives. This will enable us to both participate in the construction of their narratives, while at the same time, we also learn about ourselves from their narratives.

In Brueggemann's analysis of the imaginary David, he addresses the issue of truth. He states that he does not inquire about facticity or what happened, but that he is rather more interested in what is claimed about the reality of the context of David (cf. Brueggemann 2002: 2-3). Additionally, Brueggemann (2002: 3) states:

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> This literature, like good literature generally, is always discerning, struggling with and bringing to speech something about truth, something about how it is with us, something that is not known in precisely this way until it is brought precisely to this articulation. So storytelling always drives us to the question of Pontius Pilate the Governor, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38). The governor (and we along with him) asks what is reliable, what is the sure disclosure what we can count on?

Therefore, Brueggemann states that a narrative does not know about truth before the telling and the retelling of the narrative. He states that disclosure of truth happens through the preserving, valuing and formulating of the narrative, and that this happens within the context of the community (cf. Brueggemann 2002: 3). Therefore, truth is invented and reinvented as the narrative is told and retold, even hundreds of years after the factual and historical happening of the narrative. When we as a twentieth century community retell the narrative of David, new truths are invented. Therefore, truth does not lie in factual and historical events, but rather in the imagination of the community which tells and retells the story. In the same way when we tell and retell the narratives of the co-researchers, new truths are invented. Thus, even though we might have constructed a specific understanding through the creation of an alternative story for the co-researchers, the co-researchers change this understanding every time they retell their story. They come to new truths and new understandings constantly; therefore making the process of narrative construction circular and constantly changing, and in essence, dynamic and refreshing.

Another aspect of truth that Brueggemann reveals here is that this truth regarding David is not simple and unambiguous. The truth comes with power and with consequences, as sometimes the truth is allied with David, while at other times it is indeed set against David (cf. Brueggemann 2002: 3). The truth here is seen as polyvalent, meaning that it cannot be captured in a box with boundaries. The truth regarding David moves in various directions, it is rich and varied as the truth is created by different narrators in different contexts and for different purposes. In the end, as Brueggemann states, these different truths make the narrative unsure and are always a bit hidden, we are never fully sure of what is communicated, or what exactly is asserted as truth here (cf. Brueggemann 2002: 4). This hidden aspect of the element of truth in all narratives makes us as the readers humble and forces us to wait, in patience, for disclosure (cf. Brueggemann 2002: 5). This waiting period is then also the journey we have to endure in order to find the subjective truth which has meaning for us in a specific context. In the same way, as is seen through the construction of the co-researchers' alternative

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narrative, they are also never sure of what exactly the truth is for them. However, in waiting and in enduring the uncertainty, the co-researchers and ourselves, gain humility and in this humility we are amazed with what is revealed to us. When looking at the alternative narratives, one can see that multiple truths have been revealed and that these truths are always subjected to constant change. However, it is the hiddenness of this truth which forces us to journey, and in this journey multiple truths are revealed, although we are never sure about the exact truth. This journeying to subjective truths makes it possible for us to grow and to change, as our narratives constantly change in the face of the constant reconstructing our narratives. However, through this change, meaning is made possible, and the meaning-making process never dares stagnate – stagnation of meaning results in stagnation of growth, and the hiding of the multiple and reflexive truths which collectively make a holistic, insightful, reflective dynamic human being who should constantly move forward. This moving forward is made possible through the constant revision of our truth inherent in our narratives.

Moreover, Brueggemann (2002: 5) states that he treats and he sees David as a paradigm, as an epitome. According to Brueggemann this is how ancient Israel saw David, as a prototype for a man of God. Therefore, the truth stated through the being of David is in actual fact the truth in general, a truth which tells us something about ourselves. It is in this statement that I, the researcher, chose David as metaphorical figure, as I believe that we learned something about our assumptions regarding men, regarding men of God and God Himself, through the narrative of David, or the truths about David as told through the narratives of ancient Israel. These narratives correspond much with the narratives that modern Israel (our community) holds regarding our modern Davids. Narratives infused with ambiguousness and multiple truths; narratives which despite the fallibility of our men, never disowned our men, as we as a community also stand in awe of men and what they can achieve.

The final notes regarding the truth of David, as told by ancient Israel, is that historical facts are never truly 'historical', but always constructions created by us and also for us (cf. Brueggemann 2002: 5). Brueggemann (2002: 5) states:

> In the same way, we are always busily constructing ourselves for the sake of appearance and for the sake of self-understanding. Those constructions are characteristically strange combinations of fidelity and deception.

Secondly, truth is never subjected to scientific certitude (cf. Brueggemann 2002: 5), as truth itself is also a construction of our imagination. Finally, truth is always multivalent,

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"… multi-faceted, and layered" (Brueggemann 2002: 6). There exists a multitude of truths regarding one narrative and these truths always contain a political and power-related aspect.

Therefore, from Brueggemann's postulations and statements we are made aware, from looking at ancient narratives, that liberation lies in the narrative and not in the historical facts per se. Therefore, in the telling and the retelling of narratives, and even our own personal narratives, we can stay close to the person who created the narrative, even if that person is us. This is the only manner in which we can stay true to our personal essence, even if the embodiment of this essence changes in the face of changing truths regarding ourselves (cf. Brueggemann 2002: 6). I want to postulate then that this multifaceted aspect of our own constructed truths does not change the person we are in essence, but only how this person will be embodied in the future in the form of the multiple narratives which ensure that we always search for new truths so that we can come to a better understanding of ourselves; our role in this world, in the context of God's primary narrative, thereby reaching our fullest potential.

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CHAPTER 4

THE BATTLEFIELD

... the stage is set ...

> 1 Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephesdammim. 2 And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. 3 And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them. 4 And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath.
>
> – 1 Samuel 17:1-4 (NKJV) –

This chapter is concerned with the *description of the context*, as experienced by the co-researchers, infused with the different elements which influence the writing of their narratives. We have seen that a postfoundational notion of practical theology directs us to first describe and explore the local and embedded context of the co-researchers before an attempt should be made to move beyond this context. Therefore, the context of the co-researchers will first be described in terms of the most significant events embedded in this context which have an influence on the construction of their narratives.

This chapter is called “The Battlefield” and refers to the description of the stage upon which the battle will take place. I have specifically chosen this analogy with the contexts, as it will soon become apparent that the co-researchers of this study are indeed fighting a battle. As with any war, it is to one’s advantage to know the battlefield – to know where your enemies come from, what shelter is provided and what armour is available from the battlefield, hence the activity of sending a scout to explore the battlefield and the enemy. Therefore, this chapter acts as a scout in exploring our battlefield.

4.1 The battlefield of the (post)modern day Davids

> I firstly lost my mother, secondly it was my brother and lastly it was my first brother during my matric year in 2008 ... It didn’t hurt by that time because I was little but now for the fact that I’m starting to experience life it is starting to hurt ... I miss

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> everything about them, I miss things like their love, tenderness and care. I also miss their support emotionally and financially.
>
> (Molimi TOL Camp 2010)
>
> ... my mother passed away last year on the 3rd of August, well as I've said she was a kind person she wanted something big in life but Satan was so jealous and nothing worked out until she get sick for 3 months and then passed away ... the only challenge that I went through and still go through was the one of my father. When I tried to give him a second chance in calling me his son after leaving me for no reason
>
> (Manqoba TOL Camp 2010)
>
> I firstly lost my little sister followed by my dad then my mom. I can't remember about the first two people but mother was the best, humble at all times ... my mother she used to live far from me and come see me at the end of every month because of her job, she had cancer then she passed on
>
> (Kgotoso TOL Camp 2010)

It is clear from the above [7]mini-stories that the context of the co-researchers is deeply embedded in a world which has left many young boys alone in this world. This context is partially part of the global context which is infiltrated by a reality of HIV and Aids, poverty, and abandonment. This global epidemic however, deeply engrained in the context, has infiltrated the personal and subjective lives of boys and girls at a crucial stage where they form an identity of who they are, where they come from and where they are going to. This specific context imposes so much additional responsibilities on these vulnerable young minds, that they are blinded to a future which can change their course. Instead, these boys are exposed to a life where they have to take responsibility and accountability for their own lives, and decisions they make – decisions normally pertaining to the mature adult – long before society has equipped them to survive in the world.

As part of this research journey, seven adolescent boys were chosen as research companions; five of whom are registered with the NGO PEN, situated in the inner city of Pretoria and two of whom are registered with the NGO Heartbeat, who has a centre in Thembisa, Gauteng. Two of the PEN boys live in a place of safety, known as Precious

[7] The grammar of the stories is kept as written by the co-researchers.

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Pearls, and one boy lives in a flat in the inner city of Pretoria with some friends. Two of the remaining boys at PEN currently live in Thembisa, but they formerly also resided at Precious Pearls.

The two co-researchers chosen from the NGO Heartbeat were guided by another co-researcher, a social worker employed at the centre in Thembisa by Heartbeat.

In the 'scouting' of the context, six dominant influences were identified in the make-up of the context, which is noteworthy for a description of our 'battlefield'. These six areas of description will now be discussed in detail.

4.1.1. A context of loss and orphanhood

All of the boys are from a black African background and most of them were born in rural areas outside the city of Pretoria. Most of their mothers moved to the city in search of job opportunities, and some only came to live with their mother later in their lives.

Six of the boys chosen as co-researches have lost their mothers to death, at least four years prior to this study. Five of the boys are abandoned by their fathers and two boys (twins) have lost their father during a gun fighting incident when they were very young; therefore, they did not know their father. Subsequently all the boys, except one, are double orphans.

The above stories clearly show how the loss of the mother creates a vacuum in the child's life, especially because she is most of the time the only stable nurturer in the family. The participants in this study stated that they do not only suffer physical loss, but also emotional and psychological losses as they literally have no one who support them, love them and guide them into adulthood. It is clear that the loss caused by the HIV and Aids environment, is not only one-dimensional, meaning that it causes orphanhood only; it also causes a loss of income and with the loss of income one loses one's sense of security. By having no loving and caring adult in the house, children also lose a sense of stability. The result of having no adult role-model in the house, especially as a child moves into adolescence, means that a child loses any opportunity in developing a stable identity. This unstable identity causes children to "float" around senseless, not prioritising education and not developing meaningful stable relationships. The list of the consequences of living in the HIV and Aids environment is endless. As Foster (2006: 1) states:

> The economic and social effects of HIV/AIDS on children include malnutrition, poverty, neglect, migration, and homelessness. Psychological effects are

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> depression, guilt, and fear possibly leading to long-term mental health problems. The combination of these effects compromise children's access to an adequate standard of living, health and education ... and increase their vulnerability to a range of consequences, including illiteracy, poverty, child labour, sexual and other forms of exploitation, HIV infection and unemployment in adulthood.

Therefore, it is clear that children suffer multiple losses in the face of the HIV and Aids epidemic.

4.1.2. A context of paternal abandonment

As previously stated, it was found that about 50% of Africa's children grew up without a father (cf. Mtimkulu 2006: 38). The causes of this abandonment might be multiple, but nevertheless causes some form of trauma for the children: "Added to that was the effect of poverty, which AIDS intensified but did not create ... [V]iolence was another source of trauma – several children had lost their father, not to AIDS but to gun fighting" (Denis and Ntsimane 2006: 242).

It has been found in numerous studies that children growing up without a father figure experience many hindrances to their development on all dimensions. "The absence of the father means that children are unable to develop properly on many levels: psychologically, materially, emotionally, cognitively and physically" (Mtimkulu 2006: 39).

The absence of a father or a man in the house also has economic consequences, as the household has to be maintained with only one salary; that is if the mother is employed at all. Therefore, paternal abandonment is indeed a problem which affects the family structure psychologically, socially, and economically.

4.1.3. A context of gender and sexuality

The HIV and Aids epidemic is fuelled by much more than just promiscuous sexual practice. The fragmentation of gender identities, and the inequalities between the two genders are but some of the social practices affecting the spread of HIV. This is affirmed through findings by Barolsky (2003: 36) who states that "... gender and sexuality have become recognised as critical to an understanding of both the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS within the South African context, and the way in which the disease has developed".

Inherent in these practices is the concept of gender and sexuality for children who grow up without both parents in a home; for children who witness physical and sexual abuse

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daily or have experienced it themselves. The fact is that our children do not have a healthy paradigm of 'being a boy' or 'being a girl'. When moving into puberty, both boys and girls experience a sudden development of hormones and a change in their bodies. They have to make sense of this by using skills available to them in society; a society who is preoccupied with promiscuous sex and the use of sex to gain power. Therefore, this epidemic is making us aware of the powerful cultural and societal discourses which tell our boys and girls how to be in this world; it is a discourse; however, not sensitive to equality, healthy practices and age; a discourse which puts our youth in positions where they are at risk. Therefore, amidst this epidemic we have to take a closer look at cultural and societal discourses underlying the notion of gender and sex, also for our adolescents as this is where we must start in making a change. As Barolsky (2003: 19) rightly states:

> ... the epidemic must also force a reappraisal of the notion of 'adolescence' and the restrictions placed by society on young people. HIV/AIDS is redefining and challenging as never before our understanding of what constitutes 'adult' and 'adultness' in terms of rights and behaviours and 'adolescence' in terms of rights and behaviours.

Most literature has focussed on how females are the victims of sexual oppression, dominance and abuse, experienced by their counterparts. Everyone is in agreement that the construction of male sexuality is at fault for these practices but for some reason these constructions are not effectively addressed as to influence change – women are the focus of all interventions, but still they lack power in successfully negotiating safer sex.

> Constructions of sexuality in the era of HIV/AIDS attempt to affirm male power through the performance of sexuality, while positing women as the original source of the disease. These constructions do not tamper with male authority and instead form a defence against women's attempts to assert new types of sexual boundaries.
>
> (Barolsky 2003: 38)

Therefore, it is clear that the negotiations must originate with men, change must start with men and society's messages about what it means to be a real man: "Construction of male sexuality pose men both as victims of women's primal charms, as well as active initiators of sex with a multiplicity of partners, and the latter is seen as an essential marker of manhood" (Barolsky 2003: 37). Thus, underlying this concept of manhood is a

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meaning-making process constructed by issues such as sexual power and control. Similarly, in the context of manhood and its meaning, Cornell, Reid and Walker (2003: 26) have posed the question:

> How do men prove their manhood? A number of case studies undertaken in Southern Africa identify dominant behaviour in men. These include [...] exercising control over women, coercive sex ... [O]f course, not all men behave in this way.

Unfortunately the minority never rules, and it is this skewed paradigm of manhood and sex which is in the majority. The majority is so major that it is targeted at the primary cause for the spread of HIV and Aids.

4.1.4. A context of poverty

All the boys live in conditions of extreme poverty and are registered, either with Heartbeat or PEN, as 'orphaned and vulnerable' and receive material support, such as monthly food parcels and have access to the organisation's psycho-social support services, such as weekly support groups or therapy and counselling and academic support services such as assistance with homework and studying. All of the boys have been exempted in paying school fees while they were in school (some of the boys were in school with the start of this study, but completed matric in 2009) and are at the mercy of the two organisations in receiving material and other donations.

The HIV and Aids epidemic does not exist in isolation and is both fuelled by and partly caused by extreme levels of poverty that a majority of our citizens experience. Children First (2006: 15) affirms this by stating that "[p]overty is a result of and a cause of HIV and AIDS".

In terms of this it seems that HIV in itself is also opportunistic: it flourishes amongst communities that are already labelled as the marginalised as they suffer because of a low-economic status. Barolsky (2003: 18) rightly affirms this by stating: "Disease therefore operates not as an independent variable but as a highly visible marker of social power. It traces the outlines of hierarchies already deeply entrenched but usually embedded but unremarked in the ordinary fabric".

This lack of income already leaves many people hungry at night; being hungry means that one lacks certain essential nutrients, nutrients which are essential for the healthy functioning of the immune system. Therefore, already on biological level these people are more vulnerable to infection. Once infected a poor person does not necessarily have the means to medical assistance, such as getting tested, or getting treated.

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Besides the fact that they cannot afford vitamin supplements, they can also many times not afford transport to the clinics or hospitals. Low economic societies are also marked by a high level of crime, crime which many times are attractive to the many men who cannot find a job and have nowhere else to go to make a life for themselves. Poor communities also experience, more than any other social class, the effects of drug abuse, sex work and family abuse. In the townships manhood is many times equated with wealth – "money makes a man" (TOL camp 2010); when men cannot prove their manhood through the job they do or the money they make, they resort to other social delinquent practices such as domestic abuse and rape, which further fuels the spread of HIV.

The poorest of the poor are also prowled on by malicious rich men, as they abuse young women who are already in a vulnerable condition for their own sexual satisfaction. One girl, fifteen years of age stated: "I used my body just to survive [...] I would sleep with someone even if I didn't love that someone so long as he would give me money" (Demmer 2007: 45). Elfenbein (2005: 11) affirms this through his findings: "High rates of poverty lead to a situation in which many women engage in transactional sex in order to survive and in order to support both themselves and their families".

When looking at these findings and the detrimental context in which HIV prospers, one might go as far as to state that our main enemy might not by HIV, but rather poverty.

4.1.5. A context of poor psychosocial development

It might be noteworthy to state that three boys completed matric in 2009 but only one boy passed, while the other two boys failed two subjects and are doing re-examinations in 2010. The one boy who passed got a bursary to study Information Sciences at a college in Pretoria and is doing quite well.

It has been mentioned that more than half of the children orphaned in South Africa are between the ages of 12 to 17 (cf. Children on the Brink 2004: 17). Therefore, it would seem that adolescents make up the majority of orphans. The question is: what are the effects of orphanhood on children between these ages, or children who find themselves at this crucial developmental stage?

Children on the Brink (2004: 17) continues by affirming that key development experiences occur during adolescence, such as physical and sexual maturation, a progression towards social and economic independence and also the development of an identity. Attending to these events becomes crucial in the context of HIV, as these

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children are vulnerable in becoming the victims of sexual exploitation or, because of their sexual activities, become vulnerable in getting infected with HIV and other sexual transmitted diseases.

It has been found with adolescents who have been orphaned that they understand the loss they have experienced, but find it difficult to express their feelings, worries and anxieties regarding this loss (cf. Children on the Brink 2004: 17). Furthermore, it has been found that:

> [t]hey may feel resentment and anger at the death of a parent or close family member. They may seem to be coping, but at the same time they can experience depression, hopelessness and increased vulnerability. This can lead to a sense of alienation, desperation, risk-taking behaviour, and withdrawal.
>
> (Children on the Brink 2004: 17)

On a socio-economic level, adolescents specifically suffer at the hands of poverty. The need to financially support themselves and/or their siblings and the need to attend school to get an education are continuously in tension. At the end of the day they might either engage in risk behaviour to attain money, or they might not attend school as they need to take on a job (cf. Children at risk 2004: 18). Some of the adolescents who manage to balance both school and the worries regarding finances, inevitably struggle at getting good grades or even passing their year. Besides the obvious struggle for survival, the "[e]conomic hardship can also deprive adolescents of much needed recreation and participation in community activities" – these activities are also aimed at integrating an individual into society and teaching them important life and social skills. The outcome of not being able to enjoy one's childhood have psychological consequences such as "…depression, hopelessness and risk behaviour" which might in turn lead to the practice of unsafe sex and the abuse of illegal substances (Children at risk 2004: 18).

It is found that "[a]dolescent orphans in HIV/AIDS affected communities may be more vulnerable to HIV infection than young children or adults. Young people, especially girls, are becoming infected at younger ages, particularly in communities highly affected by HIV/AIDS" (Children at risk 2004: 18).

It is clear that adolescence in the context of HIV and Aids is a stage marked by increased sensitivity to risk behaviour and because of an increase of responsibilities thrust upon them by the loss of an adult and the context of poverty; they do not get the

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opportunity to develop into healthy adults. It is also clear that if we want to make a change, if we want to halt this disease in its tracks, we need to invest all of our interventions, time, energy, and resources into this young generation of adolescents.

4.1.6. HIV and Aids, poverty and gender relations within informal settlements in South Africa

It cannot be stated with full confidence that all the boys' mothers died of Aids, as it is difficult to obtain such information – the death certificate always indicates the opportunistic disease as cause of death, as opposed to directly ascribing death to Aids. Some of the boys state that they think their mothers died of Aids, two boys state 'cancer' as cause, while the remaining boys do not have an idea what was wrong with their mothers – they only known that the onset of the illness and that death was unexpectedly sudden.

All of the research participants (co-researchers) in this study are either living in an informal settlement or have lived in an informal settlement. Informal settlements are generally identified by a lack of resources and extreme poverty. In turn, as we have seen formerly, poverty is a deterrent in the spread of and maintenance of HIV and Aids. The TAC briefing paper (February 2008) states that they know with some confidence that most people who are infected with HIV and Aids in South Africa, live in informal settlements. They explain this by stating that their data suggests that housing and related living conditions play a role in the transmission of HIV and Aids, and that informal settlements generally house people from a low-socio economic background, as many of the residents do not own a house, but live in a shack (Geffen 2008: www.tac.org.za).

TAC has also found that the residents of the informal settlements in South Africa are currently most at risk getting infected with HIV and Aids (cf. Geffen 2008: www.tac.org.za).

An understanding of the socio-economic context and the discourses at work in informal settlements is important in understanding the experiential context of the participants of this study. One can ask anyone living in an informal settlement or who has been in an informal settlement before, and they will tell you that different rules apply there. It is interesting to note when one enters an informal settlement, in the middle of the day in the middle of the week, groups of men will sit in a circle, around a fire and drink beer. This is indicative of the high unemployment rates in informal settlements, which give way for the powers of poverty and subsequent crime to infiltrate the lives of the residents. In informal settlements the prevalence of rape as a sex crime is especially high.

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Harvey and Kehler (2005: 3-4) state that "[i]n South Africa, statistics on rape vary between 52 000 reported cases a year [...] to 1.69 million" (cf. SA Law Reform Commission).

The incidence of gender based violence in South Africa is even higher, with one in every two women having a chance of being raped in their lifetime, and a woman being raped every 26 seconds. One in four women is believed to be in an abusive relationship, and a woman is killed by her intimate partner every six days (Vetten and Bhana 2003: www.powa.co.za).

The reality is also that the majority of survivors of these assaults are women, and the majority of the perpetrators are men". It has been stated before that manhood is defined in [poor] areas by the concept of sexuality and sexual promiscuity, as men cannot show their power as a man through the amount of money they have, and will then seek out alternative ways to proof their manhood. "Constructions of sexuality in the era of HIV/AIDS attempt to affirm male power through the performance of sexuality ..." (Barolsky 2003: 38).

This is furthermore affirmed by a study done by Cornel, Reid and Walker (2003: 22) where they argue that "… sex is also about power – who initiates sex, who makes the decisions [...] these decisions are contested because relationships between men and women are unequal".

Therefore, it is clear that unequal gender relations is the norm and a mix of western and traditional social paradigms interact with each other to create a new urban, "township" culture. This is a culture which does not necessarily care for its neighbour anymore; one will find an orphaned child, alone in his shack, with no adult member and no neighbour bringing him some food at night. One of the participants of this study stated: "In my community it's every man for himself" (TOL Camp 2010). This is also indicated by statistics which state that "… there were 150,000 children living in a total of 79,000 child-only households across South Africa. It equates to 0.8% of all children and 0.6% of all households. There has been no change in the proportion of children living in child only households between 2002 and 2007" (GHS 2007: 76).

Many times, if not the most, families are without a man in the house. It is also norm for girls to fall pregnant as a teenager; for the father to deny any responsibility and leaving his house, targeting the next vulnerable woman in a conquest to proof his manhood.

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Demmer (2007: 44) found during one of his interviews that:

> Most often it was women who had the primary responsibility of supporting the family. Often it was the grandmother who had to care for the family after her children had died and there was no one to look after the grandchildren. Sometimes entire households depend on the social grant that all the elderly receive in South Africa.

Apparently not only unequal gender relations, but also unequal age relations are apparent in the generational gap which is quite common in the 'townships'. Many times grannies are the only known mother (or 'father') of their children's children.

It is clear the social, psychological, and economical context inherent to an informal settlement, is the playing field for HIV and Aids, for poverty and much psychological trauma. It is definitely not the ideal environment for any child to develop into his/her full potential; nevertheless informal settlements are the reality for the majority of South Africa's population.

By understanding the context in which the story of HIV emerges, one can better understand the various factors contributing to the narratives of the co-researchers of this study. It is imperative to remember that the creation of an alternative narrative will also be embedded into this context as this is after all their home. However, it is possible that an alternative narrative can motivate a 'moving out' of this context; however, one must be very careful here to not impose one's own identified problem onto the narratives of the participants. It must be noted that what is a problem for the researcher, or the reader, might not necessarily be a problem for the co-researcher; after all none of the participants identified their living conditions per se as the problem. However, in deconstructing their narratives one might identify discourses embedded in the context (which we have, e.g. gender and sexual relations, power relations etc.) which fuels the experienced problem. The idea is to make the co-researcher aware of these discourses, embedded in context, culture and all other social practices, so that they can better and more realistically re-write a future narrative which is in fact attainable and satisfactory, by keeping in mind that this future narrative will also to some extent be maintained by its specific playing field, or context.

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4.2 The role of the NGO CBO Heartbeat and the NGO FBO PEN within the field of HIV and Aids

All of the boys are religious but do not ascribe to a specific denomination. The five PEN boys used to go to the church services provided by PEN (protestant reformed); while the two boys at Heartbeat do not go to church often. None of the boys are particularly interested in ancestry worshipping or using the services of a Sangoma (traditional healer), but at the same time none of the boys deny these practices. It might be that the lack of an African parent might cause them not to be exposed to these traditional practices as much as those children living with their grandmothers or mothers.

NGOs (nongovernmental organisations), CBOs (community-based organisations) and FBOs (faith-based organisations) in South Africa play an important role in combating both the causes and the effects of HIV and Aids and the disastrous effect of fragmentation and destruction it has on all social and economic structure. All the participants of this study are either registered with the FBO PEN or the NGO CBO Heartbeat. Two of the participants live in one of PEN's safe houses; while the remaining participants received monthly material support from either one of the organisations. Additionally, both PEN and Heartbeat provide psycho-social or spiritual support to children during weekly support group session at their centres. This provides the children with an opportunity to engage with other children who have suffered similar trauma and who need life skills to face the challenges ahead.

Swart (2007: 17) explains that Heartbeat (cf. www.heartbeat.org.za) is a non-profit and a public benefit organisation which was originally created to alleviate the suffering of orphaned and vulnerable children by facilitating changes in communities.

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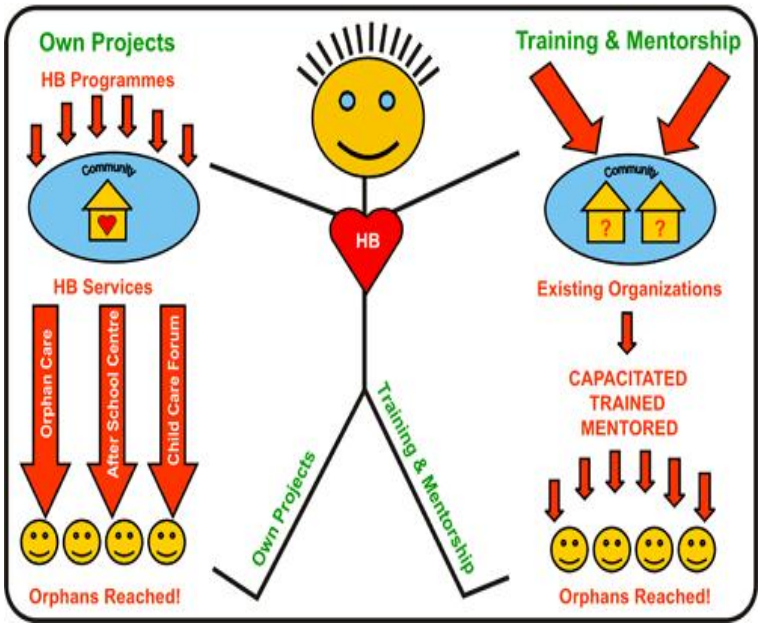

Figure 3: Heartbeat's model of care (www.heartbeat.org.za)

Appointed childcare workers are central in Heartbeat's model of care. Swart (2007: 17) reports that "… each family is assigned a childcare worker" who visits each child-headed household assigned to him/her three times per week and each relative-headed household assigned to him/her once per week. During these visits the childcare worker does a general assessment of the physical condition of the house and the physical, mental and emotional condition of the children in the house. At core in the roles and responsibilities of the childcare worker is that he/she must provide the children "… with emotional support, counselling, discipline and assistance with their homework" (Swart 2007: 17). Therefore in summary the childcare worker replaces the role of the absent father and mother by acting as someone who cares for the child in all ways. Additional to this the childcare worker also delivers food donations and other material donations to the children. Children receive a full food parcel once a week which is enough to feed a small family (cf. Swart 2007: 17).

The other relevant organisation which most of the participants in this study come from is the faith-based organisation, PEN (Pretoria Evangelism and Nurture) (cf. www.pen.org.za). Their website states their vision as follows:

> The main focus of our ministry is to build long term relationships with the people whom we serve. To minister, not only through bringing the word of God, but to see to all their needs: food, clothes, social and academic care for the children, preventing family violence through therapy, helping with job creation, taking care

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> of HIV-positive people, improving self-esteem and eventually, creating a new wholesome community.
>
> (PEN Our Vision: www.pen.org.za)

PEN is also a non-profit and nongovernmental organisation which works closely with local churches as well as other governmental and nongovernmental organisations. What makes PEN different from Heartbeat; however, is that most of their activities are focussed on evangelism and ministry as well. Further in their vision statement they say that they are "a non-denominational Christian-based organisation and as such sees itself as God's VOICE, STEWARD, SERVANT and COMMUNITY in the inner city of Pretoria" (cf. PEN Our Vision: www.pen.org.za).

PEN explains their activities and programmes by elaborating on the four words, 'voice', 'steward', 'servant' and 'community'. In accordance with the imperative of 'Voice' which states that "[a]midst the noise of the inner-city PEN strives to be a Voice of God bringing hope and dispensing love to our inner-city communities" (PEN Ministries Voice: www.pen.org.za). PEN conducts a number of ministries which includes, Bible Clubs, a Hobby Centre, a Library, Pal groups, School & Hospital outreaches, Partnerships and Advocacy, Sea Holiday for disadvantaged children, Inner City Faith Community Partnerships, and Student Outreaches.

In accordance with their imperative of 'Community', PEN believes "that the Kingdom of God is especially realised in and through God's new community" and; therefore, conduct both educational activities and residential community activities to the marginalised and disadvantaged. Some of these activities include various crèches and nursery schools, as well as providing less privileged people with an opportunity for affordable accommodation at their housings projects. One of these housing projects 'The Zama Zama's, is a "… free housing facility for men who make their living by collecting used paper and cartons and transporting it on trolleys to recycling agencies in the inner city" (PEN Ministries Community: www.pen.org.za).

PEN's 'Servant' imperative in turn, focuses on rendering specific much needed services to the people in the inner-city, such as giving out clothes and food parcels to people in need; developing and maintaining a drop-in/minor-ailment clinic aimed at helping people infected or affected by HIV and Aids; and to provide basic health care and HIV and Aids support to homeless people who normally do not have access to proper health care.

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Furthermore this servant initiative focuses on providing each child registered with PEN with at least one good meal per day (cf. PEN Ministries Servant: www.pen.org.za).

PEN also has a *Guidance & Support Centre* where appointed social workers, part-time workers and volunteers evaluate families for the allocation of bursaries, food parcels and other needed services. Social workers also engage in therapeutic activities with the children, parents and other individuals. Therapy is being done on a daily basis for children, parents and other individuals. "Currently we have a full time educational psychologist, a part time educational psychologist, three social workers, and a pastoral therapist on the staff ... Apart from this there are occupational-, speech-, and remedial therapists volunteering at PEN" (PEN Ministries Servant: www.pen.org.za).

Finally, PEN's 'Steward' initiative is driven by God's first command in Genesis 1, where "[w]e are not only called to proclaim the truth, serve the poor, and build community, but also to be good managers of God's property" (PEN Ministries Steward: www.pen.org.za).

The participants in this study from both organisations overtly state their appreciation and gratitude towards these organisations in providing them with a "new family", support and saving them from the slumps of the street or the townships. One of the participants at Heartbeat wrote this letter to the social worker who is responsible for doing therapy with him:

> I would like to thank you very much and I do appreciate your kindness to me and your love and support you have for me and I wish God could keep you for me so that you would be able to see what I will do for you just to appreciate your kindness and your support to me ... [S]ometimes it feels like a dream to have someone who listens to your sad stories, your problems and again I thank God the Almighty blessed me with you.
>
> (Heartbeat interviews 2010)

Similarly one of the participants of this research who is registered at PEN states: "Most of the challenges that I had PEN played a big role in them in the way that they encourage me and make ways to help me in what so ever I am going through", and another: "These people show me love in many ways, they make me feel very special at all times. So I appreciate such people in life" (TOL Camp 2010).

Therefore, it is clear that these organisations and other similar organisations do play a big role in changing the lives of children affected and infected by HIV and Aids; they

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cannot bring back or even replace the loss they experience, but they can try their utmost to make a change in the children's lives by giving them not only food and shelter, but also some guidelines and support in the challenges they have faced and will surely still face in the future.

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CHAPTER 5

THE NARRATIVES OF (POST)MODERN DAY DAVIDS

This chapter is concerned with movement two and three of the seven movements of Practical Theology. Movement two entails the listening to and description of in-context experiences, while movement three is concerned with making, describing and developing interpretations of experiences, in collaboration with co-researchers.

5.1 The Narratives of (post)modern day Davids fighting their (post)modern Goliaths in the context of their Trees of Life

Following is a report on the narratives of each (post)modern-day "David" as experienced by him. I will signify the narrative of each co-researcher with the use of a personally chosen African metaphorical pseudonym (the co-researchers chose the names themselves). Information from both camps (10-12 October 2010 and 26-28 February 2010) is used and combined to form a holistic narrative.

5.1.1 [8]Molimi – "Farmer"

Molimi (Sepedi meaning 'farmer') was born in Nylstroom in Limpopo. His parents were separated since he was a baby and his grandparents passed away when he was very young. Molimi lost his mother in 1998 after a long illness, and his father passed away two years following his mother's death. He states that the loss of his father did not affect him as much, because his father was never part of his life and that the loss of his mother did not affect him as much at the time as he was still very young; but now that he experiences life, he misses her and finds it difficult to live without her. In 2003 his cousin committed suicide.

Molimi has an older brother and cousin and he used to live with them in a flat in the inner city of Pretoria, then he had a fight with his brother and he was allowed to live at Precious Pearls. At present (2010) Molimi lives alone in a flat with some friends, as he ran away from his brother's house (after he was expelled from Precious Pearls) because

[8] Spelling errors were omitted in the co-researchers' personal stories, but the wording and grammar were kept in their original format.

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of frequent physical abused suffered at the hands of his brother. Molimi experiences much ambivalence towards his brother, as his brother was the one who looked after him since his parents passed away and in many ways guided him with regards to issues of life.

However, his brother is an alcoholic who introduced Molimi to alcohol from a very young age. When he was drunk, he used to physical abuse his girlfriend and Molimi and the next day he would not remember what he has done. Molimi states: "*My brother drinks when he stresses and beats us up, I pray to God for help and then fall asleep*". So one day it became too much for Molimi and he ran away.

To make matters even more confusing for Molimi, his brother found him a flat when he ran away and currently pays the rent on behalf of Molimi. Molimi; therefore, feels that he owes his brother much as he is the only "father figure" he knew. In response to the question if there is anyone in his life he feels he needs to obey, he responded that he needs to obey his brother because he supports Molimi financially. He does accept his brother with his mistakes and still speaks of him with respect; however, in response to the question if anyone has failed him before, he states: "*It was my brother, he failed me with many things".*

Molimi states that life was very difficult for him. When he was left alone with his brother they struggled to survive, he states:

> We had sleep at night not knowing whether they [are] going [to] evict us the following day or what. So that was a very hurtful experience for me personally

Looking at the positive side, he states that he grew up quickly and learned how to fend for himself:

> [I] am not staying with my brother or a guarding. That teaches me how to be responsible at a very young age. My college life is also hectic because I have to work under pressure so that I can produce good results for the bursary to carry on.

Molimi states that he is quite good at entertaining people by dancing, playing music or even acting. He says that his friends would describe him as a funny person, and someone they can talk 'straight' with. In describing his strengths, he states that he is a good listener and he can make decisions and take instructions. He tells a tale of a competition they had at PEN, and he won "*Not because I want to rule is because I can listen and take instructions*" (TOL workbook October 2008)

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Currently (2010), Molimi is enrolled for an IT course at college and is also a DJ at night. He says that he feels proud of himself in being able to pass school and study further and living his dream of making music, but at the same time he has disappointed himself. Molimi states indirectly that he has a problem with alcohol. He finds himself drunk a lot of times and then he does things which he knows are wrong. He is very hard on himself about an incident after a recent PEN camp, where he was caught having sex with one of the younger school girls who also lives in Precious Pearls. Because of this he was expelled from Precious Pearls. The rest of the boys also joke around with him as he might possibly have fathered a child. Molimi states the following regarding the incident:

> The reason I moved out of Precious Pearls in 2008 is that we were at a camp (sea camp) and I had this thing with a girl – we did something bad – we came home and I did it with a girl who lives at Precious Pearls, it was not right what we did, especially because it was at a Christian camp. This thing changed my life – I don't like life, I drink each and every day alcohol. I don't know why I drink, I think I'm used to the city life – I'm doing things I'm not proud.
>
> (TOL camp February 2010, informal discussion)

Molimi's story contains much ambivalence. As one of the co-researchers of this study, Molimi struck me as someone with a high moral intelligence and someone who clearly respects God. For example, in response to the question of what a real man is, Molimi answered: "*Identify his mistakes and repent, must be good .... [It is] your mentality, to make your family happy*" (TOL camp February 2010, informal discussion). Furthermore, in response to the question of what is your biggest storm, he replied:

> The fact that I want to live a Christian life but it seems difficult the people around me don't give me that support. We go clubs and all that, but I'm planning to cut them because that is the only way I can live my life as a Christian. My other storm was my abusive my brother who abused me physically. He always came home drunk and beat us (me and his wife).

In reference to how Molimi views God's presence during his struggles, Molimi states:

> God has played and still [plays] a very important role in my life. Like last year when I was staying at Precious Pearls. [9]I was too old to stay there so I had to

[9] Note here that first Molimi said he had to leave Precious Pearls because of his age. Only later through the discussion he admitted that he was expelled from the house.

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> leave the place and I didn't know where to go but I still went of the place and stayed at a friend's place. So I had the time to fix things with my brother. That was God's sign showing me the right way.

In conclusion to Molimi's wishes for his tree, he states:

> I would love to see my tree planted next to the valley where it will get enough water to survive like having a family and being able to afford life.

It is clear that for Molimi success is not necessarily related to having money, but in being happy, being a good father and husband and keeping one's family happy. In response to the question if he thinks it is possible for a man to be a good man, he stated that he thinks it is possible; however, the world makes it hard for one as it offers many temptations.

5.1.2 [10]Manqoba – "Victory"

Manqoba (Zulu meaning 'victory') was born in Mpumalanga and used to stay with his grandparents in Mpumalanga. In the year 2004 when he turned twelve years of age, Manqoba went to stay with his mother in Pretoria. Manqoba's mother was very ill for three months and then suddenly passed away in 2007, when he was fifteen. He recollects the story and says:

> Yep my mother my past away last year on the 3rd of August, well as I've said she was a kind person she wanted something big in life but Satan was so jealous and nothing worked out until she get sick for 3 months and then passed away.

After his mother passed away, Manqoba's extended family took all of her belongings. The result is that Manqoba has nothing left which can remind him of his mother. He states that he was very upset and reacted in a "bad way". Afterwards Manqoba was accepted by PEN and went to live in Precious Pearls.

Manqoba was very sad and still is at present; he finds it difficult to deal with her death. Manqoba has two sisters, one his older and the other one younger. Manqoba has recently become uncle to the child of his oldest sister, and he feels very proud. He states that he feels like a man now. In terms of the most important people in his life, Manqoba states:

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[10] Spelling errors were omitted in the co-researchers' personal stories, but the wording and grammar were kept in their original format.

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> My mom is the most important person in my life even though she passed away but she [is] still important and nothing will change. My cousins[s] ... are also important and my sister who is now taking good care of me she is also important.

Manqoba currently lives in Thembisa with one of his friends and his little sister and two cousins. He wrote matric last year (2009) and failed two subjects. Therefore, he is rewriting those two subjects so that he can go to college one day. During the first camp Manqoba stated that he would like to become a pilot. However, during the second camp Manqoba changed this and stated: "*I want to see myself being successful in different ways namely soccer, graphic design, music composer and being a DJ*". Therefore, it would seem that Manqoba struggles with a career identity.

In responding to the storms Manqoba currently experiences, Manqoba states:

> Well nothing much happened in my life but I tried to sort some things out with my father but he was too busy for me all he did it was to give me money but the thing is I don't want his money all I want is a father who will teach me how to become a men, so nothing really fascinating happened in my life.

And afterwards,

> Well after the camp the only challenge that I went through and still going through was the one of my father. When I tried to give him a second chance in calling me his son after leaving me for no reason. So that's one of the [most] difficult challenges I've ever experienced in my life.

To emphasise the effect of this storm Manqoba furthermore states:

> The greatest storm that I faced was after my mom past away and my father did not want to take responsibility and that has affected my tree badly and I am trying by all means to overcome it.

It would seem that Manqoba is maturing in many ways, as he states after the first Tree of Life camp his life has changed in terms of how he looks at it (his perspective) – he states that he is now starting to set goals and have plans for the future.

In terms of Manqoba's future hope and dreams for himself he states: "*I would hope to find happiness and to live a life that I always wanted to live and I always obey God".* It would seem that Manqoba has not lost hope and believes very strongly in the plan God has for his life: "*... I do have that believe what God has planned my life already although it's a bit tough right now, but I know I will get through it*". Manqoba says that his life has

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been hard, but he believes in the victory that God has given him to overcome the worst, and that this victory will be the theme of his life.

5.1.3 [11]Kgotoso – "Peace"

Kgotoso (Sesotho for 'peace') was born in Carletonville North West, and is one of an identical twin. In describing himself he states: *I'm 'Kgotoso' a 17 years old boy. I am a twin brother, I live at the place of safety, I am writing my matric this year and I am a rapper".*

In growing up Kgotoso did not see much of his mother as she worked at a faraway place, but he remembers her visiting once a month and holds these memories as dear: "*I remember sitting together as a family she would crack jokes and spend the little time she had with us*".

Kgotoso experienced a tragedy of events when his father got shot and was killed when he was very small, then a few years later his little sister passed away and then his mother got cancer. He does not state the time period between her illness and her death, but her death came as a shock to him and his brother.

Kgotoso does not have dear memories of his extended family and states: "*I don't know much about my father's side but my mother's side are selfish people heartless and they're Xhosa but speak Zulu*". After the death of his mother his extended family rejected him and his brother and they were left alone to fend for themselves. He states that he can't remember much of his father and sister, but he remembers his mother as humble and always laughing. He states that he found it difficult to deal with her death, but as time passed and as other people extended care towards him and his brother, he can remember his mother with fond memories and not just sadness. He states: "*I just wish my mother was alive to see me getting successful*".

He recalls one such a fond memory:

> At first it was hard but now they came once in my mind in a while and I am coping very well. I remember the Saturday morning when we would be in bed room cracking jokes when [she] would randomly say: "my child who loves me would make me tea", we would both jump off the bed quickly me and my brother would fight over that

[11] Spelling errors were omitted in the co-researchers' personal stories, but the wording and grammar were kept in their original format.

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Kgotoso states time after time his closeness to his brother and also his dependence on him for emotional survival. He adamantly describes his twin brother's role in his life as someone who guides him and gives him words of comfort and support: "*My twin he taught me never to run away from my problems*". In affirming this close relationship Kgotoso says:

> The first important person in my life will be my twin. He is the person I have always had, we do things together he goes through everything with me...

Kgotoso still uses the memories of his mother to guide him through life, and through his relationship of shared experiences with his twin brother, he can let her memory live forever. He states that his twin is the first important person in his life, and then his mother, as "*she made me what and who I am today*". Kgotoso's mother does indeed play a big role in his life even today:

> My mother had big dreams about us, I am not from a rich background so my mother always wanted us to continue where she ended so that kind of give me a motivation/ support in whatever I do.

In reflecting on what Kgotoso wishes for himself in the future, he adamantly states that he wants to be successful; he wants to be a lawyer and have a lot of money so that he can buy a big house and a big car and live in the suburbs. For Kgotoso success is inevitably linked to money as he believes that this is what his mother also meant by success.

> I want to be a lawyer. I want to have a big house drive an expensive car and I also want to be a hip hop star have a family build a home for those who don't have [one]... I would like to see myself as lawyer and a celebrity at the same time having a big house and riding on big wheels.

Other important people in Kgotoso's life in the present is the 'new' family he found at Precious Pearls, this includes the friends he has who are also orphaned as well as the house mother. He states that in the same way that 'normal' families have difficulties; this new family also has its "ups and downs". To show the importance of this family to him, he states:

> I was once been given up by a family (which was stormy) and now God gave me back a family which was one of the things I needed in my life family support of life.

He recently experienced a similar 'storm' of loss when two of his close friends left the house. He states that this was one of the difficulties he had to face 'along the road' and

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that it affected him by losing perspective. Learning from wise words is central in Kgotoso's narratives as he frequently states what he has learned from people. He states that the people from church (PEN) have taught him to hold on to God in every situation and his house mothers taught him that "we become strong from our mistakes".

Music is one of Kgotoso's big passions and he states that for him it is "a form of expression". He mentions that his extended family has now came back into his and his brother's life and that he feels good about that. He mentions; however, that once again, he has lost his grandmother last year (2009): "*She got shot to death but my tree is [still] healthy*".

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CHAPTER 6

UNDERSTANDING THE BATTLE

4 And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. 5 And he had a helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. 6 And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. 7 And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him. 8 And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. 9 If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us.

– 1 Samuel 17: 4-9 (NKJV) –

This section is concerned with a description of experiences, as it is continually informed by traditions of interpretations, and may indicate the various discourses underlying the context, which serve as traditions of interpretations. In line with the title of this study, I was particularly interested in discourses which influence the construction of the self-narrative in relation to future related role expectancy and responsibilities, gender identity formation and religious relations, which might or might not influence the spread of HIV and Aids.

[12]Three of the co-researchers' narratives were chosen in giving a description of their experiences, as it is informed by various traditions. From these narratives several discourses or traditions have been identified, which will be described and elaborated with the use of additional related literature which assisted in understanding the 'battle' which is to be faced.

The metaphor of 'battle' was chosen to represent this chapter, as our narrative has now developed into the phase where we need to understand what the 'battle' is about; who

[12] Spelling errors were omitted in the co-researchers' personal stories, quotes or poems, but the wording and grammar were kept in their original format.

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we are fighting; and what 'weaponry' is to our advantage and disadvantage in entering this battle. This is the 'battle' fought by these boys every day of their lives. In looking at the various discourses (named here 'weaponry') which influence the character of the 'soldiers', the boys could attain a better understanding of what tactics to use in winning this battle. But as is the nature of any battle, however brave the soldiers might seem, certain elements hinder them in always thinking clearly and fighting the battle cleverly.

6.1 David the Sheppard – Molimi

David was the youngest of eight brothers and lived a humble life as a shepherd in his father's fields. He was seen as insignificant to his brothers, as he was younger and smaller in physique. Because of this he was picked on and ridiculed by his older brothers.

Molimi is also the youngest brother, but seems to face an ambivalence of feelings towards his older brother. As he states: "*So far the most important person in my life is my brother. He taught lots of stuff like music and he teaches me maths and science. From life itself I have learnt many things from my brother*", but at the same time when asked what challenges he faced, he states: "*My other storm was my abusive my brother who abused me physically. He always came home drunk and beat us (me and his wife)*". He also states that sometimes he feels small if he compares himself with other older DJs and that he felt small during his matric year, but that God helped him with his struggles and his feelings of inferiority.

Molimi is stuck between his loyalty towards his brother and gratefulness in looking after him after his mother passed away. However, Molimi is aware of the fact that his brother is not such a good influence on him or his relationship with God. Further in his story Molimi states that he fears in becoming like his brother because he also drinks much these days; however, he states that he knows that he is not aggressive and does not become aggressive when drunk. His ambivalent feelings are clear in a letter he wrote to his brother:

> Dear brother
>
> I have always lived up to you. This is simply because you want the best for me. You took me to places where I am supposed to be because of things that are happening in that certain place.

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> You gave me a beer to drink and let me experience how it feels like to be drunk, how people do mistakes when they are drunk. And your last words was "you can get the best advice in the world but it's up to me to take the final decision".
>
> For that I wanna thank you because you let me grow up and become a better man.

Molimi makes the reader think of the 'shepherd' quality of David – Molimi is very humble and sees God in everything he does. He admits his mistakes but at the same time he acknowledges God's role in his life to succeed. He states his trust in God *"because [I] am still alive today because of Him".* He also sees the role of a shepherd as important as he sees God as his Sheppard, because "*he guides me in every way I take.* Molimi sees his future in humility and does not want to be rich, but only wants a happy family and realises that this is not possible without God. He also experiences a deep sense of gratitude towards God for saving him and this gratitude is strongly connected with his sense of moral responsibility. He states that he is not living the way of a Christian and that this disappoints him deeply, as he believes:

> In life one should obey and trust in God because we should seek him first and everything shall be given on to you. I grow up and sometimes forget to thank the Lord for giving me strength and helping me to win against this storm. But most of the time I thank the Lord for what he has done in my life.

Molimi states that he is good at entertaining people; he makes music, dances and sometimes even acts. He says this makes people happy and he likes to see the smiles on their faces. This makes one think of David's role as musician for King Saul, to calm his spirit. Molimi also admits that his friends do not know this, but sometimes he will do whatever people ask, just to please them and make them happy.

Molimi's identity is not only formed in what he thinks God expects of him, but also in what his mother and his brother expects of him. Identifying his potential is a central concept for Molimi; he is so grateful that people love him and helped him, and he believes the reason for that is that they saw potential in him, as if he always needs to do something to deserve the love. Consequently, Molimi does not want to disappoint his mother and even his brother, but states; however, that his big dream is to become a well-know radio DJ; to get his own record label, so that he can also help other upcoming artists. Once again the theme of helping others emerges as if this is the only way that he is worth of their love and acceptance. In response to why he thinks people love him and is kind to him, he states: "*They wanted to see me succeed in life. So they put all their trust, time and effort on me like some kind of investment*". An investment is always

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for personal gain. Therefore, it would seem as if Molimi's identity is formed in the idea of conditional love.

It would seem that Molimi's biggest storm was losing his mother and his struggle to literally survive; however, he has overcome this storm by still keeping his mother's memories dear and by succeeding in going to college and surviving life, thus making her proud of him. Molimi faces another Goliath; however, at this moment in his life: The Goliath of integrating his identity in God, with his identity embedded in the world of entertainment, alcohol abuse and using women for sexual gratification. This also makes one think of the narrative of David. David was a small and young boy, brave enough to face the giant Goliath – the same giant for whom the Israelites trembled in fear. He conquered this giant, but could not conquer his own temptations for beautiful women, like Bathsheba and even more than that, another man's woman. This temptation has lead him not only to commit adultery, but to commit murder.

> I pray to my Lord God for protection, strength and hope so that this storm can just pass by.
>
> In life we come across many obstacles. The only way to overcome those problems is to take them in a different angle. We experience storms that some [sic] times makes you want to give up in life - When difficult situation occur in my life, I try to take my head up at all times. I get someone that I can talk to so that I can have different ways to solve this problem.

Molimi's story is one of disappointment: he is disappointed by his father leaving him; disappointed in his mother's death; disappointed by a big brother who should have protected him instead of abusing him; disappointed in his family who never stood by him because of "jealousy" and a consciousness about their 'image' in society; and finally disappointed in himself for giving in to life's temptations. In writing his own 'tree' song, he wrote:

Title: The morning

I wake up everyday

And I don't feel the morning shine

I took another look into the sky

Hoping that the sun will shine

And all I feel is the rain

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That brings me pain

I keep on praying and praying

Preparing for any pressures of life

Until one day morning

When the rainbow was in the sky

The pain went away and I flew into the sky

I crying tears of joy and I prayed Thank You Lord.

(TOL Camp 2010)

Molimi specifically chose a name meaning "farmer" to identify his present story. Because Molimi is also the last born in his family, he sees it as his responsibility to be the farmer and look after his mother's things. As the youngest, Molimi is also picked on by his older brother; therefore, he always had to live in the shadow of his brother. However, Molimi is emotionally stronger than his brother by showing how he handles his angers and fears – by not getting aggressive like his brother.

Like David, Molimi defies worldly manly qualities. He states that a man is someone who is loving; who can easily express his feelings; and who rejoices in the Lord in all he does. Molimi sees women as wise and able to control their urges, almost in adoration. He knows the type of man God wants him to be, but he finds it difficult to live, as life brings him off course. He sees a man as someone who protects; not only his own, but also other people and their property, because he believes that someday he will need their help. He sees a man as the responsible head of the home who respects himself and other people. He believes that a real man will always strive to live according to God's will and that both the woman and the man in the house should strive to be wise.

Molimi also has an honourable manly quality: he does not strive to serve his own needs; he is a good listener and ponders over a problem; he speaks with honesty and always sees how he can solve his and other people's problems. Many of his friends turn to him in seeking advice. He sees himself not only as physically strong, but also mentally, as if that and spiritual strength are the defining characteristics of a real man for Molimi.

Despite Molimi's faults and mistakes, he irrevocably believes that "*God will help me face my Goliath because he will never leave me nor forsake me*". He states that "*I will be a husband who is a good father to my kids and a loving husband to my wife*" as he values

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the role of a good male in the house. In a similar way, Molimi states that he sees God as a father figure, because He takes care of us "*and he loves us too*". He states that because God is also a father he "*expects fathers and husbands to protect and love their families [because] he does the same to [sic] us*".

Molimi states that he thinks God tests people so that they can grow spiritually. In a similar manner he believes that one day God will reckon with bad people, because "*what goes around comes back around".* Therefore, he does not only view God as a Father who protects, and a Shepherd who guides, but also as a Judge who will let justice and the truth prevail one day.

Molimi clearly believes in sincerity and honesty as he says his friends know him as a "straight" talker. Molimi was the first in the group to admit that it is not right, that men use women as sexual objects; he admitted his problem with alcohol and sex; he admitted that he did not always put God first and only sought His help when he was in need: He refers to 'pride' as "*a bad thing because we should walk by faith and not by sight. We must not do things so that people can see us".*

Finally, Molimi reaffirms his believe in Ubuntu, by stating that in his community it is "every man for himself", but despite this he believes we always need other people to help us with the things that we cannot do. Therefore, he acknowledges his limits as one man only.

Molimi has fond memories of his mother and treasures every moment he could spend with her. He sees his mother as a true mother, very caring and she "never laid her hands on me since I could remember" (this might indicate what Molimi treasures in a parent: non-aggressiveness as he experienced the opposite from his brother). He describes himself as "Mommy's Little Boy". He states that when she died he was still a small boy and he did not realise the loss. It is; therefore, unclear why he misses her now – one would think that as a boy grows older he would miss the parent he could identify the most with, but it might be that most of his friends also mainly live with only their mothers, and; therefore, support, care and guidance in life might be specific to mothers in their community.

In conclusion it would seem that Molimi, just as many other boys, lacks a proper role model.

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6.2 David the Victor (Manqoba)

David was a conqueror of much: he fearlessly conquered the big Goliath as he trusted in God; he conquered the stereotypical views of a man pressed on him by the society of the day; he conquered the idea that a 'nobody' will always be a 'nobody' by becoming a 'somebody'; he conquered King Saul in his jealous attempts to kill him; and he conquered many nations during war. However, David's conquests and subsequent victories were never his own. Every time it was a battle fought for the Lord and won for the Lord, a victory *of* God.

Manqoba makes one think of such a conqueror. Not a conqueror of big nations and brutal wars, but a conqueror of his own fears; a conqueror of the stereotypes pressed on him of the present day which tells him he can never reach his dreams; that he must give up because there is no hope or no money; a conqueror of poverty and depression, a conqueror of his own father who does not want him.

Manqoba; however, is not all that sure as yet about the victorious quality he has. He knows one day he will flourish as a victor; however, he is not yet sure how he will reign victorious over his father and lack of identity in a career. In a song Manqoba wrote at the second Tree of Life camp (26-28 February 2010), he voices his feelings of indirection and uncertainty. The song; however, also clearly shows that the one thing he can always hang onto, is his God. Maybe this is the one thing in his life, which was or is stable in the face of much instability and insecurity.

My life is full of ups

And downs, and now

All that I do is (x2)

Give praise to the Lord

My life is travelling

Different places

And run through

Different crises (x2)

So I ask the Lord

To help me to

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Go through it once

Again

Chorus:

So my life it feels like a dream

Challenges come and go

Lord Almighty help me once again (x3)

(TOL Camp 2010)

I, (the researcher) noticed a peculiarity in Manqoba during the camp: he is a silent mighty figure, with a physique of a strong grown man, but has sadness in his eyes of that of a young bruised little boy. He does not say much, but when he speaks, he makes a statement. Manqoba is clearly someone who ponders about life and prefers finding answers himself, at least, this was my observation.

Manqoba speaks of his mother with tenderness. He states that she was and still is the most important person in his life. He feels confused, because although the memories he has often guides and motivates him in life, he states that she always said to never remember her after she was gone. (During my research I found this to be a common theme in the African culture that it is not good to remember). He sees her as part of his root system; as someone who taught him everything he knows. Manqoba has a very tender heart and feels obligated to protect his two sisters. Manqoba is the only one in the group who never spoke with disrespect about women – he only states that his older sister had a baby and that he is proud to be an uncle – this makes him feel like a man now with new responsibilities. Manqoba has; however, not told his friends about this feeling and that he became uncle. One of the questions asked if it is okay to have sex with many women and to cheat on your wife, because of the slogan: “boys will be boys”. He responded, that for him it is not okay, but “... *from what I see these man just have sex with different woman for the fun of it*”; acknowledging that what he feels or thinks might not be the truth for his peers at large.

Masculine concepts of a true man featured much during his conversation and it is clear that he equates being a man to concepts such as ‘responsibility’, ‘head of the house’, ‘power’, ‘man of the house’, ‘bread winner’, ‘protector’, ‘strong’, ‘courageous’, ‘self-control’ and ‘spiritual leader of his house’.

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Manqoba strives to be a 'real man' one day, but states that he first wants to become a 'somebody', and that he will only marry when he is about thirty years of age. This once again might refer to how he thought about the responsibilities inherent in being a husband and a father. He states that he wants to be a responsible father and husband that is loving and caring. He feels that God expects of men to be loving and caring, *"a father who does not judge but a father who understands*". This statement might explain that Manqoba does not see God as judgemental, but mostly as a father. However, later on when asked what he thinks about God's punishment of David in letting his new born die, he responded that he thinks that it is fair, because David was wrong (which is in contrast with what the others said). He also states that he thinks God tests people, by letting their loved ones die. This might indicate that Manqoba sees discipline then as part of the fathering role.

The Goliath in Manqoba's life, currently, is the absence and the unwillingness of his father to be part of his life. He states "... *I tried to sort some things out with my father but he was too busy for me all he did it was to give me money but the thing is I don't want his money all I want is a father who will teach me how to become a man* ...". This might indicate that Manqoba does not equate wealth and status with being a good father, but rather the responsibility of a father of teaching his son how to become a man. Manqoba is patient and invited his dad a few times into his life; like he is almost saying "this is your chance to become my father"; like it is an honour – see his statement: "*When I tried to give him a second chance in calling me his son after leaving me for no reason*". He also states, in response to who makes you feel small and unimportant like Goliath did David, that sometimes *" ...[I] do feel that way my father makes me to feel unimportant".*

This leads us to another concept that is quite important to Manqoba, and that is *honour*. Manqoba approaches the subject of manhood, with *honour*. He states that a real man should be the head of the home and a provider, with honour. He speaks against the fact of a woman making more money than a man, not because of his pride and his ego, but because it is a man's *honour* to be the breadwinner. He states that God expects of men to be the spiritual leaders, like men were chosen for this role – a role of *honour*. Manqoba indeed experiences his role as a man, as a position of honour – he only wishes that he had a father who could carry this honour over to his son. In an imaginary letter (TOL Camp 27 February 2010) to his father he wrote:

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> Dear dream father
>
> I would have loved to have a father to teach me how to become a real man but I guess it's all in my dreams. I would have loved if you where the one to show me the characteristics of being a real man to show me how real man live, how real man tackle difficult challenges but I guess you've already made your decision but I hope God will bless you in everything you do and I hope God will make you realise that you have a son out there.
>
> Your son,
>
> [Name]

In response to one of the questions which invited the co-researchers to tell us about their fathers, Manqoba wrote the following:

> Well my father left me while I was a baby so I don't have much to say to him and it's not that I'm angry at him or I don't want to express my feelings, it's just these days it does not bother me that much but I would have love having him around to teach me how to be a real man but I guess it was not meant to be, so now I just pray to the Lord that I would be a good father to my children and not to follow my father's footsteps.

It is clear; therefore, that Manqoba yearns for a father figure in his life, and that he took the first step in letting go of his pride (like David in repenting about his sin) and to approach his father in giving him another chance. But, to his disappointment, his father refused the offer. Manqoba does not express or show his feelings in telling this story; as if it does not bother him. One cannot but wonder how much such rejection must hurt and what the effects of this will be on a young growing boy; entering adulthood as a man and possibly be a father one day.

Manqoba is not a big talker and states that sometimes he tries to speak with someone about his problems, but it is not always helpful to him. He prefers praying to God, to wait patiently upon God to show him the way – just like David did.

Manqoba struggles to find direction in life. He stated that he wants to be successful in many ways, playing soccer, making music or being a graphic designer. In 2008 he wanted to become a pilot. Now; however, he failed two subjects in matric last year and his dreams fell to the ground. He states now that he is rewriting these subjects and just tries to live life to the fullest. It would seem that Manqoba has not developed a career identity as yet, and one wonders if this might be because of a lack of a father figure, or just a proper role model. He remembers that his mother was not someone who gave up

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easily and states that that is what keeps him motivated as she wanted to see him successful one day. He affirms that God wants the best for him; to be successful and states that "*I want to live a life where nobody will tell me how to live it but God*". Might this indicate a breaking free from authority?

Although Manqoba struggles with direction and purposefulness, he knows that his victory will be in God. He does not trust in fallible family structures, nor in the lack of responsibility of his father; he waits, patiently upon the Lord to show him the way, as he states that he believes that God has a plan for him, but "... *it's a bit tough right now, but I know I will get through it"*. Manqoba also admits that only now is his relationship becoming stronger, and only now has he realised that a real man trusts in God. Manqoba does say that some of his friends will laugh at him when he speaks about God and expresses his feelings about God; he says that a real man in his community does not do this. In contrast with this Manqoba states that "*... these days I'm starting to have a strong relationship with Him"* which indicates his awareness regarding his relationship with God. In light of this, we might conclude that Manqoba's identity is furthermore suppressed by society, as he has feelings to express regarding his relationship with God, but, amongst his peer groups, he would be seen as "*obviously soppy*". Therefore, this might indicate another unfulfilled expressed identity, as now when he did find his identity he can also not display it openly in public. This might be another Goliath to conquer.

Manqoba does express some of his fears, as he states that he is scared of dying because he does not want to leave his loved ones behind "crying and stressing".

Finally, in writing his own story by using the characters of the narrative of David, Manqoba writes the following:

> **David**: To myself "*Manqoba"* I am a good person a person who has a small but strong and have strengths to conquer whatever comes my way because I have the strongest king in my life who keeps me strong day by day which is God.
>
> **Goliath**: One of my old problems that I am still dealing with is my father who I am still trying to have a relationship with.
>
> **God**: In some problems that I face God helps me to overcome them but right now I feel like he has abandon me because first it was failing two subjects and now I'm sitting at home having no hope that I will go to varsity but hey I guess everything happens for a reason maybe God has some good things stored for me.
>
> (TOL Camp 2010)

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In giving a reason why he chose the name Manqoba, he states: "*because in every challenges that I face most of them I do come out as umanqoba (victory).*

6.3 David the King (Kgotoso)

The narrative of Kgotoso makes one think of the office of David as king. David was chosen by God, but he had to flee the power of Saul – he was anointed by God, but rejected by the king. In the same way, Kgotoso was also chosen by God as a child, as a leader of his home (the stronger of the two twins), but he had to flee the maliciousness of his own family who did not want him to take the crown. He describes them as "selfish people and heartless". When meeting Kgotoso one might think of him as someone with no insecurities, no stresses. Like a king, developing and maintaining a public persona, Kgotoso also maintains a public persona which does not reveal an ounce of insecurity or instability – 'the world may not know, as the world might think you're weak and take advantage'. This is the idea one gets of Kgotoso – an idea which is of course very misleading. In describing himself, surprisingly, he states that he is a sweet and loving person, someone who does not like seeing other people sad. Ambivalently, he states the following regarding himself: "*I usually stand up to help out other people and humble myself in everything I do. This is what I am, I call it a gift*". It soon becomes clear that Kgotoso builds his identity almost on a Hero persona – he states that he realised that he is quite good at helping people, and without the virtue of humility, explains how he helped a blind girl write her exams, thereby coming late for class and being punished. Kgotoso and his brother is also quite well known in the hip-hop music industry, and once again, bashfully inform you about their success. This reminds one of King David, used to being the hero, striving on this quality in maintaining his identity – he too was a 'nobody' who became a 'somebody' (cf. Brueggemann 2002: 8); somebody the marginalised and the oppressed looked up to in admiration and infatuation.

Once king, David strived to be the best; to conquer many nations and be successful in gaining much wealth. Like King David, Kgotoso also wants to be the best and conquer the nations in competition, the nations which stand in his way of being successful. He is brave and sure about himself, almost to a level of arrogance, but he is sure because he knows that God is on his side.

Like a king, Kgotoso also wants much material wealth. He states: "*I want to be a lawyer. I want to have a big house drive an expensive care and I also want to be a hip hop star, have a family build a home for those who don't have*", and again in response to what he

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wants in the future for himself: "*To be successful and have my own house at the suburbs*". Kgotoso seems to be very focussed on material things and states ambivalently: *"I used to ask my mom for this and that – that would hurt her – now I just get it",* in referring to material things he receives from other people. When asked what he needs from other people or God, he states "*financial support*". He also states his mother's dreams for him in terms of his material wealth:

> My mother had big dreams about us, I am not from a rich background so my mother always wanted us to continue where she ended so that kind of give me a motivation/support in whatever I do.

It would seem; therefore, that Kgotoso's identity is very much rooted in his desire towards wealth, and he believes, as he states that "Money is power". In response to the question if there is someone in his life who makes him feel unimportant, he states: "*There are some rich people that really make me feel unimportant"*. It seems that Kgotoso views his future relationships with women also from his perspective of wealth, although he is clearly a romantic. He states, numerous times, that the woman should not make more money than the man, as she then thinks that "she could do whatever she wants". At the idea of a woman making more money than him, he bursts out in laughter. Kgotoso, obviously has a soft spot for the ladies. During the discussion he stated that men do not have control over their lust, although a man might be in love with someone. He states that when temptation arrives, men do not have any control over their actions. This contradicts his answers to some questions, where he states that men in general do sleep with many women, but according to him it is not right. He states that a man should not sleep with a woman who is not *his* (note the indication to property). This might indicate that he experiences feelings of ambivalence between what he knows is right or wrong, and what he experiences amidst his life in relation to temptation. This would seem to be an ongoing theme in all the boys' narratives: that they know what is morally right, but find it difficult to practice. Therefore, like King David who could not resist temptations of womanly beauty, Kgotoso also finds it difficult to resist his temptations of lust.

In stating the qualities of a man, Kgotoso says that he will protect people, but only those people who *belong* to him, like his wife. He sees a real man as someone who gets respect from people, and *"... a person who has love for what they have, strong inside, able to express their feelings*". Strangely enough, in his framework of seeing a man almost as a king, he does believe that a man is allowed to express his feelings. He

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states; however, that he realises that this is not acceptable with all of his friends. He states that he finds it "sweet" if a woman comforts a man – almost as if he gains from it. He also acknowledges that amongst his peers, a real man is seen as someone who has a lot of beautiful women. Note the mention of "a lot".

Kgotoso has had many losses in his life: first his father, who was shot in a gun fight; then his little sister who he did not really know; and then his mother, with whom he had a close relationship. Regarding the loss of his mother and how he felt about it, he states that his grandmother used to irritate him in talking about his mother the whole time, as it just made him sad: "... *she made it difficult for us, reminded us too much about her*". He states that "*Right now it's like a movie to me, I lost my mom 6 years ago, but it feels so real".* Kgotoso states that at the first camp it was difficult for him to talk about her, but that he is now able to talk about her with regards to fond memories. He states: "*At first it was hard but now they came once in my mind in a while and I am coping very well. I just wish my mother was alive to see me getting successful*". He misses his mother, because, as he states: "she was my mother". Kgotoso, although grieving, moves on easily. In response to the question of what he does when storms pass, he states: "*I thank God and move on*". At another instance he also states that one must leave one's worries in God's hands, and move on: "*Just let go let God deal with or should I say put it in God's hands*". Therefore, this might indicate that Kgotoso does not ponder on things of the past, and keeps his eyes focussed on that which he wants from the future – he has a very positive outlook on life. Nevertheless, he wrote the following song to his late mother:

Mommy I missed you

Life aint the same

Mommy without you

Remember all the good day good time

When I used to cry

By your side

Yeh! I miss that

My heart keeps

Bleeding when I'm down

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By your grave

I right now

Mommy I'm somebody's slave

I wonder

How it feels

To be right where

You should my angel

(TOL Camp 2010)

Kgotoso, like David, is deeply religious and does not shy away from talking about God in public. He states that his peers would think he is weak and boring if he does express his feelings openly; however he also says that one should "*Stand up for what you believe in, do what is the best for you, do not go/flow with friends*". However, he states that his friends are not all Christians, but that does not bother him. Kgotoso has much faith in God's protection over his life, and states his appreciation towards God in saving him, as he was "... *never naked or starving*". In response to the question of what he does when he faces his storms, he states: "*I pray to God to give me strength*".

It would seem from his answers that he sees God as a father figure, but not as a disciplinarian. He stated that God did not act right in letting Bathsheba's baby die, as it was not his fault. He continuously describes God's characteristics as loving and caring and protecting, and that God wants the best for him, such as joy and peace, because He is his father.

Kgotoso sees family life as very important, and states that he was very disappointed in his grandmother in deserting him and his brother when their mother died. However, he states that he found a new family in Precious Pearls and that it was worse living with a family "... but getting nothing from them".

In choosing a pseudonym, Kgotoso chose this name which indicates 'peace'. He states: "*I have had so much on my shoulder in my life and I think peace is what I need so my first born would be Kgotoso*".

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6.4 The weaponry

During this study the researcher became interested in how boys both view and express their experiences differently from the girls. The researcher was specifically interested in how certain dominant traditional discourses have affected the development of the boys' narratives. The activities inherent in the "David's battle, God's victory" workbook were aimed at engaging in conversations which will point at these specific discourses and its influence in the writing of narratives. The findings listed here mostly came from the second Tree of Life Camp (26-28 February 2010). Additionally, during an informal discussion about qualities of David as a man comparing it to the qualities of a man in today's life, many ambivalent ideas about masculinity, femininity, and the roles of men as fathers and husbands came to the fore and are listed here.

Some investigation into literature was needed to learn from other studies in terms of what they found to be dominant discourses. Various dominant discourses were identified during the first Tree of Life camp and elaborated in the second Tree of Life camp and a literature study was aimed at these discourses and combined with findings of this study. The researcher has to point out that much of these studies were done either in America or Europe, as she found that literature regarding African concepts of masculinity, fatherhood and identity were very much limited. This stresses the need for more studies which focus on these experiences, specifically for African men.

The metaphor of 'weaponry' is used here as an indication of the various discourses informed by traditional interpretations, within the boys' local context (battlefield). Weaponry can both be advantageous or disadvantageous, depending on your position in the battlefield and the army. Let us take a closer look at some of the weaponry identified in this study.

6.4.1 Men and Sex

When it comes to sex and women, tension seems to exist between the boys' sexual desires and lack of resistance, and the fact that they describe a good woman as someone who respects her body. They state they want to marry a woman who respects her body, but on the other hand they appreciate it when women give them sex.

Kgotoso feels that a man gets "*respect for being a player – a man gets respect and feels good if they can have many girls, sometimes we just get bored with one girl*". He goes on by saying that "*Sometimes after sex I get irritated and annoyed with the girl*" maybe indicating her use as a sex object.

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Molimi states that in his community "*boys and girls do proof womanhood and boyhood*" by having sex. He states that your friends expect you to have sex to be seen as a real man. Furthermore he states that "*Men can't respect and resist temptation – if they do it [have sex], they are manly*". The conversation turned in the direction of what a guy will think if a girl stops the heated intimacy session because she does not want to have sex. Molimi stated that he will respect the girl, but Kgotoso said that "*No I will be disappointed, upset, she turned me on, she led me into temptation*". Kgotoso's brother states that for him it depends on the type of relationship he has with the girl, but paradoxically he states: *"... if she gives you sex, you still love her, but [if] you can get sex from others* (pulling his shoulders up indicating that 'people will take the opportunity').

In reference to this, both Kgotoso and his brother stated that "*Men can't resist temptation*", but on the other hand Kgotoso states that women should respect their bodies. In response to the question why only women should respect their bodies, he stated that "*it's different for men and boys [because] men can't disrespect their bodies, their bodies do not 'wear' as women's do*".

Molimi was honest and stated that he had sex with different women he does not love because he wants to satisfy his sexual desires. Kgotoso's brother states that "*I appreciate it when I receive sex from woman*".

It is ironic that in response to the question of what makes a woman a bad woman, all the boys responded by stating that it is a 'loose' woman and a woman who does not take care of her physical appearance. Kgotoso stated once again that "*Women should respect their bodies*". When asked if they ever think of the possibility of getting infected with HIV and Aids, most boys responded that they never think of that. When asked if they always use a condom, they state it depends on the heat of the moment. One co-researcher stated that he only uses brand name condoms, as he does not trust the free condoms distributed by the government. Another boy confirmed this and added that he does not like the 'feel' of the governmental condoms. In an informal discussion (26 June 2010) with two young adults also orphaned early in life, they also stated that sometimes they do not think of using a condom. One of the boys also states that he would rather not use a condom then, if he cannot afford to buy a brand name. It is interesting to note the female participants' response on this question. Two of the female participants know that their parents died of HIV and Aids, and state that they are very scared of getting infected, because of seeing the way that their parents died. They state that is the sole

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reason why they have not had sex yet. Two of the five boys have gone for an HIV and Aids test previously.

Interestingly, Manqoba was silent during the whole conversation. A reason for this might be that Manqoba has two sisters who he respects very much. Later during the conversation one of the female participants posed this question: "What if that woman is your sister?" and all the boys responded in outrage that they will "kill" the boy who misuses their sisters in this way. However, neither Kgotoso nor Molimi has sisters; therefore, the reality is not a fact for them. In doing the activities in the workbook Manqoba did state that he feels it is wrong to have sex with many women, but "*... from what I see these men just have sex with different woman for the fun of it".*

It would seem then that these boys feel they need sex and they cannot resist temptation in any way, as it is a function of their biological make-up; whereas women can resist temptation, in fact, if she cannot she is a 'bad' woman and they do not want such a woman as a wife, when and if they get married. The researcher wonders then if they are aware of this ambivalence, because for every temptation there should be a woman, so they expect the impossible of women: they expect them to give them sex because biologically they need it, but at the same time when they are ready to commit, they want a sexually respectable woman. Therefore, they participate in the sexual use and abuse of women, and they expect when they are ready; when they have used enough to satisfy their sexual desire, women must now be open to love and just accept the sexual use and abuse as part of their manhood.

In turning to the literature for a deeper understanding of the concept of men, sex and HIV and Aids, it was found that a wide variety of socio-cultural and economic factors influence men's expectations regarding their behaviour as partners, husbands and fathers, also in sub-Saharan Africa. The following are predominant factors which influence a man's future role expectation: a high proportion of a population living in rural areas; the influence of poor health conditions; the impact of urbanisation and migration; low levels of education; and increase of poverty and rapid socio-cultural changes (cf. Bankole, Singh, Hussain and Wulf 2004: 22). Bankole et al. (2004: 23) furthermore state that an erosion of prevailing cultural and community norms as a result of modernisation undermines men's traditional family roles as providers; and have found that a strong link exists between cultural and economic disadvantages and the reckless behaviour of men. They affirm this by stating:

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> Pervasive poverty and diminished life prospects can foster violence, hopelessness and patterns of sexual promiscuity, and may offer little incentive for some people—especially young men—to take good care of themselves.
>
> (Bankole et al. 2004: 23)

Denis and Ntsimane (2006: 238) in turn state the institution of marriage, specifically amongst the poor, does not predominantly regulate relations between men and women; at least not anymore. The rates of getting married have declined and have resulted in the unsettling of family units, where most children, specifically in Africa, are raised by single parent mothers, where they seldom see their fathers if they are even aware of who their fathers are (cf. Denis and Ntsimane 2006: 238). It would seem through various studies that men are proud about their fertility and do not shy away from proving this fertility. However, these fathers will not necessarily take responsibility for the children they reproduce. Glaser (1992) did a study on the subculture of the 'tsotsi' in the Witwatersrand and found that it was an honour for a tsotsi to father children so that he could proof his manhood. One of the participants of Glaser's study stated proudly that he had fathered a child with his fifteen year old girlfriend, when he was merely sixteen. He stated that they would boast about their kids with their friends, although it was unusual for a tsotsi who fathered a child to support this child in any way. Glaser concluded that the tsotsi culture believed that the rearing of children is a woman's responsibility (cf. Denis and Ntsimane 2006: 240).

Therefore, it becomes clear that being sexually active might be a sign of manhood and that many boys, as the participants of this study stated, need to proof their manhood by having sex with many girls, even though they feel and know, that on a moral basis, this is not acceptable behaviour. It also seems that the activity and decision of having sex, do not move along the lines of a rational decision making process where the 'pros and cons' are kept in mind, neither is the moral issue considered. What is worrying though, is that these boys never consider the implications of their sexual demands on the innocent girls and women who fall prey to their manipulation and deceit of apparent love. These boys do; however, acknowledge that their behaviour is not right and that they are wrong in treating girls and women in this way. It is apparent; however, that their ostensible feelings of guilt are not strong enough to regulate or even transform this behaviour. It must also be kept in mind that these boys are having sex at an age where they have not yet developed into full mental and emotional maturity; therefore, they do not yet have the capability in understanding the responsibility of fathering a child, or the

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consequences of getting infected with HIV and Aids. This explains adolescents' tendency to participate in risk behaviour.

Therefore, in considering reasons which can explain such behaviour, some insights in the psychology of gender and sexuality is warranted. Therefore, we turn to the insights given by several psychological models in explaining gender identity and subsequent sexual behaviour, specifically pertaining to men and adolescents. We are here interested in the social and cultural aspects, as we have an imperative as social constructionists and postfoundationalist practical theologians, to search for traditions of understanding, related to gender identity and sexual behaviour, within the context wherein this behaviour takes place.

It is important for us to provide an outlay of the statements given by the co-researchers, before we can investigate causes or the roots of such statements.

Statement 1: "*It is accepted and even expected from society, for men to have multiple, frequent sexual partners'*;

Statement 2: "*Men do not have control over their desires and sexual urges and the acting on of it";*

Statement 3: "*It is not accepted for women to have multiple sexual partners or to be sexually active before marriage, because a woman must have respect for her body and because women's bodies are destructible through the act of sex";*

Statement 4: *"Men appreciate and expect sexual favours from women (girlfriend)";*

Statement 5: "*A man will get upset with a women tempting him during intercourse and then backing out";*

Statement 6: *"My wife should not be a 'loose' woman and should respect her body";*

Statement 7: "*I don't think about HIV and Aids at that moment".*

The first contribution to our understanding of sexual and thus gender related behaviour, is that from the anthropologist, Margaret Mead (1935; 1949) who did studies on the operations of gender in certain cultures, and the notion of masculinity and femininity within specific cultures. Mead found that the notion of being a man and being a woman differ remarkably between different cultures, and; therefore, concluded that the notion of gender and gender-related responsibilities and roles, are dependent on enculturation. Mead stated specifically that the rules, rituals and customs of a specific culture and subculture are infiltrated with specific expectancies and requirements for male and

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female behaviour and what it means to be male and female (cf. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 40). Therefore, "... sex is determined by biology, whereas gender is a social construct ..." (Balk 1995: 22).

Sociologists, in turn, focus their attention on gender roles and how this influences the performative differences in men and women's behaviour. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (2004: 41) refer to Robert Brannon (1979) who postulates that men and women are provided with certain 'scripts' which they must internalise so that it acts as a guide for behaviour. Therefore, the concept of role is seen as "... socially encouraged patterns of behaviour that people are expected to perform in specific situations" (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 41).

Both of the above stated theories reaffirm our notion that identity and subsequent behaviour and thought is grounded within a specific context, which creates certain epistemes which are in turn circulated, so that behaviour can be guided. As a postfoundationalist and social constructionist, we further assume that these epistemes, according to Foucault, will contain a degree of power and control which is then implemented for someone's or something's own good. Therefore, the question now arises: why do people blindly follow these 'scripts'? Surely there must exist some motivation behind gender specific and sexual behaviour other than enculturation, as people are elevated above the notion of an animal, where he/she needs motivation for behaviour and intelligently considers the consequences of their behaviour.

Talcott Parson attempts to answer this question by rejecting the notion that gender differences can be solely by biology and proposes a view of "... gender differentiation as a product of structural functionalism" (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 42). He argues that social organisation is a product of evolution where social and cultural practices evolve, or change to serve the purposes of social cohesion and productivity. Furthermore, he states that role acquisition is attained by the internalisation of a gender identity which is proposed by a specific community or society. It is important; however, that a person must have both competence in and commitment to the gender role, before the notion of gender roles comes into practice. Therefore, social functionalism states that the differentiation between role expectation for males and females, serves complimentary functions, working together so that society can function more effectively (cf. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 42). This theory; however, does not explain why deviant behaviour, such as sexual deviant behaviour, is accepted as norm where it obviously does not serve the common good of the society.

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It is evident when looking at the responses of the co-researchers in this study, that a notion of masculinity and femininity, or what is accepted behaviour for men and women respectively, plays an immense role in the way that they act and more specifically in their sexual behaviour, although they do not acknowledge this but rather attribute it to biology. Therefore, gender identity and gender stereotyping as received from a specific culture or society, do indeed play a role in the choice of using women for sexual gratification; while at the same time ambivalently expecting that one's wife will not have been one of these woman who was used, as she must respect her body and herself, as if she actually has power in making such a decision. I postulate that a sexual act is preceded by a cognitive schema which entails a certain pattern of thinking, and internalised discourses from society related to gender, which ultimately determines the act of having sex, or not, or of having safe sex or not.

The Gender schema theory on the other hand, proposes that people develop a complex, schematic cognitive category for gender which serves as framework for gaining and maintaining gender-related knowledge (cf. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 48). Bem (1985: 186) states:

> Gender schema theory proposes that sex typing derives in large measures from gender-schematic processing, from a generalized readiness on the part of the child to encode and organize information – including information about self – according to the culture's definitions of maleness and femaleness.

The Gender schema theory furthermore proposes that sex typing is mediated by a person's own cognitive processing, while the processing itself is derived from the sex-differentiated practices of the socio-cultural context (cf. Bem 1985: 186). Thus, the schema theory also explains how the above cognitive statements are developed from the socio-cultural context, but how it is processed by the individual him/herself. This gives a better explanation also of individual differences, where some men, despite their environment, do not take part in some of the sexually exploited practices, or how these boys can know that these practices are wrong, albeit their participation. The question that comes to mind now, is specifically what the motivator behind overt sexual behaviour is; if these boys cognitively process the moral unacceptability of their behaviour. It is clear that this motivator, whatever it might be, prevails over moral awareness. This motivator would also seem to be the primary factor behind their illogical line of thinking, such as an attitude of being a victim of one's own sexual desires and having no control over it; or the ambivalence of expecting a woman to satisfy sexual desires, but when

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seen in the light of a future spouse, such a woman becomes dispensable to the mercy of a morally pious woman.

The social learning theory on the other hand, might give some insights with regards to role models and gender. This theory states that children acquire gender roles through imitation and modelling – an observation of adults' behaviour in the same context, looking at the punishment or reward which follows certain behaviour and then deciding to imitate the same behaviour or not. It is crucial to be aware that a child must identify with the adult person in some way. A strong identification factor is gender; therefore, children tend to imitate the behaviour of the adult of the same gender. As children increase in age, they learn to classify various behaviours as pertaining to a certain gender. Therefore, parents act as strong role models, because children are often more exposed to them than to other adults (cf. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 48). Thus, in our case where most of the co-researchers did not have a father, they had to imitate the behaviour of another male role model. Unfortunately, this role model might not be such a good model for gender behaviour, but the children will not realise that necessarily. A good example of this is where Molimi sees his brother as a role model, because he taught him how to drink and how to get drunk (seeing it as a positive trait); obviously unaware of the inappropriateness of teaching such behaviour to a child.

The gender stereotyping theory connects closely with the social learning theory in stating that people attain a rigid set of beliefs regarding the characteristics of men and women; and what it means to be a 'real' man and a 'real' woman, which they attain from observation and modelling in their homes as children. It postulates that children are more likely to develop rigid gender stereotyping when their fathers model a very traditional role of what it means to be a man in the house and if the father has a strong influence on them. Moreover, they state that strong gender stereotyping usually develops in a context where the behavioural aspects of gender is emphasised more than the biological differences (cf. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 58). This theory does make a lot of sense; however, in our context where most of the boys did not grow up with a father in the house, the question might arise where their rigid notion of gender stereotyping then comes from. It might be argued that they had other male role models from the community which had such a big influence on them that they imitate their frame of reference and subsequent behaviour. The media of course, also has an immense influence on the way that children perceive masculinity and femininity; especially the music industry which our young people follow senselessly.

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The conflict theory on gender, on the other hand, states that different roles and positions of women and men in the society, come from a conflict of interest between patriarchal power and social positions (cf. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 42). Here we have to do with various feminist theories, based on the postmodern notion of power relations underlying certain discourses in society.

If we take a closer look at statement 5: *"A man will get upset with a women tempting him during intercourse and then backing out",* we gain some insight into this also from the psychology of gender and sexuality, and more specifically from the insights offered by the second wave of Feminism, which emerged in the 1970s. Apparently this idea of a woman who turns a man on and then refuses to 'go all the way', is referred to as a "prick-tease" and is many times used by men to taunt a woman. Brownmiller (1975: 121) states that this is a huge grey area which takes on the form of sexual exploitation where a woman is coerced into intercourse because she does not possess the means to physically or psychologically resist, or they succumb because she never realised that she might "… with effort repel the advance". Brownmiller (1975: 121) states that this results from a female paralysis of will and is not much different from a case of rape. Please take note that I am not implying that the co-researchers in this study are taking part in any sexually abusive or exploitative behaviour; however, this theory assists in shaping our understanding of the power relations which shape the reason patterns of the co-researchers of this study.

Another feminist theory is the notion of otherness, briefly mentioned here. The theory of otherness is "... a dualistic mode which runs through western thinking in which things are defined in contrast with what they are not" (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 134). According to this theory, women are viewed by patriarch epistemes as "... that-by-which-men-define-themselves-as-not-being" (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 134). According to Haste (1993: 85), this idea of 'otherness' maintains the division between gender roles and subsequent sex differences. Haste states that men define their notion of 'selves' on their being of otherness, from women, and as such affirm their integrity and definition of the Self. This idea might explain why the co-researchers reason in a very illogical manner; that men can have multiple sex partners, because their genitals do not 'wear' in the same way as women, and the notion that what counts for men, does not count for women: men can be promiscuous, women may not, based on this notion of otherness which simultaneously affirms and justifies their being and identity of self. Therefore, according to this theory, we can conclude that this

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episteme is ultimately informed and shaped by traditions of patriarchal otherness and subsequent supremacy, and not a variable of the biological or cognitive.

In further reference to feminist explanations regarding men's sexual behaviour and their power of control through sexual behaviour, Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (2004: 231) suggest the concept of "heteropatriarchy" which assists in giving men sexual access to women, but this time through a variety of manipulative strategies whereby a woman is 'seduced'. These strategies position women in such a way that they do not only accept sex from men, but that they actually feel they want to do so because, for example, they are in love or that the man is in love with them. This might indicate some strategies employed by the co-researchers in convincing some women to have casual sex, by telling them that they are actually in love with them, while they know, as they state, that they will not marry a woman who gives sex this easily. Thereby using the women for their momentarily sexual gratification, but convincing them otherwise.

These various theories are not given here only as a source from which we might gain understanding of behaviour, but also for us to see how certain theories can assist in the affirmation and maintenance of very illogical and oppressive justifications of the behaviour of people in powerful positions. For instance, if we look at statement 2 which says: "*Men do not have control over their desires and sexual urges and the acting on of it",* it might seem ridiculous and one might think that surely, this type of thinking cannot take place or be justified in any manner. However, certain theories of sexual behaviour, specifically the sociobiology and evolutionary psychology theories regarding sexual behaviour, can indeed provide a justification of exploitative and abusive sexual relations with women (cf. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 239) and a framework such as our statement above, which acts as the motivating source for such behaviour. As an example, take a look at the extracts of the biological based theory of Anne and Bill Moir (1998: 219):

> Men on average, have 400 per cent more erotic fantasies than women, men dream of women, they daydream of women, they fantasize about women, and they do not fantasize about having cosy chats beside the fire. His fantasies are about sex ... [H]e is sexually aroused far more easily than she is, and, as in the rest of his life, he craves novelty. He often finds that novelty in artificial stimuli, which is why he likes pin-ups, pornography and peepshows.

The above statements are not posed as questions or possibilities; they are posed as facts, as reality and even more than that, a generalised, universal reality which applies

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to all men. Here men are fed with constructs and ideas which are inevitable; and even more than this, if men do not feel this way or act in this way, they are posed as abnormal. Therefore, here our narrative has been written, completed and judged fundamental and unfaltering. If such corrupted knowledge is disseminated in a society with young adolescent boys who are very much in a stage of development where their only concern is acceptance by a social group, what would the results be on their behaviour? One can imagine, also in turn, what liberty such an episteme must pose to delinquent boys and men, who are already caught up in discourses of oppression and dominance over women. Here their behaviour is posed as 'norm' and they are given the freedom to do as they please in the name of 'supposed' nature.

Another example from these two scholars is the following extract from their book *Why men don't iron: the real science of gender studies* (Moir 1998: 222-3).

> The sexual drive in both women and men is fuelled by testosterone; and men have 1,000 per cent more ... [T]estosterone and sexual aggression is also linked. Sexual assaults by males peak at 17-25 years, but decline thereafter as the testosterone declines with age. There are more sexual assaults in the autumn when the male's testosterone peaks. Violent rape is associated with higher T levels, though the non-violent rapists generally have an average level ... [W]hile there is no proof at this time, it may be expected that a significant proportion of date rapes must be from steroid self-medication.

It is quite easy, especially for people who tend to simplify scientific statements, to come to the conclusion that men rape women because they are "... suffering from a testosterone-fuelled, irresistible urge that cannot be controlled" (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 239).

Therefore, it is clear how sociobiology and evolutionary psychology can provide a justification of exploitative or abusive sexual relations with women, as it is most probably similar discourses which informed the co-researchers of this study that they are not in control of their own urges. Here they can also argue, which they do, that when a man exploits, abuse, or just use a woman for his own sexual gratification, it is because he suffers from a testosterone-fuelled, irresistible impulse that he cannot control. Furthermore, the women can be partially blamed for the emergence of this urge, as her behaviour and physical appearance combine to send him 'misleading messages'; which he cannot discern because of his biological predisposition to not be able to communicate or understand women. As Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (2004: 239) state:

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> The propensity is just 'wired in' to some men, who, especially in their youth, or at certain times of the year, lurk around, souped-up on testosterone, waiting to pounce. This is hardly a flattering image of men...

The socialisation theory, on the other hand, such as proposed by Lees (1996) suggests that sexual abuse or exploitation of women is the product of severe masculine stereotyping. She states that certain learned stereotypes, such as the avoidance of feminine qualities; the increase of male status, success and respect; the emphasise on self-reliance, strength and confidence; and the idea of oppressing rather than being oppressed, is organised in a type of macho-masculinity, which results in abusive and exploitative behaviour. She states that such a paradigm can be highly rewarding as it is a way of gaining status and respect within one's social group (cf. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 240). This theory; however, also leaves men victims to their nurture, and does not consider issues of power and human will. As Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (2004: 240) state:

> ... they portray men as victims either to their own base 'animal nature' or to their dysfunctional 'nurture', incapable of acting in anything but a sexually aggressive, exploitative macho manner.

Another consideration of traditions of interpretations which might influence or inform the notion of sexual behaviour and men, comes from the postmodernist scholar Jacques Foucault (1976/80) and his ideas regarding sexuality and power. Foucault adamantly states that in the western world sexuality, as a performative act, is a socially and culturally constructed knowledge, which is specific to its time and place, and as such acts as a form of power in controlling people's behaviour. He affirms this notion by giving four strategies by which this power is exerted, namely the socialization of procreative behaviour; the 'hystericization' of women's bodies; the 'pedagogization' of children's sexuality; and the 'psychiatrization' of perverse desire (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 176-177).

In looking at the 'hystericization' of women's bodies, which is of particular interest to the nature of this study, Foucault states that women's sexuality is equated with their identity, and as such people treat women as if their biology is their identity. This allows society to control and regulate women's behaviour (cf. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 177). During an informal discussion with two young adult men who were also orphaned as teenagers (26 June 2010; Swartruggens Rametsi) they admittedly stated that they see women as sexual objects, although they acknowledge that it is not right to do so.

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From the statements made by the co-researchers of this study, we might also conclude that they see women as sexual objects, and define them by the degree that they could satisfy their sexual desires and urges. Therefore, Foucault's argument might just be plausible as an active discourse in some societies. What was of particular interest to me (the researcher) during this study, was that all the boys and men stated that they have much respect for their mothers, more than their fathers, and miss them dearly; but when asked why they have respect for their mothers, as women, but inadvertently objectify women who fall outside this personal realm as sexual objects of pleasure, they responded fiercely that they do not see their mothers as sexual objects and would be greatly offended if any man would view their mothers in this way. They could not give any explanations for this line of thought, and found the question interesting as well. One would think that if a boy or a man has much respect for his mother and maintains a close relationship with her, that his behaviour towards other women in general would display this affection for his mother. One might state, carefully, that it seems if the social need to conform outweighs the personal experiential construction of gender relations. Or, that the socio-cultural influence on the construction of gender relations, happens outside and independent of the personal experience of various familial gender relations and is never merged into one construct of gender and sex. Another possibility of course, is that their mothers and sisters are not experienced and constructed as persons of gender, and subsequently as sexual beings.

Nevertheless, Foucault viewed sexuality essentially as a domain of power and that it is used by those in position of power to exert and maintain their control over society. He states that the opposite is also true: that people use sexuality as a powerful resistance to dominant and authoritative power (cf. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 177). In this sense, sexuality can be seen as a form of domination by men, to exert their power when all else fails; especially in the light of a loss of social and political power of the 'new man' (e.g. sexuality as resistance to power); however, it can also be seen as society's way, still embedded in patriarchy in South Africa, to control women, by stating that sexuality is the domain of the male, and he has power to do as he pleases (sexuality as a form of power).

A final consideration from the postmodern feminist theories is that of Jacques Lacan, where he drew on the work of Saussure about the symbolic nature of language. Lacan postulated that human behaviour and experience is not driven by biological forces, of the id, ego and superego (as postulated by Freud); but rather constituted from three orders

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of meaning, namely the symbolic-, imaginary- and the real order. He postulated that these three orders influence people's experience in terms of how they construct, experience, and act out their identity and how they construct, experience, and act out their sexuality. Therefore, he makes a strong link between identity and sexuality. In laying out his theory, he proposes that the symbolic order exists of the language based social and intersubjective world of meaning, which we acquire through socialisation and enculturation. The imaginary order, in turn, exists of one's unconscious desires, motivations and significance, which is constructed through the discourse of dreaming, which pieces together bits of meaning into something which makes sense to a person. The real order is where the psychic is felt instead of understood, as with trauma, and falls outside the domain of significance. Lacan finally suggests that these three orders are always in a constant antagonistic flux, where the real order pressurises both the imaginary and symbolic order, as they compete with each other for meaning (cf. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 135; Lacan 1966; Bowie 1991). Thus, in using this theory as comparative, it might suggest that the boys experience certain desires of meaning, such as love, security and stability (imaginary order), but that they are acculturated and engendered with specific sexual male behaviour of dominance and power which signifies masculinity (symbolic order), which is expressed in the real order as a struggle of deciding which order will serve as an ultimate meaning-making source. Until that decision is consciously made, that is, until the boys have completed their self-narrative, which entails ultimate meaning for guiding future behaviour, acculturation will almost always prevail. Or, of course, the other way around is also possible, where they desire sexual gratification and polygamy (imaginary order), while their religious affiliation might encourage and enforce sexual piety, which is then expressed in the real order as a struggle of maintaining their own desires and their spiritual and moral obligations. Once again, the ultimate meaning making narrative has to be developed, before this constant struggle and flux will come to an end. This; however, is a very "psycho-analytical", and; therefore, "thin descriptive" way of looking at what we understand as a socially constructed phenomena. Nevertheless, this theory also serves as a possible discourse which influences traditional interpretations of understanding, which has to be considered in the deconstruction of the narratives of (post)modern day Davids.

In conclusion, Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (2004: 179) give valuable insights on the various theories posed regarding gender and sexuality, by stating that as postmodernists we accept that our identity is shaped by cultural knowledge of gender and sexuality, and as such, we view psychological knowledge regarding gender and

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sexuality as also culturally constructed. However, some of the theories are posed from the view of modernism and judge such epistemes as authoritative and the main source of knowledge regarding sexuality. Therefore, in reflecting on these theories, as postmodernists, we have to admit that these theories, constructed by interrogative research, function as a self-fulfilling prophecy, where they simply reap what has been sown. Hence, the knowledge that psychologists 'discover' in their research is not about

> ... universal laws of human behaviour' in relation to gender and sexuality. It is simply an account of the historically and culturally specific conventions, expectations and assumptions that operate about gender and sexuality...
>
> (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 179)

Thus, these proposed theories do indeed give us valuable insights on how knowledge regarding gender and sexuality is distributed as primary discourses in society, more than the actual factual statements thereof. These theories function not as factual domains, nor as historical domains, but rather as systems of meaning which are used by various people in various embedded contexts, to construct their self-narratives which in turn guide their relations, thoughts and behaviour. It does not tell us as much about the person living these narratives, but more about the context and discourses which function within that context; which the person in turn uses as a guiding metaphor.

6.4.2 HIV, Sexuality and Gender

HIV and Aids is an undeniable challenge faced by many South Africans, and especially by our youth. One cannot speak of sexuality without implying the possibility of the presence of HIV and Aids. Similarly, one cannot speak of gender without considering the agents of HIV and Aids. Barolsky (2003: 19) states that HIV and Aids "…challenges conventional sexuality and implicates gender and generational hierarchies directly". Therefore, as much as adolescents do not want to admit the reality of this disease they need to become aware of this challenge and that they cannot take part in sexual activities with the mind-set of a child, especially while the consequences of these activities can be devastating to the future course of their lives. Therefore, as Barolsky (2003: 19) states, the epidemic has forced us to reappraise our ideas of adolescence and the restrictions which are placed on young people's sexual behaviour. HIV and Aids has truly redefined our understanding of what it means to be an adult as opposed to being an adolescent in terms of our rights and our behaviour.

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Furthermore, we cannot turn to biology alone to understand the causes of this disease. We have to consider the interaction between biology and gender to come to a better understanding of how people are at risk because of society's construction of the concept of gender (cf. Barolsky 2003: 36). The fact of the matter is that this society encourages different norms for men than for women, which places women more at risk. Some of these encouragements include multiple sex partners for men, male control over barrier methods, and women's financial dependence on men (cf. Nelson Mandela/HSRC Study of HIV/AIDS 2002: 20). Thus, gender within a specific society refers to the specific expectations and norms of that society for male and female behaviour, characteristics and roles. Therefore, the concept of gender is specific to a culture and society and greatly influences the way in which women and men interact with each other (cf. Rao Gupta 2000: 1).

Barolsky (2003: 36) states that social roles are being engendered, and that this 'gendering' of social roles determine the degree of access each gender has to power and resources. "This gendering of social roles has a direct impact on the differential access of men and women to power and productive resources" (Barolsky 2003: 36). It is; therefore, this access to power and various forms of resources which create both delimitations and potentialities, which in turn determine the spreading of HIV and Aids. Barolsky (2003: 36) furthermore states:

> Over the past ten years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, gender and sexuality have become recognised as critical to an understanding both of the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS within the South African context, and the way in which the disease has developed.

Thus, we cannot deny that the lack of power of most women in South Africa in negotiating safer sex practices inevitably plays a role in the spreading of Aids. It must also be stressed that sometimes, or rather many times, sexual intercourse is involuntary and many women are coerced into sex, be it during a case of 'date rape', or unexpected sexual assault from an unknown perpetrator. The rape and sexual statistics in South Africa are staggering and speaks of how masculinity is asserted through sexual violence. Robertson (1998: www.csvr.org.za) states that the roots of sexual violence in South Africa lays with our male dominated and patriarchal society. She states that "[w]omen hold limited power and authority and are frequently exploited" (Robertson 1998: www.csvr.org.za) and that incidences of sexual violence are more common in such societies. Robertson (1998: www.csvr.org.za) furthermore states that certain 'rape

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myths' contribute to the prevalence of sexual violence, especially in societies where women are often blamed for encouraging or causing men to rape. Some of these 'rape myths' include, beliefs such as men have limited control over their sexual desires and lust, and; therefore, cannot help their urges to rape; or that women actually enjoy being raped or that some women are in some way responsible for the rape; thereby freeing men from being held accountable.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that sexual violence is caused by men feeling powerless and emasculated as a result of past political and criminal violence, as the victims in South Africa are mostly women while the perpetrators are mostly male. Therefore, sexual violence might represent a displacement of past aggression wherein men feel that they can reassert their manhood and masculine power by abusing the 'weaker' of the society, which is women and children. Therefore the rapist, in essence, reasserts his masculinity though sexual violence (cf. Robertson 1998: www.csvr.org.za). This idea is reasserted by professor Rachel Jewkes (Mail and Guardian 18 June 2009: www.mg.co.za) who states:

> We have a very, very high prevalence of rape in South Africa. I think it is down to ideas about masculinity based on gender hierarchy and the sexual entitlement of men. It's rooted in an African ideal of manhood…the key drivers of the problem which include ideas of masculinity, predicted on marked gender hierarchy and sexual entitlement of men. Efforts to change these require interventions on structural dimensions of men's lives, notably education and opportunities for employment and advancement…

Harvey and Kehler (2005: 3-4) in turn state that the reported rape cases in South Africa vary between 52 000 and 1.69 million, and that in reality most of the victims are women, while most of the perpetrators are men. With regards to manhood, Cornell, Reid and Walker (2003: 26) found that the masculine identity of men in South Africa seems to be largely defined by exercising control over women and engaging in coercive sex, although this cannot be generally applied to all men in South Africa. Harvey and Kehler (2005: 3) in turn argue that the concept of manhood in South Africa is largely defined by sexual promiscuity; while girls and women are expected to stay pure and be virgins. Therefore, it reaffirms the idea that women are expected to be nonsexual, while men are defined by their sexuality and dominance of women, both sexually and socially. By placing such limitations on women, men are indeed in control of women, as they decide when women are allowed to have sex or not, never leaving an opportunity for the woman to make the decision (cf. Harvey and Kehler 2005: 3). This also affirms the

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paradox of men's expectations, also found with the co-researchers of this study. While they feel that they are not in control of their sexual desires and that they deserve sexual gratification, they still want virgins as wives one day. The decision; however, of which woman stays a virgin and which woman must serve as the object of gratification, taking her out of the equation of being a desired wife, lies solely with the men, or yes, even with the boys.

These numbers indicate very strongly that sex and sexuality are dominated largely by the paradigm of patriarchy and the accompanied concept of masculinity and manhood. Cornel, Reid and Walker (2003: 22) state that sex is many times about power because relationships between men and women are generally unequal. Therefore, non-consensual sex is used to reinstate the source of power, because masculinity in essence is about power; what it means to be male and what it means to be female is based on social assumptions, generated by the gender in power. Therefore, if patriarchy is the gender of power, it will also determine decisions regarding sex and sexuality (cf. Harvey and Kehler 2005: 3).

Additionally, women do not only suffer because they lack in power in making decisions regarding their own sexual health; they also suffer in carrying the consequences of such lack in power in suffering alone with living with the disease of HIV and Aids (Harvey and Kehler 2005: 4), because women are more vulnerable to HIV infection, and often their husbands or boyfriends accuse them of infidelity once they have been diagnosed. Therefore, the "… link between gender inequality and death has never been so direct as with Aids" (Elfenbein 2005: 10). Because many women or girls find themselves in dire poverty, they often engage in transactional sex so that they can provide for their families (cf. Elfenbein 2005: 11); often girls are orphaned because their mothers died of Aids, and they are left to fend for themselves and their siblings. The results are that these girls drop out of school or engage in informal prostitution so that they can look after themselves and their siblings, and so the cycle continues. Thus, whatever the cause of power inequalities, one cannot deny the existence thereof and the role it plays in fuelling the current HIV and Aids epidemic.

Another issue of gender and HIV and Aids is men's denial of the existence of this disease and their vulnerability in being infected. During a conversation Barolsky (2003: 36) had with a woman who is infected with HIV, the woman stated that to her opinion, men are in denial. In explaining why she says this, she stated: "Men are more rejecting [...] I think it's the power, the power that they have, that they are the head of the family,

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that thing is the one that makes them not to accept easily" (Barolsky 2003: 36). This corresponds with the findings of this study where the co-researchers also stated that they do not live as if HIV is a reality, and that they do not think of infection while engaging in sexual activities.

It would also seem as if men are not only in denial about the existence of this disease, but that they exclude themselves in being able to get infected. If they show symptoms of illness, they tend to turn to traditional therapies instead of turning to modern medicine which will help in the diagnoses and treatment of the disease; perhaps thereby also denying their vulnerability in being infected with HIV and its existence (Barolsky 2003: 38). During the interviews Barolsky (2003: 39) had with various infected women, one women stated: "They [men] don't get sick, even when they get sick they don't go to doctors, they don't go to the clinic, they don't get pregnant, they go to witch doctors' (Khanya Family Centre interview July 2003 in Barolsky 2003: 39). Another woman stated that men do not want to accept the reality of HIV and Aids, and that they go to 'witchdoctors' who probably will give another cause of the symptoms (cf. Vatech interview July 2003 in Barolsky 2003: 39). In explaining these responses of men to the possibility of being infected with HIV, Barolsky (2003: 39) states that their response might be shaped by their 'ethos of machismo', combined with the distress of the colonised who were always seen as diseased. It would also seem that men do not only deny their vulnerability in being infected with HIV and Aids, but also deny that they can in anyway carry or cause the disease, as Barolsky (2003: 39) states: "… the problem' does not belong to men, it adheres to women". This inevitably hinders any possibilities of change in behaviour or customs, and promotes even more oppression and abuse of women.

Finally, women are also the main caregivers of the children when their husbands have deserted them and sometimes take care of the sick husband, even if she might also be infected (cf. Steinberg; Johnson, Schierhout and Ndegwa 2002: 17). Because women are abandoned by their husbands if they find out that they are infected, they choose to be silent so that they can protect themselves and their children from ostracism and rejection. However, in their secrecy they are left to suffer alone and deny other possibly infected family members the opportunity to know their status and get treatment (cf. Barolsky 2003: 41).

In conclusion it can be stated that power is inherent in both gender and sex and that these unequal power relations which exist in the societies of the poor and the

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vulnerable, inevitably increase both women's and men's chances of infection (cf. Rao Gupta 2000: 1-2). HIV and Aids is the result of these unequal power relations and men's denial of their own accountability towards the spreading and maintaining of infection, stigmatisation, ostracism and abandonment. This in turn is the result of society's unhealthy concept of what is masculine and what is feminine (cf. Barolsky 2003: 37).

6.4.3 Men and Money

In terms of money and gender, all the co-researchers agreed unanimously that a woman should never have more money than her husband. In stating his point, Kgotoso's brother says: "*If everything in the house is his, he can throw you (the woman) out – money makes a man*!" Kgotoso affirmed this: "M*oney gives girls wings, they think they don't need you, they look down at you".* Ironically Kgotoso states simultaneously that "if there is love it does not matter if the guy makes more money", but still, "the girl cannot make more money than the guy".

Some of the female participants also agreed that a woman should not make more money than a man, but their solution is not making less money and being submissive, but rather marrying a man who is in the same "league" as they are. For example, one of the girls stated: "*People must stay in their class – You can't be a CEO and marry a domestic worker*". One of the other female participants expressed the view of how a man then compensates for power if he makes less money: "*This is an economical issue, if you are a CEO and you have to look after him, a man's ego will be touched. Men will find other ways to be the "man" then, like abusing his wife*".

Therefore, the discourse of 'money is power' is evident throughout these conversations, and that men are more entitled to this power (and thus money) than women.

Barker and Barker (2004: 37-38) refer to a study done by Bruce (1995: 2) in Guatemala, where he found that in 55% of families where women did not earn an income, the man was responsible for making decisions regarding healthcare; whereas this was only true for about 11% of families where women did earn an income. Therefore, it is clear that in operation, this discourse of 'money is power' is very prevalent in some societies.

Morrell (2006: 21) in explaining the definition of a 'good' father, states that in some societies fatherhood is equated with providing on a material basis for his children, especially in Africa where the father is mostly the main source of money in the family. He states that "a 'big man' only commands respect when he is able to provide".

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Therefore, a good father within this context is someone who secures opportunities for his children on a financial basis, and a 'bad' father is someone who denies his financial responsibilities and obligations towards his children.

It might be that because most of the co-researchers have been raised without a father, and witnessed the financial suffering of their mothers, that they have come to the conclusion that the biggest role a father or a husband can play is in providing, at least, financially, as they are in any case not used to an emotionally involved father. Manqoba also stated that his father is only willing to provide in his needs financially, and not emotionally, maybe indicating something of that community's view regarding the role of a father. In speaking with one of the Zulu young adults (26 June 2010, Swartruggens Rametsi) who has recently impregnated a girl, he stated that according to his culture he had to pay 'damage' because he is not married to the girl. Therefore, this is another practice where the father must, at the very least, give his financial support. Additionally, this notion of the financial obligation of a father and a husband is supported by the family court's required monthly payment of child support and/or alimony in the case where a husband and a wife are divorced and they have children together.

Kgotoso and his brother state that recently their uncle got involved with their lives, and gives them much financial support. Kgotoso and his brother are subsequently very appreciative of this, but it must be noted that Kgotoso and his brother place much value on financial power, as he equates his identity and his future hopes to material wealth. He also stated that he feels unimportant and 'little' in the presence of 'rich' *men*.

However, these explanations only partially satisfy the notion of the importance of a man maintaining the wealth in the home and family, as it does not explain why their identity is affected and threatened when their wives gain financial wealth instead of them.

Pasick, Gordon and Meth (1990: 166) state that although many men are not able to define 'power', they are very much aware of the 'symbols' of power. They refer to Bateson (1972) who listed the most recognisable representation of power, namely, one's job, money, disregard for authority, sexual prowess and gambling. Moreover, Pasick, Gordon and Meth (1990: 166) have found that the most important of these symbols, is inevitably money, and that a man's attitude regarding money may say much about how he is seen in his society, or how he sees himself, within his society/community. Furthermore, they have found that those feelings of pride and shame are often associated with money, and sometimes anger, disappointment and frustration (cf. Pasick et al.: 1990: 166). This reinforces the idea that the equation of men and money, and

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subsequent power is very much a social and cultural construct, which although outdated in many societies, is very much prevalent in the community of the co-researchers. It is interesting to note that few of the female co-researchers stated that they would like to make money and if possible, more money than their husbands, because they do not want to be dependent and controlled by their husband, and the basis of being financially in need. Three of the remaining female co-researchers stated that the man should make more money than the wife, as he is the provider of his family.

This reaffirms the argument of Pasick, Gordon and Meth (1990: 60), through which they postulate that it is not only men who accept and affirm their responsibility as financial providers, but that many women, even if they have a career, also expect men to take on various roles allocated by society as being manly roles. They state that the result is "... a reinforcement of the model where men are good providers for their families if they are oriented to success in the economic world" (Gordon and Meth 1990: 60). It has also been found that the more money a man makes, the less likely the women is to work. This might refer to some men who prefer their wives not to work, but if many women choose when they get the opportunity not to work, it reinforces the idea to men, that the more money he makes, the more desirable he is (Gordon and Meth 1990: 60). This also reaffirms the notion, specifically in the townships, of the 'big daddy's' who intimidate, both young men and women, with the status they gained because of their wealth. It is well known that older richer men will 'buy' young beautiful women, with something as futile as a cell phone, while he has a wife and children at home (Discussions 26 June 2010 Swartruggens Rametsi). The man can then brag with a beautiful young woman on his side, while the lady gains financially, thereby creating social status for herself. This does not refer to the case where men give young girls and women money because of the girls being extremely poor and sometimes from a child headed household, specifically in exchange for sexual favours (e.g. prostitution) – this refers to the specific idea of 'sugar daddy's' who many times 'buy' these girls and women for social status and not primarily for sexual favours. Two of the co-researchers stated that in their community the older men who have much money, can do whatever they like, and that they threaten the younger boys in taking their girlfriends from them, because "*he has money, and I don't*" (26 June 2010 Swartruggens, Rametsi).

In conclusion, it seems then that the notion of masculinity gained through money and thus power, is socially and culturally constructed and reinforced, not only by men, but also by some traditional women:

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> When women convey expectations that men perform their traditional duties, they may unknowingly reinforce men to occupy roles that are familiar but which block men from expressing their 'softer' side, something many women want from men.
>
> (Gordon and Meth 1990: 61)

6.4.4 Men and Protection

In response to the question if the participants think that it is a man's job to protect, Kgotoso stated that he will only protect himself: "*No its his business, I'm a coward, I will protect myself*", but his brother paradoxically stated that it is a man's job to protect, because *"A man is the head of the family, men has muscles, he is made for physical things".*

Molimi stated that a man must "... *not just protect his family, if you go through the same situation I will expect them to help me*", thereby expressing the idea of 'what I do to you will come back to me (e.g. the idea of Ubuntu).

6.4.5 Men and the concept of 'being a real man'

During the conversation the boys expressed their idea of what it means to be a real man, by comparing themselves with the characteristics of David.

Molimi stated that it is important for him to be seen as a real man, not only physically, but also mentally and spiritually, once again reflecting the idea of his family being an extension and a reflection of him as the man of the house: "*I believe what you do today will reflect in later life. I want a woman who reflects who I am*". He also states that a real man must be able, like David, to admit his mistakes and 'repent'. He emphasises that a man's mentality of making his family happy will make him a real man, but at the same time a man wants to be "*satisfied in all ways*".

It would; therefore, seem if Molimi wants to be a good husband and father, but that the evidence for this would be his wife and children's overt expression of their appreciation of him. His statement makes it sound as if the idea of a wife is just that, an idea – a construct build around his being and his identity, which represents the quality of his functions as a husband and a father. The question which might be posed here is whether there is any room in this argument for her own identity and being to be reflected upon? It seems as if being in a relationship with a woman, for Molimi, is a one-way relation where her being serves as a function of his own ego. Therefore, for Molimi a

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real man is the idea of a good husband and a good father, expressed through the testimonies of his wife and children.

For Kgotoso's brother a real man is someone who respects and protects women. He should be responsible in all he does and respect other people's property (including other men's women). In response he wants a woman who is good listener, who comforts him and who accompanies and supports him through the problems he might face. He states that he will feel like a man when he gets respect from a woman; this includes; however, that she should be comfortable with him and not be scared of him. This indicates how he wants to be the man of the house, but not by force or fear. Kgotoso's brother felt adamant about the fact that he is still in the process of becoming a real man: "*No I'm still becoming a man; I'm trying to change, not to take on too many woman, to treat them well. I'm still developing into a man*".

Kgotoso states that for him a man must be the provider: "this is his role as a man" and that he will feel like a real man "... *when his family likes it when he is around*" and he receives love from them. He states again: "*I will feel blessed if my wife stays at home and looked after me; a woman (wife) should not have too much money*". Therefore, he implies that having money will also make him feel like *the* real man. He concludes that a real man must also take responsibility; it is not clear; however, what exactly he must take responsibility for. In turn, Kgotoso expects commitment and honesty from a woman.

Thus, for Kgotoso a 'real man' is someone who protects only his property and someone who gets respect from his wife for the loving and caring being that he is, not respect forced by fear; a man who is the provider (financially) and a man who is taken care of by his wife, and someone who takes responsibility. Kgotoso also expresses that his manliness is expressed through the love and the care his family has for him – adoration from his family.

Manqoba stated, in a few words, that he sees a man as someone with power, so that he can be respected. He defines a real man as someone who has self-control and thinks twice before he does something.

Another co-researcher, who chose the pseudonym Mpho (Gift), stated that a man should protect his self-confidence, respect and responsibility, as he is seen as the 'head' of everything. Therefore, protection for him is the protection of his own manly qualities. He further stated that a real man is someone who is honest, supportive, has self-control and is caring and always takes responsibility for his actions. In asking what makes a 'great' man, he responded: his power, and a woman: her integrity.

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One of the other male co-researchers noted that it is serious to be in a relationship and that: "*When you realise there is something you need to let go of, change first, both men and women*".

For a description of the interpretation of traditions which might inform the notions of being a real man, we turn to the literature.

Morrell (2006: 14) affirms our social constructionist view that masculinity is also not determined by biology, but that it is constructed through our relations with a society and its underlying discourses which inform interpretations of our experiences and relations. He furthermore states that the notion of masculinity can change over time, as the viewpoints of a society, in turn, changes over time (probably as a result of the emergence of new informed epistemes). Additional to the changes of a society, there are also different cultural sanctioned ways which inform the notion of masculinity and manhood, which means that the notion of masculinity is both acted and performed. Morrell (2006: 14) elaborates:

> Boys and men choose how to behave and this choice is made from a number of available repertoires. Such choices are never entirely free, because the available repertoires differ from context to context and because the resources from which masculinity is constructed are unevenly distributed.

These repertoires are infiltrated with direct and indirect messages regarding maleness and femaleness and appropriate related behaviour and expectancies in terms of responsibilities and role divisions. These messages influence a variety of events and decisions, such as future prospects, educational attainment, choice of career, meaning of and role in family, having and rearing children, and the like. Moreover, these messages, usually received as little boys or little girls, shape our adult attitudes and behaviour towards a variety of personal and professional instances and relationships (cf. Brown and Barker 2004: 29). Some scholars state however, that much of these traditional notions have changed over time, especially in the western world, where little girls receive messages of more and wider possibilities and in contrast, boys receive mixed messages which result in feelings of insecurity and distrust (cf. Brown and Barker 2004: 29). In the western world, and as a result of the feminist movement, the idea and operation of femininity and masculinity has changed quite a bit, which has liberated many women; while at the same time leaving many men confused and frustrated. This confusion and frustration is not as much as a result of the social changes regarding the differing roles of men and women, as it is a result of the prevalence of traditional

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definitions for manhood and masculinity despite this change; while these definitions have been extended to include additional feminine roles and psychos-social expectancies and responsibilities.

However, when listening to the stories of the co-researchers, it does not seem if their paradigm of gender roles and responsibilities has changed that much from the traditional western paradigms. This might be because of their traditional African background, which has only recently incorporated some aspects of the western paradigm, especially in urban areas. Nonetheless, there are a few indications of changes, such as the emphasis on a loving and caring husband and father and the views of some of the co-researchers (still in the minority however) on the display of feelings allowed by men in some instances. When it comes to role expectations and other manly inherent qualities, such as pride, respect and power, it would seem that their paradigms conform with traditional (modern) western paradigms of what it means to be a man and a woman. It is interesting to note that they do not particularly display African traditional notions of masculinity and femininity; most probably because most of the co-researchers are urbanised, in the first place, which means that they have just now incorporated much of the western notion of modernism, while the western world (specifically Europe and the USA) is now moving away from modernism to postmodernism, which entails many feminist notions and movements. It is difficult to determine; however, whether their strong patriarchal customs are as a result of traditional African or modern Western heritage. It must also be stated that South Africa has such a rich inheritance of traditions, customs and paradigms, that the notion of patriarchy and matriarchy, modern, postmodern or African traditional, varies from family to family, depending more on economic class, education and international exposure, than on race. In showing the variety of cultural heritage and the fusion thereof with western modern notions, Rudwick (2008: 157) has done a study specifically on the Zulu culture and their understanding of the word '*Hlonipha'* which refers to 'respect'. She states that in the context of contemporary South Africa and especially in urban areas, it seems that the individual receives his/her cultural (and subsequent linguistic) embeddedness not only from one single monumental source, but from different contexts and traditions. Furthermore she states that the notions of culture and identity, embedded in an increasingly urbanized and globalized world, have become extremely complex and multifaceted, as most individuals seem to adopt hybrid cultural identities (cf. Rudwick 2008: 157). Therefore, we can state that the co-researchers of this study might have derived their notions of masculinity and manhood from a variety of traditional African paradigms, infused within

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the notion of the western modern paradigm which they got in contact with during their experiences within an urbanised area. Therefore, we can conclude that their notion of masculinity is primarily informed by cultural traditions of patriarchy. It is important to note, while we look at different theories regarding gender identity development and subsequent notions of masculinity, that although the different cultural backgrounds of the co-researchers will inevitably influence the *content* of their gender paradigm, the *structure* and internalisation thereof move along the lines of social construction and enculturation. Thus, it must be made clear that this study does in no way state generalisations of gender content, but is more interested in how this content (messages) was internalised and thus performed, especially in the light of the varying informed traditions in South Africa.

It has been found through cross-cultural research, that boys and subsequently men, receive narrow definitions of what it means to be a 'real man', which is evident through discourses such as mass media, pop culture and even academic research. Therefore, a consistent theme is evident through all these discourses which provides very narrow and masculine notions of what it means to be a man (cf. Brown and Barker 2004: 30) in all cultures. Barker and Barker (2004: 30) state that this traditional masculinity theme is more evident in the cultures and media of the minority world, probably because the developments of postmodern and feminist ideas are still much lacking in the minority worlds. Meth (1990: 8) states: "How we are to think, feel and act as a member of a particular gender gets transmitted to us at an early age in more subtle forms and from a variety of sources". Some studies have confirmed a genetic basis for some of the gender differences, such as the effects of sex hormones on the development of personality; however, the power of socialisation far outweighs the genetic influences (cf. Meth 1990: 8).

This powerful socialising process already starts in boyhood; perhaps even in infancy through the contact a boy has with his primary caregivers and other significant people. These people are not always aware of their influence on a child's gender development, as they themselves have undergone the same socialisation process. Therefore, it is postulated that a man's expectations of himself are already learned from a very young age; however, the caregivers and other significant people are not the only source for this type of gender socialisation (cf. Meth 1990: 8). As stated above, the wider macro-structures which operate in the larger society, have a significant impact on the behaviour of all family members, and gender differences are powerfully enforced by these larger

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structures and is highly influential, specifically in the identity development of a boy or a man (cf. Meth 1990: 8). Meth (1990: 11) furthermore states that these forces do not work in isolation and are not the determiners of how gender differences will be performed. Various factors such as social and economic status, race and ethnicity will affect the ways in which young boys will attend to these gender differences. This seems to affirm my notion that gender paradigms differ specifically from socio-economic status and perhaps exposure to education or other frame of references. Meth; however, also confirms that race and ethnicity also play a role in these different views of gender roles and might be of particular interest to the context of this study, especially because the boys differ in cultural traditions, such as being Xhosa, Sotho, Tswana or Zulu.

During Rudwick's (2008: 155) research with the Zulu culture and the concept of *Hlonipha,* she found that higher status, seniority, and being male automatically qualifies one as the receptionist of *Hlonipha* actions. Additionally, she interviewed both male and female individuals, who state that the notion of gender equality in the Zulu community is somewhat being established in the urban areas; however, rural Zulu men tend to feel very much intimidated by urbanely educated women. This in turn, results often in violence against these women as they are accused of being disrespectful towards the Zulu culture and customs. She states:

> One only needs to consider the Noord Street incident in February 2008 where taxi drivers stripped and sexually assaulted an African female by the name of Nwabisa Ngcukana because she wore a miniskirt, to see how bizarre gender dynamics are played out in South Africa in reference to *respect*. A recent Mail & Guardian (M&G) article offers extracts of some of the interviews journalists conducted with individual taxi drivers in the taxi rank mentioned above. Almost justifying the incident one of the males said '…it's about respect. I was taught by my parents that a woman's skirt should be below the knees and that is how my wife and I have raised my daughters' (Ndlovo and Mhlana, 2008: 6).
>
> (Rudwick 2008: 162-163)

Rudwick (2008: 163) similarly found that the Zulu patriarchal culture has various constructs and perceptions regarding what are seen as respectful and disrespectful. One of her interviewees, for example, stated that he beats his wife when she voices her criticism towards him, as he perceives this as ultimately disrespectful behaviour (cf. Rudwick 2008: 162-163).

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Additionally, this study has noticed that the Zulu boys and young men are much more focussed on honour and the role of the father and husband as the head of the house. When a Zulu boy has impregnated a girl (such as was the case with one of our conversationalists), he has to pay 'damage' to that family (26 June 2010 Swartruggens Rametsi). In rural areas of South Africa where the Zulu tradition is still highly enforced, a man can take as many wives as he can afford (through paying *labola*), and in both the Xhosa and Zulu culture, rituals of manhood, such as initiation, is still much prevalent and very significant to both the social group and the boy himself. In the conversation I had with the two young adults, where the one was a Basotho and the other a Zulu young man, the Zulu man laughed openly at the Sotho man for not being circumcised and completing his initiation. The Sotho man in turn stated that for him it is not an important ritual, whereupon the Zulu man replied: "*But you are not a man now*!" (26 June 2010 Swartruggens Rametsi). This indicates two things: Firstly, one's culture determines the development and performance of manhood and masculinity, and secondly, that there are extreme variances between cultures, urban and rural areas and individuals in general, regarding the performance of masculinity and manhood. The prevalent and most influencing factor, however, seem to be the macro-context, which stands in inferiority to the influences of significant people. However, both of these young men were raised without a father, and might have had no other choice than to gain their notions of masculinity from their context and other influential male models; that is, if we assume that male figures have an influence on this development. Both of these young men were raised and live in Soweto, which is quite urbanised. However, their traditional roots and their interpretations of their experiences within the urban area and their relations to other people within this context, interacted to construct a notion of masculinity and the performance thereof.

All the same, many socialists and psychologists suggest that a little boy is already confronted with notions of masculinity from a very young age, by stating that young children, especially boys, are very sensitive to distinctions made according to gender (cf. Meth 1990: 10). In various studies done it seems that boys as little as 3 years old, are aware of what is masculine (boy) behaviour and what is feminine (girl) behaviour, by demonstrating an ability to distinguish between what games are considered masculine, where the girls did not have a rigid distinction between 'boy' and 'girl' games. These findings indicate as well that boys experience much more pressure in adhering to certain gender roles and standards than girls, and that socialisation particular reinforces gender

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distinctions which might restrict the behaviour of boys as they grow into adolescence and ultimately, manhood (cf. Meth 1990: 10-11; Hartley 1959: 465).

As an example of this intense distinction that boys make between 'boy' behaviour and games, I would like to describe a recent observation of mine in participating in a soccer outreach programme during the July 2010 holidays, in the township Mamelodi, in Pretoria. As one of the activities for the small children, the organisation Funanani (an NGO and FBO for OVCs) had developed the netball fields into a play park for the small children, where they had various toys including several of those 'push-scooters' that the young children of ages two to four can ride on. I had a small girl with me; she was aged two and a half years, who asked me to push her around on one of these scooters. Keep in mind that I could not communicate with these children as they speak Sesotho and I do not. While pushing her, a small boy, I estimate about three years old, pointed at the girl to get off the scooter. She was coincidentally on one of the blue scooters. I tried to explain to him that she just wants to play a few more minutes and then he can get a chance as well. But still the boy kept on gesturing that he wants to ride on that scooter (there were at least 15 scooters, all occupied, but for some reason he wanted the scooter the girl was on). After a few minutes, he pulled at my shirt, and pointed to a bright pink scooter, thereafter pointing at the little girl and said "*girl*". Then he pointed at the blue scooter, pointed at himself and said "*boy*", indicating that she must get on the pink scooter because she is a girl and he is a boy, wanting the blue scooter. I was amazed at how adamant this boy was to get on the blue scooter that he even logically developed reasons why he must get that specific scooter, probably thinking that I would see reason.

Another inherent aspect to the developed notion of masculinity is also developing a notion of what it means to be female. Meth (1990: 11) states that as boys develop their identity, specifically their gender identity, they develop a severe sensitivity to discriminating between masculine and feminine behaviour and ways to avoid any behaviour which might be associated with femininity. It is interesting to note how sensitive men are about what behaviours are constituted as feminine and what it indicates when exhibited by a man. In congruence with this development various literature and studies have found that a man's distrust and fear of femininity is one of the strongest forces and discourses underlying gender bias and; therefore, this fear is responsible for the way men feel and act, and subsequently influence their behaviour. In conclusion, many of these studies have concluded that the idea of masculinity is

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equated with anything which is not feminine (cf. Meth 1990: 12). This was quite apparent in the conversations between the male and female co-researchers, regarding the exhibiting of feelings for a man. Almost all the boys, except Kgotoso, stated that it is not manly to express feelings, even feelings about one's religion. Although most of them state that they do experience these feelings and that they would sometimes show it to girls, they would never display these feelings amongst their male friends as they would be seen as "soppy and weak".

Another central theme of masculinity is 'power'; especially power over women. Kahn (1984: 238) noted during his research that men state that "… with power they are men; without it they are no better than women". This is also clear during the conversation with the co-researchers, where several of the boys defined masculinity, or being a 'real man', as someone with power. It seems also that they find it difficult to define what they mean with power, although several of them equated power with money, and especially having more money than the wife, otherwise she "*thinks that she can do whatever she wants*" (TOL camp 27 February 2010), referring to the power a man has over a woman when he has more money, which ultimately refers to having power over the survival of the woman. Cornell, Reid and Walker (2003: 26) also state through a number of case studies undertaken in South Africa, that the identifiers of manhood, include exercising control over women, which includes coercive sex. The data gained from this study, provides two very differing insights regarding this, as most boys stated that they do want power in their homes, but this includes the love and the care of their wives and children, not through fear or force. Most agreed that violent behaviour towards women is not 'manly', and this includes violent sexual behaviour (TOL camp 27 February 2010). However, the two conversationalists from Soweto stated that they also disagree with violence towards women, but the fact is that it is happening at an alarming rate. They describe some causes of this as the lack of an appropriate father figure who could role model the performance of appropriate aggressive feelings. In line with social constructionism, one might argue that it is just this modelling of inappropriate aggressive behaviour which causes men to act in this way. Other scholars argue that, especially in the low socio-economic contexts, many men lose their sense of power because of a lack of job opportunities and thus money, and; therefore, exert their power in acting violently against women (cf. Baker and Barker 2004: 21-22). Therefore, aggressive power over women might not be as a result of a lack of a good male role model, but more a result of frustration and a lack of a sense of power through their status and financial stance in society, which has come to equate the idea of manhood.

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Meth (1990: 14) states, that although men might aggressively pursue power through authority and money, they have relatively little power over their need of internal rewards. Here internal rewards refer to emotional support and nurturing, which is a basic human need, but through socialisation men are taught that these needs equate 'weakness'. "The statistics on the differences in male's and female's physical health demonstrates how destructive this mind-set can be for men" (Meth 1990: 14). The emergence of this need might be visible in postmodern contexts where the notion of masculinity has evolved in an acceptance of men to express their emotions and feelings, and some of this was visible through Kgotoso and his brother's statement that they think it is manly to show one's feelings. However, much of this is restricted to conversations with and in the presence of close female friends, as they also state that they would rarely express their feelings to their male peers. There seems to be controversial opinions about men and the expression of their feelings. For example, Kgotoso states that it must be horrible for a woman to live with a man who does not express his feelings and "*It is sweet for me when a girl comforts you when you cry*". However, Manqoba states very adamantly "*It's not manly to express feelings, it shows weakness*". He also wants to explain that this does not mean he does not share: it depends on the situation, but *"… I don't want to make family problems, or my problems hers*", reinstating the idea that men must handle and be strong enough to handle their problems by themselves. Manqoba states that he has a friend who displayed his emotions towards God, and that made him look 'soppy' to Manqoba; although he states that he himself maintains a close relationship with God. Molimi also stated that in his community it is not manly to express one's feelings and there, men don't express their feelings. Therefore, this controversy about the subject might indicate how men's sense of external power often leads to the neglect of their own emotional and communicative needs, as well as their need for nurturing and care (cf. Meth 1990: 14).

Meth (1990: 30) explains the conflict men experience regarding their internal and external needs, by stating that at a very young age boys are encouraged to express their aggression and violence, and discouraged to express emotions. Adolescent males, specifically, have a number of developmental tasks which have no clear cut beginning or end, throughout their lives. This results in young men who find the responsibilities, demands and challenges of adulthood; career and finding a partner; while simultaneously maintaining and conforming to specific gender expectations and notions; too much to bear and; therefore, often struggle in the different roles that they have to take on (cf. Meth 1990: 30). One can just imagine how much harder such a quest for

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success must be in the absence if a good male role model, or just someone who can support and guide one during these conflicting desires and quest for meaning. Manqoba often expressed his frustration in wanting to reach his aspiration of being successful and a good family man, but not having the guidance of his father through this process, like he states it, "*in becoming a man*" (TOL Camp: 28 February 2010).

We find an interesting explanation from Chodorow (1978) regarding boys' relationship with their mothers and the influence thereof in their gender identity formation, as explained by Meth (1990: 8). Generally, even today, mothers are still the primary caregivers for children, and as such the first meaningful relationship that an infant experiences, is with his/her mother. Subsequently a boy's and a girl's sense of self develop in relation to their mother. Meth (1990: 8) states:

> According to Chodorow (1978), the infant's dependence upon its mother for its emotional and physical needs creates a relational climate that exerts a powerful influence on the emerging gender identity.

Although Chodorow's theory has strong psychoanalytic roots, it gives us a valuable idea of how the boys' gender identities develop in terms of their relationship with their mothers. In her analysis she found that the nature of attachment for boys and girls with their mothers differ, as she found that boys experience the separation with their mothers more suddenly and in a discontinued shift. A girl, she states, remains closely attached to her mother because this closeness is not challenged by outside factors. She states that this condition of separateness of the boy from the mother provides the preconditions for a boy in struggling in later development, as the boy experiences constant ambivalence in his need to maintain connection with his primary caregiver, while simultaneously developing a gender identity. This inevitably leads to an emotional detachment from the mother (cf. Meth 1990: 9). Meth (1990: 9) states that Chodorow's theory might give us insights with regards to the reasons why men struggle in balancing their need for closeness and distance from a very early age. He states that many men of course do not realise the reasons for this conflict and that they can often not articulate why they become emotionally distant when they want, in fact, to feel closer to that person. He states: "Men are at loss to explain how they can desire a nurturing relationship yet create emotional distance and deny dependency" (Meth 1990: 9). In this study, all of the boys expressed their loving and caring feelings towards their mothers, and that they were, in actual fact, very much dependent on the love and the care they received from their mothers and that this is the biggest loss in their lives. They state that

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now they have no one else who can support them and love them and care for them like their mothers did. It is peculiar why men do not extent this need of care and love to other women in their lives, such as female friends, and why they, when provided with an opportunity, choose to use female friends for their sexual gratification, rather than seeing the potential of love and care that they can receive from these female friends. Chodorow's and Meth's arguments might help to explain why they detach themselves emotionally from girls and women, and replace the need of nurture and care, with the need of sexual gratification, perhaps because socialisation once again prevails over their own internal needs, as they deny their personal needs in maintaining their masculine identity. This might be evident in the co-researchers' statements of the need to be a good and loving husband and father, but still wanting the power and 'respect' associated with being a man, as if the two are ultimately separate. Interestingly, Meth (1990: 10) states that when a boy separates from the closeness he had with his mother, it becomes important that the father replaces this loss with male nurturing and care. If this does not happen; if the father is unable to provide some of the care and nurturing lost by this separation, "... the cycle of denial of emotional needs may be perpetuated to the next generation" (Meth 1990: 10). In the face of the epidemic which South Africa faces, thereby resulting in the fragmentation of the family structure which specifically results in a loss of father involvement and presence, it might be inevitable that this cycle of denial will perpetuate to the next generations, which seems to be already taking place. Furthermore, it seems as if it results in an overly masculine identity which seeks its own gratification at the expense of women's willingness to provide in a man's emotional and nurturing needs.

As a final consideration in the development of the notion of being a 'real' man, we consider the inputs of Morrell (2006: 15) where he states that fatherhood is traditionally associated with manhood, as a man is expected to take on the role of a father. However, he states, the point at which one becomes a man, is these days reached along different routes and many times disputed. Amongst boys, manhood is a desired destination as it marks the moment when a boy becomes a man. This was traditionally associated with a conference of rights, which in turn gave them the 'respect' that the role of the man elicits. Although, biologically manhood is signified by physical growth and a mature male body, it signifies, more than this, the actions or choices of a young man, as well as the acceptance of a boy's manhood by older adult men. Therefore, specifically in South Africa, the rites of passage was emphasised as the transition from boyhood to manhood (cf. Morrell 2006: 16). After explaining that manhood does not only imply

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sexual maturity (e.g. ejaculation) but also the admittance of adult men that you are ready to be a man, Morrell (2006: 16) states: “In their desire to ‘become men’, and pressured by peers to claim this status, boys may mobilise their sexuality and power over girls to establish this claim”. Meth (1990: 24) affirms this by stating that masculinity is embedded in performance, which is evident in a man’s pursuit of status through his job and society, which is attained through good performance and competing with other men. Therefore, the need to achieve on a sexual level is not an exception to this rule. Meth (1990: 24) states that the importance of sexual performance is visible already in adolescents’ preoccupation with sexuality, and states that boys discover from very early on that their private feelings about anything related to sex and sexuality becomes public domain. Meth (1990: 24) states: “Just as much as men want to feel successful as sexual partners, they fear failure and incompetence, albeit amongst their peers. As a result men often exaggerate the extent of their sexual experience and knowledge”.

Morrell (2006: 17) states that what happens in modern times is that boys assert their manhood through their sexual endeavours, which means that young girls often become the victims of this ungoverned assertions. This phenomenon is not unique to South Africa, as a recent project in the US found that “...about one fifth of teenage males believe that impregnating a young woman would make them feel ‘more like a man’ (Thornberry, Smith and Howard 1997: 518). In Johannesburg similar findings were found in a study done by Anderson and Mhatre (2003), where one out of every fifth man admitted that they had forced a women to have sex with them, while an additional three per cent of the men stated that they would consider being sexually violent (cf. Morrell 2006: 170). It is clear why so many men are having sex at a very young age and subsequently fathering children who they are not mature enough to look after or care for, or even want to care for.

Furthermore, from research done in the United States, it was found that fathering among young, black working class boys are much higher compared to equivalent middle class boys. This might indicate that the performance of masculine identity depends more on available life prospects, than on sexual success with girls (cf. Morrell 2006: 17). This information then corresponds with the earlier statement that men, in a loss of power through a lack of financial resources and subsequent status in their community, might revere to violence and sexual promiscuity to make up for the loss in masculine identity.

This might explain why the co-researchers make such a distinction between their gender specific biological ‘uncontrollable’ urges towards sex with a beautiful girl/woman, while

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maintaining that they want the opposite for a wife, someone who respects her body and will not take part in adultery. It might be that they see their sexual endeavours as ultimately distinct from their relationship with a respectable woman, such as their mothers. The first is for the sake of maintaining their masculine identity and status; while the latter, in turn, is for the sake of their need for love, care and nurture, perhaps after their identity and status as a man have been established in their community. In other words, when they are freed from the pressure of proving their manhood, then only will they enter a marriage. This explains Manqoba's statement of wanting to get married when he is about thirty, and Kgotoso's assertion that he is still in the process of becoming a man. We can conclude, that for the co-researchers, being a 'real' man is different from being masculine, or proving manhood.

6.4.6 Men about the role of "Father"

Some children have fathers who live far away and send money or clothing

Some children have fathers who live nearby and visit regularly

Other children have fathers who raise them alone

Others have fathers who share home and caring duties with their mother

Others have fathers who look after them all the time,

So their mothers can work

Some children have fathers they stay with at weekends and in the holidays

Others have fathers who are in jail

Some children have fathers who live at home, but are rarely there

Others have foster fathers or step fathers

Some children have fathers who are too poor to provide for them

Some have an uncle or grandfather who fathers them

Some children have a father who is a child himself

And some children have no father figure

There are fathers who read bedtime stories to their children

And there are fathers who cannot read

There are fathers who love and care for their children

And there are fathers who neglect and abuse their children

Some fathers attend the birth and every milestone in their children's lives

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Others have never even met their teacher

Some fathers are ill, some commit crimes and some beat their children's mothers

Others work long hours in hard jobs to provide for their children

Some are confident in their parenting role and take great pride in it

And others are frightened of these responsibilities

Some fathers run away from their children

Others, desperate to see them, are prevented from doing so

Fatherhood is different in so many ways for so many children

But one thing is universal

What fathers do ... MATTERS TO CHILDREN"

(Barker and Barker 2004: 18)

In reference to the role of a real man as a father, Kgotoso mentioned President Jacob Zuma as an example, after the widespread news that he has fathered another illegitimate child. He states: "*Zuma as a man - is not nice when your dad is not stable as a child. Bread delivered to Zuma, but our people are starving*". This indicates that Zuma is not a stable father in the eyes of Kgotoso and that he only fends for himself and do not think of the rest of his 'children'.

Molimi stated that the only father figure he knows is his brother and that on the one hand he is scared to become like him, acknowledging the influence of such a role model in his life. He does state; however, that he is not aggressive, admitting his differences from his brother and indirectly stating "I am not him" (not a puppet at the mercy of a puppet master); he states that when he drinks he gets depressed and cries, but not aggressive like his brother. He sees the influence of his brother on him by the fact that he also drinks too much, and that scares him in becoming like his brother.

Kgotoso's brother states that he wants to be a father and a husband one day, but he admits that he must change first: "I need self-control first [and] maybe therapy". He states that he is on his way in becoming a good man, but not quite there as yet.

Everyone seems to agree that the characteristics of a father are someone who comforts his children, who gives unconditional love and in this way becomes the head of the family.

Kgotoso states that today's society makes it difficult for men to become good fathers and husbands, because of the trend that men cheat on their wives and abuse their women.

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He states that he does not see abuse as manly and he wants to love and protect his wife one day, but admits that this is not the common attitude in his community and the temptations provided by the world do not make it easy for a young boy to become a good man. Manqoba affirms this and states that it is not easy and sometimes not possible to be a good husband and father, as the world does not believe in God.

The two conversationalists I spoke to on 26 June 2010, stated that they were also orphaned and never knew their fathers. It was difficult for them to grow up without a father and hear other children spending time with their fathers. They miss someone to give them guidance in life and to tell them how to be a man, affirming Manqoba's impression that a father teaches his son how to be a man. The Sotho young man stated that living without a father in his opinion made men violent against women – if you had a role model to tell you that that was wrong; then you would not act on impulse.

In response to the question of why they think fathers do not take up their responsibilities, the Sotho and Zulu young men stated: "Because men do not want to take responsibility, they use culture as an excuse, men run away because they are scared and were not ready for the responsibility of being a father" (26 June 2010 Swartruggens, Rametsi). Poverty plays a role according to them, as men need to pay "damage" in the Zulu culture when impregnating a woman without being married to her – some men do not have this money and then cannot, according to culture, have any right to see his child. Also men do not have money to pay *Labola* in order to get married to women. Another factor is that these men never had fathers who role modelled being a father, so the cycle continues. According to these boys the lack of fatherhood is as a result of the lack of appropriate role models. However, they state very adamantly that men use this as an excuse; you do not have to have money to love your child (26 June 2010 Swartruggens, Rametsi).

During the activities of the David's Battle, God's Victory workbook (TOL camp 26-28 February 2010), the children had to write a letter to their fathers (Annexure 6): absent, deceased or still alive, or had to describe their relationship with their fathers. In Kgotoso and one of the Heartbeat co-researchers' letters, both describe how they miss the absence of their fathers and how it felt when the other children spoke about their fathers and what they do together. Manqoba emphasises the lack in a role model and feelings of rejection, while the Heartbeat child expresses his lack of nurture and care. Molimi, does not speak of his father at all, and wrote a letter of appreciation to his older brother,

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as the only male model he knows. Kgotoso also expresses ambivalent feelings in stating that although his father used to physical abuse him and his mother, he still feels the absence in his life, especially when other children spoke about their fathers. Mpho, on the other hand, was raised by his stepfather and expresses that his stepfather is more like a biological father to him, thereby acknowledging the fact that a father is not necessarily someone who is one's biological father. In all these narratives, the children unanimously express the void in their lives in not having a father.

We will now look at some of the effects found through research on children in not having a father figure or role model, and see if there really is an influence on their physical, emotional or psycho-social development as well as their relationships with the opposite sex.

Allen and Daly (2007: 12) found through research done by Furstenberg and Harris (1993) that adolescents who can strongly identify with their father are 80% less likely to go to jail and 75% less likely to become unwed parents. Furthermore, Allen and Daly (2007: 12) discovered through studies done by [13]Moore and Chase-Lansdale that the risk of becoming sexually active at an early age is greatly reduced by living in any type of married household; and that studies done by Flouri found that when a child experiences father involvement he/she is less likely to become socio-economically disadvantaged and experiencing homelessness. On the other hand, children who are raised without fathers are more likely to experience behavioural problems at school, such as an inability to pay attention, being disobedient, being expelled frequently or suspended, and also tend to have poor school attendance. They are also more likely to drop out of school, thereby forfeiting their opportunities in being educated, so that they could attain a good job. [14]Additionally, such children have also been found to have a greater chance in repeating a grade, less likely to complete high school, less likely to seek further

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[13] Studies done by Moore and Chase-Lansdale (2001) and Flouri (2005), discussed in Allen and Daly 2007: 12), mentioned in this text as secondary sources provide confirmation of validity of stated research findings.

[14] Research done by Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan (1997); Horn and Sylvester (2002); Mott, Kowaleski-Jones, and Mehaghan (1997); Dawson (1991); McLanahan and Sandefur (1994); Painter and Levine (2000); Nord and West (2001); and Krein and Beller (1988) discussed in Allen and Daly (2007: 12), listed here as secondary sources which provide confirmation of validity of related footnote research findings.

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education opportunities, and are more likely to not have a job as an adult, thereby having a likelihood of having poor labour relations (cf. Allen and Daly 2007: 12).

Furthermore, it has been found that an absence of a father figure also influences a child's moral development. [15]Hoffman found that father absence in the lives of boys may cause a lower score on several moral indexes which measures "... internal moral judgement, guilt following transgressions, the acceptance of blame, moral values and rule conformity" (cf. Allen and Daly 2007: 13). From studies done by Hetherington and Martin it seems that both boys and girls who have been raised without a father, have a lower ability in delaying gratification, thereby having poor impulse control over anger and sexual gratification, and they tend to have a weaker sense of what constitutes right and wrong behaviour (cf. Allen and Daly 2007: 13).

[16]Additionally, children who are raised in the absence of a father figure, seem to be more vulnerable for the development of emotional and psychosocial adjustment problems, by exhibiting a variety of internalising and externalising behaviours (cf. Allen and Daly 2007: 13). For example, boys who are raised in father absent homes are found to be more likely to feelings of unhappiness, sadness, depression and even being hyperactive; while both boys and girls tend to develop anxiety disorders and exhibit behavioural problems. [17]Some of these children also suffer from various psychological disorders and might even try to commit suicide (cf. Allen and Daly 2007: 13).

It seems that the toll, specifically on adolescents who are raised without a father, is greater than for younger children, as [18]these adolescents are found to be more likely to

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[15] Research done by Hoffman 1971 discussed in Allen and Daly (2007: 13), listed here as secondary sources which provide confirmation of validity of related footnote research findings.

[16] Research done by Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan (1997); Horn and Sylvester (2002); Kelly (2000) and Painter and Levine (2000) discussed in Allen and Daly (2007: 13), listed here as secondary sources which provide confirmation of validity of related footnote research findings.

[17] Research done by Kasen, Cohen, Brook and Hartmark (1996); Kandel, Rosenbaum and Chen (1994); Brent, Perper, Moritz, and Liotus (1995) discussed in Allen and Daly (2007: 13), listed here as secondary sources which provide confirmation of validity of related footnote research findings.

[18] Research done by Ellis et al. (2003); McLanahan and Sandefur (1994); Miller and Moore (1990); Metzler, Noell, Biglan, and Ary (1994); US Department of Health and Human Services (1988) and Painter and Levine (2000) discussed in Allen and Daly (2007: 15), listed here as secondary sources which provide confirmation of validity of related footnote research findings.

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be sexually active at an early age and to engage in sexual activities on a more frequent basis. Subsequently, they are more likely to become pregnant as a teenager or have illegitimate children as an adult (cf. Allen and Daly 2007: 15). Furstenberg and Weiss also found that early fatherhood during adolescence and early adulthood is more likely to occur when the boys or young men were not raised by their fathers. Similarly, young men are found to not be living with their children if they were themselves living in a home without a father (cf. Allen and Daly 2007: 15). Additionally, Feldman (1990: 88) states that when parental deprivation is severe, children and adolescents exhibit problems in behaviour control, such as being prone to addiction to drugs and alcohol; therefore, being vulnerable in developing a mood disorder.

When looking at the listed findings of developmental outcomes on children who were raised without fathers, it becomes important to acknowledge that parental activities and engagements, especially that of a father, occur within a complex context which also entails various other influences. A child's development is not only shaped by father involvement, but also qualitatively shaped by interactions with various other people, such as teachers, neighbours, peers, siblings and other significant people, such as the extended family. These, combined with other cultural and economic conditions, interact with each other in shaping a child's development in various domains. Subsequently, development is determined by a multiple of factors, and we should not ignore these factors by focussing only on the effects of or lack of father involvement. Therefore, it is very difficult to determine exactly what the effects are of an absence of father involvement, as we cannot look at the development of a child without considering all the possible influences and determinants (cf. Allen and Daly 2007: 27). Nevertheless, it is clear that the presence or the absence of a father, can, directly or indirectly, enhance or inhibit the development of a child. Furthermore, it is also stated that fathers function as an essential source of practical, financial and emotional support for mothers, which in turn enhances the relationship that a child has with his/her mother, thereby facilitating the healthy development of the child. It is important to note, especially in the economic circumstances that most families found themselves in, in South Africa, that fathers' social capital can greatly enhance a child's access to various opportunities, privileges and social networks, which provide a child with multitude of opportunities to develop into a healthy and responsible adult (cf. Allen and Daly 2007: 30). It seems then that the financial income a father can provide is not trivial to the child's development, even though it might be a great gender stereotype. When the economic status of a family is increased, stress is removed from the mother, thereby enabling her to be a more patient

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and caring mother. A father's financial contribution inevitably exposes the child to better educational opportunities, which increase the quality of a child's relationship with teachers and other authoritative people, and also the type of friends that he/she will make.

It is argued then, that even though a father might be highly involved with his children, because he is unemployed, he would prefer to forfeit this emotional relationship in the hopes of being able to better provide for his child financially, as he is aware of the opportunities available to a child when financially secure and stable. Note that when and if a mother can provide for the child's financial needs, then the situation is different and the father has the privilege of not carrying the burden as a provider; thus leaving him with opportunities to be more emotionally and psychologically involved with his children's lives. Therefore, it can be stated that the father's absence does not necessarily mean a lack of financial means for his children and his involvement does not necessarily refer to financial involvement.

Additionally, father involvement does not always guarantee healthy development. The fact of the matter is that many fathers are highly involved with the lives of their children, but not necessarily in a good manner. Studies done by [19]Jaffe, discussed in Allen and Daly (2007: 30), for example found that when a father is engaged with antisocial behaviour, the children also exhibit more behavioural problems, both at school and at home. Morrell (2006: 17-20) also provides several examples of where a father is physically present in the lives of his children, but often emotionally absent and abusive. He reports that this results in much harm, even more so as the absence of such a father. Therefore, one might wonder which is the worst: an absent father; or a present father who is abusive? Research done by [20]Friel, discussed in Allen and Daly (2007: 30), suggests that family context, family process, patterns of interaction, and the quality of various relationships, have more explanatory power regarding the healthy development of a child, than just the absence of a father in the home. In summary, Allen and Daly (2007: 30) argue that the impact of father absence moves in accordance to the following directives:

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[19] Research done by Jaffe (2003) discussed in Allen and Daly (2007: 30), mentioned in this text as a secondary source which provides confirmation of validity of related footnote research findings.

[20] Research done by Friel (2001) discussed in Allen and Daly (2007: 30), mentioned in this text as a secondary source which provides confirmation of validity of related footnote research findings.

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1) having no co-parent

2) experiencing economic loss/disadvantage

3) experiencing social isolation and disapproval

4) experiencing perceived/actual abandonment relating to psychological distress, and

5) perceived and experienced conflict between parents (cf. Allen and Daly 2007: 30).

They further argue that these mechanisms might be more powerful in creating deleterious effects on children, in combination with the absence of the father figure, than just father absence alone. It is; therefore, necessary to consider the multidimensionality of father involvement in relation to various variables within the context, such as other relationships and social class issues. Thus, the effects of father absence should be explored by considering the effects of its opposite, which is the effects of father presence (cf. Allen and Daly 2007: 30-31).

It is now important to consider how men see their role as a father and the concept of 'fatherhood'. Barker and Barker (2004: 17) state that the extent to which men see themselves as a father and the manner in which they define the roles and responsibilities of a father, depend very much on various socio-cultural factors such as, economic, social, political, cultural and religious factors. These factors will determine if men see a father as a nurturer, mentor, companion, disciplinarian or advocate and will influence if they are actively part of their children's lives. Additionally, these factors also determine a man's capacity to fulfil some of these roles effectively and frequently (cf. Brown and Barker 2004: 17). For example, in many African contexts, a father is not as much the biological parent of the children, but has much more to do with kinship ties. Polygamy, which is also accepted in many cultures, such as within the Zulu customs, complicates matters, as the performance of the father is often decided by who is married to the mother or the person who agrees to be 'the father' (cf. Morrell 2006: 13). Barker and Barker (2004: 17) furthermore state:

> Since none of these factors is static, fatherhood roles and fathers' conduct are not static, either, and the pace and direction of change depends on the nature and pace of the changes taking place in a particular context.

Therefore, it is clear that defining the concept of 'fatherhood' and the extent to which it is practiced, is very complex because of its multidimensionality. This concept is also subjectively dependent on a man's own experiences with his father; the origin of his family; or the way it came to be that he fathered a child; his relationships with past and

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current partners; his employment status; the quality of his marriage; and finally, his interpretations and experience with these conditions (cf. Brown and Barker 2004: 17). This variety in the definition of fatherhood and the expectations related to fatherhood can be seen in the narratives of the co-researchers; where they construct a fatherhood narrative from their own experience with their fathers, as well as their interactions with their context and the definitions they have derived from this context about what is expected of a father. The statements of Barker and Barker; however, help us to see that the fact that the co-researchers were not raised by their fathers, or were raised in a context which did not provide any male role model, will inevitably influence the construction of their idea of fatherhood. It is interesting to note; however, that they constructed a very healthy idea of what it means to be a father, contrary to what they observed in their context. It would be interesting to know if they will be able to conduct these narratives that they have constructed when they become fathers, as many of them acknowledge that it is not easy to be a good man, a good husband and a good father in their communities, as the community provides many temptations and very little guidance on how to fulfil these roles.

Moreover, Barker and Barker (2004: 24) explain that the kinship system of childcare and support has gradually been eroded in South Africa by several factors, such as migrating from rural areas to urban areas; more women who entered the workforce, either because of a necessity or because of the changing roles of women; and the effects of the HIV and Aids pandemic. These factors have largely contributed to fewer positive male role models in certain communities, and have been substituted by male models from the media, distant idealised figures or local power figures, such as drug 'dons' (cf. Brown and Barker 2004: 24). During this study replacement male role models were visible through the attitude, speech and dress of for example, Kgotoso and his brother, who are music 'hip-hop' stars in their community. They have incorporated a speech and an attitude which reflect the attitudes of the hip-hop starts in the entertainment industry; which reflect attitudes such as 'non-caring', bravado, and a 'coolness' which make them untouchable and a focus on the material gain of their present and future status. It is a very male dominant attitude which degrades women as 'sex objects' for their own gratification, combined with an attitude of all girls will do whatever they ask of them, as girls are drawn to such powerful and famous figures. It soon became clear through our discussions (TOL camp February: 2010) that this is a front, which gives them a persona which makes them stronger to challenge or even ignore experiences from the past.

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As a result of the abovementioned socio-economic changes, single-parent households, and more specifically female-headed households, are on the rise, which create an even bigger distance between the differing roles of a mother and a father respectively. Despite this, patriarchal structures prevail in various institutions, such as governance, the corporate and financial sectors, religious institutions and even in culturally ascribed family roles, despite various socio-economic challenges and differences. As a result, fatherhood is still defined as someone who provides, protects and disciplines; however, few fathers conduct even these narrowly defined roles. It has been found through numerous studies that domestic work and child rearing is the prerogative of the mother, while fathers should be responsible for the role of breadwinner. These definitions and descriptions of the role of the father persist in industrial cultures and into adolescence (cf. Lewis and Lamb 2004: 59-60).

Therefore, traditionally, the role of the father has been divided into two main responsibilities: Firstly, being an economic provider of the child's needs, and secondly, being a firm disciplinarian. Opposed to this, nurturing and caring for children were allocated as a mother's responsibility. Therefore, it is quite clear that the role of a father as a provider and disciplinarian fits more with the image of a masculine man who should be strong, tough and aggressive, with both other people and their own children (cf. Feldman 1990: 88). Feldman (1990: 88) also reports that children view their fathers and their roles also in the same way, and as much less nurturing than their mothers. Additionally, Feldman (1990: 88), referring to the findings of Biller, states that low father involvement, as well as traditional authoritarian and punitive fathering, can be a hindrance to the development of a child's self-esteem, frustration, tolerance, impulse control, cognitive functioning, and interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, children who are abandoned by their fathers experience this as rejection, while children with very strict and punitive fathers, experience condemnation. Both these reactions weaken the child's development of a healthy self-esteem, which in turn results in feelings of frustration and helplessness (cf. Feldman 1990: 88).

Thus, it might be argued that because the concept of 'nurturing' is still not a 'manly' concept, many men feel that they can in any case not provide for their family financially; therefore, they prefer to rather be absent from the family, as there is no other role to fulfil (cf. Brown and Barker 2004: 26).

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The present-day African father's identity is neither entirely traditional, nor entirely modern. His character is hybridised by a variety of indigenous and imported cultures and subsequent imperatives:

> It is a rich overlay of Arabic-Islamic cultural influences and Western-Christian intrusions that have been or are being superimposed on deep- rooted indigenous African cultural images, all, most or some of which are relevant to contemporary African fathers.
>
> (Brown and Barker 2004: 39)

This incorporation of various psychologies, roles and responsibilities, has reshaped the parental identity, status and position of both women and men, and many African men find it difficult to reposition themselves within such a paradigm. Furthermore, the low-income father, with an insecure and unstable employment future; with a partner who equates financial support with his relationship with his children, has little use for the concept of the 'new father' (cf. Brown and Barker 2004: 39). Even though women want change which would negotiate equitable load sharing, many women are just not in a financial or social position, within South Africa, to embrace such change. Men, on the other hand, also do not share this vision for change, possibly because of their privileged patriarch position in society, despite their lack of income. As we have seen before, money is equated with power; however, if finances are difficult to come by, men will find other ways of securing their masculine identity. A change in paradigm, which promotes equitable positions in society, will threaten the power positions of the masculine identity. It should be noted that "... the significance of fathers in the lives of children and the significance provided by children in the lives of their fathers should not be discounted as forces for change" (Brown and Barker 2004: 40). Therefore, such a change in paradigm will be beneficial for men, women and the children.

It has been found that a father's extra-familial social networks have little or even negative influences on his involvement with his children. Men also report that these social networks do not provide them with practical or moral support in becoming involved in the lives of their children (cf. Lewis and Lamb 2004: 48). In South Africa; however, where HIV and Aids is ravaging the population and the family structure as an institution, men are significantly challenged to become carers, not only for their biological children, but also for the orphans and external family members who have lost their parents. Therefore, for this to happen, the idea of fatherhood must be developed and elaborated on (cf. Bartlett and Vann 2004: 92).

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The influence of other male figures, such as sports coaches, youth club leaders, entertainment icons and other community leaders, on the development of boys' identity, should also not be discarded. It has been found that these figures can also exert an influence on how boys construct their ideas of being a male and a father, specifically in the absence of a biological father. In some cultures the traditional role and responsibility of a father is recognised and even honoured, while in many other cultures, specifically in the new sub-culture which is established in urbanised areas, the influence of the father is many times discounted (cf. Brown and Barker 2004: 29). Thus it might seem that fatherhood does not only imply biology and that a father is much more than the sum of both its biological and economical composition.

In understanding what it means to be a father, one must look at the advantages to the children in having a father, as well as the advantages to men in being a father. Lewis and Lamb (2004: 59-60) state that it seems as if fathers play an important role in mediating the relationships that children have with people in the outside world. Additionally, they found that the involvement of a father predicts positive relationships with people outside the family. Furthermore, [21]additional research also suggests that when fathers are involved with their children's lives, the children attain the ability to regulate their emotions better, and to solve conflict in a constructive manner. Therefore, it would seem as if both fathers and mothers influence their children's future ability to develop and maintain relationships through teaching and modelling various social skills (cf. Lewis and Lamb 2004: 59-60). It has also been found that the traditional father role obstructs the psychological development of a man; as the experience of nurturing, supporting and guiding their children provide men to develop their generative potential, thereby leaving them fulfilled. Many men report a void in their emotional lives if they did not have the opportunity to be part of their children's lives (cf. Feldman 1990: 88-89).

It is a widespread belief that a boy needs a father and this is understood to really indicate that a boy needs the man which fathered him. This might be because this view fits with a belief system "...which overestimates the influence of biological parents on their children, and underestimates other forces that shape a child" (Morrell 2006: 14). It is; therefore, argued that the focus should rather be on the need of all young children,

[21] Research done by MacDonald and Parke (1984), discussed in Lewis and Lamb (2004: 59-60), mentioned here as a secondary source which provides confirmation of validity of related footnote research findings.

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irrelevant of gender, for adult care and protection and a relationship of quality between these persons (cf. Morrell 2006: 14). Morrell (2006: 15) poses the question if a child needs his biological father, or just a man who fulfils the fatherhood role, and states that this is quite a controversial issue which specifically came to the foreground in the wake of HIV and Aids where many households lost biological parents due to acute illness and death. He affirms, that the focus is on love, care and a good role model who the child can identify with; irrelevant of this man's blood relations with the child (cf. Morrell 2006: 15). However, in the context of African culture and traditions, a child is left without any connections with the family or clan, and furthermore will not inherit from the father. This results in the undermining of a child's security, especially if seen in a patrilineal context (cf. Morrell 2006: 15). Therefore, it is not just a case of identity formation, but also of traditional honour and inheritance.

In looking at reasons why fathers do not accept their roles and responsibilities, Morrell (2006: 14) states that one prominent reason within South Africa is a lack of resources: "Poverty is the most important factor undermining the role of fatherhood and the involvement of fathers" (Morrell 2006: 20). [22]He states that because most African fathers consider their roles as providers, and are; therefore, unable to provide for their children, they choose to flee or deny the father role (cf. Morrell 2006: 20). If we look at this from the perspective of the children, we find that the crisis for them is not the fact that their fathers are not married to their mothers, but the fact that their fathers just desert them. As is found by a study done by Denis and Ntsimane (2006: 243), 62% of fathers abandon their children and nobody takes the place of the father role, at least not permanently: "There may be stepfathers of sorts – the mother's boyfriend of the day – but these rarely play a meaningful role in the lives of the children" (Denis and Ntsimane 2006: 238). In many cases, neither the children nor the caregivers of the children speak about their fathers, as is the case with Molimi from this study. Denis and Ntsimane (2006: 244) state that the mothers probably have some recollection of the fathers, but that they just keep silent, and the grandmothers report having no information regarding them. Therefore, the worst is not the absence, but the fact that these children do not have one memory to tell about their fathers; not one happy moment or even a tragic one. Finally, Denis and Ntsimane (2006: 247) state that overall the children in their study

[22] As found through research done by Coles (2002) and McAdoo and McAdoo (1995) discussed in Morrell 2006: 20.

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express the pain of not living with a father and sometimes not even knowing who their fathers are. They also state; however, that not all fathers of course desert their children, but that is still the exception, rather than the rule: "One wonders how boys who have been deprived of the presence of a father will ever learn how to become fathers themselves" (Denis and Ntsimane 2006: 247).

Feldman (1990: 90) furthermore states that another source of anxiety regarding fathering is the fear of failure, as many men are not too confident about their ability to be competent nurturers. He states that research found that many fathers, who are not too involved with the lives of their children, do not have much confidence in their ability as nurturers. Subsequently, this perception of incompetence results in a fear of humiliation, which in turn results in an avoidance of being a nurturing parent (cf. Feldman 1990: 90).

Additionally, other theorists suggest that a lack in being a nurturing father might stem from the importance of identifying with the father as a child, through which a boy develops a strong sense of self-cohesion and self-esteem. Most probably when they were children their fathers were also not involved in a caring and nurturing manner, thereby reinforcing the model of an uncaring and non-nurturing father. Therefore, behaving in ways which are different from this integrating model might stimulate some anxiety and fear from men (cf. Feldman 1990: 90). Some men might also experience anxiety which stems from traditional gender-role socialisation, where men are conditioned to fear being feminine or having any feminine qualities. In the same way they are conditioned to see childcare and nurture as a feminine activity, thereby inhibiting their involvement as it creates anxiety and a fear of ostracism (Feldman 1990: 89).

Some interpersonal barriers have also been suggested as another factor which might inhibit men to be more involved as fathers, which is the overt and covert expression of ambivalence by some mothers. Women want their husbands to be more involved, on the one hand; however, on the other hand they might also express anxiety, guilt and resentment about giving up the role of primary caregiver. In turn, these feelings may cause women to exclude the father, or to criticise the father's actions, which can undermine the father's efforts to be more involved with his children (cf. Feldman 1990: 91). In families where the mother and the father are divorced, much hostility and conflict exist in some of these relationships, which hinder the father's opportunities to become more involved. Many times such fathers would rather avoid such conflict with their ex-wives by withdrawing from the lives of their children (cf. Feldman 1990: 91). The same

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might happen in families where the mother and father were never married, but maintain a hostile relationship.

Outside of family dynamics, fathers report that pressures from work might inhibit their involvement with their children, as employers are generally not very willing to make adjustments to their work schedules or hours in order for fathers to take care of their children or additional responsibilities related to their children (cf. Feldman 1990: 91). Because a man is generally still primarily seen as the provider, a man is not in a position to negotiate such positions at work.

Morrell (2006: 21) states that one might ask '... how fatherhood can contribute to the construction of peace-loving, democratic, tolerant and respectful masculinities?" (Morrell 2006: 21). He states that many prevention programmes which focus on men as fathers, are promoting the idea that fathers spend time with their children, which places their emotional needs on the top of the list, as opposed to their material needs. It is also found that good fathers are also healthier if they have a good relationship with their children. However, in poor communities which have limited access to resources, the emphasis of these intervention programmes should be on how a father can take responsibility for his child, by supporting this child where he can and by being a good role model. This idea also fits more with the traditional African view of a father, as a man usually gets respect if he can provide (cf. Morrell 2006: 21). This idea is also visible through the way that the co-researchers see the primary role of a father and a husband. But it is interesting to note that the co-researchers also acknowledge the value of being a loving and caring husband and father, and they want to gain the respect of their wives and children in this way; rather than dominating by fear. It might be stated then, that there is still hope for a change in paradigm – the problem lies with the implementation of this paradigm.

Through their research, Denis and Ntsimane (2006: 247) conclude that amongst the poor, in South Africa, biological fathers play a marginal role in the lives of their children, thereby leaving single young mothers to raise the children. They also state that most of these fathers do not see any benefits in establishing a relationship with their children or the mothers of the children, especially if they do not have the resources to provide for the family. Therefore, many women have given up on the ideal of marriage, and some of them even feel that it is better to raise their children alone, than to live with an abusive and violent husband.

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Morrell (2006: 23) concludes that fatherhood is integral to the concept and construction of 'masculinity'; however, men in different contexts interpret the concept differently. For some men, fatherhood ends after a child has been conceived; for others fatherhood is understood as a responsibility in providing and protecting. This has sent many of these men to work at faraway places so that they can provide in their children's material needs, thereby forfeiting any emotional relationship and attachment with their children. Another idea of fatherhood is where children become part of the father's identity: fathers living their lives through their children.

Therefore, we can conclude from the above information that historical (socialisation) factors as well as material conditions, constrain the way in which people understand and exhibit the roles entailed to fatherhood, and that a great need exists to foster a description of masculinity which incorporates the idea of responsibility and loving care towards both their children and their wives or partners. Such an idea of masculinity should exclude the sense of power, especially the type of power that men have over women and children, so that both the fathers and the children's lives can be enriched with meaning, fulfilment and healthy development. Morrell (2006: 23) states:

> When men accept the fatherhood role, in whatever form, they also contribute to the broader goals of gender equity. Fatherhood should be a role that integrates men into families, rather than separating them from children, women and other men.

In conclusion, much of what was voiced by the co-researchers is evident in many of the above stated theories and arguments, and it became clear that the co-researchers have incorporated much of the traditional idea of fatherhood, such as a man should provide and discipline. However, a movement can be seen in their narratives which indicate that they also value the supposedly feminine qualities within the role of a father, such as caring and loving and guidance. This might be because they have first-hand experience of what it is like to be raised without this special care and love from a father, and that they have witnessed some of this in the fathers of their friends. We can safely state that their ideas of a father and husband as a provider is not so much consciously about the intent of power, but rather that it is a result of the knowledge communicated within their communities about the role of a father, and subsequently, a man. However, although all the boys stated that they want to be good fathers and good husbands; one wonders if this "want" is a strong enough motivator for mobilising change in their communities. Most of the boys stated that they are already engaging in exploitative sex; see

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themselves as not in control of their own sexual desires, and one boy might possibly already be a father. This boy does not seem keen to investigate this statement for truth. Most of the boys also see manhood as something for "older" men, something they are still becoming; however, they are already engaging in what might be called "adult" behaviour, without considering the consequences. One of the conversationalists; however, stated that he recently found out that he was a father, and although he is not interested in marrying the mother, he is already quite involved with the child and would like to stay involved as far as possible, as he stated: "*I want to give him what I did not have*" (26 June 2010 Swartruggens Rametsi).

6.4.7 Men and Violence

Most of the co-researchers in this study are of the opinion that real men do not abuse their wives and their children; as Kgotoso states: *"... society has a whole lot of cheat and abuse, for me personal, I do not see abuse as manly, believe in one person at a time, if you love her, you protect her*". However, it would seem that some of them have experienced abusive male figures in their lives or are very much aware of the rate of family abuse within their communities. Molimi, for instance, speaks of his brother who is abusive towards his girlfriend, and when he is intoxicated, he also abuses his little brother.

During an informal conversation with young adult orphaned boys, two of them stated that the lack of a father-figure or a good male role model might influence the fact that some men are abusive towards their women. They state that if they did not have someone who told them how to handle feelings of frustrations – or in their words, "*how to be a man", they would hit their girlfriends, because they don't know better*" (26 June 2010 Swartruggens). This statement of course is debatable, but it is interesting to note how boys view themselves many times as not being in control of their behaviour. The same theme featured during the theme of sexual temptations, where these boys attributed their lack of self-discipline to their inherent, almost 'animalistic' biological nature. Here we have an idea of an *external locus of control,* which is a continuous theme throughout all discussions with the boys. If someone has an external locus of control, it means that they believe their lives are determined mainly by sources outside themselves, such as fate, chance, luck or powerful others (cf. Gershaw 1989: www.virgil.azwestern.edu). Rotter postulated that there is a link between one's behaviour and reinforces. If one sees a strong link between one's behaviour and reinforces, one tends to have an internal locus of control as one then believes that one's own behaviour and efforts can

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result in rewards. If one does not see a link between one's behaviour and reinforces, one tends to live by an external locus of control, which then indicates that one does not believe that one's own behaviour and efforts can result in reward or punishment. Therefore, locus of control indicates the place where a person attributes control over one's own life and behaviour (cf. Locus of control: www.wilderdom.com).

This corresponds to the African worldview which also attributes many events, good or bad, to the making of the ancestors, angry neighbours who 'bewitch' or even God who punishes (cf.van Dyk 2005: 116-117). Therefore, the co-researchers' tendency to understand events and experiences in their lives as having an external locus of control, might have its roots from the African worldview. This phenomenon is discussed in the next chapter.

Therefore, although the co-researchers state that violence of men towards women is not acceptable, it would seem that they also see this as something out of their control, as they also state that life makes it difficult to be a good man, perhaps referring to various temptations inherent in their specific communities. Ambivalently, all the co-researchers stated that having control and self-discipline, is a character if being manly. One wonders if this is only a theoretical statement for them, but something which is very difficult to practice, as the men they see in their communities are men who do not practice control over their emotions and anger (domestic abuse), and over their sexual urges (abuse and rape). It is to be wondered if these boys have ever seen a 'good' man, as described by themselves? It is apparent that they know what a 'bad' man is, and that a 'good' man is the opposite of a bad man, but not one participant has mentioned one role model in terms of their criteria of being a 'good' man.

Barker and Barker (2004: 22) attribute violent and criminal behaviour in many developing countries to the lack of education and employment of many young men; stating that these men often see this as the only option to survive and way of being in their world. This outlook on life then impacts on family safety and income. Furthermore, they found in their studies that violent behaviour is often associated with these young men's version of manhood and masculinity (cf. Barker and Barker 2004: 23); therefore, it would seem that violent behaviour towards women might be a result of masculine socialisation where men see it as the man's role to be violent towards people who they consider 'under' them in terms of power ranks. This includes both women and children, and in some cases boys and young men.

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Barker and Barker (2004: 23) also found several protective factors against delinquent behaviour, such as:

- Being competent is a specific skill or ability or being connected with a meaningful social institution;
- Being part of a male peer group who reinforces non-violent masculine behaviour;
- Maintaining a close, supportive relationship with positive male role models who reinforce alternative ideas of manhood and masculinity and who provide connections to relevant resources;
- Developing a meaningful relationship with a partner and finding meaning and purpose in being a father and a husband;
- Developing healthy coping strategies and ways of controlling anger.

From the above it is quite clear that a positive male role model and a good supportive system can indeed change the tendency to be violent towards women and children, and that violent behaviour is indeed constructed and reinforced by one's social group and peers.

6.4.8 Men and Work

It seems from some of the answers the co-researchers gave through the activities of the "David's battle, God's victory" manual, that the type of work a man does, does reflect his sense of masculinity or manhood. One co-researcher stated that "...our society measures men by the job they do", while Kgotoso on the other hand stated that he does not really feel that a job makes a man. However, from Kgotoso's responses with regards to the idea of masculinity, he made it very clear that for him a man has money. This might indicate that the manner in which money is attained does not matter to him. Kgotoso and his twin brother are very aware of the image that they portray in being 'hip-hop' artists. It would seem; however, that this image is not connected to their masculinity, but rather to the status they attain in being 'celebrities'. It is however clear, that whatever job a man has, it must be higher in rank than that of a woman, according to one co-researcher. Therefore, although the type of job does not necessarily matter it must contain two essential elements thereby enhancing the concept of masculinity: Firstly, it should pay well, and secondly, if married or in a relationship, it should be a better position than that of the relevant woman. Thus, the ideas of power and money,

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and power and position strongly surface in the gender related narratives of the co-researchers.

Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (2004: 248-249) affirm this notion by stating that historically, men's identity was linked to their work, and if this work becomes unstable, unfulfilling, uncertain or nonexistent, men tend to lose their sense of satisfaction and sense of self, as a man. They have also found that if a man must now take up a position which was formerly allocated only for women, they believe that their status will be reduced to being an "inadequate woman" (cf. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (2004: 248-249). Additionally, research suggests that there is a link between men's role confusion and their assumption of alcohol, increased violence against women, increased risk-taking behaviours, increased suicidal behaviour and a strong sense of homophobia (Barker and Barker 2004: 36). Thus it would seem that a man's position in the workplace inevitably influences his gender identity and subsequent sense of masculinity.

Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (2004: 248-249) postulate an interesting phenomenon of today's so-called 'new men' which refers to the manner in which men construct their gender identities amidst a loss of job opportunities. They state that as men's traditional roles and resources are decreasing, they become increasingly embodied, meaning that they have a grown interest in 'dressing up' and using various forms of bodily adornment, such as piercings. This phenomenon Foucault (1988: 88) refers to as the 'technologies of the self'. Foucault (1988: 88) states:

> Technologies of the self-permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a number of operations on their bodies and souls, thought, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection and immorality.

Therefore, Foucault implies that technologies of the self are used to construct a specific identity. In other words, technologies of the self are means by which people construct their identities. [23]McRobbie in turn states that many young people, especially young men, play around with conventional images of masculinity and femininity, being homosexual or heterosexual, or being black or white, with the goal of retaining control over their lives, within a world which does not offer them many other opportunities anymore (cf. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2004: 248-249). Stainton Rogers

[23] McRobbie, A 1994. Postmodernism and popular culture. London: Routledge.

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and Stainton Rogers (2004: 248-249) in referring to McRobbie's theory, state the following:

> One of the most noticeable trends in young men's lives has been the loss of traditional job opportunities in manufacturing. Jobs in heavy industry have about halved over the past 50 or so years. Together with the rise in part-time and insecure work, and the rapid entry of women into what were traditionally 'men's jobs', young men, especially those without qualifications – are finding it harder and harder to get the kinds of jobs that would allow them to take on the traditional role of the breadwinner .... [G]iven that this life opportunity is not available to large numbers of young men, then where else are they to find any sense of identity?

Furthermore Pini (1997: 163) argues that technologies of the self, which also include an increase of interest in music and dance, assist people in managing both their bodies and their self-images. Therefore, these 'new men', amidst the reduction of job prospects and subsequent long-term planning, now prefers immediate bodily pleasure, over far-sightedness.

This is an interesting phenomenon which is quite clear not only in the way that the co-researchers' dress, but also in the vernacular of their everyday conversations. Kgotoso and his twin brother, both deeply engrained in the hip-hop music industry, do not only dress the part (both have big diamond earrings, they wear sunglasses even in a room, and specific hip-hop clothes) but also speak in a different way. They would, for example, refer to themselves and their friends as 'niggers', which was always seen as a derogative way to speak about a black person, specifically in the United States. This term is very popular under the African American hip-hop artists. These two boys are also very infatuated with their image and they want to be identified as the 'cool' boys (they call each other 'Gold' and 'Platinum'). Therefore, it would seem that they have found some sense of identity in identifying with this particular group – not only because they like music and because they are quite good in writing and performing their music – but also because they have found some comfort in this type of embodiment. Moreover, it would seem that this image also makes them less vulnerable against masculine expectations and responsibilities – they are indeed untouchable.

Both Molimi and Manqoba also state that they are DJs and want to become famous DJs. Molimi stated that he finds comfort in his music, as if he can escape life's sorrows when he plays music. The same idea is maintained by Kgotoso and his brother. Therefore, music and the attitude and image that comes with it, help the boys to escape from some of the responsibilities entailed within their conception of masculinity and manhood.

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6.4.9 Men and facing problems or taking responsibility

Throughout the discussion which emerged from the activities of the "David's battle, God's victory" manual, it became clear that taking responsibility and facing one's mistakes and challenges is inherent in the concept of masculinity and manhood, for all the co-researchers. Kgotoso's brother states that if a man has done something wrong, he must be punished like David was punished. He states that "*punishment makes you stronger*" (TOL camp 27 February 2010). Reversely, an irresponsible man is someone who does not have control over his own behaviour, such as anger and sexual temptations. Likewise, Manqoba states that for him a 'bad' man is a man who is known to be "*weak, violent and someone who is not honest*", or someone who has "no self-discipline and no self-control, leading others to do bad things". In this regard, Kgotoso stated that he is still becoming a man, as he has no control and self-discipline with regards to his sexual desires, and is; therefore, not being responsible. In reading how David turns to God when he faces a problem, the co-researchers stated that it is good for a man to do that; however, in their community men are not in the habit of bringing their problems to God as they will be ridiculed by their peers for doing that. They state that such a man is seen as weak by their community.

It seemed through the course of the discussions that the co-researchers became aware of their own mistakes and temptations by looking at what David did to Bathsheba and Uriah, and that this narrative encouraged them to talk about it. Everyone acknowledged that David had done wrong, and what he has done is not manly. However, once again, they stated that the world provides many temptations and that it is not easy to live a good life. It was interesting to note that they also saw Bathsheba as a 'bad' woman for committing adultery, but at the same time they admitted that she might not have had a choice as David was a powerful man; thereby acknowledging the power of position and money, especially in controlling women. Furthermore, after reading what Bathsheba did to ensure Solomon's position on the throne, everyone stated that she was a good and a brave woman for looking out for her son and that that is to be expected of a good mother. It seemed; therefore, as if the co-researchers have much respect for a woman in doing whatever she can to look after her children, but more specifically after her son(s), perhaps because they could identify with that narrative. Even after reading the narrative about David, Bathsheba and Uriah, the co-researchers 'forgave' David, because he admitted his wrongdoings and took the punishment that came his way; perhaps because for them, maintaining the different components which collectively refer to an idea of masculinity, is more important than the result thereof. For example,

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although a man is not a man if he committed adultery or hit his wife (according to the co-researchers), the fact that he repents and takes the punishment which comes his way, as 'a man', or differently stated that he takes *responsibility* for his actions, overrides his foregoing offences, because that is what a real man does. This idea might also be evident in the way that Molimi views his abusive and alcoholic brother as a good manly role model, despite his apparent shortcomings, because he did in effect 'admit' his mistake by paying for Molimi's rent after he ran away. Similarly, Kgotoso and his brother wrote that their father was also abusive towards their mother, but that they would nevertheless have preferred him to be alive so that he could teach them how to be men. Therefore, they ambivalently state that a real man is not violent, but that their father would have been able to teach them how to be real men, irrelevant of the fact that he was abusive. One wonders then if their responses about abusive men were a case of giving the right answers, or really believing in their assertions. In explaining this ambivalence, one might state that Molimi has experienced abuse himself and the feelings which accompanied this experience might be a strong enough reinforcement for him to not be violent himself, and that his brother is really the only male figure in his life – someone who genuinely cares about Molimi. Therefore, Molimi can accept his faults, because the brother's care of Molimi outranks the pain he has caused, especially because there is no one else in Molimi's life who care about him. In Manqoba's situation, he has two sisters which he cares about and he already sees himself as their protector; the man in the house. Subsequently, he is very protective of them and will not allow anyone to abuse them. Both Molimi and Manqoba emphasise the role of a man in being responsible for protecting his family and that a man must have self-control and self-discipline. Kgotoso and his brother, on the other hand, do not have any sisters, and were themselves not abused, although they have witnessed the abuse of their beloved mother by their father. Moreover, Kgotoso stated that he will not protect just anyone, and both Kgotoso and his brother were more inclined to seeing women as sexual objects; they were more focussed on their own needs and satisfaction of these needs, despite the negative consequences that a woman might experience because of this; and they were much more focussed on a man's right to earn more money so that the man can retain his power over *his* woman. Additionally, they tended to describe a 'real' man according to his material status and role in his house, whereas Molimi and Manqoba placed more emphasis on protection, responsibility and other inherent qualities of a man. Therefore, it would make sense that Kgotoso and his brother did not see the link between their abusive father and their description of a good man.

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Furthermore, the co-researchers stated that responsibility is especially important when it comes to one's family. They were all in agreement that a man is responsible for the protection of his family and providing for the family's financial needs, but in being responsible, they want respect from their family in turn. Therefore, the performance of taking such responsibility is conditional on the return of respect. The concepts of respect, self-respect and respect from others seem to be very important for the co-researchers as an identifying and acknowledging character of a 'real' man. Most of the co-researchers stated that they want respect from their wives and children, and that a good man respects himself. It does not seem if the co-researchers' concept of 'respect' is a reciprocal or earned action, meaning that to have respect, one must earn respect and also give respect back to other people. Instead it would seem that respect, for the co-researchers, is the product of being a real man, where the defining characters of a real man is the means to the end, of deserving respect.

6.5 The personal armour of battle – identity

The personal armour of battle refers to the 'covering' which functions as protection during battle; therefore, metaphorically referring to those characteristics incorporated into the narrative of the self which helps the co-researchers construct a narrative which will help them to understand and make sense of their experiences, and additionally assists in the creation of a future narrative, with this constructed self as the primary actor of this narrative. The incorporation of these characteristics also acts as a protective shield against attacks and challenges experienced, as to maintain the coherence of the constructed narrative.

This personal armour is known as an identity – an idea of oneself and how and where one fits into the world. Many theorists refer to this developmental aspect as an ego identity, which is an important developmental event of the personality, which often occurs during late adolescence. This development of an identity refers to the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood and involves the incorporation and integration of various skills, beliefs and identifications collected as child, into a more coherent whole. This collection of various items which makes up the identity, provides a person with a sense of continuity with his/her past, as well as direction for the future (cf. Marcia 1993: 3). Therefore, one's identity does indeed function as personal armour; those things which protect one from the blows of the past, while these blows simultaneously also structure the formation of the identity, which in turn structures the creation of a

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future narrative of the self. We will now be looking at how this identity influences the construction of gender related narratives.

6.5.1.Identity formation

Marcia (1993: 3-5) explains that the concept of identity can be considered as existing in three different aspects. The first is the *structural* aspect, which refers to psychodynamic processes and the balancing effect that the formation of an identity has on these processes. The second is the *phenomenological* aspect, which in turn refers to the personal experience of having or not having an identity as well as the experience of a person's specific and particular identity and the process of forming such an identity. The final aspect, which is the behavioural aspect, refers to those components of the identity which can be observed by oneself and others (Marcia 1993: 3-5). By looking at these different aspects of identity formation, awareness is created regarding a concept which is not directly observable with the use of empiricism, but nevertheless observable through almost all behavioural, verbal and non-verbal aspects of being in the world. Although Marcia's theory might build much on theories of the psychodynamic, we, as social constructionists, must also be aware of how something other than directly observable behaviour can also be influenced and constructed by various social processes. Some of these social processes, which are important in the development of such an identity, are then the nuclear family, one's peers and the specific cultural context of an individual.

In the development of an identity we turn to the theory postulated by Erik Erikson (1950/ 1963), which introduced a psychosocial developmental model of identity development. Although many theories have been postulated for the development and formation of an identity, Erikson's theory has been chosen for this study as he is one of the few theorists who consider environmental and social factors in the development of an identity, and does; therefore, not solely focus on psychic and internal processes of an individual. As social constructionists who assume that much of who we are and how we think is constructed by social influences; we cannot accept such a one sided view of psychological development, as we cannot state that an individual develops in a vacuum or free from outside influences. Although Erikson might also hold many views of the psychodynamic school of thought, which has its roots in the modernistic worldview, we have to acknowledge the influences of such theories on the development of postmodern psychological theories, and that as such, very few plausible theories regarding the

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development of an identity have been developed to replace such theories. Therefore, I (the researcher) call for an interdisciplinary dialogue between a postfoundational notion of Practical Theology and the psychodynamic developmental theory of Erik Erikson in reaching a better understanding of the formation and development of an ego identity, in the absence of new, postmodern theories regarding the subject at hand. Although Erikson (1950) used the stages of psychosexual development as posited by Sigmund Freud, he modified it and expanded on Freud's theory placing much more emphasis on the social context wherein development takes place. By doing this he was also the first who offered a life-span theory of development which covers the entire life cycle; from infancy to old age. What makes Erikson's theory so much different than other psychodynamic developmental theories is the fact that he was much more concerned with the social origins of the developmental stages, which makes his theory a great contribution to the psychosocial developmental theory, as opposed to a psychosexual theory of development as proposed by Freud and Neo-Freudian theorists. Erikson's theory explains how identity is acquired and explored specifically during the stage of adolescence. He also states that the quality characteristics of identity may differ from culture to culture; however, the way in which an identity is formed is much the same in all cultures. Furthermore, Erikson states that a true sense of identity can only be developed when a psychological connection between childhood and adulthood is made. This connection is strengthened during childhood where a child receives much recognition for his achievements and accomplishments (cf. Erikson's theory of Identity Development: www.aui.ma). Therefore, a healthy identity can only be developed when psychological growth occurs. Erikson's psychosocial model of development; therefore, maintains that psychological growth occurs as a result of conflict experienced during the different stages of human development (cf. Balk 1995: 21). Erikson posited eight such stages where each stage reaches a crucial point during a specific chronological age (cf. Marcia 1993: 5). Erikson maintains, furthermore, that the source for such conflict has its roots in the biological, in the human body and the changes it undergoes; where different social demands act as triggers which shape the form in which conflict is exhibited, which in turn then calls for psychosocial adjustment made by a human (Balk 1995: 21). In such a way psychological growth occurs. As Balk (1995: 21) states: "… the model posits psychosocial conflict as the impetus for fundamental human development".

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[24]Therefore, to successfully function within society a person must master all of these eight stages and successfully resolve the conflict which occurs in these stages. If one does in fact resolve these conflicts successfully, one would be enabled to take advantage of many opportunities, while poor resolution of a specific crisis might restrict a person to enact future goals and aspirations (cf. Balk 1995: 22). A crisis, in turn, in Erikson's view, refers to a critical point in one's development where one is provided with an opportunity to either grow or refuse to grow. Therefore, the resolution or the lack of resolution will either result in gaining a new psychosocial strength or stagnating in a specific psychological stage (cf. Balk 1995: 22).

This study is specifically interested in the crises and conflicts experienced within adolescence and will; therefore, take a closer look at these stages, starting from middle childhood as this stage precedes adolescence. During middle childhood a child must learn to adapt to the culture of a school, and must face the crises of applying their minds to learning and their skills to produce various things. Erikson calls these crises the between industry and inferiority, which means that if the child resolves the crises, he/she will gain the strength of competence. However, if the child does not resolve the crises, he/she will mostly be inactive and miss opportunities for further growth (cf. Balk 1995: 22).

Adolescence is a very important stage of identity development for Erikson, as he states that the formation of identity reaches its peak and will determine the resolution of future identity crises. The biggest danger that the adolescent is presented with is the danger of making a commitment too soon on the one hand, while on the other taking too long in making a decision. Erikson (1961: 11) states:

> The challenge in the person's life is to achieve fidelity in one's commitments while retaining diversity in one's approach. Unless diversity and fidelity are balanced, the person becomes the victim of narrow constraints (no diversity) or of 'an empty relativism' (no fidelity).

Additionally, the adolescent is too preoccupied with his/her appearance to others, than self-evaluation, which can hinder psychological growth. This, combined with the possible challenge of applying skills and roles to an available occupation, makes the adolescent vulnerable indeed (cf. Balk 1995: 23). Therefore, the integration which takes

[24] Erikson 1963, 1968, 1982; Erikson et al. 1986

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place in the form of the ego identity, specifically during adolescence, is the accumulation of the ego's ability to integrate the various identifications with the variations of the libido, with the aptitudes which developed from talent and with the opportunities which are offered through social roles and social interaction (cf. Erikson 1963: 261). Therefore, the ego identity develops from the adolescent's confidence that there is a link and continuity between his/her likeness from the past which is matched with his/her present likeness which has meaning for others and which is visible and applicable in a future career (cf. Erikson 1963: 261-262). This leads to the adolescent's desire of imaginative guidance, which implies that he/she trusts in both his/her peers and parents or other significant adults, to provide some goal which he/she can work towards. This desire for imaginative guidance also results in a resistance to narrow or impractical ideas (cf. Balk 1995: 23), which in turn eludes the boundaries of opportunities. Thus, the biggest threat facing an adolescent is the inability to settle in an occupation or career path which captures his/her imagination. This lack can result in role confusion (cf. Balk 1995: 24).

Erikson speaks of the adolescent being in a stage of moratorium, which means that the individual is in a transition from no sense of identity, or from a bestowed to a constructed identity (cf. Marcia 1993: 7). Essentially this means that the adolescent will experience a delay (or moratorium) between childhood and adulthood, where he/she becomes attracted to new ideas, experience a heightened desire in obtaining peer approval and belonging to a specific group or cause so that he/she can identify with what is good or evil. Therefore, during this moratorium stage the adolescent will experiment with new guises, new commitments and new relationships with the primary aim of developing a unique and specific identity (cf. Balk 1995: 24). It is clear then that for Erikson, the adolescent experiences a heightened sense of purpose and interest in life, which is a natural phenomenon for the adolescent. This stands in strong opposition towards Sigmund and Anna Freud who essentially saw adolescence as a "… time of turmoil and urgent psychopathology" (Balk 1995: 24).

Although the formation of an identity is a life-long task and involves the resolution of many crises throughout the life cycle, this formation reaches its peak during adolescence. Therefore, in essence, the primary crisis which an adolescent comes to face is that of self-discovery. The result of self-discovery is either the clear formation of an identity, or the malformation of an identity, which leads to a vague sense of the self. Therefore, the adolescent might experience this development of an identity with tension, because of the fact that the lack of development might result in failure. This process of

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self-discovery involves the facing of many options and; therefore, many choices which need to be made. In essence, making choices involves the renouncing of many possible selves (cf. Balk 1995: 131), because an identity must consist of consistent characteristics, and not many opposing ones which will result in confusion and a vague identity.

Thus, the adolescent faces two dangers in the formation of an identity: the first is the danger of choosing a career path too soon, perhaps because of the approval of other significant people, instead of basing such a choice on his/her needs and desires. This danger or pitfall is called 'identity foreclosure' and entails the adolescent to not experiment with various possible roles and results in not gaining enough experience which is needed to make a responsible and personal commitment to the real self (cf. Balk 1995: 132). The second danger is that of avoidance – where the adolescent is not motivated to experiment and; therefore, also not motivated to make a decision or a choice. This danger is called 'identity confusion' and involves the lack in making choices because the adolescent is not motivated to make commitments. Erikson states that this type of adolescent is generally self-centred, emotionally immature and lacks the development of true friendships (cf. Balk 1995: 132). Therefore, Erikson states that ideally the adolescent must experience a psychological moratorium, where he/she is allowed enough time to explore possible future career roles, without too much pressure from significant others to have too many responsibilities. In this case the moratorium will enable the adolescent to explore various options which will result in the formation of a fulfilling and satisfactory identity, which will provide the adolescent with a sense of purpose and a sense of continuity, which Erikson calls "continuity fidelity'. Continuity fidelity involves being faithful to one's past, present and future (cf. Balk 1995: 132). If and when an adolescent succeeded in forming a healthy identity, he/she will have a clear sense of self, will feel confident about their values, will be independent and will be able to develop and maintain intimate relationships with others. Additionally, they would have gained skills which will help them to resolve the next crisis in their development, which is the crisis over intimacy with others versus isolation from others (cf. Balk 1995: 132). Therefore, one can argue that if an adolescent has succeeded in forming a clear and healthy identity, and if they then gain certain skills to resolve the next crisis of intimacy versus isolation, an adolescent, such as the co-researchers of this study, might be more equipped to be better fathers and husbands than their peers who have not formed a clear identity, as they would be able to maintain intimate relationships which will not threaten their sense of selves. One can also state that Manqoba who finds it

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difficult to settle on a career path, might be in the stage of moratorium which indicates that he is in the transition of having no clear identity, to having a conferred or constructed identity. This might explain why Manqoba cannot see himself committed to an intimate relationship before the age of 30, which he sees as the turning point from childhood to adulthood.

It should be noted, however, that identity formation is not a result of resolving a crisis specific to adolescence only, but is indeed a lifelong task which involves meeting crises and making commitments (cf. Balk 1995: 131). Balk (1995: 22) states: "Each age of man is a successive step in a hierarchical progression and each age carries with it the potential for identity development or stagnation …". Therefore, a person's choice of resolving a crisis will lead to the accumulation of capabilities which will eventually contribute to the ever-new conformation of the identity, or personality (cf. Erikson 1968: 96). If a person does succeed in resolving all eight crises at the end of his/her life, he/she would have gained various strengths such as "…hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care and wisdom" (Balk 1995: 22).

Another important aspect in the formation of a clear and healthy identity is the involvement of proper and caring support structures, such as that of a parent. Balk (1995: 139) found that those adolescents who show a clear achievement of an identity, or those who found themselves in the stage of moratorium, reported that their parents exert less control over them and frequently encourage them to be independent. On the other hand, adolescents who had no firm identity stated that their parents tend to utilise inconsistent child-rearing practices and offer praise and discipline unfairly. Those adolescents who tend to have conferred identities (foreclosed) in turn reported that their parents do not encourage independence and many times exert much more control over them than the parents of achieved or moratorium adolescents (cf. Balk 1995: 139). Therefore, we can conclude that it might seem that parenting styles and support structures do have an influence on the formation of an identity, and that identity formation seems to occur within a specific social environment, preferably a supportive social environment, and not in isolation from one's immediate family.

If this information is then used to understand the identity development of the co-researchers of this study, it seems that a lack in proper support systems might have had an influence on a clear identity formation. In the case of Manqoba, who did not have any support from his father, it might be understandable then why he is confused about his career identity and his future aspirations. It is also clear that most of the co-

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researchers seem to be immature in relation to their future identities. Kgotoso states that he is still becoming a man and experiences much ambivalence in his views of masculinity and the masculine characteristics he exhibits in reality. The same goes for Molimi, who is very mature in his views of a good man, but finds it difficult to be that good man; however, Molimi does seem to have a clear career identity, which might be because of the support he received from his mother and his brother. It is also quite clear that the development of the co-researchers' identities up and to this point in their lives, has a great influence on the construction of their future narratives and the way that their current narratives are exhibited.

6.5.2. Gender and Identity

Another important facet of identity is that of 'gender'. The created gender identity will ultimately influence much of how one's identity is exhibited in relation to one's relationships with various genders as well as one's expectations for oneself in the future. As we have seen earlier, the concept of masculinity is much integrated in one's sense and experience of one's own gender and of how one thinks one should behave because of the social expectation relevant to being either 'male' or 'female'. [25]Gilligan has found some differences in the manner in which males and females make commitments. Making commitments, as we have seen, is important in the formation of an identity. Gilligan states that it seems that males must first establish independence and personal achievement, whereas females must first establish emotional bonds in their interpersonal attachment to significant people (cf. Balk 1995: 147). Thus, it can be concluded that if a boy does not experience a sense of independence and a sense of achievement somewhere in his life, he is not capable of making any commitments which will ultimately contribute to the formation of a stable identity. This might explain why Manqoba finds it difficult to make a commitment when he feels that he has failed in his goals thus far. On the other hand, Kgotoso and his brother have already achieved a sense of achievement and independence through their music careers and aspirations; where Molimi also feels that he has achieved to further his studies and look after himself, thereby becoming independent. However, in the case of Molimi and Kgotoso it seems that their constructed identities do not conform to their exhibited behaviour, thereby

[25] Gilligan (1982, 1986)

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creating a gap between 'who they are' and 'who they want to be', specifically pertaining to their roles as future fathers and husbands.

Therefore, it might be stated that much more than just the above feelings of achievement and independence contribute to an exhibited gender identity. Balk (1995: 59) explains that social rules and cultural patterns have a much more pervasive influence in the exhibition of gender identity, especially during puberty. We refer to these pressures of society and culture as gender-related role expectations, where gender intensification refers to the differences in gender roles, especially during adolescence. It is true that biology promotes differences in sexual behaviour; however, most researchers agree that social pressures enforce and shape gender role differences. As Balk (1995: 22) states: "... sex is determined by biology, whereas gender is a social construct ..." Therefore, it would seem that certain concepts such as self-image, self-motivation and achievement are influenced and shaped by gender role expectations (cf. Balk 1995: 59), irrelevant of an identity which has already been formed. Thus we might conclude that although achievement and independence are needed before commitments can be made for male adolescents, that this formation of the identity develops and manifests itself irrelevant of and separate from the gender identity which develops because of social pressures and conformance, and that these two might exist separate from each other, with two separate functions.

It has been widely known that the family is the most important context for the development and intensification of a gender identity; however, the parent-child relationship tends to change remarkably with the onset of puberty, where conflict is heightened and emotional distances are increased (cf. Balk 1995: 61). This might be because of the heightened importance and influence of the peers and; therefore, social expectations. Additionally, it has been found that in low socioeconomic households the emphasis on sex-typed expectations is very high (cf. Balk 1995: 61).

This differentiation between an ego identity and a gender identity might explain why the co-researchers exhibit a different form of identity than the one they verbalise. Perhaps the ego identity acts as an internal locus of control for behaviour which is seen as important for adult, career and family life; while the gender identity which is mostly constructed and intensified by social expectations acts as guise for conforming to these expectations, although it might not be that much internalised within the ego identity. Therefore, gender identity almost becomes functional and performable, but not directional.

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6.5.3. Society and Culture and Identity

A final aspect of identity which must be considered is that of a social or cultural identity. Developmental psychology has focussed specifically on how culture and society influence a person's development and how other agents, other than the person him/herself, are co-participants in a person's path of development (cf. Schachter 2008: 451), including identity development. Similarly, Adams and Marshall state that personal development as well as identity formation is the product of a dialectical process which involves both processes of differentiation and integration. Here integration refers to the process whereby an individual is connected, joined and acknowledged by a society, which will ultimately benefit both the individual and the society at large (cf. Schachter 2008: 452). Therefore, the process of developing a career identity, for example, is for the benefit of both.

Schachter (2008: 453) agrees that a distinction between ego identity and personal and social identities exist, as do the distinction between identity structure and identity content. However, he states that in real life they all are interdependent on each other. For example, an ego identity might take different forms within different social and historical contexts. In the same way different social identities might need different ego identities to maintain a specific social identity. Thus, in essence Schachter (2008: 453) concludes that both the ego and the social identity is embedded in context and essentially co-constructed. Schachter (2008: 453) is; therefore, arguing that although the adolescent might think that he/she is creating a personal identity, it might be true that the individual is creating an identity from available templates which are partly pre-given and pre-imposed by "… other goal-directed individuals and social structures" (Schachter 2008: 453). These individuals and social structures are; therefore, referred to as 'identity agents' which assist the process of identity formation, and can include any significant person who actively interacts with the adolescent in developing and forming an identity, such as parents, teachers, clergy, mentors and youth workers and leaders (cf. Schachter 2008: 454). It is then also in this concept of partners in identity formation that which is lacking in the standard theoretical conceptualisations of identity formation, although most people would acknowledge that social agents do influence the development of a social identity (cf. Schachter 2008: 455).

In turn, Thom and Coetzee (2004: 184) have found that adolescents living in the new South Africa have to form their identities in a society which is undergoing much transformation, and; therefore, lack a one specific socio-cultural identity. They state that

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such adolescents might face a dual identity crisis, which entails the lack of an individual and a cultural identity. They mention the work of Kilpatrick (1974) where he states that ideally adolescents must develop an individual identity while simultaneously not rejecting their cultural heritage. For this to happen effectively; however, the culture or society must be characterised by consistency and stability so that an individual can successfully identify with the given culture, thereby forming a synthesis between their traditional and modern culture (cf. Thom and Coetzee 2004: 184).

Thom and Coetzee (2004: 185) have also found with regards to black American adolescents, that they lack a formation of a clear identity. They have concluded that the reason for this might be that they were denied many opportunities and lacked proper role models and; therefore, lacked opportunities for developing trust, autonomy and initiative. It can be stated that the same conditions are present in South Africa with African adolescents, who, although they have access now to many opportunities, also lack proper role models because these role models lacked various basic opportunities and are not in a position to act as a relevant role model, as stated before in this study. One can also state that the traditions and customs available to adolescents through various cultures have largely been fragmented and dissolved, because of the fusion of many cultures with the western culture. Williams (1987) has done studies on black teenage girls who predominantly live within a white social system, and has found that they experience a loss of individual identity, because they lack a cultural identity (cf. Thom and Coetzee 2004: 185). In conclusion then it seems that the development of a clear individual identity is largely dependent on the development of a clear and stable cultural or social identity.

A final reflection on the construction of an identity comes from Castells (2000: 6-7), where he postulates that the formation of an identity is the result of the construction of meaning. Meaning in turn is deduced from the actions of significant social actors, because of the attributes of these actors which are appealing to the person doing the formation of his/her identity. Finally, he states that identity is deeply rooted in experience, and an "…identity which is not rooted in experience is fantasy, not identity" (Castells 2000: 7). Therefore, according to Castells (2000: 7) people create meaning form the very moment of existence – a meaning which comes from shared experiences. Thus it is in fact the combination of interaction and experience which results in the creation of people's minds, or identity, both individually and collectively.

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The above insights regarding the formation of a social identity, as well as the relationship between individual (ego) identity and social/ cultural identity, explain why many of the co-researchers lack the formation of a clear identity, even if and when they are independent and get appreciation for their actions, because most of them lack a clear cultural and social identity and role models to model these identities. It also explains why the co-researchers display different identities verbally (privately) and behaviourally (publicly), to fit the situation at hand.

6.6 Combat Training

6.6.1. Vulnerable Families

A final consideration for understanding the battle, is understanding the familial contexts as experienced by adolescents or children; and the influence this context has on the formation of an identity which is used to protect oneself during battle, or literally giving one a 'battle' identity. Therefore, the familial context is metaphorically referred to as 'combat training', as the family is the one place where one learns how to be and how to view the world (or the battle).

Pretorius (2009: 57) states that the present nuclear family in South Africa is characterised by the following:

Firstly, most families in South Africa, especially those who are living in low socio-economic areas such as the townships, are **economically vulnerable,** indicating that things such as unemployment, illness, and sometimes death are characteristic of that family, and makes the family severely dependent on one or two members for financial aid (Pretorius 2009: 57). As is the case with most of the co-researchers, they were largely dependent on the income their mothers earned, and when their mothers passed away they had no-one else to turn to for financial support. They were then either left on the street, or left with a grandmother who also did not earn an income and who eventually had to give the children to PEN.

Secondly, most families living in low socio-economic areas are also **socially vulnerable**, which indicates that there is no social control within a small isolated family; making that family unstable. Those families who are classified as being a 'closed' family, with intimate personal relationships, generally indicate that the family members are very dependent on each other and when problems are endured, they have no one else to turn to for support, thereby being largely unsupported (cf. Pretorius 2009: 57). All the

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co-researchers reported that their mothers were the only support system they had and that they find themselves without any support, even when in the care of PEN or other relatives. Molimi stated that he has some support in his brother, but the rest of the co-researchers have superficial relationships with extended family members or with the care workers at PEN.

Another characteristic of the small nuclear family living in a low socio-economic area, is that of being **emotionally vulnerable**. This in turn indicates that the family members are much dependent on each other for emotional support, which places much pressure on family members who then experience each other's problems much more intensively. This threatens the emotional stability of such a family (cf. Pretorius 2009: 57). Again, most of the co-researchers were emotionally dependent. Kgotoso and his brother have an intense emotional relationship, but the remaining co-researchers lack an emotional relationship with anyone.

The fourth characteristic is that of being **pedagogically vulnerable**: here a family existing out of a parent and a child, builds strong relationships so that the child can be guided in becoming an adult. Therefore, the social and emotional vulnerability which makes the family unstable when these support structures are removed, and the strong ties between parent and child make it difficult for the child to be released when the relationship has been compromised by death or illness, thereby hampering the socialisation process. What then happens is usually a drastic emancipation of the child, which places much more emphasis on emotional ties instead of the relationship of authority. This makes the child vulnerable to become egocentric (cf. Steyn 1977: 396–402; Pretorius 2009: 57). The co-researchers find it very difficult to submit to any form of authority, as they never knew such a relationship. It seems that their relationship with their mothers were usually one of heightened emotional intimacy, but not one of authority. The result is that most of the co-researchers, especially Kgotoso and his brother who stated regarding PEN: "*They will not tell me what to do*", will not submit to authority. This statement seems to exist independently of the fact that PEN is the sole provider for these boys at the moment.

Finally, such a nuclear, low socio-economic family is usually **vulnerable** with regards to **differentiation** because of a lack of a father figure in such a home. This might cause a very close and intimate relationship with the mother, which makes withdrawal from the mother-child relationship so much more traumatic and might overburden the mother when the mother is still alive (cf. Steyn 1977: 402–407; Pretorius 2009: 57). This

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vulnerability is very much visible in the lives of the co-researchers where the only intimate relationship they knew was their relationship with their mothers. The consequence is that when they lost their mothers, they lost every psycho-social and emotional support system they knew, and have no one else to identify with. This lack of a male figure also makes the co-researchers more vulnerable in developing an unstable and vague gender identity.

Therefore, it is clear that the types of relationships which were created in the family have an immense influence on the character and identity of the child, even when taken away from the family set-up. The type of family and accompanied vulnerability will inevitably determine the types of relationships that a child will form as an adult, and will largely determine the course of development in later life.

6.6.2.The effect of family incompleteness

Pretorius (2009: 381) states that when a family is affected by a fatal illness and/or death, the family structure becomes disorganised and family members are in essence then separated. He states that because most of the times in South Africa a family is held together by the mother, the death of the mother can have serious effects on the coherence and stability of the family, which is clearly visible through the situations of the co-researchers in this study. Therefore, a family is essentially disrupted by an illness or death, because death and illness are ultimately accompanied by sorrow and fear, because of the anticipation of separation. Many times children in such a home experience guilt and anger because of the death of a close parent or caregiver and most of the times these feelings are not discussed with the child beforehand (cf. Pretorius 2009: 382).

Pretorius (2009: 382) states that illness, death and divorce affect children in the same way by creating a vacuum in the child's life where he/she misses and longs for the presence of at least one parent who had to accompany the child in his/her development. Therefore, the child has to, as a result of illness, death or divorce, go without an intimate relationship that could have been of much value during his/her development into adulthood. Inevitably, such a loss has an influence on the psycho-social and sometimes even mental development of a child. These effects are worsened because most children in such families lack a father figure, and; therefore, bargained on the support and guidance they received from the mother. It has also been found that a child needs the care and support of both parents for his/her potential to be actualised (cf. Pretorius

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2009: 382). Thus, a single parent household is essentially characterised by social absence, emotional and sometimes physical deprivation and a longing for the involvement and love of a parent (cf. Prinsloo 1983: 3; Pretorius 2009: 383). Therefore, children who are raised in a single parent household are already vulnerable, and this vulnerability is heightened as he/she loses the only family/ parent he/she knew.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the loss of a parent deprives a child from essential socialisation skills and guidance and essential levels of intimacy needed to reach his/her potential and to become a responsible and well adapted adult. The effect of parent deprivation, either through illness, death or divorce (separation), has an irrevocable influence on the manner in which a child faces certain developmental challenges during his life, which happens throughout the whole life cycle. Therefore, it is not as much a case of a lack of a father figure that will hamper growth and development, but rather the lack of having two parents, each who plays an essential role in the child's development, as a mother and as a father irrespectively, which affects a child's vulnerability in becoming the best he/she can. Each parent from each gender has a part to play in the healthy and normal development of a child, irrelevant of the gender of that child.

Additionally, when a child lacks a proper and healthy role model which should ideally be modelled through the same sex parent, a child will inevitably turn to peers and socially recognised figures of status, such as celebrities and political figures. A young person needs someone with whom he/she can identify and whose behaviour he/she can imitate in the development of his/her own identity. However, unfortunately he/she sometimes chooses a person who personifies permissiveness and immorality, perhaps because of the entertainment world's sometimes narrow view on masculinity and femininity, and in this case it will have a negative effect on his/her identity development. As Pretorius (2009: 59) states:

> Many young people's ideals do not reach further than the 'sophisticated' attitude towards life of the uprooted city dweller, the immoral actress or the disrespectful roughness of the slum hero. Large numbers of young people identify with some or other pop singer, film star, sports hero, racing driver or character from the world of film or romantic fiction. These are the reasons for the tremendous influence of the communication media, with their obsession with and overemphasis of sexuality and aggression.

Therefore, emphasis is placed on the parent's role in modelling realistic and proper masculine or feminine behaviour to a child, as this has always been the sole task of a parent, and because the influence of parents' behaviour outdo any other role model. A

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child or even adolescent does not have the ability to understand that the behaviour of an entertainment figure is fantasy, fiction and usually blown out of proportion for the sake of entertainment. Therefore, the role of the parent is not just modelling gender behaviour, but also teaching a child to discern between the consequences of real-time behaviour and deciding on behaviour based on the forecasted consequences, for example that promiscuity can lead to unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease, as this is not shown in the entertainment world. Therefore, if a child lacks this modelling of behaviour and guidance in discernment, he/she will inevitably turn to the media or entertainment world for guidance. This type of behaviour is visible through Kgotoso and his brother's behaviour of mimicking the attitude, language and tough patterns of the hip-hop industry, being oblivious to the fact that the hip-hop industry portrays the objectification of women as sexual objects, having a negative attitude towards taking responsibility and family life, and many times abusing substances and alcohol. This is the sad consequence of the fragmentation of the family structure and the victory of the entertainment world on providing a false sense of security and way of living.

6.6.3. Five levels of interpersonal understanding of social cognition: Robert Selman

In the same way that children develop morally, psychologically and physiologically, they also develop socially, or in terms of their understanding of interpersonal relationships. This is a crucial skill and determines the manner in which a child becomes an adult and develops relationships, as well as choosing which relationships to maintain or discard. It is important in this study to determine the path in which the co-researchers developed in terms of their understanding of interpersonal relationships, as they have lost a crucial model which was responsible for guiding this process and modelling the correct way to develop and maintain such relationships, namely that of their mother. We have already determined that the lack in father figure will inevitably also influence the co-researchers' identity formation and their understanding of their social roles as future fathers and husbands. [26]Robert Selman's model for interpersonal understanding can in turn determine the effects in interpersonal development with regards to the lack of a father figure, the loss of a mother and the fact that these co-researchers were raised in a family set-up as those described above.

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[26] Robert Selman (1976; 1980)

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Robert Selman argues that the ability of children to understand the perspectives and experiences of others develop from their understanding of social reality which includes the understanding of complex, abstract and symbolic representations which occur within such a social reality. Furthermore, he states that this development happens along the path of five levels of understanding of how people relate to each other (cf. Balk 1995: 215).

The first level, Selman plots at the age of three to six years and is characterised by a child's understanding of his/her own physical appearance and psychological understanding; while at the same time not understanding that other people also understand their own physical appearance and psychological reality, but in a different way than the child. Therefore, he/she is confused about the fact that different realities or perspectives exist outside his/her own reality and perspectives. This first level is labelled level 0 by Selman (cf. Balk 1995: 215).

The second level is labelled level 1, and entails the child's ability to now understand that there are differences in physical and psychological realities and perspectives. He/she is also now able to distinguish between people's behaviour in being purposive and intentional and that people can have a psychological reality and life, which is hidden from public view and exists in the mind of the individual person. However, he/she cannot yet predict how people will respond in a given situation. This level generally happens between the ages of five and nine (cf. Balk 1995: 215-216).

Between the ages of seven and twelve a child moves into the third level (Level 2) and is now able to mentally step outside him/herself and evaluate and reflect on his/her own thoughts and actions. This level entails concrete operational thinking processes where the child understands that people can move out of their own experiences and perspectives and put themselves in the shoes of another person. They also know that their knowledge about another person's experiences and/or perspectives contains some level of imprecision and ambiguity (cf. Balk 1995: 216).

Most of the co-researchers seem to have developed into this level, as they state the complexity of people in their lives and their own limitations in understanding these complexities and ambiguities of people. Most of the time, these feelings of ambiguities are brought forth by their fathers and their lack in showing interest in their lives. These children know very well that this is not how it should be and that the attitudes of their fathers are wrong and not the norm. They; however, seem to experience ambiguous feelings regarding the source or the cause of their fathers' attitudes, as they still try to

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figure out if their fathers feel this way because of them, as children, or because of greater macro-social factors. Thus, the co-researchers are still in the phase of determining if their fathers' attitudes must be internalise personally because of something they have done, or if this is a global phenomenon. Of course, it would suit them better if it is a global phenomenon, which it indeed seems to be. Many children, including the co-researchers, both male and female participants, state that it is a norm for the father, husband or boyfriend to abandon his responsibilities and subsequently, his family. Many of the female co-researchers stated that they do not need a husband to have children and to be successful, as many women have to cope this way anyway. Therefore, it is quite clear that family planning and planning of one's future are currently excluding the role of a male figure in a woman's life. They state that if they find a good man it will be a bonus, but that they are surely not investing all of their hopes into this *ideal*.

Level 3, or the fourth level, generally develops during early adolescence and continues to the age of 15. Within this level the child has now fully developed into understanding the third person perspective, meaning that he/she is now able to understand that he/she is both an actor and an object in the 'game' of life. This enables the child to act and reflect upon the consequences of his/her own actions and upon the interaction happening between the different selves (cf. Selman 1980: 39; Balk 1995: 216). Balk (1995: 216) states: "The level 3 adolescents know that a complex mutuality marks social relationships".

It would seem as if few co-researchers realise that they can and must reflect on their own actions and thoughts. Molimi seems to have developed quite well into this stage, as he constantly verbalises his reflections on his own actions and thoughts. The other (male) co-researchers seem to respond in amazement to Molimi's evaluation of himself, as if they find this amusing. The female participants are excluded from this, as they reflect often upon themselves, their thoughts and experiences and those of others. This corresponds with the identity development of girls, as they are socialised in being reflective and responsive; however, it seems that boys are discouraged in doing so and this is clear in most of the male co-researchers' lack in scrutinising their own behaviour and thoughts. This ambivalence is quite clear in the co-researchers' statements of how they view sex and women, and that they do not find it strange that they want a virgin as a wife, but that they expect at the same time that their girlfriends satisfy them sexually when they desire so, although they know that this is not the type of girl they will marry.

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Additionally, their views of their lack in controlling their own sexual behaviour and desires, also contradict many of their former statements.

During the fifth level, or level 4, which happens during the ages of 16 and older, the person realises and fully understands that people, including themselves, are more complex than he/she can ever understand and recognises their own and others' unconscious motives, attitudes and reactions. Therefore, the person in this level understands that the idea of interpersonal relations is much more complex and abstract than they could ever fathom. Interestingly, the type of relationships developed during this stage, moves from superficial to multidimensional, meaning that the person starts to understand that their social world and relations within this world are determined by multiple factors such as politics, legalities, economy, international affairs and various cultural and social customs and traditions (cf. Balk 1995: 216).

It is interesting to note that the co-researchers of this study are fully aware of how their social worlds as well as their physical worlds are influenced by the macro system of politics and economy, where they state that they fear the end of the World Cup 2010, as they do not know what will happen economically. It is also understandable why they fear economics, as they are confronted every day of their lives with the fact that they are financially needy and that they do not have stable figures in their lives which can provide financial security and stability to them, as children with parents generally have.

An important component in the development of interpersonal relations is the development of altruistic behaviour. Balk (1995: 218) states that altruistic behaviour is generally generated by the ability of developing empathetic understanding, but that empathy does not always lead to altruistic behaviour. A person can have the ability to understand how someone feels, but can still lack in responding or transforming this understanding to assisting the person in need. Balk (1995: 218) states that four things generally hinders a person in transforming empathetic understanding into assistance: they do not perceive themselves as having a personal responsibility; or they feel incapable of assisting effectively in that person's need; or they become overwhelmed by their own empathetic distress; and, finally, they feel they lack the necessary skills in either communicating empathy or assisting in empathy. The fact is also that males are socialised in not expressing care for others, as this is generally expected from women. Therefore, women tend to engage in altruistic behaviour much more often than men (cf. Balk 1995: 218-219).

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Kgotoso stated that he will not protect any person who is in distress as he feels that it is not his responsibility and that he will not risk his own safety for the safety of someone he does not know; while his twin brother stated that he will protect anyone as it is his duty as a man to do so. This clearly indicates that even while being raised in the same family and in the same context, these two boys have very different views and senses of responsibilities when it comes to altruistic behaviour. Molimi also stated that it is his responsibility to protect all against all costs, even more so women and children. In stating why he feels this way, he said that one day he will need help from others, and in helping others, he will be rewarded with protection from others. This clearly indicates that Molimi's motivation of altruistic behaviour is rooted in his sense of moral responsibility and religious reciprocity, while Kgotoso and his brother's view of altruistic behaviour is clearly influenced by their view of masculinity and what it means to be a man.

6.6.4.Egocentrism as an adolescent characteristic

An additional characteristic which is inherent in adolescence is that of egocentrism. This characteristic has an influence, not only on the decisions which will be made, but also on the consequences of those decisions.

[27]David Elkind brings our attention to the negative consequences of a child being forced to grow up too quickly or to take on adult responsibilities when he/she is in fact not ready to do so. He states that if this continues in a society, the next generation will be uninvolved parents and children will incorrectly think they are competent when in fact they do not have the resources to possess adult competency (cf. Balk 1995: 210). Furthermore, Elkind speaks of an 'imaginary audience' concept which entails the tendency of adolescents to feel or think that everyone in the world is observing and judging their behaviour and actions, and that they are actually at the centre of everyone's world. Therefore, teenagers have the tendency to construct imaginary audiences and these audiences have the ability, in their minds, to both admire and criticise them, as they believe that even their private thoughts can be known to these audiences as shame and exposure. This of course, inevitably leads to the adolescent to experience feelings such as shame because they feel exposed the whole time, and constantly ridiculed (cf. Balk 1995: 211).

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[27] David Elkind (1967, 1987)

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With reference to this, it is interesting to note that the co-researchers stated that they feel ashamed at school because they are known as children who live in precious pearls, and; therefore, are orphans. They state that some children do not want to be friends with them because they are orphaned, while other people pity them. This might indicate their constant awareness or perception that people and other children are observing them, judging them and making fun of them. However, this can also cause more trauma, or double trauma, as they lost loved ones, while at the same time losing their identity and sense of security which they had in their mothers, and as a school going child with parents.

In explaining why this concept or idea of an imaginary audience occurs, Elkind states that adolescents tend to not distinguish between their own feelings and thoughts and those of other people. This in turn may lead them to think of their own uniqueness in much exaggerated terms, while this sense of mystical uniqueness is used to construct a fable about themselves and their lives with many false ideas and perceptions about how other people experience them (cf. Elkind 1967: 103; Balk 1995: 211).

The consequences of living by this constructed and mythical fable are twofold: firstly, the adolescent believes, unconsciously, that he/she cannot die, or that he/she is at least in some sense immortal. This idea of immortality then explains why many teenagers take part in risk behaviour and sometimes even thoughtless behaviour (cf. Balk 1995: 212). This sense of immortality then becomes especially dangerous in the context of the co-researchers of this study, as this idea can expose them and make them more vulnerable in taking part in behaviour which can infect them with HIV and Aids. As most of the co-researchers stated, “We just do not ever think of HIV and Aids, or that we can in some way be infected”.

Secondly, the adolescent believes that his/her thoughts and emotional experiences are unique and not like any thoughts or emotional experience anyone else has ever experienced (cf. Balk 1995: 212). Once again, the co-researchers expressed how amazed they were to share their experiences and emotions within the research group, because they never thought that anyone felt the way they do and experienced loss in the same way.

Fortunately, Elkind states that adolescents will eventually grow out of this egocentrism in the process of establishing firm operations. He states that the imaginary audience does not go away during middle adolescence, but is rather replaced with a “hypothesis” which is then in turn used to test against their social reality. In the utilisation of their hypothesis

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testing, adolescents become gradually aware that their personal interests and concerns differ both quantitatively and qualitatively from other people's (cf. Balk 1995: 212). This shift in imagination was, interestingly enough, visible in the co-researchers, as their mentality changed from the first Tree of Life camp in 2008, to the second Tree of Life camp in 2010. They stated that they became aware that people can share the same experiences and that their circumstances are not as unique as they first thought. They also moved from experiencing the death of their mothers as a personal attack on them, to accepting it as part of life and the consequence of illness. They also realised that it helps to talk about these emotions, as they did not speak about it at the first camp, because they literally felt that no one will really understand. Now, after the second camp, by sharing their emotions, feelings and stories, they realised that together they can accept and move on, because life does in fact not wait for them before it moves on.

Elkind additionally states that late adolescents will only move beyond this mystical fable, once they have established an intimate and close relationship with someone else. This requires the development of an identity and a relation with someone else by directly confronting Erikson's developmental task of intimacy. He states that only by experiencing empathy and understanding someone else's needs, can a young person move beyond his/her own self-consciousness, selfishness and egocentrism (cf. Balk 1995: 212).

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CHAPTER 7

DAVID'S BATTLE, GOD'S VICTORY

36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. 37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, go, and the LORD be with thee.

– 1 Samuel 17: 36-37 –

This chapter investigates and reflects on the religious and spiritual aspects inherent in the narratives of the co-researchers, and more specifically, on aspects which tell us about how the co-researchers understand and experience the presence of God within their specific situations. This is the fifth step in the process of postfoundational practical theology and is the one specific item which distinguishes practical theological research from other types of research in the social sciences, as we as practical theologians aim at closing the gap between the story of the individual and the story of God with His people.

The metaphor of 'David's battle, God's victory' has been chosen to represent this chapter because it indicates the role of God and our experience of God within our own narratives or battles. Up to this point the battle and all aspects of the human battle have been explored, so that we can come to an understanding of how our everyday experiences and how our past relations with significant others influence our experience of our human world and relations with others. However, in this chapter the role of God in determining our victory has been incorporated on purpose, as we believe, as Christians and practical theologians, that our victory lies in our relations with God, and God's divine intervention in our lives amidst our battles. Generally, as will be seen in our [28]co-researchers' narratives, this experience of God is the climax, the turning point of our narratives, which determines defeat or victory. All of the co-researchers stated this experience of God as the turning point in their tragic narratives which is used to write alternative future narratives. As with David, where he trusted God to save him and be

[28] Spelling errors were omitted in the co-researchers' personal stories, quotes or poems, but the wording and grammar were kept in their original format.

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with him during battle, as He has done in the past for David when he fought lions and bears, the co-researchers also trust God to determine their victory over their past, as He has done for them in the past.

Therefore, this chapter will be looking at various theories which explain the development of faith, religion and a sense of morality. These theories will then be applied to the narratives of the co-researchers in coming to a better understanding of how they experience God and God's character in their lives and narratives.

The conversations which are recorded in this chapter were attained from the second Tree of Life camp, 26-28 February 2010, at Sikelele, Magaliesburg.

7.1. Molimi: Farmer

In the discussion regarding the manual, 'David's battle, God's Victory', Molimi acknowledged that his community does not regard a relationship with God as 'manly', and also does not see the expression of one's feelings towards God as manly. However, he added that he does think that it is manly, and does not care what other people might think. He also states that he thinks that women are more religious, and if a man expresses his feelings regarding God, he will be seen as a woman. He also states that in his community it is not manly to take your problems to God, as David does.

For Molimi, God has always played an important part in his life and it seems that he turns to God for help and sees God as his Saviour and Guide. He states that God has saved him from the streets and fixed things between him and his brother, in showing him the "right way". Additionally, he states that he realised at the first Tree of Life camp (October 2008) that God is the most important person in his life and that he should; therefore, make the most of his life. He states that he has been doing that by playing an important role in other people's lives so much that they see him as a role model. However, Molimi states that he wants to live a Christian life, but that some of the people who surround him do not give him the necessary support in leading a Christian life. He says that instead they go to clubs and drink a lot and that he thinks he should cut these people from his life so that he can live a life as a Christian. For Molimi, leading a morally right life is very important and; therefore, it seems that he makes the connection between being a Christian and showing his gratitude for God's grace, by living a morally good life. For Molimi it is not enough just to believe and state one's beliefs, but to actually live a life by example and in relationship with God.

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Furthermore, Molimi seems to see God as a Shepherd and the Saviour, by stating that God will never leave nor forsake him. He tends to memorise many passages from the Bible, or Christian slogans, such as "*give your best and God will do the rest*".

Molimi places much emphasis on God's love for him, and that this love makes him stronger so that he can face big and small challenges. However, Molimi seems to also be aware of God's wrath and that God will punish as He sees fit. He states that God has punished David rightly in letting his son die, as David did wrong and had to be punished.

Molimi states that he sees God as a Father because God looks after us and because He loves us. He states simultaneously that God expects fathers and husbands to protect their families and to love their families because God is this kind of Father Himself. However, he adds that it is possible for fathers to be good fathers, but that the temptations in the world make it difficult for men to be good fathers and good husbands.

Molimi also says that God is like a Shepherd to him because God guides him in *"…every way I take*". He furthermore states that in life *"…one should obey and trust in God because we should seek him first and everything shall be given on to you*". Molimi says that he does trust in God, but that he does not always obey Him. He says that God wants him to live a better life. Therefore, once again the issue of morality of Molimi's faith is quite visible.

Molimi furthermore states that he knows that God wants the best for him; otherwise he will not still be alive. He does; however, also believe that God tests people so that He can see if one trusts Him and so that they can grow spiritually. He says: "God has tested me because he took my parents to see if I am strong enough to conquer death". Molimi probably means here that God wants to see if he can handle death, and not as much conquer death. Molimi also believes that God will reckon with bad people one day, because, as he puts it: "*what goes around comes back around*". This is a recurring theme in Molimi's statements, as he also stated earlier that he will protect and help strangers, because one day he will again need a stranger's help.

In referring to the Goliaths in Molimi's life, or situations where he felt small, he states that he felt small and insecure when he was in matric, but that God helped him to handle his problems. He says that he feels that if God is on his side, he can conquer any problem. He states with a bit of shame, that he used to put himself before God and he used to only call on God's help when he experienced problems. This might indicate Molimi's awareness that having a relationship with God entails more than just calling on God when in need. This; therefore, indicates Molimi's deep awareness of the complex

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dimensions of having a relationship with God, as opposed to just having faith in a moment of distress and hopelessness.

In conclusion, it would; therefore, seem that Molimi's sense of morality, or his sense of what is right and what is wrong is very much developed, so much in fact that he realises that God being a father, entails more than just the providence of protection and love, but also indicates a reciprocal relationship where God will discipline as a father does, when needed. He seems to experience some ambivalence in terms of God as Father and God as Judge, and places much emphasis on leading a good life, and that this is a prerequisite in truly being a Christian. It is also clear; however, that Molimi has a deep-seated love for God, and that he relied much on God's protection and guidance when he was in need. He seems to trace everything he is and everything he received back to God's unfailing love and grace for him, and that he must live a life which speaks of gratitude for what he has received. Much of what Molimi is experiencing currently is accompanied by feelings of guilt – he feels guilty that his current life does not correspond with that which is regarded as a Christian life; he feels guilty that he only turns to God when in need; and he feels guilty that he is not showing his gratitude to God. Molimi is indeed experiencing a deep level of faith.

7.2. Manqoba: Victory

Manqoba, as previously stated, is not a talker. If and when he speaks, he does so almost as if contemplating, rather than overtly stating something. Nevertheless, Manqoba asked during one of the discussions: "*What do you do if you have a church and your wife is in another church? I will not feel like a man if my wife makes decisions about church on my behalf*". Kgotoso and his brother stated in response that a man and his wife should be on the same level spiritually, but Manqoba disagreed and answered his own question: *"a man must be the spiritual leader; it's the man's responsibility to lead, you must be in the same church".*

Therefore, it seems as if Manqoba sees the man of the house, also as the spiritual leader of his home and his family. This in itself is an exception to the rule, as most young men and boys these days do not see a real man as a man of God. This might indicate that Manqoba is a little bit traditional and conservative in his thinking, clearly willing to take on that responsibility. Most of the female co-researchers agreed with him and stated that they want the man to be the spiritual leader.

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During the same discussion some of the co-researchers stated that men tend to only pray when they experience storms and Manqoba replied by stating that it is possible for a man to be strong and a leader of God, as if the opposite is true.

Manqoba states that he sees God as a Father, because God protects, cares for and loves us. In turn he states that God expects men to also be loving and caring fathers, who do not judge, but rather understands. However, in asking if God was right in punishing David, Manqoba states that *"...God acted rightly, because what David did was very wrong so he had to be punished*". Therefore, it seems as if Manqoba does not expect the same from earthly fathers than from God, as our Holy Father. He expects earthly fathers to understand and not judge, but God may judge. Perhaps Manqoba feels this way as he does not link earthly fathers with God as father, because he did not have a father as role model, thereby experiencing God differently.

Manqoba states in turn that he believes that God will help him, as he has a strong relationship with God these days. He states that it is manly to express your feelings regarding God, as David did but, in his community it is not seen as manly, and it is also not manly to rely on God for everything. Manqoba states that one of his friends openly expresses his feelings towards God and that he experiences his friend as 'soppy' in doing this. He states that most of his friends are not religious, so if he was to express his love for God, they will laugh at him. Therefore, it seems as if Manqoba finds it difficult to live out his love and feelings towards God, openly and amongst his friends. This indeed puts limits on his expression and results in him keeping everything for himself. This also indicates that Manqoba does not have a community of believers who can support him in his faith. Manqoba states that he is just starting to have a real relationship with God, indicating his awareness of the importance of having a relationship with God; however, the fact that he cannot share this relationship openly with others, might surely limit him in his growth and; therefore, the satisfaction that he gains from this relationship.

Manqoba seems to see God as a protector, who gives him strength to overcome his problems. He also states that he sees God as a Shepherd because "*He guides me and makes me live a right life*". Once again the emphasis is on guidance and living a morally right life; therefore, indicating that Manqoba also sees his relationship with God as reciprocal – God protecting him and guiding him and him showing his gratitude towards God by living a right life. There is no indication that Manqoba sees living a right life as a prerequisite for having a relationship with God.

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Manqoba puts all of his trust in God. He says that he believes that God has a plan for his life, although his life might not follow this route at the moment. He states; however, that he believes that God will get him through this and show him the way so that he will be where he is intended to be. This indicates Manqoba's believe that God has a divine plan for him and that Manqoba has to trust and believe against all odds that he will be where he should be. Manqoba also believes that God tests people so that God can see how strong one is, *"…not only physically but spiritually too*". He states that God will judge over the bad and the evil one day, because it is His job and not ours. He also believes that God has tested him by taking his mother away and that this was difficult for him to understand; however, he believes that God now expects him to trust in Him and obey His commands almost, as to "pass the test".

Nevertheless, Manqoba also believes that God uses everything for His and people's advantage; he believes that God is on his side and that God will help him to stand on his "… own two feet again". He states that when he feels stressed or sad, he tends to think that He does not need God, or that he is not good enough to be a "man of God". It also seems as if Manqoba experiences some ambivalent feelings towards the fact that God has a plan for him, and what he is experiencing currently in his life. He states that in some challenges he faces, God helps him to overcome it; but at the moment he feels as if God has abandoned him because he failed two subjects and subsequently he is now at home, without any hope of being admitted by to university. In response to this, he states that everything happens for a reason and that he hopes that God has something good for him in store.

Thus, it is clear that Manqoba turns to God for protection and guidance, but that he is unsure of how to receive this guidance. He is still experiencing some confusion regarding his faith in God, and how to establish such a relationship with God. It also seems as if he is unsure if God has a plan for him, although he states that He does; but he is unsure of the reason why things did not go as planned. It would also seem, as in the other co-researchers' narratives, that these boys explain events they face in life by contributing the causes to external events and persons. For example, Manqoba states that he cannot understand why he failed two subjects, and why God abandoned him, as if he has no part to play in passing these subjects. In the same way he sees the death of his mother as caused and allowed by God as in testing Manqoba for trust and obedience. This corresponds much with the African worldview where all cosmic events, are attributed to some external force or being, such as the ancestors. Where traditional

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African people would have stated that the ancestors are angry with them, or that they are bewitched, Manqoba now, seemingly, attributes events he faces, to an angry God or a God who abandoned him, for what reason, he is not sure yet.

7.3. Kgotoso: Peace

Kgotoso seems to experience a loving and caring relationship with God, where he places much emphasis on God's protection. He states that through the FBO NGO, PEN he grew spiritually, thereby developing a closer relationship with God. He states that God helps him to overcome his problems.

According to Kgotoso God describes a real man and a real man according to the virtue of 'honesty' as this indicates being "strong from the inside" and will inevitably result in a good relationship with God. Honesty is an important characteristic for Kgotoso, as he describes a real woman also as being honest in all she does and not 'cheating' on him; although Kgotoso himself has admitted that he struggles with being honest in his relationships.

Kgotoso believes that God is always on his side, through good and bad, thereby indicating God's unfailing love and loyalty. He states that it is manly for him when David expresses his feelings towards God, and this corresponds with his earlier remarks which stated that he himself expresses himself easily and freely. He sees the expression of emotions as a manly character. He also says that he knows that his community does not see this as a strength, but states that the Bible is full of examples of how God's love and expressing one's love towards God, makes one stronger. Kgotoso says that he expresses his feelings easily and that this makes his brother embarrassed.

As stated before, Kgotoso places much emphasis on God's protection and states that this is why God is his Father, because he protects. He then says that God expects fathers and husbands to look after their families' needs and be there when they need them. One will remember that Kgotoso stated earlier that he will only protect his family; therefore, it would seem that protection for Kgotoso is only relevant to the role and responsibilities of a father towards his family. He also says that it is difficult for a man these days to be a good father and husband, because *"…we have so many things around us that make us do what we shouldn't*". This is the first time that Kgotoso expresses his awareness of the connection between leading a moral life and being a Christian. He also stated earlier that he struggles with this.

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Additionally Kgotoso states that he puts all of his trust in God, because God has been faithful to him in assisting him through his "storms". He also sees God as a Shepherd because God took him out of a situation where he could not save himself. He states: "*I was never naked or starving*". Kgotoso, as with Molimi and Manqoba also believes that God tests a person, so that God can see how faithful you are and if you trust in him, with all of your heart. He states; however, that he has not been experiencing such a test from God, indicating that he does not, as is the case with Molimi and Manqoba, feel that God has tested him through the death of his mother and father. Furthermore, he feels that God will punish bad behaviour one day.

In asking him how he thought God felt about David's wrong behaviour, Kgotoso states: "*God was extremely angry and felt betrayed as well because he trusted David*". It is interesting how Kgotoso personifies God as being very angry and trusting in David, as the African worldview also tends to personify their gods in terms of anger and being pleased or not. This of course then justifies the punishing behaviour of the deities; however, note how Kgotoso states that God was not right in punishing David's new born son because of David's mistakes. He is the only one of the co-researchers who felt this way.

Kgotoso is much aware of God's almighty power and God's power in determining the course of one's life. He states that God is aware of one's limits and abilities and that God has always rescued him, even when he thought that there was "no way out", referring specifically to his grandparents' rejection of him and his brother.

Additionally, Kgotoso adds that at times he also feels like he is not good enough to be a man of God, because he does not know God very well. In referring to what his friends will say if he expresses his feelings towards God openly, he states that "*friends can kill you spiritually*"; however, he will not be friends with someone just because that person is not a Christian or if that person does not want to talk to God.

In conclusion, it seems as if Kgotoso's is appealing to God's loving, caring and graceful side. He does not view God too much as a disciplinarian or judge; but emphasises God's protection, love and guidance for his life. It is unclear how strong Kgotoso's relationship is with God, even though he states that he will not hesitate to speak about God in public. He also does not place much emphasis on leading a Christian life. It would; therefore, seem as if Kgotoso is quite content with keeping his relationship with God as 'casual', having faith in God and approaching God when he faces storms; he is not much guilt driven, as is a characteristic of his personality where he states that if he

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experiences a storm, he will thank God for helping him and then "move on". He does; however, verbalise much appreciation for God's grace and protection.

From the above narratives it is clear that in these boys' communities it is not seen as manly to openly express your feelings about God and be openly religious. It seems that it might be a desire of both men and boys to turn to God when scared or when they experience a storm, but they must either do it in private, or at an organisation such as PEN, where it is almost the criteria to be part of the organisation. However, as the boys state – they live in two worlds –one is the PEN world and the other is the real world – in both different rules apply in playing the "man" game.

7.4. Men, Religion and Spirituality

The development of religiosity, faith or spirituality is a complex phenomenon which is also influenced by various psychosocial events and experiences which a child comes to face during his/her development. Therefore it is imperative to consider all possible theories regarding the development of such, so that a better understanding can be reached regarding the type and degree of co-researchers' religious, faith and/or spiritual development. In discussing the various viewpoints it must be noted that the researcher and author does not identify with a specific school of thought. These possibilities are given as a possible way to come to a holistic understanding, and not for comparative purposes.

7.4.1. Religion and Identity

According to Duriez and Soenens (2006: 120) in referring to Erikson's work (1968) one of the main developmental tasks of adolescence is the development of a stable and secure identity. Part of this development process is the adolescent's particular stance regarding a religion, faith and/or spirituality, otherwise stated, his/her stance towards existential issues. It seems that a person's specific attitude or view regarding religion, faith or spirituality is related to his/her attitude and exposure to various socio-political issues, prejudice dispositions, cultural conservatism, cognitive-motivational variables, an intolerance of ambiguity and closed-mindedness (cf. Duriez and Soenens 2006: 120).

Additionally, Barker and Barker (2004: 27) report that a man's family role, attitude and behaviour with reference to the role of a father and husband, seems to be influenced by the religious institute he affiliates with. They state that "[s]criptural references are used by all major religions to uphold male authority and responsibilities, and the mothering

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role of women" (Barker and Barker 2004: 27). This corresponds to the narratives of the co-researchers who state that it is a man's responsibility to look after his family, according to the Word of God. Their theories regarding a man's role as husband seem to be influenced by their religious affiliation and viewpoints.

The issue of sex and sexuality is similarly influenced by different types of religions as well as denominations within a specific religion. Therefore, men's and women's behaviour in relation with their families are much influenced by their religious opinion regarding issues such as reproductive health, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, sexual practices, pregnancy outside wedlock, multiple partners, and gender equity. The manner and the degree in which men are religious or not are also influenced by the institution in which worship takes place and also the attitude of men regarding spirituality within a specific country. Barker and Barker (2004: 28-29) state: "These differences, whatever their source, profoundly reflect the impact of these institutions on men and, by extension, their families".

Thus, it is clear that a religious identity, first and foremost develops from the specific attitude of a family or community regarding the role of men and the role of women in a specific religion. Furthermore, the religious or spiritual viewpoints within a specific country reflected through socio-political practices, also determine the manner in which men in general view their roles and functions as fathers and husbands. South Africa is very rich with a variety of religions and spiritual viewpoints; therefore, it makes sense that men and boys will differ much in the manner in which they view their future roles as husbands and fathers. Moreover, within the community wherein the co-researchers find themselves, no particular statement is made regarding the roles of men, and; therefore, the boys need to create their community's attitude and viewpoints from a variety of assumptions gained from a variety of sources. For example, their grandparents might have a very traditional African viewpoint, which entails ancestry worshipping enmeshed with Christian values, where their peers might be a-religious. PEN specifically is Dutch Reformed, whereas extended family might focus on African Pentecostal Christianity. Therefore, it makes sense if the co-researchers are confused regarding what is exactly expected of men as fathers and husbands. They have to then literally make their own assumptions of what they observe and experience from their peers and other community members. If this is the case, their narratives will inevitably reflect opposing and contradicting assumptions. Most of the boys stated; however, that they are not as much interested in ancestry worshipping; however, they do not make much sense of the Dutch

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Reformed services they attend through Pen. Molimi's brother does not attend a church and the remainder of the co-researchers do not attend any specific church with family or friends.

When looking at religion in a country and its influence, Müller (2000: 61) states that religion can either promote social exclusion or marginalisation in creating a hierarchy of social groupings (referred to by Müller as *centrifugal force*), or it can be a *centripetal force* which encourages the acceptance of diversity aimed at reconciliation. When looking at a post-Apartheid South-Africa it seems as if religion is acting as a centripetal force, which encourages reconciliation, in that many types of religions are tolerated. Thus, it can be said that the co-researchers are provided with many possibilities with which they can identify if chosen to do so. However, it can also be said that they are provided with too many opportunities which results in a lack of will in choosing a relevant religion, or they are faced with the danger of entering an eclectic type of religion.

Another consideration of what influences the attachment towards a specific religion is that of friendship. Research done in South Africa; however, suggests that friendship is shaped by shared experiences which exclude experiences shared on the macro-level. Therefore, it would seem that friendship is constructed through shared experiences around popular fashion and music primarily; and secondarily around religion, age, gender, language, same educational experience etc. Therefore, friendships in South Africa are not as much influenced by the political views and feel of a community (cf. Dawson 2007: 466).

Within the study done by Dawson (2007: 470) they have found that friendships or interpersonal relationships play an important role in identity formation. This might be because sharing the same experiences allows people to relate and identify with others. Therefore, it is clear that shared identities exist, which is created through a common understanding of situations and not by obvious identity markers such as race; and that identity formation does not happen in isolation, and is not relevant only to the individual's efforts in forming an identity. Identity formation is; therefore, enabled by the specific context in which an individual finds him or herself and is constructed within the process of interaction (cf. Dawson 2007: 470). Thus, we can state that a religious identity will also be formed and developed within opportunities of interaction and within a specific religious context, irrelevant of specific identity markers. Relevant to this, Oyserman, Grant and Ager (1995: 1217) state that Erikson and Marcia postulate an identity which includes only independent, autonomous and bounded factors in the formation of the

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identity, and excludes factors from the social and cultural context, thereby ignoring how identities are negotiated within a paradigm of interpersonal relations and experiences.

Another important aspect in identity formation, and more specifically the formation of a religious identity, is that of the role of the parents. Mullis (2003: 968) states that the parents play an important role in assisting their children in developing an individuated identity which will result in the child feeling more emotionally connected with his/her parents, as well as developing a clear sense of who he/she is as a separated person. Therefore, the child can maintain a close and intimate relationship with his/her parents, while at the same time developing an independent and distinctive identity. It has also been shown that parents who accept their children and interact with them in a positive and constructive way, facilitate the development of an identity, within various social contexts; whereas parents who are in the habit of judging and devaluing their children, hinder the development and formation of a clear, independent and secure identity (cf. Mullis 2003: 968). Moreover, it has been shown that commitment from an adolescent to a specific career and/or life course is closely related to an intimate and adaptive family structure; therefore, placing emphasis on the relation between family cohesion and the development of a clear and secure identity (cf. Mullis 2003: 974).

Gender differences also have an influence on the development of the identity; however, it might be influenced both by a specific parent's own gender as well as the gender of the specific child (cf. Mullis 2003: 976) and social influences on the role expectations of a specific gender. It has been found that men first deal with the ideological dimensions and aspects which are incorporated into the identity, and then only move onto interpersonal relations and meanings. This might be because men explore ideological dimensions relatively distant and independent of context and relations. Women on the other hand tend to focus both on interpersonal relations and ideology, perhaps because women address ideology and relational commitments in more detail than other aspects of their identity formation (cf. Mullis 2003: 976).

Another aspect in the formation of an identity is that of race. Mullis (2003: 977) states that racial differences do emerge from studies done of identity formation. Thus, it has been found that within white families, identity formation is influenced by the cohesion and characteristics of the family. Surprisingly, amongst African American young adults and adolescents a negative relation has been discovered between "… family cohesion and ideological and interpersonal exploration, and between family adaptation and interpersonal exploration ... between identity exploration and family cohesion and family

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adaptability" (Mullis 2003: 977). These findings correspond with earlier studies which disclosed a higher incidence of identity foreclosure between members of minority and disadvantaged social and racial groups. Moreover, some scholars state that the variable of race might be much more influential and determinant on the formation of an identity, than that of social class, age and even gender. Therefore, one would find that women from a specific race might have more in common with men of their own race, than with women from another racial group in terms of the exploration and formation of their identities. Another aspect which was found during the study of identity formation of African American young adults, is the lack of the need of exploring interpersonal relations when they experience close family relations and cohesion, perhaps because they might be content with the relationships they have within a family (cf. Mullis 2003: 977).

In conclusion, it might be stated that various aspects influence the formation of an identity, and more specifically of a religious identity. Aspects such as religious affiliation and traditions, family relations, gender and race all have a great influence on the formation of a faith/religious identity, thereby also confirming that such an identity develops and is formed within a specific social context and cannot be attributed solely to individual and intrapersonal aspects. However, it has also been found that ideological commitment tends to develop from and be strengthened within a familial context which provides structure and guidance to a child (cf. Mullis 2003: 977). Therefore, if the co-researchers have developed a safe and secure religious stance and commitment, it is likely to have been developed from their previous familial context and strengthened by their involvement with organisations such as PEN and their church.

7.4.2. Role-taking responsibilities

Inherent in the development of a religious, faith or moral identity is the development of a sense of responsibility and accountability which is usually visible in the type of, and degree of roles an individual make his/her own. [29]Kohlberg postulates that the concept of sharing is fundamentally a social concept which inevitably leads to the development of a social-moral consciousness which in turn involves the idea of role-taking responsibilities. Role-taking responsibilities are many times universal and provide the individual with an opportunity to know who he/she is in relation to others (cf. Balk 1995:

[29] Kohlberg (1969; 1976; 1980)

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185). Therefore, one can state that if an individual, like the co-researchers, is provided with opportunities to take up some roles as a child, he/she will be prepared to take up different gender specific roles within the family as an adult. As such, moral reasoning develops from these opportunities to take on specific roles within a family, and involves the gaining of a social-moral perspective. Therefore, moral reasoning develops as soon as a person adapts and changes his/her moral understanding, thereby gaining a different sociomoral frame of reference which is used take make decisions related to moral matters. The transformation of the basic principles which collectively results in a body of moral reasoning happens because of the amount of role-taking opportunities available to a person and not so much because of the role of the family. Kohlberg specifically emphasises that moral development occurs as a result of the sociomoral experiences provided by groups outside the family, such as the peers (cf. Balk 1995: 185). Therefore, Balk (1995: 186), in referring to Kohlberg's theory, states that the critical issues in the development of moral reasoning is:

> (a) the extent and the variety or role-taking opportunities available to the individual and (b) the ability of the person to incorporate new social stimulation into current levels of understanding.

When looking at these explanations in understanding the co-researchers' moral development, one can state that these boys did not have many opportunities to take on specific roles in the family, as they never had a father, or a male figure to model the different roles of a boy or a man. In the same way it is quite clear that their theoretical moral frame of reference is influenced by what they know is right or wrong perhaps learned from childhood from the mother and other extended family members, but in practice the moral reasoning which surfaces is the one influenced by their peers and other social groups, aimed at survival within this social group. In general, most of these boys hesitate in taking it upon themselves to live out a specific role, and; therefore, in making a specific moral judgement. Molimi is one of the few who states awareness of his moral role as future father and husband, but still finds it difficult to live according to his moral frame of reference, as is the case with the other boys. It can also be stated that some of the boys, if not all, do not necessarily see the role of a father and/or husband as a moral obligation, as this is not modelled to them. Rather, the role of father and husband is a *choice*, instead of a moral obligation which follows commitment to a woman and his offspring. Additionally, the lack of taking up the role of a father or husband as a moral obligation might be a result of boys or young men in general

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engaging in adult behaviour before they have developed such a moral consciousness and understanding.

Kohlberg postulates another plausible aspect of moral understanding through the *one stage up or down principle* which proposes that a person will not be able to absorb information of a moral nature which is beyond his/her apprehension of moral principles, thereby stating that an individual, or adolescent will miss out on opportunities to engage in mutual understanding and rather focus on whatever serves his/her own interest (cf. Balk 1995: 186). Balk (1995: 186) gives an example of how people operate according to this one stage up or down principle, by explaining how some students could not appreciate the value of cultural differences, because "…the idea requires reasoning more than one stage above their stages of moral reasoning" (Balk 1995: 186). Furthermore, most of the students who could not accept and understand the value of cultural diversity were found to have a foreclosed identity, where those students who embraced cultural diversity mostly had a moratorium or achieved identity. Therefore, if this theory is credible it might just suggest a relationship between identity formation and moral reasoning (cf. Balk 1995: 186).

Related to the above statements, Kohlberg postulated three levels of moral development which indicate an individual's maturity in understanding moral principles and moral issues. The first level is called the *preconventional* level of moral reasoning and involves a child's understanding of morality with reference to either obeying authority, thereby avoiding punishment or engaging in activities which serves his/her own self-interest, irrelevant of the moral consequences. Kohlberg also states that this type of moral reasoning is generally found with some adolescents and with some criminals (cf. Balk 1995: 187).

The second level of moral reasoning is known as the *conventional* level and entails a compliance with and preservation of social rules and expectations and is subsequently the level with which most individuals, adolescents and adults operate. People who comply with this level of moral reasoning do so usually because it is for society's best interests (cf. Balk 1995: 187).

Additionally, a minority of adults conform to the *postconventional* level of moral reasoning, thereby adjusting their behaviour according to their own developed and personalised ideas and principles of morality and by committing themselves to the moral principles upon which society's rules are based and grounded (cf. Balk 1995: 187).

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These individuals do not only comply with these rules and principles because of a fear of consequences, but because they truly believe that only good will come from obeying and keeping with these principles.

Finally, Kohlberg states that the type of moral reasoning relevant to a person will inevitably determine the type of relationship such a person has with his/her society. As an example he states that:

> Preconventional individuals perceive rules and social expectations to be externally imposed, conventional individuals have internalized society's rules and expectations, and Postconventional individuals distinguish their identities from the rules of society and work from self-chosen principles that are grounded in the concept of justice.
>
> (Balk 1995: 187-188)

Additional to these levels of moral reasoning, Kohlberg has also developed and identified four different *moral orientations* used by people to reason about moral issues. The first is that of the *normative* orientation, where a person tends to either blame or approve, obey or consult authoritative people and emphasises his/her rights and duties. The second orientation is that of *fairness*, or a fair orientation, where a person tends to maintain impartiality and reciprocity by weighing up different perspectives and by encouraging free agreement amongst people. Another orientation is that of *utilitarianism*, where a person will base all decisions and reasoning strategies in terms of good or bad consequences. Finally, the fourth orientation is that of the perfectionist; where a person will in turn, reason with the use of ideals. Here a person will use terms such as 'self-respect', serving 'human dignity', or maintaining and upholding 'autonomy' (cf. Balk 1995: 188).

Firstly, it is important to note that people will reason differently about real moral problems as opposed to hypothetical problems, as other factors also play a role in reasoning, such as one's emotional state and personal, real-life experience of the dilemma (cf. Balk 1995: 188). Secondly, Kohlberg also states that moral development and moral reasoning is in essence a function of the cognition and that the general sequence in which one reasons is constant and universal. He adds that experience is the main force behind the manner in which people will reason about moral issues, as it leads people to think about social behaviour, take in the information provided and use it to construct or reconstruct the primary principles which regulate their moral thought and behaviour (cf. Balk 1995: 189). One must also note that people tend to reconstruct their moral

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principles with hesitation, and would rather change their moral principles gradually, instead of making drastic changes (cf. Balk 1995: 189).

It is interesting to note that Balk (1995: 208) has found that moral reasoning might have very little, or even no connection with moral action. As an example he states: "A college student may know the Postconventional principles that come to bear when faced with a real situation [...] but may act out of self-interest when actually confronted with the situation". This might just be true for the co-researchers of this study, where their moral reasoning does not comply with their moral actions. For example, they state that a 'real' man must protect, honour and respect a woman, while at the same time admitting that they use girls for sexual pleasure.

It is difficult to determine in which stage each co-researcher might find himself, and, diagnosis is not the purpose of this study. However, it would seem that Kgotoso might operate in terms of the preconventional level as he seems to either take part in actions or behaviour based on the advantages he will receive from taking part in such behaviour. For example, he states that he will not protect someone he does not know, as he will not put his own life or safety at stake in engaging in such altruistic behaviour. Although he acknowledges that his behaviour is not right, he does expect a girl to satisfy his sexual urges, although he gets annoyed with her afterwards, thereby admitting that he engages in such activities purely because of the advantages that he will receive from this activity, and irrelevant of the consequences for the girl. This in turn might indicate that Kgotoso's moral orientation conforms to that of the utilitarian.

Molimi, on the other hand, seems to function on the conventional and even at times, the postconventional level, where he acknowledges and tries to abide by society's rules, as he realises that this is the best for everyone involved. His behaviour is more destructive towards himself, than for other people around him. Additionally, he states that he believes that he should protect everyone, even strangers as "what comes around goes around", thereby acknowledging the reciprocity of social behaviour. During the second Tree of Life camp Molimi wrote the following story:

> **Title: Three Magical Stones**
>
> Long long time ago there was a boy named Molimi. He was a very lonely and sad boy without parents but only a brother was there to support him financially. One day Sunday afternoon he decided to rest a bit and slept. He had a dream and in the dream he was very successful but not rich. He could afford life. In the dream he was visited by the three angels and every angel gave him a wish stone.

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> The first stone he wished that his parents were alive and they were staying together. The second stone he wished that he had all the riches in the world. The third stone he wished that he was the best DJ in the whole wide world. Everything was the way he wanted. He live all his life with everything he wanted.
>
> Until one day his parents had to divorce, everybody wanted all the money he had and his wife gave him HIV/Aids. The phone ringed in his dream and that was an alarm waking him up. He woke up realising that it was all a dream. So he started to take life as it is and stop blaming God for taking his parents. He started to work his way up and focus on God.

Through this story it is clear that Molimi does not value materiality and money as much as he does happiness and contentment with his life. He has almost made peace with the fact that he might not be rich, while at the same time expressing his longing for having a happy family. This might indicate that he has already developed his own moral principles which he uses to live by for his own good and the good of the society, and which governs his development into adulthood and ensures that he stays on the right path towards real happiness. He has also reached a level of moral maturity where he made peace with the loss of his parents; moreover, it seems that he is very realistic in stating that yes it could've been different; however, it might not have been better. This indicates a very mature level of morality which few people reach ever in their life, by acknowledging that sometimes it does not help to dwell on the past and engage in "what if…" scenarios, but rather accept the past and make the best of it. Furthermore, Molimi makes it clear why he chooses to accept the past and move on and what or who enables him to do so: "So he started to take life as it is and stop blaming God for taking his parents. He started to work his way up and focus on God". Therefore, it is safe to say that Molimi has developed a clear sense of moral principles, moral reasoning or moral orientation, which is based on his focus on God and what God *can* do for him, instead of what he *has* done. Thus, we can state that Molimi has indeed developed into the level of the postconventional moral reasoning stage. Therefore, one might also think that Molimi has the moral orientation of a perfectionist, as it seems as if he believes and reaches for social and religious ideals, not for his own gratification necessarily, but because he believes in dignity, autonomy and respect.

With reference to Manqoba, it is quite difficult to determine in what stage he finds himself. Manqoba does not say much and it is; therefore, difficult to determine his moral reasoning or orientation. Molimi has not accepted his father's lack of wanting to get involved with him and struggles to make sense of where he is moving in his life and what

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God's purpose is for his life. He has; however, a strong sense of what an honourable man is and what an honourable man does. Manqoba finds it difficult; however, to express his beliefs and convictions in the real world, where everyone is not believers. This might indicate that he also functions on the conventional level of moral orientation; however, he might give into enough pressure even though the consequences of his behaviour might be negative for himself or society, because his identity is still foreclosed. Additionally, Manqoba attributes negative experiences to forces outside himself, and this might indicate in turn that he conforms to the normative moral orientation where he blames or approves, obeys or consults authoritative people.

7.4.3. The views of James Fowler

[30]James Fowler developed a theory regarding the level of a person's faith consciousness from childhood to adulthood, where *faith* does not indicate a specific religious commitment, but is rather a term which indicates "… the universal human quest to identify what is of ultimate value, what gives meaning to existence and what enables a person to be connected to others" (Balk 1995: 223). According to Fowler, beliefs indicate the manner in which a person expresses his/her faith; however, much of faith is inexpressible because faith, in nature, does not only indicate conscious beliefs, but also conscious motivations (cf. Balk 1995: 223).

Fowler became specifically interested in how faith, or beliefs develop along the human life span, and after many interviews during his research, he proposed seven stages of faith development across the life arc. The first stage is called *primal faith* and involves a fundamental, primarily emotional response which places much focus and emphasis on trust which counterbalances mistrust. This stage enables an infant to experience separation without experiencing accompanying fear or anxiety. Therefore, this stage, which occurs in infancy, is the foundation upon which the child's faith can grow and should be nurtured within the safe boundaries of a secure and stable family. Subsequently, Fowler speaks of the family as being the 'incubator' of faith development for any child. This stage is based on Fowler's belief that humans have an innate tendency for make meaning from their experiences (cf. Balk 1995: 225).

The second stage (*synthetic-conventional faith*) comprises of childhood imagination and relates specifically to a child's development of a conscience which helps the child to

[30] James Fowler (1981, 1991)

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develop an increasing awareness of the moral standards upheld in his/her family or social context. This stage emerges generally no later than the age of three (cf. Balk 1995: 225).

The second stage is followed by the stage of a *mythic-literal faith*, which is much dependent on a child or adolescent's development of concrete operations and his/her ability to understand the perspectives of other people. Therefore, stage number three is characterised by a child or adolescent's ability to develop and use various narratives in sharing their experiences, and in developing and sharing the meaning of these experiences entailed in the narratives. Stage three generally occurs during middle childhood and can last up to early adolescence (cf. Balk 1995: 225).

The fourth stage in faith development is called *synthetic-conventional faith* and involves a growing interest in developing interpersonal relationships, which includes the development of a personal beliefs system, thereby making commitments, both to people and to the belief. During this stage a transformation in cognition takes place which helps the adolescent to form and develop their worldviews in relation to the people they meet and the experiences they gain. These experiences help them to orientate themselves with regards to the meaning of human existence and their search for truth (cf. Balk 1995: 225).

The fifth stage generally happens between late adolescence and young adulthood (although some people have been known to enter this stage as early as age 13) and is called *individuative-reflective faith*. This stage is characterised by two distinctive changes in a person's identity, the first being an examination, evaluation and restructuring of a person's values and beliefs, and happens as the person makes a conscious decision in doing so, as opposed to being forced to accept unexamined commitments and traditions. The second important change in identity is the growing understanding of the self where a person decides and chooses the roles and responsibilities he/she will assume, as opposed to having choices imposed on him/her. Therefore, in this stage a person will seek foundations which underlie the roles and responsibilities he/she wants to assume. This is generally a characteristic of an achieved identity, as stated by Erikson (cf. Balk 1995: 226).

During a person's midlife years, more or less around the age of 40, a person can move into the sixth stage of faith development, referred to as *conjunctive faith*, which involves the acceptance and embracement of paradoxes experienced during life as part of the human condition. Here an individual accepts that life is filled with contradictions and

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subsequently moves beyond the enticement of imposing meaning on to the world, thereby allowing the world to disclose herself (cf. Balk 1995: 226).

The seventh and final stage unfortunately circumvents most people as very few people have entered this stage before the age of 60. This stage is called *universalizing faith* and involves an escape of the idea that a person is the centre of value. Here a person reaches a new understanding of empathy thereby allowing them to identify with the perspectives of others and also, the perspective of God (cf. Fowler 1991: 41). People who find themselves in this stage can usually be identified by their strong will to fight oppression and violence and further love and justice (cf. Balk 1995: 226-227).

In conclusion, Fowler (1991: 34) calls these stages of faith the "… evolving patterns of constructive knowing" (Balk 1995: 225).

Once again, it is very difficult to make a decision with regards to the developmental stage of the co-researchers' faith; however, one can state with relative confidence that all the co-researchers move on a continuum between stages three and five, depending on the worldview and changes in identity made in accordance with beliefs and their development of and commitment to a specific belief system. Kgotoso seems to have some difficulties in *wanting* to understand the perspectives of other people; however, he can articulate his own experiences and that of his twin brother and also attribute meaning to their narratives. It seems as if Kgotoso is still very much focussed on himself and has not made a conscious decision to adapt his identity as to accommodate different values and beliefs which are not imposed on him. It might of course also be that he just has not articulated this change in identity. Manqoba seems to be moving into stage five, where he seems to be developing a value and belief system independent of those imposed on him; however, he finds it difficult to live in the freedom of this adapted change of his identity. Molimi also seems to be in stage five for quite some time, but also finds it difficult to stay true to himself and his commitments to his values and beliefs.

7.4.4. Attachment and Spiritual Development from Childhood to Adolescence

The attachment of a child to his/her mother or father plays a particularly big role in the understanding of a child's socio-emotional development which will influence the development of a religious or faith identity and his/her commitment towards a religious body or institution, as faith is both a social and emotional phenomenon. Some scholars have found that infant-caregiver attachment can predict a child's level of empathy, social

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competence, ego resilience, externalisation and internalisation and possible behavioural problems later in life (cf. Granqvist and Dickie 2006:198).

A child can either be securely attached or insecurely attached which means that he/she will exhibit a specific attitude towards exploration. A child will generally turn to a caregiver when distressed and the manner in which this caregiver deals with the child's distress will determine the type of attachment a child will develop towards the caregivers or other significant people later in his/her life. When a caregiver helps the child to deal with the distressing situation in a sensitive way, the child's confidence will gradually increase which will enable the child to explore his/her environment and the distressing situation without being overwhelmed, because he/she knows that other people are available if he/she needs comfort or help amidst the distressing situation (cf. Granqvist and Dickie 2006: 198). On the other hand, if the caregiver avoids the child's distress and fails in being available if a distressing situation is experienced, the child either will develop an excessive and passive clinginess towards an inconsistent caregiver while failing to do any exploration of his/her environment, or the child might take part in aggressive and defensive exploration, at the expense of any type of attachment to a significant other (cf. Granqvist and Dickie 2006: 198-199).

Adolescence is of important when considering the attachment theory, as adolescence marks the transitional period where an attachment to caregivers is transferred to peers or other significant people, other than the caregivers. Granqvist and Dickie (2006: 199) describe the transitional period as follows:

> Attachment transfer occurs sequentially, beginning with the proximity maintenance function in early childhood, followed by the safe haven function in midadolescence, and finally the secure base function in early adulthood being primarily directed toward reciprocal relationship partners rather than parents.

A person departs from an attachment usually through his/her search for connectedness, and this connectedness is usually found in a person's personal relationship with God, or another deity. However, it should be noted that whoever replaces the attachment relationship of a caregiver, should meet the stated criteria. These criteria include proximity maintenance, being a safe haven, functioning as a secure base, and finally, the attachment figure should be perceived as being stronger and wiser than the person who creates an attachment, specifically during times of distress. These criteria are then often met in the relationship a person has with God. It has also been shown that the more distress people are experiencing, the more likely they are to turn to God for

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comfort. This shows how people find a safe haven in the being of God. Additionally, God possesses certain qualities which people turn to in provision of a secure base which outweighs any other perceived qualities; while the perception of God as being omnipotent and omniscient provides refuge in a being Who is perceived as stronger and wiser. It must be noted that attachment does not only occur in theistic religions, but also in nontheistic religions where people devote themselves to other beings such as ancestral spirits (cf. Granqvist and Dickie 2006: 199).

Granqvist and Dickie (2006: 199) speak of the compensation hypothesis which states that people, who have experienced insecure attachment bonds with their caregivers, tend to compensate for the lack of such a close attachment by establishing relationships with other people, or other beings as to regulate their feelings of distress, thereby also gaining a new sense of security. Therefore, with reference to religion, such people have a higher tendency for accepting God as a surrogate attachment figure.

Attachment gradually shifts during the development from childhood into adulthood from parents to peers, love partners and God. In middle childhood a child begins to realise that some of their significant others cannot always be readily available as they would like to, thereby shifting their attachment to God as they experience a closeness with God. God then becomes the substitute of a parent and children desire God in anthropomorphic terms. Additionally, during middle childhood children tend to view God in similar ways as they view their parents; however, God becomes the more 'perfect' parent, because He is viewed as "…more powerful, more loving, and more nurturing than their parents" (cf. Granqvist and Dickie 2006: 202). Interestingly, specifically during middle childhood, God is essentially seen as 'loving' and not necessarily as 'punishing'; therefore, children in this stage tend to link the image of their mother with God, rather than the of image their father. During adolescence, the child establishes a closer relationship with God; however, their attachment shifts now more readily to peers and to love partners (cf. Granqvist and Dickie 2006: 202).

Scholars speak of an *internal working model*, adopted by [31]Bowlby from Kenneth Craik, who stated that people have the ability to predict the outcomes of events or their actions with the use of a small scaled brain-model which is used to represent both the external and internal environment of a person. This model enables people to consider various

[31] Bowlby (1988); Kenneth Craik (1943)

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alternative possibilities in their mind, with the use of knowledge and experience gained from the past, and apply it in responding to the present and the future (cf. Johnson-Laird 1983: 179). According to Granqvist and Dickie (2006: 202), the internal working model (IWM) is less important than the IWM of others during adolescence; therefore, perceptions of parents are still strong predictors of the perceptions adolescents hold of God. They state that it is only much later during adolescence that adolescents use the IWM of the self to predict the concept of God (cf. Granqvist and Dickie 2006: 202).

Furthermore, if a strong attachment bond exists between a child and his/her parent[s], it seems that a child will develop stronger loving relationships with other people, including God. These children also tend to see God as powerful only if they see their parents as powerful as well. During attachment the socialisation process of the child becomes important, as parents tend to socialise their children according to their own religious beliefs. In the same way, mothers seem to be extremely important in this socialisation process as the mother often takes it upon herself to teach her children in the ways of her religion. In essence, research has found that parents' involvement with regards to their children's religious experience, contribute to feelings of 'nearness' to God, for the children (cf. Granqvist and Dickie 2006: 202). On the other hand, when a child experiences an insecure attachment, he/she will tend to look for spiritual solutions in recreating such a secure relationship or attachment (cf. Granqvist and Dickie 2006: 205). In the same way a child's image or idea of God, becomes more and more like his/her experience of his/her mother or father. Interestingly, children at a young age tend to see God much more like their fathers, but when they get older, they tend to see God more in the way they see their mothers. When children are separated from their parents or during time of stress, when securely attached, they tend to see God as the 'more' perfect parent. In the case of insecure attachments, children tend to see God much more differently than any one of their parents (cf. Granqvist and Dickie 2006: 206).

Additionally, it seems that adolescents will experience a stronger sense of religiosity when they have an insecure attachment to their caregivers, than adolescents who have a secure attachment. However, it must be noted that religiosity can fluctuate under certain circumstances, even for securely attached adolescents. For example, if a securely attached child forms a new attached relationship, he/she can experience an increase in religiosity, but if such a child faces a break from such an attached relationship, he/she tends to experience a decrease in his/her religiosity, especially over an extended period of time (cf. Granqvist and Dickie 2006: 205-206). If the securely

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attached child's caregivers are spiritual or religious, that child will tend to exhibit the same religiosity or spirituality and mimic the same standards as his/her caregivers. If a securely attached child again, enters a new close relationship other than the one he/she had with his/her caregivers, he/she might experience a change in religiosity, depending on the religiosity and spirituality of the love partner, or close friend. Therefore, a positive relationship exists between a securely attached individual and his/her new partner with reference to religiosity (cf. Granqvist and Dickie 2006: 206).

On the other hand, an insecurely attached individual might use God as a replacement attachment-like figure, especially in the case of a stress-provoking event; therefore, religion or spirituality is used as a regulatory strategy. It has been found that children who experience distress or who are continuously facing risks tend to see God as loving and powerful, more so than children who are securely attached. Thus, in such a case religion provides the security which is needed by such a child, or adolescent, to function more effectively. It has also been suggested that insecurely attached adolescents tend to go on a religious quest where they want to 'earn' security; therefore, suggesting that religiosity in such a case, does not only serve as a security basis, but also as a self-integrating system where *more* security is gained when one is *more* religious or more spiritual (cf. Granqvist and Dickie 2006: 206).

It is clear from the above information, when compared to the narratives of the co-researchers that most, if not all the co-researchers, find their security in their relationship with God. They all tend to see God in terms of motherly-characteristics, as someone who protects, who guides and is more powerful than anyone else they know. It also seems as if all the co-researchers received their religiosity from their mothers, because of a close, secure attachment they had with their mothers. None of the boys had a close secure attachment to their fathers, and this might explain why they do not view God so much in fatherly terms or at least in what they have experienced a father to be. They state that God is like a father to them, because God protects and guides; and they know that these are qualities expected of an earthly father as well, but their personal experiences have taught them differently. None of the co-researchers have developed a close and loving relationship with either a peer or another significant person; therefore, it makes sense that God is now the replacement of that secure attachment. It would be interesting to see if they do develop an intimate relationship with another, if their sense of religiosity would increase or decrease. It is important also to note that the guidance they receive from PEN has definitely increased their religiosity, but all the care workers

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from PEN are female; therefore, they once again, receive spiritual guidance from a motherly figure as opposed to a fatherly figure; thereby reinstating their view of God as a mother.

7.4.5. The family as context for religious and spiritual development in children and youth

Spirituality and religiosity are many times connected to both a person's emotional and mental experiences and life. Therefore, emotionally-laden events such as death, illness, trauma, despair, joy, hope guilt, shame, sexuality and identity, will inevitably be affected by religion and spirituality. However, these experiences can also in turn affect one's spirituality and religiosity as people and children turn to the various resources available to them from their spiritual and religious background, to construct narratives of meaning, comprehension and purpose (cf. Wagener and Malony 2006: 140). Additional to this, adolescence includes a time where young people start thinking about their past, their roots and consider ways in which they can be valuable and play a part in their culture and society. Therefore, if an adolescent wants to develop a stable and secure identity, he/she needs to draw from models, or experiences available to them through their own context, while, ironically, defining themselves in a unique and individual way. Adolescence is also a time of idealism, where anything is possible. This can lead some young people to join new movements and to engage in novel activities in their search for meaning and truth. In the creation of a new sense of self, religiosity and spirituality are also explored and discovered; therefore, becoming an essential part of their identity formation. However, for most adolescents, such exploration will take place within the safe haven of their family life, where they can also receive guidance and gain information regarding possibilities available to them (cf. Wagener and Malony 2006: 140).

It is interesting to note that emerging research has found that children's perception of their parents' beliefs has a greater influence on their own beliefs, than that which their parents proclaim or report to believe. In other words, what parents do or say in terms of religion, is less important than what they think they believe (cf. Boyatzis and Dollahite 2006: 301). Therefore, it is more about what is modelled to the children and what non-verbal behaviour tells to the children, than verbalised information.

Additional to the type of messages communicated or perceived in the context of a family, is the importance of narrative in communicating meaning and purpose. This is then also one of the main purposes of religions – to communicate through stories of tradition, the

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meaning of living in the world, and one's purpose within this world in relation to other people and to a "transcendent divinity". As such, narrative is also in essence the foundation of familial meaning making and; therefore, the narrative of personal religion or spirituality will become part of this greater familial narrative. Therefore, within such families each person can affect and be affected by the family religion and/or spirituality. (cf. Boyatzis and Dollahite 2006: 301-302). During research done by Boyatzis and Dollahite (2006: 301) they have found that adolescents from religious families experienced an increased sense of purpose and direction in their lives, stronger ties with their family members and an increased sense of confidence. They also found that in general the mother plays a bigger role in conveying religiosity to children, than the father. Reasons given for why mothers in general have a bigger influence are that mothers tend to attend worship services more often; children see their mothers praying, more often than seeing the fathers enter prayer, and mothers verbalise their beliefs more often and more openly than fathers do. Additionally, mothers tend to be more open about their feelings and as a consequence children turn more openly to their mothers in discussing important and emotional matters (cf. Boyatzis and Dollahite 2006: 302).

Religion can also have a positive influence on men, especially on fathers, as it has been found to encourage greater father involvement, a greater commitment to children and the marriage as opposed to unaffiliated fathers. In turn, an increase in father involvement is often linked to positive outcomes for the children and adolescent boys who have been raised in a family that is part of a religious community are less likely to become young fathers outside of marriage. Therefore, for many affiliated fathers, their faith and religiosity act as motivators for their involvement with their family (cf. Boyatzis and Dollahite 2006: 302).

When considering the above information with reference to the narratives of the co-researchers, one can state that a lack of a father figure might put them at risk in becoming young fathers as well. However, most of the co-researchers received a solid basis of their religion from their mothers and adhere to the religions of their mothers. It might be true that this inheritance might encourage them to be more involved with their families. All the co-researchers have voiced their need in being a better husband and father than they had, thereby acknowledging the value of a father and a husband in the family. All of the co-researchers also stated that from a religious point of view, this is what is expected of men from God, as God models the perfect father.

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7.4.6. The African Worldview and its influence on spiritual narratives

Although all the co-researchers of this study are Christians, they do have their roots in traditional African Religion, notwithstanding the fact that they are not as much influenced by it anymore. This little influence of African Religion might perhaps be because of the changes in the composition of culture as people moved from rural to urban areas. One would note that in South African urban areas a fusion of culture, language and; therefore, also religion took place. Although most of the co-researchers are Tswana, Xhosa or Sotho, they also speak a language which is intermixed with different dialects. A rural person would for example state that the people from the 'city' do not speak a pure language and do not adhere anymore to traditional customs.

All the co-researchers are in agreement that ancestry worship, for example, is not acceptable as a Christian. Through the telling of narratives; however, some reminiscence of traditional African Religion does appear. Therefore, it might be important to take a good look at what is meant by "African Religion" so that we will be able to see what influence it really has in the construction of the co-researchers' narratives.

When referring to African Religion we must first consider their concept of a Supreme Being. According to Kruger, Lubbe and Steyn (2009: 36), African Religions tend to describe their Supreme Being in terms of activities or places of abode, and that this Supreme Being is seen as the creator and upholder of all living things. In the Batswana traditional religion (which also includes the ideas of the Sothos and Pedis), God is commonly known as 'Modimo'. 'Modimo' was not traditionally seen as a person, or as something who had human qualities, such as fatherhood – this idea was possibly injected by the first Christian missionaries (cf. Kruger, Lubbe and Steyn 2009: 45). Instead the Batswanas thought of 'Modimo' as an active energy which initiates and maintains action and interaction and which is the source of all living things. Therefore, it would be more accurate to refer to 'Modimo' as a divinity or 'it', than 'God' or 'him' (cf. Kruger et al. 2009: 45).

Furthermore, the Batswanas' idea of Modimo represents the way that they see the whole cosmos – as a unity. They believe that the unity between the different aspects of the universe, namely the whole cosmos, gods and people, are part of the primordial foundation of the universe and that this unity, or sometimes referred to as totality, can also be seen as a 'being' on its own, which exists independently from everything else. Therefore, 'Modimo' is here seen as the highest form of this energetic, independent

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totality. The creation itself is identified with Modimo, and; therefore, people are also seen as sharing in this energy which in its highest form is Modimo. Therefore, the Batswana people state that: “a person is Modimo” (“Motheke Modimo”), which means that they have a share in this divine energy (cf. Kruger et al. 2009: 46).

Because Modimo is energy, and because all of the cosmos shares in this divinity, Modimo can either be a person or a power, depending on how it is seen in a specific circumstance. It seems as if this ‘Modimo’ does not expect any specific cultic worship and; therefore, some people tend to see It as a distant God, meaning that although it is present in everything and every situation, it does not concern itself with interfering with daily life (cf. Kruger et al. 2009: 46; van Dyk 2005: 116).

Additional to “Modimo”, the Batswana also believe in ‘Medimo”, which refers to demigods which are seen as only *partly* divine beings, part of the manifestations of the Supreme Being. Kruger et al. (2009: 46) state that these beings should actually be seen as ‘personalities’ which are manifested through the Supreme Being, Modimo. Medimo; therefore, personifies different attributes of Modimo, with the aim of bringing people closer to Modimo. Medimo should not be confused with “Badimo”, which in turn refers to the ancestors. The ancestors are not seen as deities or spirits, but actually refer to a person’s deceased parents, who function, even though deceased, still as guides for people still living on earth. Therefore, ancestors can in fact not be worshipped as many literatures insinuate. However, although Badimo refers to deceased people, they are not mere humans – they still share in the divinity of Modimo; therefore, the word Badimo, stems from the word Modimo. Although people also share in the divinity of Modimo, they are not ancestors (cf. Kruger et al. 2009: 46-47). Ancestors; therefore, are not human, because they are not subjected by the limitations of the flesh, or of the human body, but are still seen as “… moral, just and never partial” (Kruger et al. 2009: 47). It can be stated; therefore, that ancestors are the guardians of the morality of the Batswana community, who communicate insight to the people of the community, insights which are seen as divine and never misleading (cf. Kruger et al. 2009: 47). Van Dyk (2005: 116) in turn states that these ancestors are seen as a very important part of the everyday lives of the tribe, as they are benevolent beings, whose sole purpose is to preserve the honour, customs and traditions of the community or tribe, by protecting the living people against evil or destructive forces. However, she states that these ancestors can easily withdraw their protection when upset, which will allow illness to inflict people. Therefore, they do not cause illness or bad things, but they allow it. This

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relationship can then be restored quite easily through offerings and/or sacrifices (cf. van Dyk 2005: 116).

The Zulus, as some other African tribes, believe that when a person dies and when he/she is buried, he/she will not necessarily become an ancestor. The families must have additional services with additional rituals, even a year after death, to ensure that the deceased stays in the memories of the people, so that he/she can become an ancestor (cf. Kruger et al. 2009: 49). The ancestors play a very important role in the lives of the Zulu people, as they are also seen as a bridge between the Supreme Being (called *uMvelinqangi* in the case of the Zulus) and the people and their involvement is seen as essential for good health, fertility, having good crops and ensuring rain. Therefore, the Zulus will consult the ancestors regularly and engage in extensive rituals through ceremonies, where animals are slaughtered as offerings and sacrifices. Therefore, bad things happening to people, or to the community is often seen as the result of displeased ancestors (cf. Kruger et al. 2009: 49-50).

Additionally, the Batswana has a *Ngaka*, or the diviner, who is seen as the facilitator of positive relation between the supernatural powers, or divinities and the Batswana people. This *Ngaka*, is a very important link with the powerful spirits who inevitably decide the fate of the people. The *Ngaka* is then also like a doctor, who can tell his patients what the ancestors say, or what their wishes are (cf. Kruger et al. 2009: 47). Without this person the Batswana will never know what is expected of them, or what they did wrong (in other words why they are being punished). In the Zulu culture, this doctor is referred to as the *isangoma*, who is mostly a woman, although men can also be an *isangoma*. Additional to the duties of the Ngaka, the isangoma is primarily responsible for maintaining and restoring the health and well-being of the community. As such, the isangoma has the duty to discern the causes of misfortune by deciding if it is the work of the ancestors or the work of malevolent witches (cf. Kruger et al. 2009: 50).

It can be stated that African Religions are mostly concerned with the maintenance of life, where life is maintained through relationships. Therefore, for the traditional African, life is not about being, but rather about belonging, because a sense of belonging ties everything in the cosmos together, and this will in turn, generate power. Therefore, community life is quite important, because God created the world wherein individuals live and gave them laws and taboos so that individuals can live together in harmony. Thus,

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in the traditional African life, individual people make individual choices within the boundaries of the community (cf. Kruger et al. 2009: 40). Kruger et al. (2009: 40) state:

> While the freedom of the individual is not denied, it is stressed that this freedom is part of the corporate freedom of the community (the living and the deceased).

From this sense of community life, emerged the concept of Ubuntu, more fully explained through the statement of: "*Umuntungumuntungabantu*", which means: "I am because you are" (Higgs and Smith 2006: 47). In essence, Ubuntu acknowledges that true self exists within the relationship with others, and that we are only human because of others. Ubuntu is really a commitment of all people to live in peace with one another despite the many differences that South Africans share, and as such forms part of South Africa's multi-party democracy (cf. Higgs and Smith 2006: 47).

As stated in the beginning of this section, the co-researchers state that they are not as much influenced by African Religion; however, it seems as if some of these ideas are present in their speech and in their narratives. For example, Manqoba stated that he does not understand why God made him fail two subjects, as if the passing of his academics lies solely on the powers of God. In the same way many of the co-researchers tend to blame misfortune on external divine powers, or malevolent people. The sense of personal accountability and responsibility does not seem to feature in their thinking; perhaps because this idea is part of western thought. Although the co-researchers seem to understand the causes of HIV and Aids, they do not seem to be aware of the possibility in being infected with this disease if they take part in activities which place them at risk. They stated that they do not think about this disease even while realising the risk. Van Dyk (2005: 117) states that in Zambia, witchcraft is many times believed as being the cause for HIV transmission and infection, as they cannot understand how one person can be infected while another person also had intercourse with the same woman, and not be infected. One of the female participants in this study, in explaining the antagonistic attitude of her aunt towards her and her deceased mother, stated that she believes that her aunt is a witch and that she bewitched her mother. She did not say that her mother had HIV because of the evil spell, but rather that her symptoms were in some way related to the spell (TOL Camp February 2010).

Throughout the narratives of the co-researchers, it became clear that they saw God as the Punisher and as someone, when displeased, will punish, with both disease and death. Although they state that they do see God as a Father, they also seem to think that an essential role of this Fatherhood is to punish. Therefore, much ambivalence is

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noticed within their narratives with regards to God's role as protector, but also punisher when He sees fit, even though it might not seem logical. In the same way all the co-researchers, except for Kgotoso, believed that God punished them in taking their mothers away, although they cannot articulate what they did wrong in deserving this punishment. What is also interesting is how easily they made peace with this idea, that they were punished, and how they still believe that God protects them and has a plan for them. These ideas might have their origin in the African belief that gods have the power to punish when displeased. However, one cannot help to wonder, if this is the case, how they plan to please God again, if they want Him to be pleased again. It might be that they have perhaps given up on trying, as Molimi stated, that he knows what is expected of a Christian, it is just difficult to live according to these ways in modern society. It is also clear that despite God's punishment, they believe that God has not withdrawn His protection over their lives.

Another thing which must be addressed is the idea of Ubuntu. The co-researchers have all stated that in their community, it is "every man for himself" and that community life is not what it was many years ago. In asking them what they think of the idea of Ubuntu, they state that they have not experienced this in their lives. In fact, most of the co-researchers were rejected by their own extended family. One of the female participants stated that some families will take care of the orphaned children, only if they receive grants from social development. In this case then, the child is often seen as the domestic worker – someone who is expected to earn this gesture of 'grace'. This lack of Ubuntu in the urban communities is many times visible in the many child-headed households where children are the heads of the house. Many of these children never receive a helping hand from either a neighbour or a family member. The co-researchers stated that if PEN did not take them in, they would still be living on the streets. With this, I (the researcher) am not saying that Ubuntu never existed, but rather that it is slowly fading away and that the South African welfare system cannot necessarily rely on the general community to help with the flood of orphans as a result of HIV and Aids. It can also be that the community is so overwhelmed by their own experiences of poverty and illnesses, that they just do not have the resources to help another. It can also be that this fusion of African traditions with Western thought might result in a new culture, a new thought which builds its foundations not on individualism or communism with the aim of peace and strife, but on survival, with the aim of staying alive day-to-day, amidst poverty, lack of job opportunities, disease and crime. The question might be asked if we, as a community, can *afford* lending a helping hand, without coming short ourselves, or

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without being the victim of crime and disease. Therefore, it might not be a case of losing our traditional values or sense of community, but in fact just trying to stay alive…

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CHAPTER 8

WHOSE SON ART THOU, THOU YOUNG MAN?

> 57 And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. 58 And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.
>
> – 1 Samuel 17: 57-58 (NKJV) –

This chapter is concerned with giving a description of experiences, which are thickened through interdisciplinary investigation. The heading was chosen because of the informative nature of King Saul's question. Hamilton (2008: 260-261) states that Saul is in fact asking about David's roots, in amazement and ridicule, while at the same time inherently asking David to renounce Jesse as his father, thereby asking him to renounce his roots and upbringing. This corresponds with the inquisitive nature of this seventh step in the Practical Theological process, where an enquiry is made to the roots and stock of the co-researchers, from different perspectives. In the same way that Saul has a perspective, David, Goliath and God, respectively, have a different perspective of David's roots and stock – all of these perspectives are important in understanding David in his holistic nature.

8.1. Reflection of a co-researcher

One of the co-researchers provided a short reflection on his experience of the two camps and the group discussions during the camps. This reflective discussion took place on 30 June 2010. The name of the co-researcher will stay anonymous.

In response to the question of how he experienced the content of the discussions, he stated that he became more aware of his own manliness. Referring to the story of David and how David trusted in God, he stated:

> …remember when David trusted God with his impending victory against that extra-huge human Goliath, well to me it is sort of a biblical teaching to all men that, even though the male ego drives us sometimes, but there will always be someone we need; to guide, save and even help us conquer our battles, which is exactly what David did – believing in God and even asking the power to conquer.

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He furthermore stated that he does identify with David, in that he also consults his "one and only Saviour" which is God. He additionally added that the story made him think about his own life and how he can handle the challenges of life, as a man, "…from the spiritual giant himself – David; One which is to have faith in whatever you truly believe in, to be patient in whatever situation as well as having the courage to persevere...later!!!".

In asking if the story was in anyway insightful or helpful to him, he responded:

> Yes the story was indeed, helpful for me especially when I tend to compare myself with David. I mean, I'm also small physically and yet taken advantage of by many people. So I think my situation is more or less the same as David's; but then that doesn't seem as a disadvantage to me since I read the story of David you know!..and yah., from the story I also learnt that as a man, or even women themselves, in whatever you want you have to be diligent, perseverant and even carry the patience all the way in order to reach at whatever height we want to see ourselves.

In terms of his relationship with God and how he views God he stated that the story of David made him realise that with the power of God and with God on his side, he can face any challenge, no matter how big and they (him and God) will conquer the challenge together. However, he states that David's unfailing faith in God and the way he praised God made him realise that he might not dedicate his life, as a Christian, enough to God.

In response to the question if the story of David had any relevance to his life, he stated that he cannot put himself a hundred percent in David's shoes, but nevertheless the story was and is indeed relevant to the challenges that people experience even today, the challenges only differ in content, but not in solution.

8.2. Reflection of a care worker

One care worker from the organisation Heartbeat did some of the interviews on the researcher's behalf, as she is working with these co-researchers on a daily basis and has already gained their trust. She is also from a Batswana African culture and could; therefore, easily communicate with and relate to them. I asked her to also reflect on the process. She and the two boys who were the co-researchers will stay anonymous, as requested. Both boys are age 14 and orphaned. This reflective discussion took place on 12 July 2010. The discussion will be presented here in question-answer format.

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1) When you listened to Anonymous 1's story, what were your concerns regarding him, his familial experiences or experiential context as a social worker?

This young boy has experienced double trauma in his life, because after losing his mother he lost her grandmother whom he had grown to believe that she is going to raise him. So this young man and his siblings had to live with relatives as the grannie's house was sold by his aunties. It was at this stage that Anonymous 1 had to live with his aunt, his mother never had a house of her own leaving her children in the hands of relatives. The boy has accepted his situation as a result talks about it freely on a first person level because he has developed a coping mechanism.

2) When you listened to Anonymous 2's story, what were your concerns regarding him, his familial experiences or experiential context as a social worker?

Anonymous 2 is one child that I can proudly say he is a survivor because he has not only managed to deal with his loss, but has also managed to deal with his HIV status as well. He is very clever in school and is doing very well healthwise and clearly understands what being HIV positive means and talks about it freely when there is an awareness on HIV.

3) What do you think is your discipline's (social work) unique perspective on these stories and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table (amongst other disciplines such as psychology and theology)?

Empathy and being non-judgemental to the clients' challenge or problem situation.

4) Why do you think your perspective will be understood and appreciated by people from other disciplines (such as theology and psychology and maybe anthropology)?

The majority of people understand that all these disciplines are the same I also share the same sentiment, because I also understand that all the above mentioned disciplines deal with human behaviour and try to assist people to better deal with their challenges.

5) How did you experience the interview process? Did the boys open up easily or were they hesitant?

The interview has been a learning curve for me and the boys opened up easily because of the good trustworthy relationship I have with them and because they have accepted

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their lives challenge which made quite easy for them to talk about their problem situation.

6) What do you think were the hardest themes for them to discuss?

Having to talk about their fathers that they do not know and wish to know them, they would like to know why their fathers never bothered to know them and how they are doing; although they are happy and fine with the parental guidance that they are getting from their relatives.

7) From your point of view, how do you think these boys view their masculinity in their community?

They are aware that they are young man who will grow up to take good care of their grandmother and their siblings. They do want to finish school, marry and work hard to raise their children.

8) What role models to you think these boys have in being a man in their community or family, if any?

These children are being raised in a church where they get to see a lot of gentlemen with respect and they are being taught to respect other people especially the grown up people in their lives.

9) What do you think are the major consequences of not having a father figure for these boys?

They long to feel or experience how it feels like to have a father, otherwise they are doing well and are happy although they will always feel that gap in their hearts.

10) How do you think these boys view God, similarly and differently?

They have been raised in church and have faith in the miracles that God has done or performed in this world that we are living in.

11) Do you think that the absence of a father figure has an influence on their view of/relationship with God? If so, please elaborate.

No

8.3. Interdisciplinary reflection and interpretation

As part of the postfoundational notion of rationality, is the idea of Transversality which explores understandings and interpretations beyond the specific and locally embedded

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context and discipline (in this case Practical Theology) by engaging in cross-cultural and interdisciplinary conversation. Van Huyssteen (1999: 136) states that: "Transversal rationality thus emerges as a place in time and space where our multiple beliefs and practices, our habits of thought and attitudes, our prejudices and assessments, converge. The texture of this transversality, thus resides in the domain of our social, communal and institutional practices". Based on this I, the researcher, have the imperative to move beyond my own discipline in exploring other rationalities regarding the topic at hand. Therefore, I invited four conversationalists from different disciplines to engage in interdisciplinary conversation with me, based on the three constructed narratives. I used the pseudonyms of three of my co-researchers, constructed a summary of their narratives and gave these narratives to the conversationalists with the aim of gathering their reflection, based on the following three questions:

1) When reading the story of Molimi, Manqoba and Kgotoso, what do you think would each of their concerns be?

2) How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?

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

Molimi was labelled Story 1, Kgotoso Story 2 and Manqoba Story 3. Here are the stories as sent to the conversationalists, followed by each scholar's reflection[32]:

Story 1:

Molimi – "Farmer"

Molimi (Sepedi meaning 'farmer') was born in Nylstroom in Limpopo. His parents were separated since he was a baby and his grandparents passed away when he was very young. Molimi lost his mother in 1998 after a long illness, and his father passed away two years following his mother's death. He states that the loss of his father did not affect him as much, because his father was never part of his life and that the loss of his mother did not affect him as much at the time as he was still very young; but now that he

[32] Note that the spelling mistakes were omitted from the stories, but the grammar was kept as is.

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experiences life he misses her and finds it difficult to live without her. In 2003 his cousin committed suicide.

Molimi has an older brother and cousin and he used to live with them in a flat in the inner city of Pretoria, then he had a fight with his brother and he was allowed to live at Precious Pearls. At present (2010) Molimi lives alone in a flat with some friends, as he ran away from his brother's house (after he was expelled from Precious Pearls) because of frequent physical abused suffered at the hands of his brother. Molimi experiences much ambivalence towards his brother, as his brother was the one who looked after him since his parents passed away and in many ways guided him with regards to issues of life.

However, his brother is an alcoholic, who introduced Molimi to alcohol from a very young age. When he was drunk, he used to physical abuse his girlfriend and Molimi and the next day he will not remember what he has done. Molimi states: "*My brother drinks when he stresses and beats us up, I pray to God for help and then fall asleep*". So one day it became too much for Molimi and he ran away.

To make matters even more confusing for Molimi, his brother found him a flat when he ran away and currently pays the rent on behalf of Molimi. Molimi; therefore, feels that he owes his brother much as he is the only "father figure" he knew. In response to the question if there is anyone in his life he feels he needs to obey, he responded that he needs to obey his brother because he supports Molimi financially. He does accept his brother with his mistakes and still speaks of him with respect; however, in response to the question if anyone has failed him before, he states: "*It was my brother, he failed me with many things".*

Molimi states that life was very difficult for him. When he was left alone with his brother they struggled to survive, he states:

> We had sleep at night not knowing whether they [are] going [to] evict us the following day or what. So that was a very hurtful experience for me personally.

Looking at the positive side, he states that he grew up quickly and learned how to fend for himself:

> [I] am not staying with my brother or a guarding. That teaches me how to be responsible at a very young age. My college life is also hectic because I have to work under pressure so that I can produce good results for the bursary to carry on.

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Molimi states that he is quite good at entertaining people by dancing, playing music or even acting. He says that his friends would describe him as a funny person, and someone they can talk 'straight' with. In describing his strengths, he states that he is a good listener and he can make decisions and take instructions. He tells a tale of a competition they had at PEN, and he won "*Not because I want to rule is because I can listen and take instructions*" (TOL workbook October 2008)

Currently (2010) Molimi is enrolled for an IT course at college and is also a DJ at night. He says that he feels proud of himself in being able to pass school and study further and living his dream of making music, but at the same time he has disappointed himself. Molimi states indirectly that he has a problem with alcohol. He finds himself drunk a lot of times and then he does things which he knows is wrong. He is very hard on himself about an incident at a recent PEN camp, where he was caught having sex with one of the younger school girls who also lives in Precious Pearls. Because of this he was expelled from Precious Pearls. The rest of the boys also joke around with him as he might possibly have fathered a child. Molimi states the following regarding the incident:

> The reason I moved out of Precious Pearls in 2008 is that we were at a camp (sea camp) and I had this thing with a girl – we did something bad – we came home and I did it with a girl who lives at Precious Pearls, it was not right what we did, especially because it was at a Christian camp. This thing changed my life – I don't like life, I drink each and every day alcohol. I don't know why I drink, I think I'm used to the city life – I'm doing things I'm not proud (TOL camp February 2010, informal discussion).

Molimi's story contains much ambivalence. As one of the co-researchers of this study, Molimi struck me as someone with a high moral intelligence and someone who clearly respects God. For example, in response to the question of what a real man is, Molimi answered: "*Identify his mistakes and repent, must be good ... [It is] your mentality, to make your family happy*" (TOL camp February 2010, informal discussion). Furthermore, in response to the question of what is your biggest storm, he replied:

> The fact that I want to live a Christian life but it seems difficult the people around me don't give me that support. We go clubs and all that, but I'm planning to cut them because that is the only way I can live my life as a Christian. My other storm was my abusive brother who abused me physically. He always came home drunk and beat us (me and his girlfriend).

In reference to how Molimi views God's presence during his struggles, Molimi states:

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> God has played and still [play] a very important role in my life. Like last year when I was staying at Precious Pearls. [33]I was too old to stay there so I had to leave the place and I didn't know where to go but I still went of the place and stayed at a friend's place. So I had the time to fix things with my brother. That was God's sign showing me the right way.

In conclusion to Molimi's wishes for his tree, he states:

> I would love to see my tree planted next to the valley where it will get enough water to survive like having a family and being able to afford life.

It is clear that for Molimi success was not necessarily related to having money, but in being happy, being a good father and husband and keeping one's family happy. In response to the question if he thinks it is possible for a man to be a good man, he stated that he thinks it is possible; however, the world makes it hard for one as it offers many temptations.

Story 2:

Manqoba – "Victory"

Manqoba (Zulu meaning 'victory') was born in Mpumalanga and used to stay with his grandparents in Mpumalanga. In the year 2004 when he turned twelve years of age, Manqoba went to stay with his mother in Pretoria. Manqoba's mother was very ill for three months and then suddenly passed away in 2007, when he was fifteen. He recollects the story and says:

> Yep my mother past away last year on the 3rd of August, well as I've said she was a kind person she wanted something big in life but Satan was so jealous and nothing worked out until she get sick for 3 months and then passed away

After his mother passed away, Manqoba's extended family took all of her belongings. The result is that Manqoba has nothing left which can remind him of his mother. He states that he was very upset and reacted in a "bad way". Afterwards Manqoba was accepted by PEN and went to live in Precious Pearls.

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[33] Note here that first Molimi said he had to leave Precious Pearls because of his age. Only later through the discussion he admitted that he was expelled from the house.

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Manqoba was very sad and still is at present, he finds it difficult to deal with her death. Manqoba has two sisters, one his elder and the other one younger. Manqoba has recently become uncle to the child of his oldest sister, and he feels very proud of that fact. He states that he feels like a man now. In terms of the most important people in his life, Manqoba states:

> My mom is the most important person in my life even though she passed away but she [is] still important and nothing will change. My cousin[s] ... and ... they are also important and my sister who is now taking good care of me she is also important.

Manqoba currently lives in Thembisa with one of his friends and his little sister and two cousins. He wrote matric last year (2009) and failed two subjects. Therefore, he is rewriting those two subjects so that he can go to college one day. During the first camp Manqoba stated that he would like to become a pilot. However, during the second camp Manqoba changed this and stated: "*I want to see myself being successful in different ways namely soccer, graphic design, music composer and being a DJ*". Therefore, it would seem that Manqoba struggles with a career identity.

In responding to the storms Manqoba currently experiences, Manqoba states:

> Well nothing much happened in my life but I tried to sort some things out with my father but he was too busy for me all he did it was to give me money but the thing is I don't want his money all I want is a father who will teach me how to become a men, so nothing really fascinating happened in my life.

And afterwards,

> Well after the camp the only challenge that I went through and still going through was the one of my father. When I tried to give him a second chance in calling me his son after leaving me for no reason. So that's one of the [most] difficult challenges I've ever experienced in my life.

To emphasise the effect of this storm Manqoba furthermore states:

> The greatest storm that I faced was after my mom passed away and my father did not want to take responsibility and that has affected my tree badly and I am trying by all means to overcome it.

It would seem that Manqoba is maturing in many ways, as he states after the first Tree of Life camp his life has changed in terms of how he looks at it (his perspective) – he states that he is now starting to set goals and have plans for the future.

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In terms of Manqoba's future hopes and dreams for himself he states: "*I would hope to find happiness and to live a life that I always wanted to live and I always obey God".* It would seem that Manqoba has not lost hope and believes very strongly in the plan God has for his life: "*... I do have that believe what God has planned my life already although it's a bit tough right now, but I know I will get through it*". Manqoba says that his life has been hard, but he believes in the victory that God has given him to overcome the worst, and that this victory will be the theme of his life.

Story 3:

Kgotoso – "Peace"

Kgotoso (Sesotho for 'peace') was born in Carletonville, North West, and is one of an identical twin. In describing himself he states: *I'm 'Kgotoso' a 17 years old boy. I am a twin brother, I live at the place of safety, I am writing my matric this year and I am a rapper".*

In growing up Kgotoso did not see much of his mother as she worked at a faraway place, but he remembers her visiting once a month and holds these memories as dear: "*I remember sitting together as a family she would crack jokes and spend the little time she had with us*".

Kgotoso experienced a tragedy of events when his father got shot and was killed when he was very small, then a few years later his little sister passed away and then his mother got cancer. He does not state the time period between her illness and her death, but her death came as a shock to him and his brother.

Kgotoso does not have dear memories of his extended family and states: "[*I] don't know much about my father's side but my mother's side are selfish people heartless and they're Xhosa but speak Zulu*". After the death of his mother his extended family rejected him and his brother and they were left alone to fend for themselves. He states that he cannot remember much of his father and sister, but he remembers his mother as humble and always laughing. He states that he found it difficult to deal with her death, but as time passed and as other people extended care towards him and his brother, he can remember his mother with fond memories and not just sadness. He states: "*I just wish my mother was alive to see me getting successful*".

He recalls one such fond memory:

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> At first it was hard but now they came once in my mind in a while and I am coping very well. I remember the Saturday morning when we would be in bed room cracking jokes when [she] would randomly say: "my child who loves me would make me tea", we would both jump off the bed quickly me and my brother would fight over that.

Kgotoso states time after time his closeness to his brother and also his dependence on him for emotional survival. He adamantly describes his twin brother's role in his life as someone who guides him and gives him words of comfort and support: "*My twin he taught me never to run away from my problems*". In affirming this close relationship Kgotoso says:

> The first important person in my life will be my twin. He is the person I have always had, we do things together he goes through everything with me.

Kgotoso still uses the memories of his mother to guide him through life, and through his relationship of shared experiences with his twin brother, he can let her memory live forever. He states that his twin is the first important person in his life, and then his mother, as "*she made me what and who I am today*". Kgotoso's mother does indeed play a big role in his life even today:

> My mother had big dreams about us, I am not from a rich background so my mother always wanted us to continue where she ended so that kind of give me a motivation/ support in whatever I do.

In reflecting on what Kgotoso wishes for himself in the future he adamantly states that he wants to be successful, he wants to be a lawyer and have a lot of money so that he can buy a big house and a big car and live in the suburbs. For Kgotoso success is inevitably linked to money as he believes that this is what his mother also meant by success.

> I want to be a lawyer. I want to have a big house drive an expensive car and I also want to be a hip hop star have a family build a home for those who don't have [one]... I would like to see myself as lawyer and a celebrity at the same time having a big house and riding on big wheels.

Other important people in Kgotoso's life in the present is the 'new' family he found at Precious Pearls, this includes the friends he has who are also orphaned as well as the house mother. He states that in the same way 'normal' families have difficulties, this new family also has its "ups and its downs". To show the importance of this family to him, he states:

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> I was once been given up by a family (which was stormy) and now God gave me back a family which was one of the things I needed in my life family support of life.

He recently experienced a similar 'storm' of loss when two of his close friends left the house. He states that this was one of the difficulties he had to face 'along the road' and that it affected him by losing perspective. Learning from wise words is central in Kgotoso's narratives as he frequently states what he has learned from people. He states that the people from church (PEN) have taught him to hold on to God in every situation and his house mothers taught him that "we become strong from our mistakes".

Music is one of Kgotoso's big passions and he states that for him it is "a form of expression". He mentions that his extended family has now came back into his and his brother's life and that he feels good about that. He mentions however that once again, he has lost his grandmother last year (2009): "*She got shot to death but my tree is [still] healthy*".

8.3.1. Practical Theology

The first interdisciplinary conversationalist was Dr Marinda van Niekerk, director of the FBO and NGO PEN and a scholar from the discipline Practical Theology. Her reflection on each story is as follows, given in the format of question and answer.

Story 1: Molimi

1) When reading the story of Molimi, what do you think would his concerns be?

His concerns might be to find balance between his own values and peer pressure. The pressure would be to conform to a lifestyle going against his beliefs. He would be concerned not to let himself down; having big expectations.

2) How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?

His awareness of God provides him with a resource for self-motivation and inner discipline that can be built on. He has an awareness to do good, and is trying very hard to steer away from doing "bad" things. God is an important part of his life. This may be used to inspire and motivate him. This God-awareness may lead to feelings of guilt and failure that may need to be made part of process when someone chooses to journey further with him in a therapeutic way.

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

He voices the role religion plays in his life. Other disciplines need to understand the contribution Practical Theology can make in the role of strengthening his moral values in order to help him to reach his own goals in life.

Story 2: Manqoba

1) When reading the story of Manqoba, what do you think would his concerns be?

He will probably be concerned about dealing with his father. Issues of forgiveness might become more important. He may struggle to deal with feelings of disappointment and disillusionment. He confesses to be holding on the plan God has for his life. He will be dealing with the challenge to find out what that really means to him.

2) How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?

The theme of forgiveness is an issue here as well. His understanding of the role his mother plays, even after her death, needs to be unpacked. The unique contribution can be in unpacking these stories and helping to interpret it in such a way that it can contribute to the understanding of his life as a whole.

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

The contribution can be strengthening his view of the future, through a faith perspective.

Story 3: Kgotoso

1) When reading the story of Kgotoso, what do you think would his concerns be?

His concerns might be how to make a success of his life. He values his relationship with his brother very much. This may be a challenge to sustain that relationship in a changing environment. He may be struggling to live up to his mother's expectations, and his own expectations of himself.

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2) How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?

His faith is a strong motivational factor. From a Practical Theological view, that can be enhanced to inspire him to reach his own goals. He needs the inner motivation to live up to all expectations.

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

He expresses the value of his faith. His dreams for his life are inspired through his faith. That can be a key in unlocking his potential; to help him to see the strength of his faith as a resource to pull from when he needs it.

8.3.2. Pastoral Therapy

Dr Callie Hugo is a professor at the Department of Pastoral Counselling at UNISA and gave the following insights regarding the related narratives.

Story 1: Molimi

1) When reading the story of Molimi, what do you think would his concerns be?

My concerns are Molimi's ambivalence between guilt feelings because of the pregnancy and the fact that his brother failed him. It refers back to the losses of his primary caregivers and may be the loss of care from his mother which lead to the intimate relationship with the girl. He obviously substituted his father with his brother. He was too young to integrate his losses in his worldview being that of a playful boy in which the world was good and he had a place in this good world. He values family life and as such, seems to be the symbol of an ideal life for him.

2) How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?

I cannot talk about my discipline as a fixed field with clear boundaries. I believe personally in a holistic bio-psycho-socio-spiritual approach to human behaviour. My field is about soul care; by that we mean not only the spiritual but the whole person. Without

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going into concepts it has to do amongst other aspects with finding a unique meaning in life. In Molimi's life I would say my contribution would be on two levels: a holistic approach tapping in on all relevant aspects of his life, not only the bio, or his drinking problem, but also the psycho, in other words, how is he thinking, feeling, perceiving and also the socio; his context, what impact did it have on his life and the spiritual; his religion. For sure this holistic–soul perspective needs to be heard to prevent a one sided approach.

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

There is a new awareness among disciplines to work holistically. If soul describes the very essence of a person then this is a perspective to be heard and appreciated.

What is the very essence of Molimi as person, not his context only or his bio only or his psyche only. If we can determine his very essential personhood then we will not touch on temporary help but long term healing.

Story 2: Manqoba

1) When reading the story of Manqoba, what do you think would his concerns be?

He has issues about passing matric, loss of his mother, relationship with his father and the future. He also needs to make space for his losses in his worldview and not easily jump into a view of God who will solve all his issues.

2) How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?

The holistic approach again. There is no indication of the bio, in terms of the psycho; how he looks at life events after the Life camp; socio, how he deals with the loss of mother and bad father; spiritual, God and his view of God`s plan for his life and soul, his very essence a creative person who needs to be assisted to develop his capabilities and potential.

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

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Too much focus on one aspect, e.g. socio-construction can lead to a loss of the real him: who he really is.

Story 3: Kgotoso

1) When reading the story of Kgotoso, what do you think would his concerns be?

His losses: that is his sister, father and mother and his friends, grandmother; the rejection by extended family and seeing money as a solution. He needs to accommodate his losses in a solid worldview shattered by too many losses, he believes in a quick solution by making money.

2) How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?

Once again the bio: his focus on material aspects like car house money etc., psycho; easy solutions to life`s difficulties, socio: new family at Precious Pearls, spiritual: wise words and soul, the question of who he really is in essence and the fact that music gives meaning to his life .

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

The focus on his soul is a culmination of all aspects of him as person. He can find meaning in suffering by means of his music if he can develop his potential.

8.3.3. Psychology

Dr Gerhard Viljoen is a lecturer at the Psychology Department of the University of Pretoria. He provided insights regarding the three narratives collectively, instead of separately. His insights are also presented here in question and answer format.

1) When reading the story of Molimi, Manqoba and Kgotoso, what do you think would each of their concerns be?

All three participants seem to show the expected concerns of adolescents as they try to establish their identities and prepare them for adult life. They also share the fact that they have to deal with difficult social circumstances in this important developmental phase. I think they differ in terms of the levels of maturity and 'realism' that they

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possess. Molimi seems to be the most differentiated in terms of his dreams and expectations. He has a longer term future vision in terms of his IT studies, but also realizes that he needs to look after himself in the short term through his involvement in the entertainment industry. Manqoba also expresses his needs, but my impression from the researcher's rendition of his circumstances is that he is more passive and less focused in satisfying/achieving these. Kgotoso seems to be quite 'young' in his thinking and does not seem to have any clear direction. His proclamation that he wants to be a lawyer and a music star and his motivation that it will provide him with lots of money is undifferentiated and could just be a compensatory strategy to deal with his deep experience of loss and lack in his own life. He expresses the need to be able to give others what he doesn't have. The differences in the impression created by the three participants are also evident in the complexity with which they describe the role of God in their lives.

A comment on the methodology: I am aware that I am reading short summaries of some of the key moments/issues in the lives of the participants, compiled by the researcher. I therefore have only very indirect access to the experiences of the participants (I am deliberately avoiding referring to these as narratives because in my view they do not meet the criteria for being stories. I also accept that these are not necessarily the (only) stories used by the researcher to construct an understanding of the lives of these participants). However, a reflexive question I would like to raise is what the effect of each participant was on the researcher and how this found bearing in the way (style, tone, length) that she reported on each case. There is a sense that the first participant's circumstances were treated with more empathy. If so, does this reflect an expectation (confirmation bias) the researcher might have had to report on positive and mature outcomes?

2) How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?

I do not believe that my discipline (psychology) has a unique perspective. If, however, a psychologist is of the opinion – as I am – that academically we find ourselves in an epoch of blurred disciplinary boundaries, what is important is not the so-called 'unique perspectives' of each discipline, but the mere fact that forums for dialogue are created in order to challenge the blinkers and possible hegemonies associated with strong and rigid disciplinary identities. Psychology has many perspectives to offer with regard to the

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concerns of the participants. I believe that the perspective offered should have pragmatic and applied value that could contribute to the transformation of societies, communities and individual lives.

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

It is not the 'inherent' or 'essential' strength of the argument or the so called 'truth value' of a perspective that makes it understandable. Understanding and acceptance, is a matter of relationship and goodwill. Therefore, any perspective offered from any discipline would be appreciated if the conditions are created within which meaningful dialogue can happen.

8.3.4. Social Work

Dr Marietjie Yssel is a private social worker who focuses on the emotional and social wellbeing of children by utilising a gestalt play therapeutic process to help children deal with the impact of trauma on their lives. In asking Dr Yssel to respond and reflect on the three constructed narratives, she responded firstly by stating that it is imperative to take the children's holistic functioning into account, although her primary focus is on their psychosocial wellbeing. She added that this focus on their psychosocial wellbeing inevitably influences her response to the stories presented in this study. Additionally, Dr Yssel requested her social work colleagues in the generic field for their input, as part of her integrative contribution. She responded to questions 1 and 2 simultaneously, but separately for each co-researcher; while responding separately to question 3 for each co-researcher. Her response to the given reflective question is listed below in question and answer format.

Story 1: Molimi

1) When reading the story of Molimi, what do you think would his concerns be?

I have identified the following themes from Molimi's story (as his concerns) are as follows:

- Dealing with the theme of loss in his life – since his parents were separated since he was a baby and his father has never been part of his life, the loss of his grandparents at a very young age and his mother's death in 1998 (the story does not indicate his

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age at this point in his life), and the loss of his cousin in 2003. It is specifically mentioned that he misses his mother now.

- The impact of the stress he experienced when living with his brother and his current ambivalence towards his brother – firstly the memories of financial stress, and secondly the abuse he suffered from his brother. The fact that his brother also did not remember the abusive incidents after being drunk, and did not take responsibility for it (my perspective), could make it harder for him to take responsibility for his own life, as this behaviour was (and probably still is) not modelled by his brother. Another aspect that in my view causes stress in his life, is his ambivalent reactions towards his brother, as he experienced abuse from him, but his brother looked after him since their parents passed away and now his brother pays the rent towards his flat.

- The trauma he experiences due to the sexual contact he had – it is stated in the story that he is hard on himself after having sex with a girl from Precious Pearls. Not only is there in his mind the risk of pregnancy, but this also caused him to be expelled from Precious Pearls. This incident had a traumatic impact on him and in his own words “changed my life”. He sees this incident as the cause of his current drinking problem.

- His struggle to live a good life and have a stable situation (my perspective), but he has a problem with alcohol. It is interesting to note that he sees the positive side of his history, that he learned how to fend for himself and sees himself as responsible and that he is proud of his independence.

2) How would you formulate your discipline’s unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?

Within my discipline there are two different important viewpoints to take into consideration, namely a generic social work point of view, and a therapeutic or counselling point of view. The following aspects are important regarding Molimi’s concerns:

- His struggle to have a good life. This concern is in my view the umbrella term for all the concerns Molimi experiences and needs to be addressed on both levels of social work intervention. It is not stated what Molimi’s current age is, but if he is under the age of 18, he is still under the protection of the Children’s act and a generic social

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work perspective will be on facilitating a process where his best interests are protected on all aspects of his development and functioning. If he is over the age of 18, the perspective will still be in providing support for him on a material and psychosocial level. Specifically from a counselling perspective, an emotionally secure therapeutic process needs to be facilitated where he can gain awareness of his current concerns (called unfinished business in the gestalt therapeutic approach), and he needs to be empowered to find appropriate ways of dealing with these concerns, and specifically the trauma-impact of aspects of his life story and his dependency on alcohol as a coping mechanism.

- Dealing with the theme of loss in his life: From a therapeutic viewpoint, it is crucial to facilitate a process where Molimi can deal with the different aspects of his losses, and gain awareness of the impact it has on his current functioning. Especially the loss of his mother and his current need for a grieving process needs to be dealt with. The fact that his father never acted as a responsible role model, and his struggle to live a good life that is connected to his loss of his father and the negative example set by his brother also need to be dealt with. Memory work and including him into a group therapy process, and continuous positive camp experiences can also enhance his increase of a positive social circle and support system.

  From a more generic point of view, an inquiry should be made to the existence of family members who could be included as a possible appropriate support system.

- The impact of the stress he experienced when living with his brother and his current ambivalence towards his brother. This aspect also needs to be addressed therapeutically as the trauma memories of these experiences can hinder him in making age-appropriate decisions in life.

- The trauma he experienced due to the sexual experience he had. The psychosocial impact of this aspect obviously also needs to be addressed in a therapeutic way, and specifically his perceptions about boundaries and sexual relationships. The possibility of sexual exposure he might have had during his childhood should also be assessed and dealt with appropriately.

  From a more generic perspective there are also aspects of this experience that needs to be taken into consideration and dealt with appropriately. If the girl he had this encounter with was under the age of 16, it is a case of statutory rape. The

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possibility of infection with HIV/Aids and other STDs also needs to be taken into consideration and his drinking problem that he links with this experience and he should be referred for specialized dependency treatment to an organisation such as SANCA.

- Facilitating positive boundaries and structure in Molimi's life. As Molimi's current lifestyle is not conducive to optimal functioning within a healthy structure, it would be advisable to empower him to gain healthy boundaries in his emotional and social life and to specifically introduce him to the possibility of alternative employment and social contexts. Also he can benefit from life coaching in terms of goal setting and career planning.

Story 2: Manqoba

1) When reading the story of Manqoba, what do you think would his concerns be?

I have identified the following themes from Manqoba's story (as his concerns) are as follows:

- A theme of loss. This theme is portrayed by the fact that Monqoba moved to Pretoria in 2004 (at the age of 12) after living with his grandparents and that his mother passed away after being very ill for three months in 2005 when he was 15 years old. He has fond memories of his mother, is still very sad and finds it difficult dealing with her death. Another loss was his father's neglect and abandonment (my perspective) as his father was too busy to give Manqoba the input he needed and did not want to take responsibility for him.

- Unresolved conflict with his mother's family. Manqoba experiences conflict with mother's family as they took all of her belongings.

- Academic focus. As he resubmitted two subjects so that he can go to college one day, his studies can be seen as a current concern. This is also linked with the fact that he is not sure about his future career.

2) How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?

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As stated before, there are two different important viewpoints to take into consideration in the social work perspective, namely a generic social work point of view, and a therapeutic or counselling point of view. The following aspects are important regarding Manqoba's concerns:

As discussed in my discipline's perspective on Molimi's concerns, a therapeutic process could also empower Manqoba to deal with the unfinished business regarding the loss of his mother, the fact that his father did not take responsibility for him, and the conflict he experiences towards his mother's family.

Another aspect that needs to be taken into account from a generic and therapeutic view is the fact that he is taking care of his younger sister. A social worker in a statutory position can support this family set-up to make sure that the sister's best interests are protected, and to provide support for Manqoba's optimal holistic functioning where needed. From a counselling perspective, guidance can be provided to assist Manqoba in his parenting skills to facilitate a healthy context for his younger sister to grow up in. Referral to a career counsellor is also recommended.

Story 3: Kgotoso

1) When reading the story of Kgotoso, what do you think would his concerns be?

The themes I identified from Kgotoso's story (as his concerns) are as follows:

- Theme of loss. Kgotoso's father was shot and killed when he was very small. A few years later his little sister passed away, and then his mother got cancer. He did not have much contact with his mother when growing up, as she worked far away, but he remembers her visiting once a month and has fond memories of her – having fun family time, his mother being humble and always laughing. He found it difficult to deal with her death and displays his current unfinished business as "I just wish my mother was alive to see me getting successful". This theme of loss was also accentuated when two of his friends left the house at Precious Pearls.

- Conflict with his mother's family. He has no positive memories of his mother's family, who rejected him and his twin brother.

2) How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the interdisciplinary table?

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As stated before, there are two different important viewpoints to take into consideration in the social work perspective, namely a generic social work point of view, and a therapeutic or counselling point of view. The following aspects are important regarding Kgotoso's concerns:

As discussed in my discipline's perspective on Molimi's and Manqoba's concerns, a therapeutic process could also empower Kgotoso to deal with the unfinished business regarding the loss of his parents and sister, and the negative memories of his mother's family.

From a generic social work perspective, continued services would be aimed at facilitating an emotionally secure context where his best interest is served.

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

In order to facilitate a holistic healing and empowering process to all children, it is important that all aspects from the multi-disciplinary team be taken into account, especially if there are legal aspects from the social work context. I think the contribution from a social work perspective contributes to a clear, full view of the child's current functioning, especially if there are legal or statutory aspects from the social work context and will be for this reason understood and appreciated by researchers from other disciplines.

8.3.5. The researcher's reflection on the interdisciplinary process

When looking at Dr Van Niekerk's comments from the field of Practical Theology, it becomes clear that Practical Theology can assist with the unpacking of spiritual and religious issues which are very much inherent in all of the co-researchers' narratives, in relation to their daily experiences as well as their past experiences related to issues of bereavement and abandonment. It will be important here to be sensitive about the spiritual and moral connotations that the co-researchers make between many of their daily experiences and their relationship with God. Therefore, it seems as if Practical Theology's unique contribution is this sensitivity towards the relation that the co-researcher's make between their future narratives and their awareness of God's determination of their future narratives. Practical Theology can acknowledge the role that religion and spirituality plays in a person's life and can assist a person in closing the gap between the story of the individual and the story of God with His people, so that this story can act as a guiding metaphor for believers' lives.

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The insights provided by Dr Van Niekerk, made me, the researcher aware of the power that religiosity has in directing and constructing a person's narrative of self. Additionally, I became aware that the co-researchers, while constructing a narrative of understanding regarding events they had to face, they integrated their own understanding of God's role in the actualisation of these events, as part of a paradigm which functions as a resource centre from which future events will also be explained. Therefore, their understanding of God's role in the events they had to and have to face, does not act as an additional source of understanding, but rather a primary source of understanding, which either inhibits or enhances their relationship with God and determines how they will approach future challenges. Furthermore, I became aware of how important it is to address moral issues in the light of specific and personal religiosity, as the manner in which moral issues is addressed is primarily influenced by a person's religious view, relationship with God and the issue dealt with and how Practical Theology specifically can assist in dealing with these very important and directive issues. Additionally, it seems that working from a Practical Theological approach, means the focus of not only apparent religious issues, but also issues which are motivated or understood generally from a religious or spiritual perspective, such as forgiveness. Forgiveness is not per se a religious attribute; however, one's relationship with and understanding of God will influence if one forgives, how one forgives, and the manner in which forgiveness is defined.

The insights provided by Dr Hugo, on the other hand, made me aware of the importance of seeing the development and the being of a person in a holistic perspective, and that one's discipline's boundaries cannot contribute to a holistic understanding of the person. Additionally, I became aware that although the discipline of Pastoral Counselling, departs from a spiritual or theological perspective, it acknowledges its own limitations in providing a holistic understanding and description of a person, thereby incorporating much of psychology and other disciplines in the social science in its own modus operandi. This humbles me as a practical theologian to always engage in interdisciplinary investigation, even within the therapeutic process.

Furthermore, Dr Hugo's insights made me realise that although we are moving into the future, into the development of an alternative narrative, a holistic understanding and description of the past narrative and experiences of past events are needed. Thereby I am deducing that although one should not ponder too long in the past narrative, one needs to have a proper understanding of the dynamics of the past narratives, on all

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levels of development, in order to create an alternative narrative which will be sufficient in directing a person's behaviour and thoughts in an effective and satisfying manner. Otherwise one might fall in the danger of creating a superficial, short lived alternative narrative, which looks good in theory, but is quite useless in practice.

Dr Viljoen's insights were helpful in terms of the similarities and differences he posed between the three co-researchers. By stating first the similarities, and secondly the differences he made me aware of the importance in first seeing all three narratives in context holistically, and then focussing on details. This gives one a better understanding of the context and the global influence the context has on various narratives. By then separating each story from the context, can one focus on those things which needs special attention, perhaps from a specific field of knowledge.

Additionally, Dr Viljoen made me aware of the importance to look at what is expressed, why it is expressed, and if the action which follows the expression fits the expression; thereby seeing these three events in the same context. He also stresses the complexity of the co-researchers' needs and aspirations, thereby placing emphasis on once again to look at the past narratives of the co-researchers in order to understand the constructed future narratives. It seems; however, if Dr Viljoen places less emphasis on content, than on the manner in which it is expressed. This makes me aware of the importance of being aware of that which is also not being stated and the related attitude which accompanies expression and behaviour, thereby focussing literally on the psychology of the person and tending to it, in a critical manner.

It must be stated that Dr Viljoen made me critically aware of my own biases which are evident even in the way that I narrated the co-researchers' stories. Therefore, it becomes important to acknowledge my own feelings and experiences of the research process and my contact with their narratives and declare the influence that this had on the content of the created narratives and the outcomes of the interpretation of the narratives. In relation to this I can; therefore, state that I have been aware of my own preferences with regards to some of the co-researchers' narratives, and that it is possible that I had more empathy for Molimi's story, than maybe for Manqoba or Kgotoso. If I can state reasons for this it might be because I identify with him in terms of living in ambivalence between the world's values and God's values. It might also be because Molimi was much more expressive than the other co-researchers. Without defending myself, I must state that I was aware of these feelings from the first moment I captured the stories of the different co-researchers, and; therefore, acknowledge my

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experiences, feelings and biases so that I can report on their stories as truthfully and unbiased as possible. As a postfoundational practical theologian I believe in the importance of acknowledging one's own feelings and experiences, in order to be as true as possible to the context and subjective experiences and this is then also what I have done. Therefore, if any preferences for a specific co-researcher are visible through these stories, it is not as a result of me not acknowledging this fact, thereby falling prey to confirmation biased, but as a result of the manner in which their narratives were conveyed to me. Because Molimi's narrative was more directly and freely expressed, his narrative contains more information, perhaps making it seem then as preferable over the other two co-researcher's narratives. Thus, Dr Viljoen's statement regarding one's awareness of biases in the reporting of research, once again makes me aware of how sensitive one, as a researcher and a therapist must be throughout the whole process, in ensuring that one does not force the data into one's own expectations. Reflectivity; therefore, becomes key in both the research and therapeutic process.

Another area which asks for reflectivity is that of interdisciplinary conversation, as stated by Dr Viljoen. He makes a valuable contribution in making us aware that one should not enter in interdisciplinary conversation for the mere sake of conversation, but should be attentive on the pragmatic value of each interdisciplinary conversation to the issue at hand. Additionally, he makes us aware of the importance of also deconstructing the institution of interdisciplinary conversation, so that we can understand why such action is taken, as to ensure that it is also not done for the sake of gaining unmerited power or giving unmerited power to bodies of institutions, thereby evading the real reason for entering in interdisciplinary conversation. Finally, he states that it is not about dialogue in general or for the sake of dialogue itself, but creating *meaningful* dialogue. Under these conditions any contribution of any field will be valuable.

Finally, Dr Yssel's insights with regards to the narratives of the co-researchers, made me aware of the value of identifying themes in the narratives, which run like a golden thread through the past, present and future narrative, and the importance of addressing these themes holistically, not losing sight of their influence on the child's development. Her social work focus also reminds us that although the writing and the rewriting and narratives are important, it is also imperative to attend to the underlying trauma which might be caused by past events – trauma which might be incorporated in the constructive narrative. If this is the case, then the newly created narrative will just carry the underlying trauma to the construction of the next narrative. Therefore, the principles

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and techniques employed by social work can prove valuable in tending to these underlying issues of trauma, so that a healthy and effective narrative can be constructed, which contributes to the growth of the person, and not only to the understanding of events faced in the past.

Her two folded focus, one of generic social work and secondly, the therapeutic focus reminds us that a person, although struggling with issues which can cause a hindering of personal and psychological growth, still functions in society as an embodied entity which is regulated by certain social rules, and that the integration of a person into society's rules as to not just function effectively in that society, but to also contribute to the wellbeing of the society, is just as important as tending to the person's psychological wellbeing.

Additionally, Dr Yssel reminds us of the importance of utilising a holistic process in our attendance to the health of the child, and that our first and foremost responsibility is the empowerment of the child. The whole therapeutic process should be aimed at this. Therefore, social work also puts emphasis on an interdisciplinary and, moreover, a multidisciplinary approach, which also places a child in the safety of the legal and statutory paradigm, so that a child is also protected psychobiologically. Finally, social work's primary contribution is not only tending to a child's psychosocial and biological needs, but also working according to the imperative of protecting a child against all costs, against those areas which therapy cannot attend to immediately.

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CHAPTER 9

FOR THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S

45 Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. 46 This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47 And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands.

– 1 Samuel 17: 45-47 (NKJV) –

This chapter is concerned with movement seven of the postfoundational notion of practical theology which enquires into the development of alternative interpretations which point beyond the local community. Here we are interested in the unique outcomes which became visible through the telling of narratives, which gave rise to the development of alternative, non-problem saturated narratives. These [34]narratives will also give us some feedback on the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis, although our primary concern is not necessarily with answering the research questions, but rather in developing alternative narratives which will give us an indication of how the narratives are alternatively interpreted; while the research questions will point to the direction of enquiry rather than following a positivistic enquiry where questions need to be answered.

The metaphor of 'The battle is the Lord's' has been chosen to identify this chapter, because this is the point in our David narrative where his narrative with God is also alternatively interpreted. David has followed a journey where he is chosen by God, where he was tempted by his lust, where he was challenged by Goliath and by King Saul, and at the end of his journey he also came to the conclusion that: "… all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands". At the end of this chapter it will became

[34] Spelling errors were omitted in the co-researchers' personal stories, quotes or poems, but the wording and grammar were kept in their original format.

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clear that the interpretations of the co-researchers of their narrative, will also contain this element of trust and victory.

The conversations, poems and narratives presented in this chapter, were collected from the second Tree of Life camp, 26-28 February, Sikelele, Magaliesburg.

9.1. The development of an alternative narrative or interpretation

The development of an alternative narrative or alternative way of interpreting past events and experiences, did not follow a linear process, but rather followed a circular process where the co-researchers constantly moved between past narratives, the present and then future narratives. The Tree of Life metaphor assisted with the deconstruction process of past experiences and interpretations thereof and how this in turn, influenced the construction of a future tree. In the drawing of the trees the co-researchers could look at not only their losses, but also what they gained and how their tree is kept alive through the remembering of their roots and the acknowledgement of what they have or who they are. The Tree of Life metaphor also assisted in the identification of a unique outcome, as the co-researcher's realised that they could use their losses positively in nurturing the memories they have regarding the loved ones they have lost. Additionally, the co-researchers could externalise that which they saw as problem-saturated. By externalising their problems or challenges, they could take a step back and see its influence on their lives and ways to write a future tree; not by ignoring or excluding the problem, but approaching their problem from a different angel, which will change their perspective regarding the problem, rather than doing away with the problem.

When looking at Manqoba's tree (below) we see how he externalised the issue he has with his dad by externalising his father in the image of an owl. This might indicate that he is aware of his father's presence, although at this moment it is just a presence, with no influence. However, it can also be seen that for him his father is an owl in his life, where his (Manqoba's) gaze is constantly focussed on this owl. The owl that is part of the tree, uses the tree as a nesting place, but does not contribute to the growth of the tree itself.

Additional to externalising his problem, Manqoba also externalised his skills and his dreams in the form of apples, or the fruits of the tree, indicating that the tree does bear fruits despite the loss of the leaves (his mother) and the presence of the gazing, uninvolved owl (his father).

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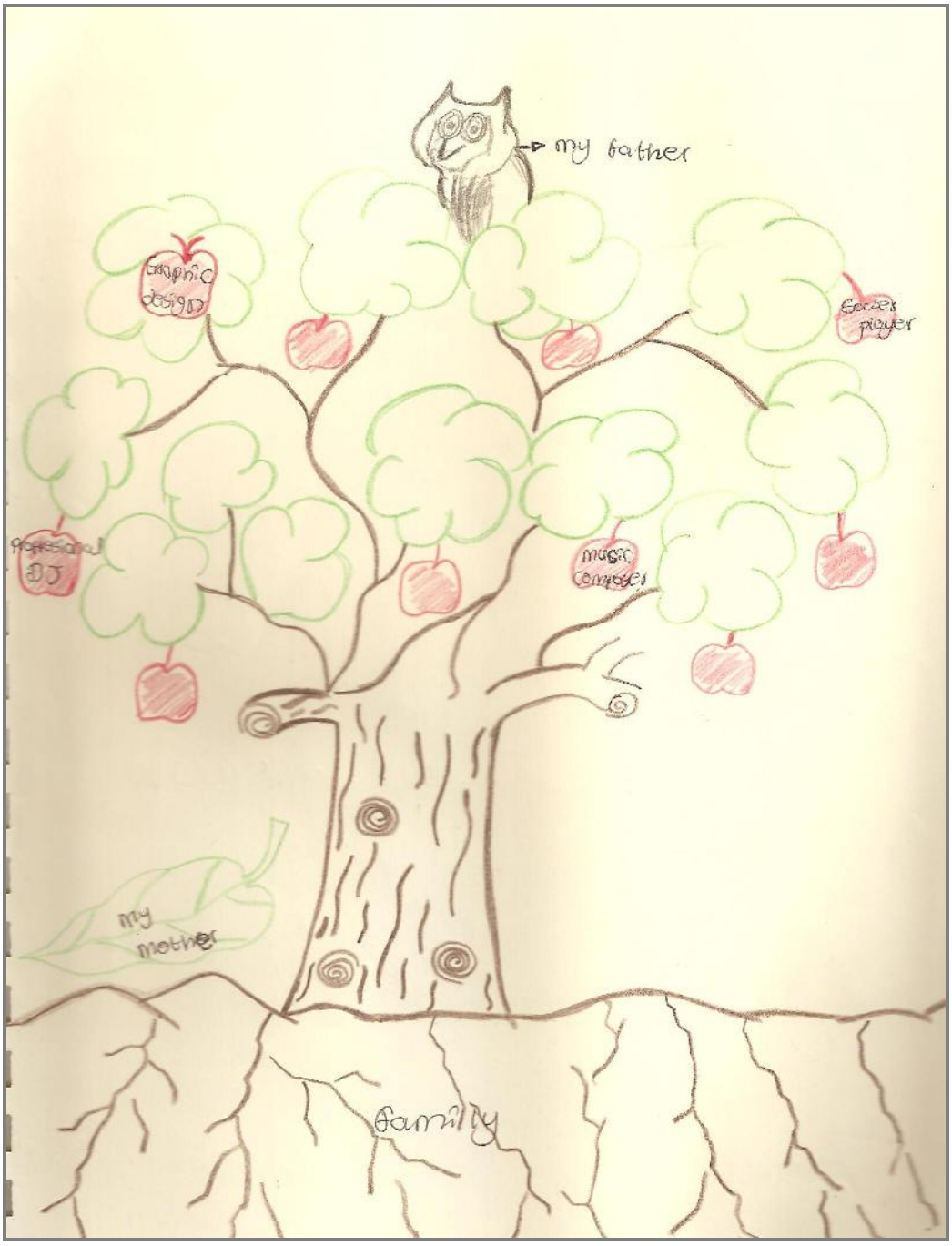

Figure 4: Manqoba's tree drawn at the second Tree of Life camp, 26-28 February 2010

In the same manner, if we look at Kgotoso's tree (below), he externalised the loss of his mother with the use of a flower, which is now growing next to the tree. Here Kgotoso also indicated that his mother was a leaf, who fell from the tree, into the ground, taking from the nutrients of the ground (God) to grow again, as a flower. A flower, which is not part of the tree anymore, but surely near the tree or next to the tree where it can always feel the presence of the tree and the tree the presence of the flower. Kgotoso also

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indicated his future as the sun which shines over his tree, thereby externalising his future aspirations, perhaps indicating that whatever happens to the tree, the sun will always shine over the tree, thus stating that there will always be a future. This can also be seen as Kgotoso's unique outcome.

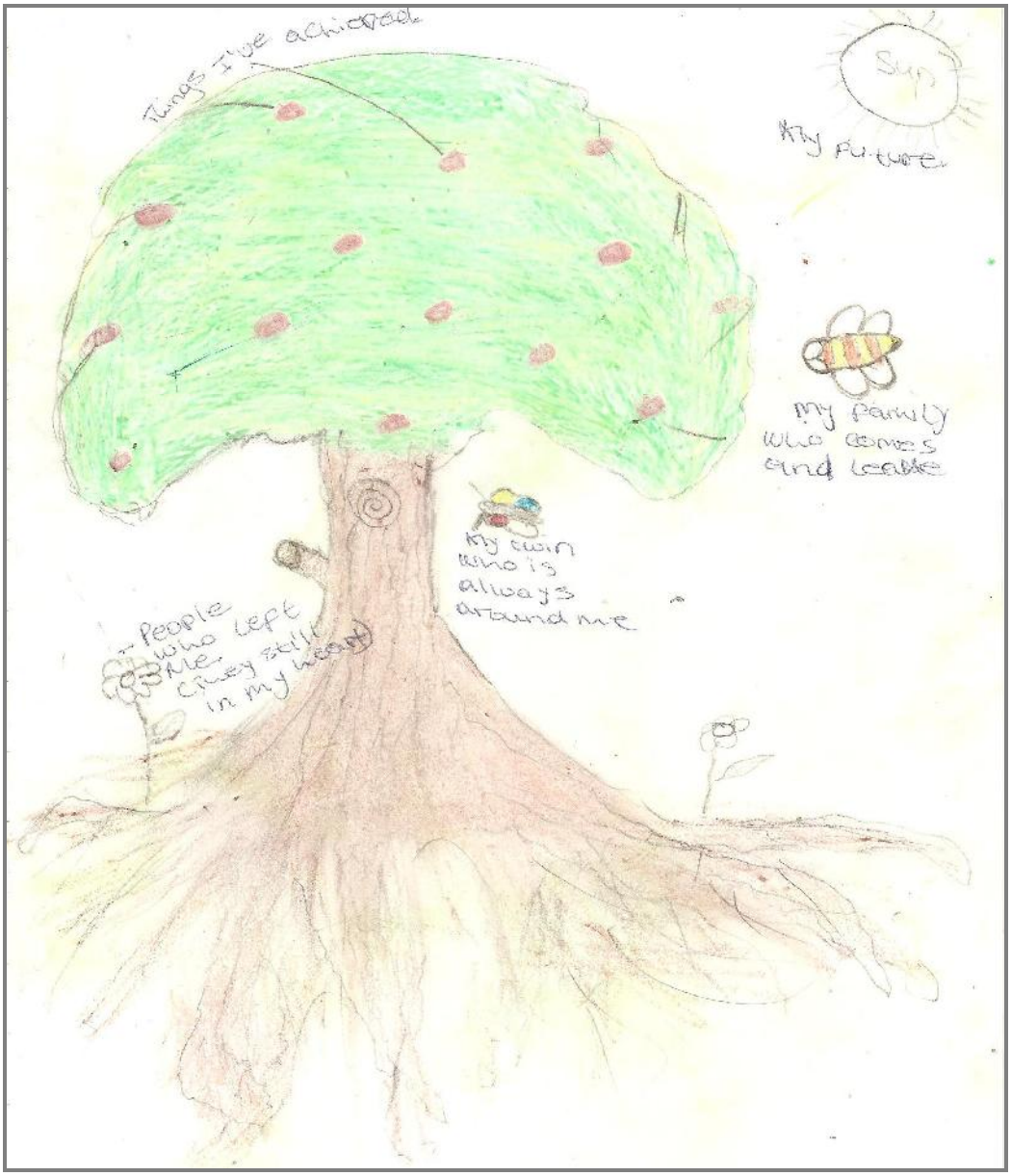

Figure 5: Kgotoso's Tree of Life drawing at the second Tree of Life camp, 26-28 February 2010

Furthermore, Kgotoso externalised his family as a bee, who "comes and goes". When he sees his family, who has disappointed and abandoned him numerous times as an entity outside himself, it becomes easier to see 'abandonment' as an external challenge inherent to the family, rather than something he might have caused in some way. The

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Tree of Life metaphor, especially when drawing one's own tree, assists with seeing one's life holistically, and not one problem, or even one success at a time. When looking at both Manqoba and Kgotoso's trees, one notices the fallen leaves and the bees, but at the same time one also sees the fruit, the flowers and the shining sun. It helps one to see one's life in perspective, to see that with laughter also comes tears, to see that, yes, challenges will always be present, but at the same time that the challenges will not last forever; and that many good things, like positive characteristics in oneself and supportive people, will make one stronger to face these challenges. In essence, the Tree of Life metaphor helps one to not focus only on the problem-saturated narratives which can be so overwhelming and even suffocating. It helps us to regain perspective.

In the next session, a closer look will be given to the development of alternative narratives with the help of the David and Goliath narrative. This narrative also assisted the co-researchers in externalising their problems and challenges in the being of Goliath. By identifying with David, God's chosen one, the co-researchers could see that he also had to face challenges, and that he also had temptations. This narrative presented the co-researchers with the opportunity to gaze into their own lives, from the perspective of someone who observes the David narratives. The beauty of any narrative is its ability to draw the reader into it and making the reader part of it, because the reader will identify with at least one aspect of the story. This is what the David narrative has done for the co-researchers – by identifying with David, if only in one aspect, they could gaze into their own lives, as if from a distance. In creating their own David narrative, with their own Goliath and with their own relationship with God, who has also chosen them for big things to come, they could deconstruct the various 'Bathsheba's' who attributed to the writing of their own problem-saturated narratives. In looking at their challenges as battles and the various factors in a battle, they had the opportunity to look at their lives as if a strategy of battle. Therefore, they had an opportunity to understand themselves better and to see the various things which influence their future lives. In essence the story of David, compared to their lives, empowered them to take control of those aspects of their lives where they can make an active decision in taking a preferred direction. Through their own David narrative they could also explore various aspects of their relationship with God; they could determine what role God plays in their lives.

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9.1.1.Molimi: I am a Farmer

Molimi chose his pseudonym, meaning farmer ("Molimi"), because he is the youngest child in the house, which means that he inherits everything which belonged to his mother. Molimi was extremely close to his mother, and in his narratives it seems as if he carries all his mother's dreams and wishes, which might indicate that he did not only inherit material things, but also his mother's dreams and wishes. Through Molimi's narratives it becomes very clear that his mother's expectations of him was very high, which was not the case for his older brothers. Therefore, one can say that Molimi's ability to reflect on his life and his actions is rooted in his desire to make his mother proud. When reading the letter he wrote to his mother, it seems as if he cannot put his appreciation into words, and that he has the highest respect possible, for his mother. This respect is also visible in the manner which he sees women. Molimi states that he respects women and that he would like to be the best possible husband to his wife one day.

Molimi's narrative clearly indicates the journey that he had to endure, since his mother passed away. Molimi and his brothers were left on the streets; they had no home and no one who was prepared to look after him. Molimi was then found by PEN and had an opportunity to live in a safe house, to have food every day, and to gain moral support from his new found house friends and that of the care workers at PEN. He also had the opportunity to be taught in God's way and to develop a closer relationship with God. Everything went well and besides the fact that he mourned the loss of his mother, Molimi was happy. Then Molimi got older, and got interested in the music industry as a DJ. His brother introduced him to the context and Molimi got many opportunities to be trained as a DJ. However, with this came along many temptations – he went to clubs at least every weekend, his brother introduced him to alcohol and to say the least, he made friends with people who were a bad influence on him. In addition to this Molimi had to face the temptation of sexual lust. After a mistake he made at one of the PEN camps, Molimi was expelled from the safe house and had to live with his brother. At his brother's place Molimi had to face new challenges – his brother has an alcohol addiction and abuses Molimi and his brother's girlfriend. Molimi decided that he could not take this anymore and ran away. His brother then decided to pay for a place for Molimi to stay. During all this Molimi never lost his sense of perseverance and got good grades so that he could go to college. Currently he is doing very well in school, although he is now struggling with another demon: maintaining his relationship with God. Molimi, the farmer, as David

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the Shepherd, never lost sight of God and God's protection over him and His love for him. Molimi is not shy in proclaiming his love for God, although he at times, especially during the second Tree of Life camp, felt a wave of shame over the fact that he gave in to so many temptations and felt that he is not leading the life that God wants him to lead. During all of this Molimi still misses his mother, but one thing that stood out was the fact that he never gave up, always kept on working hard and he never lost faith in God. In the end, Molimi prospered.

Molimi's journey can almost be compared to the journey of a farmer. A farmer is generally someone who is humble, because he is so dependent on God for his prosperity. A farmer has to work hard physically to maintain his land, and at times must face the worst of hardships when it fails to rain, or when bad weather conditions ruin his crops. However, a farmer is very rarely someone who is not a believer. A farmer is someone who always lives close to God, he sees God in all he does, in the growth of his crops and in the times when it rains against all odds. When a framer does succeed and when his crops prosper, he always gives thanks to God, in all humility because he is aware of the grace of God he has to witness every day in his life. In the end; however, no matter how tough the journey was, the farmer always prospers! Therefore, Molimi's alternative story is externalised by this concept of being a 'farmer'.

This journey which leads Molimi to prosper as a farmer is visible through a song he wrote (see Annexure 4, Figure 9):

Title: The morning

I wake up everyday

And I don't feel the morning shine

I took another look into the sky

Hoping that the sun will shine

And all I feel is the rain

That brings me pain

I kept on praying and praying

Preparing for any pressures of life

Until one day morning

When the rainbow was in the sky

The pain went away and I flew into the sky

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I cried tears of joy and I prayed “Thank you Lord”

(26 February 2010 TOL Camp 2)

Through this song Molimi explains the journey he had to go through, the pain he endured and the loss of hope he had to face. But then it came to an end, he was freed (flew into the sky) from his pain. It is also clear that through this journey of pain he kept on praying, he stayed faithful and hopeful and in the end, he thanked God for his freedom, as in acknowledging God’s presence in his journey and God’s hand of grace in freeing him. Through this song Molimi already started in writing his alternative story, and his alternative interpretation. It is an understanding which moved from having no understanding, having no hope to gaining understanding and in making peace, in being able to move on.

Molimi’s unique outcome is developed from the African story he wrote:

> **Title: Three Magical Stones**
>
> Long long time ago there was a boy named Molimi. He was a very lonely and sad boy without parents but only a brother was there to support him financially. One day Sunday afternoon he decided to rest a bit and slept. He had a dream and in the dream he was very successful but not rich. He could afford life. In the dream he was visited by the three angels and every angel gave him a wish stone.
>
> The first stone he wished that his parents were alive and they were staying together. The second stone he wished that he had all the riches in the world. The third stone he wished that he was the best DJ in the whole wide world. Everything was the way he wanted. He lives all his life with everything he wanted.
>
> Until one day his parents had to divorce, everybody wanted all the money he had and his wife gave him HIV/Aids. The phone ringed in his dream and that was an alarm waking him up. He woke up realising that it was all a dream. So he started to take life as it is and stop blaming God for taking his parents. He started to work his way up and focus on God.
>
> (27 February 2010 TOL Camp 2)

In this story Molimi’s past understanding of his misfortunes is described. Here he states that he was lonely and sad, because he had no parents and he had no money. Then he had a dream – this dream might indicate the journey he had to take before coming to the ending of the story, where he realises that he cannot change anything and that he does not have the power in determining what would have been better. The fact that Molimi states before his three wishes that he was “… very successful but not rich”, corresponds with Molimi’s former narratives where he stated that he does not want to be rich, he just

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wants to get by; the love in a family is more important to him than the money he has. This indicates a very mature and a very humble attitude, which reminds one of the attitudes of a farmer, where he realises, in facing God's grace and God's glory, that money cannot bring happiness. This story also indicates Molimi's awareness of the heartache in life, where money ruins relationships and where people are affected and infected with HIV and Aids. This story indicates that Molimi has moved from experiencing hardships and illness, to understanding causes and consequences of hardships and illness. From moving from experience to understanding, a change happens inside a person – a change which moves one to adapt one's thoughts and behaviour in trying to escape the trap of these dangers. Understanding also indicates a sense of responsibility and accountability; where experience leaves one to the mercy of fate, understanding takes one out of the helpless position, to a position where one is in control, where one has hope, because one understands the dynamics of life; where blaming makes one a victim, but taking responsibility makes one a victor. This understanding inevitably changes one's future narrative.

The moment when Molimi's alternative understanding, or interpretation took place, is indicated by: "He woke up realising that it was all a dream". His alternative story or interpretation, in turn is summarised in two sentences: "So he started to take life as it is and stop blaming God for taking his parents. He started to work his way up and focus on God". In these two sentences much is said. Firstly, "he started to take life as it is", indicating that Molimi accepted his fate, accepted his life and started to look forward and live his life. He "stopped blaming God", meaning that he also made peace with God. He changed his former interpretation of "God punished me by taking my parents away", to "God is not at fault". In Molimi's letter to his mother he said that "God has chosen you [his mother]", perhaps indicating that God has not 'taken', but 'chosen'. The word 'chosen' has a much more positive connotation which indicates a privileged position, it is always a privilege to be chosen, where 'taken', in turn, might have a more negative connotation. In the story of David, 1 Samuel 18: 2, we read that "Saul *took* him [David] that day and would not let him return to his father's house'" (Hamilton 2008: 260-261). David was taken unlawfully, and Molimi thought God had taken his mother too, unlawfully. But where David has been chosen by God (1 Samuel 16) he has also been taken, but with some glorified goal in mind. In the same way, Molimi can indicate through his word play of chosen versus taken, that he has now come to understand that his mother too, has been chosen, with a glorified goal in mind.

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The final significance of the externalising concept, 'farmer', is the fatherhood concept inherent in it. Molimi never spoke of his father and always referred to his big brother when referring to a significant male figure in his life. However, his lack in a father figure does not seem to influence his view of God. It seems as if God for Molimi is a Farmer. It is clear from Molimi's final narrative that for him, God is provider and protector. Molimi does not see or seek God as a 'quick fix'. Molimi does not only turn to God when in need. Molimi moves and God moves with him, beside him. For Molimi God nurtures, God endures, God does not reveal Himself quickly, but takes His time, just as crops take time to grow. It is almost as if Molimi is the crop and God is the Farmer. And at the end of the journey, where Molimi as the crop, endured much pain and suffering, where Molimi felt alone during the storms and during the draught, he came out fresh and stronger than ever, ready to be harvested. Therefore, Molimi's view of God does not seem to be as much connected to gender and modelling, than to office and experience. Molimi's alternative narrative is in essence created as a result of his journey with God, much like a farmer's journey with his crop.

9.1.2. Manqoba: I am a victor

Manqoba's pseudonym comes from the Zulu language which means 'Victory' and he chose this name because "… in every challenge that I face, most of them I do come out as *umanqoba* ["victory']. Therefore, Manqoba's alternative narrative is represented by this choice of a pseudonym, which indicates that even though he suffered and is in many ways still suffering, he sees his life and the actions he took in response to the challenges he faced, as a victory over his Goliath.

Manqoba's unique outcome did not develop from a change of perspective necessarily regarding the challenges he had and have to face, but rather happened through the contentment he got through his growing relationship with God and through his growing relationship with himself. Therefore, Manqoba did not necessarily reign victorious over his challenges as yet, but rather reigned victoriously over the Goliath in himself. In his tree song, Manqoba wrote the following (See Annexure 4, Figure 8):

My life is full of ups

And downs, and now

All that I do is (x2)

Give praise to the Lord

My life is travelling

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Different places

And run through

Different crises (x2)

So I ask the Lord

To help me to

Go through it once

Again

Chorus:

So my life it feels like a dream

Challenges come and go

Lord Almighty help me once again (x3)

(26 February 2010 TOL Camp 2)

When looking at this song it becomes clear that Manqoba is in many ways still facing his external Goliath, which is *uncertainty* regarding the future, going through this uncertainty alone, without his mother, needing the help of his father to show him how to go through this uncertainty as a man, but his father rejecting him once again. Another prominent feature of this song is Manqoba's call onto God – first he praises God amidst his "ups" and "downs", and then he calls for God's help to make it *through* these challenges – not taking the challenges away, but accompanying him through these challenges. It seems as if Manqoba's expectation of God is what a son might expect of his father; not to take away the pain and suffering, but just walking alongside him, guiding him to get through this, so that he can come out on the other side, as a man. Therefore, this song represents the journey Manqoba is taking on his way in constructing an alternative narrative, where the thin description of having no father is replaced with a thick description of "God is that father for me", moreover a father who does not fail me, does not abandon me. Manqoba had many questions throughout his journey to an alternative journey, and surprisingly this alternative narrative is not created through the answers he got to these questions, but rather a contentment of not having the answers, but that God is the answer for now.

When looking at the African Folktale that Manqoba wrote, we might come to a better understanding of when he arrived at the moment of gaining his unique outcome.

Title: Sunny Rain

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> Once upon a time in the place called Limpopo, there was two different villagers who had a serious argument and this argument was about what does it mean when the rain rains while the sun is still glowing.
>
> One of the villagers believe that when the rain rains while the sun is still glowing it means that baboons are getting married and the other villager believed when this happens, sick people at the hospitals are being taken by God, but both the kings from the different villages believed that when this happens it shows God's happiness.
>
> (27 February 2010 TOL Camp 2)

This story contains many metaphors and as such one cannot make conclusions on behalf of Manqoba. However, if we look at this story in the context of his song and his former narrative, or in the context of him making peace with the paradoxes in his life and seeing the events in his life from the perspective of his new found relationship with God, one might perhaps understand this story as saying that although people might have different perspectives of the same events (the two villagers) or different experiences of the same events, the primary conclusion remains always constant, and that is that everything is done and happens for the glory of God. Manqoba might be saying that one can wonder about the causes and the reasons for events, but at the end of the day all that matters is that what happens, happens for the glory of God, the remaining explanations are futile and secondary to this unchangeable fact. In this Manqoba reached his unique outcome, for rather than wondering and struggling with the reason for why all these things happened, he changed his perspective in accepting what happened, without understanding, but finding peace in the being of God, in the relationship with God, where he can sit with his Father, feel his comfort and walk according to His guidance, and know that God does have a bigger plan. It is as if Manqoba realised that man proposes, but God disposes.

The metaphor of "Sunny Rain" might also indicate this paradox experienced in his life, where he came to the realisation that hope flows through suffering, that amidst the tears and the cloudiness, lies a ray of sunlight; that for some people rain might bring sadness (people dying in hospital), but for others happiness (baboons getting married). In this conclusion of the story it is as if Manqoba got contentment that God is in charge of everything.

In one of the letters to his father, Manqoba states that he hopes that God will make his father realise that he has a son. By this Manqoba might indicate his total trust and

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believe in God to show his father what a real father is, indicating that for him, fatherhood is a command from God.

In turn, when writing about his father's absence, Manqoba writes: "…I guess it was not meant to be, so now I just pray to the Lord that I would be a good father to my children and not to follow my father's footsteps". Once again, Manqoba states this absolute determination of God that God is in charge of whatever is and whatever is not.

Manqoba wrote about his father abandoning him and wrote: "…I just pray to the Lord that I would be a good father to my children and not to follow my father's footsteps". Manqoba's statement of praying to the Lord that he would be a better father for his children, might indicate 1) that he wants to be a father, and a good father, despite the experiences he had; 2) that he asks the Lord for guidance in being a father and forming him as a man, and 3) that he had made peace with the loss of a father, so that he can plan in being a better father, without denying the fact that he has a father. If he had not made peace with this, he would not have indicated that he had a father.

In conclusion, Manqoba's alternative narrative is infused with a sense of contentment, of victory over his inner struggle of acceptance of his mother's death and acceptance of his father's abandonment. Although he might not have found answers to his questions, he has found peace within his relationship with God, with God's determination for his life, and that he will, at the end reign victorious over abandonment and loss, by being the better father and better son one day. His past narrative enabled him to write a future narrative where he does not deny his past, but uses his past experience and relationship with God, as his new Father, to write a victorious story which is much better than the ones written before.

9.1.3. Kgotoso: I have peace

Kgotoso's name is Sesotho for 'peace'. He chose this name because, as he states: "I have had so much on my shoulder in my life and I think peace is what I need". He also added that he will name his first born "Kgotoso".

In making a decision of naming his first child the defining character of his alternative narrative, might perhaps indicate that Kgotoso is already planning for a life ahead, and even more so, planning for a life defined by the concept of 'peace'. A child might indicate new beginnings and it is; therefore, striking that Kgotoso wants to define his new beginnings with the idea of peace.

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Kgotoso has reached his unique outcome in the writing of a song prior to the second Tree of Life camp (February 2010) and after the first Tree of Life camp (October 2008). This song has been recorded on Kgotoso's and his twin brother's album.

Title: Keep on pushing

Ay yoh man, this one goes out to anybody who has lost people they love the most

- the most important people in their lives. I just want to give you an inspiration, you know what I mean?

And it goes ah something like this:

I went through the struggles man, I cried in this life

Life goes hard when you ain't got parents, but you got to step it up

And focus on your dreams and the goals to achieve

Even though it's hard and I'm moving on my own, I pray for a guide

Questions running in my mind –

Is God really dead? Does he really hear? Wanna look alright

And my granny ain't here, she got shot - nine bullets on her body,

Mommy rest in peace, oh I miss her any day

I got backstabbed by a friend, I don't bleed,

My twin on the side, you're the person I can trust,

I can let my soul shine

And stay strong

Have faith in myself,

Believe that I can do it

And a future so bright

from the dark to the light

Tomorrow be a blessing if today was a gift

Chorus:

Life has different stages

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Nothing stays the same,

But I still broke through (still broke through)

After all that I've been through, (I've been through)

I still keep pushing higher (pushing higher)

Even though it seems so far (seems so far)

I'm reaching up to my dreams (my dreams)

And you can't tell me a thing

I can't go to sleep all alone on my own

My momma passed on last night

Why me?

Life goes on…

So I'm trying to get it on, man I'm doing all that I can,

But my mother on my mind, so I cry all day

My [35]nigger Wiseman tell me – life's useless, make it better if we can

I'm praying –

Oh God, I need to be free from the world we're living in

Life's kinda hard, my credit came around

Be the mother on the side

This thing we call life comes once, then it's gone

Life's never good man, my life's half lived

All the tears on my face the things I've been through

My momma came along in my dream as an angel

Only if you here to see your son grow

[35]This word is stated like this in the song. Kgotoso and his friends use this word in their conversations with each other, as a way of referring to each other as brothers. This might indicate that their background and experience as African boys might also bind them in brotherhood. Additionally, this word is used in the hip-hop industry by African American artists, in a non-derogative sense.

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And now I'm all alone with the big boy Plat

Anything is possible you said that last

Chorus

Hey man, rest in peace to my mother, to my little sister,

Tell you about who passed on in my life – yoh, my mother man, you gotta make it

Hang, do beats boy, it's your future, you know what I mean?

Now it's a must, we're all have to make it, you got to push hard

It is very sad you know

But I love you all man

Chorus x2

As with Molimi and Manqoba, this song indicates the journey that Kgotoso had to follow before coming to the unique outcome of "standing strong" and "pushing higher', until he reaches his dreams. One thing which is striking though is that Kgotoso wrote this song in the absence of a request from the researcher, meaning that he decided by himself that he needs to verbalise his feelings and experiences, and to make peace with his life, so that he can "keep on pushing".

The concept of 'peace' is quite important to Kgotoso, as we can see in his choice of pseudonym, his choice of calling his first born child (new beginning) Kgotoso and also through this song where he states that he his mother and sister must rest in peace. There is a development in this concept of peace, where Kgotoso stated that he could not sleep, perhaps indicating that he could not find peace. Then his mother came in his dream (in his state of peace-lessness), as an angel (a carrier of peace) and gave him peace by reassuring him that she wants to see her son grow. As soon as he found this sense of peace, he could encourage himself, and his brother ('big boy plat") to reach for their dreams. One can then state that this regaining of peace is Kgotoso's unique outcome, where he could then focus and gain perspective on his future, in the absence of his mother, but not in the absence of her presence in his life, to reach for his dreams so that she can see her son grow. The concept of 'growth' might also indicate new beginnings, gaining new life and in the growing 'upwards', reaching and attaining his goals and dreams.

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One can see through this song as well, that the development to the attainment of 'peace' was not a linear process. It is as if Kgotoso reassured himself that he must move on, that he must stand strong, but he almost immediately gets overwhelmed by feelings of sadness and bitterness of the loss of so many loved ones. It is only when his mother appeared in his dreams that he could finally stand strong and be assured of his strength. It is as if he is now even strong enough to encourage other to keep on pushing: "… you gotta make it; Hang, do beats boy, it's your future, you know what I mean? Now it's a must, we all have to make it, you got to push hard".

Therefore, Kgotoso's thick description of his unique outcomes, 'peace', is furthermore elaborated by his believe in himself to endure and his imperative to now motivate others who find themselves in the same position, to endure, to stay strong and to work hard. Kgotoso finds courage and strength from his memory of his mother and the closeness he had with her which motivates him to make her proud. He shares this courage and strength with his supportive community, his brother and his friends, perhaps not only to motivate them, but also to motivate himself. By writing songs and by encouraging himself and others who share the same experience, Kgotoso is constantly thickening his alternative narrative, thereby keeping it real so that it can function as a map to his wanted future.

Kgotoso's narrative does not state his view of God directly, as with Molimi and Manqoba. However, he does state that he needs to believe and pray. For Kgotoso, God seems to play the role of the Supreme Being in the African culture, where Modimo is seen as almighty and powerful, but that he does not interfere with daily life. This might be because Kgotoso is not used to have an involved father-figure in his life and that he might have learned to cope on his own. Through Kgotoso's former narratives it is clear that he does turn to God when in need, and he states that he thanks God and then "moves on". Therefore, Kgotoso's alternative narrative is infused with this idea of moving on. As soon as he receives the courage and upliftment he needs, he moves on. Even more, it seems as if Kgotoso is motivated by his past narratives to move towards a future narrative, almost as if the one is dependent on the other. One can then state, that Kgotoso's narrative is defined by this energy of movement, where God is also seen as an Energy which constantly moves where He is needed. Perhaps Kgotoso's past narratives, which are infused with loss, left him with two choices: "either stagnate and mourn, or move on, and celebrate the memories of those you lost through your constant energy of moving forward and reaching your goals". Therefore, Kgotoso's change in

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perspective came when he realised that he can use whatever happened to him, to drive him forward.

9.2. Reflecting on my own Battle of the Research Journey

After collecting the reflective thoughts of both the co-researchers and the interdisciplinary conversationalists, I thought it important to also reflect on my own experiences and thoughts regarding the research process, and the various obstacles and victories I experienced during my own battle with the research process; the relationships which were built and the content collected.

Firstly, I would like to reflect on how I experienced the *research process* itself, which contains elements of data collection, data analysis and working with the various theories entailed in this report.

I found myself comfortable in working within the qualitative research strategy and design, as most of my research experience was gained from this context. However, I did not find it easy to apply this strategy to the research context, as many challenges were faced regarding language and cultural barriers, which made me aware of the manner in which I report the narratives. Both the co-researchers and I used English as a communicative language, but the fact is that English is both mine and their second language, and; therefore, made it difficult to express oneself fully, which would not be the case if we could speak in our native tongues. It was also apparent that some questions were not clear to the co-researchers because of their lack in understanding English properly; however, we fortunately had enough time to explain that which they did not understand, but some items were not completed as requested, perhaps because of not understanding the instructions, or perhaps because some co-researchers do not like writing stories down. I could also not use an interpreter during the whole process, as it brings an element of 'coldness' into the research process, thereby resulting in me relating secondarily with the co-researchers. In the future; however, I would rather that we complete activities verbally instead of giving them time to write down their thoughts on paper. The biggest unique outcome of the whole research process is the relationship I was able to build with the co-researchers, despite the various challenges and barriers we experienced related to our experiential contexts; therefore, I was very careful in inviting secondary people into the context whose presence might compromise the trust already built. Nevertheless, the conversations flowed surprisingly easily and I was astonished by the amount of personal information entrusted to me, regarding the co-

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researchers' experience and the ease with which they shared their personal stories and deepest thoughts. I am forever grateful to them for this.

The second item I found difficult to implement within the qualitative research design, was the retelling or reporting of the various narratives entrusted to me. I struggled in finding a balance between truthfully reporting their narratives (while omitting spelling mistakes, but keeping the grammar as is) and conveying my understanding of their narratives, without doing any obvious interpretation. Being trained both in Theology and Psychology, I am conditioned to interpret and to analyse, and; therefore, found it difficult in refraining to do so, moving away from this modernistic paradigm of doing both research and therapy, while still being aware of the fact that I must move in the direction of describing and combining my understanding, their understanding and the interdisciplinary conversationalists' understanding, without falling prey to confirmation bias.

In a similar way, doing research from a postfoundational practical theological and narrative paradigm also entailed a change in mindset for me, as I was previously trained in doing research according to the modernistic paradigm. I realised during the research process, that the modernistic manner of doing research provides one (and myself) with much comfort, as one is not pressured in doing further investigation into the co-researchers' and other scholars' reflection and insights regarding one's own collected (and bias) data; thereby allocating one's own thoughts and those of "truthfully approved" former theorists as superior. However, at the same time I realised how dangerous it is to do research in such a manner, thereby developing an appreciation of the postfoundational practical theological and narrative manner of doing research. This appreciation grew even more when I witnessed the empowerment entailed for the co-researchers in doing research *along with* them and not *to* them, as in using them like experimental 'guinea pigs'. This might be the reason for them in sharing their stories in the first place, as it is not an isolated project done by the researchers, but a participative and joined effort.

Another unique outcome which developed from this way in doing research, is the co-researchers' willingness and eagerness in accepting me into their group, and into their world. Therefore, I experienced first-hand what participative research means and entails and how both I and the co-researchers benefitted from this type of research. However, I feel that if I could do it over, I would have started much earlier in writing the report and would have had more sessions with the co-researchers. Many of the activities in the

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workbook (*Tree of Life* 2008 and *David's Battle, God's Victory* 2010) were only completed at home, which resulted in not all the activities being completed, because of a lack of sufficient time at the camp and the other contact sessions. Many of the activities led to an elaborated discussion, which is inherently a positive outcome because then the co-researchers expressed themselves freely and discussed that which they see as important; however, it took up much time and caused that some of the activities had to be completed at home.

The two camps facilitated great opportunities for building relations and we managed to get very close with each other; meaning that not only is my colleague and I taken into the world of the co-researchers, but they also got a glimpse of our world and context. I think that the camps also made it feel less like research for both the co-researchers and us, but it also provided the co-researchers with an opportunity to get away from their strenuous lives and responsibilities and gave them a chance to just relax and enjoy each other's company as well. A wonderful unique outcome of the camps is that we have made good friends and the co-researchers also made friends with each other, thereby creating a solid support structure. However, it must be said that I experienced much ambivalence during the contact sessions in drawing clear boundaries between research and therapy. At the end the benefits of the contact sessions for the co-researchers were the fact that they can be debriefed regarding the trauma and bereavement they experience and can receive guidance from each other and from us in terms of their journey and future journey. However, there were times where we needed to attain information for research purposes and it became difficult for me in conveying deconstructive questioning and listening, without moving into the mindset of therapy. Additionally, these types of questions can at times, if not conveyed carefully, be seen as insensitive. It must be said as well, that during the first camp the co-researchers were still careful in sharing and we had to be aware of the manner in which deconstructive questioning was done (e.g. in a sensitive manner); but at the second camp the co-researchers bloomed and they were much less sensitive in terms of what they discussed and what they conveyed. Therefore, the conversations were much more direct and honest. Additionally, everyone enjoyed this opportunity to be frank and direct – to share without the fear of being judged, rejected or even frowned upon.

Similarly, I found it at times uncomfortable in discussing some matters such as the issue of sex, without taking on the role of teacher (as from my experience in being a Life Orientation teacher in the past). I had to refrain myself from wanting to guide and giving

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my opinion regarding the matter, and with all honesty, at times I did not succeed in just listening and gave some guiding advice. I realise that I have to be more aware of this 'teaching' tendency of mine, to be able to put it aside and position myself better as a participative *researcher* and not a participative friend or counsellor.

Additionally, I found it difficult to maintain a balance between collecting literature data and incorporating this into my research findings. The fact is that although this study works within a postmodern paradigm, the action of collecting literature on the subject is still very much modern. For example, when using theories such as Fowler, we are inherently doing an interpretation on behalf of the co-researchers. On the other hand, we cannot validate our data without getting sources which can 'back up' our findings. Therefore, although I appreciate the postmodern and postfoundational paradigm and acknowledge that it is the only manner in which ethical and "true" as possible research can be done, it is still true that most academic fields and schools move within the modernistic paradigm of doing research and also value this paradigm over different ways. Perhaps this is still the journey that postmodernism follows and one day we might perhaps arrive at a destination where this paradigm is preferred. I truly believe that the movement of doing interdisciplinary investigation or transversality is the very first step in moving away and reigning victorious over modernism.

When looking back at the narrative research and therapeutic process, it must be stated that I do not find it easy to do research and therapy within the metaphor of narrative therapy. I do find it an astounding paradigm which opens up many opportunities and possibilities for the co-researchers, but engaging with people in a more 'creative' sense and a less 'traditional' therapeutic sense, takes much effort, as I tend to find structure comforting and creativity challenging. However, at the same time, moving within the realm of narratives suites me greatly as I converse mainly through narratives and experience myself and my life as a narrative; and find it relatively easy to converse with the co-researchers with the use of narrative language. It is when using creative metaphors within narratives that I feel I can 'exercise' my skills in doing so. Nevertheless, my experience with and observation of doing research in using the metaphor of Tree of Life and David, showed me how people express themselves better and more freely, than responding to structured or semi-structured questions which are mostly used in traditional ways of doing both research and therapy. This has changed the manner in which I will do therapy in the future forever and I can state with confidence that I have grown in this particular professional area.

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The final aspect I would like to reflect on in terms of the research process is the apparent changes in the co-researchers from the first camp in 2008, to the second camp in 2010, as well as my own changes during this period of time. I would say that a bit of a history effect took place. As I stated before, the co-researchers were much more comfortable and expressive during the second camp, although I think that it might be because of their own psychosocial and spiritual growth. The group of co-researchers who we met again at the second camp were more mature, in their physique as well as mentally. Many of the co-researchers stated that the first camp made them think about issues and themselves in ways that they have not done before, thereby gaining access to their own emotional and mental world. This could very well be; however, I have observed a maturity which only comes with gaining experience in life and finding peace with regards to the past. The co-researchers were more relaxed and content with their lives, than they were in 2008 and I stated to my colleague that for me they are 'men' and 'women' now, and not children anymore and they acted more than adults than children. For me this was a unique outcome in my own life, as I witnessed how these boys and girls have grown, spiritually and mentally and I felt almost like a proud mother and wished that their own mothers were there to witness this growth, irrelevant to the fact that this growth might be attributed to the research journey we took together. To witness this and to be part of this growth in someone else's life, or specifically in a child's life, gave me a gift that changed my life forever as I matured and became a 'mother' myself. Thus, my personal experience of myself within this context changed me from being a friend and confidant in 2008, to a mother and a guardian in 2010. I guess that within the context of research this might be a challenge; nevertheless, in the context of my personal life, this is a unique outcome. I have also grown as researcher. From doing research in 2006, to now, 2010, I have also become more relaxed within the context and the urge to get data and answers to my own questions, have been greatly reduced. At the beginning of my story with research I was very immature, this almost made me selfish. I was much more concerned with gaining information and with ensuring that the information I gained is valid and reliable and conforms to the standards of academic research, than with my research participants and how they experienced the journey. This has changed, up to the point where the co-researchers and tending to their needs and experiences is now my primary concern, as I witness the change in their lives, thoughts and attitude and see the empowering benefits of doing research in such away. In essence, my attitude has changed from seeing research as a means to an end, to seeing that the research process itself, excluding the end goal, is beneficial and live changing for all the

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participants involved. This should be one's primary reason for doing research in the social sciences and specifically within Practical Theology.

My final thought on reflecting on the research journey, is with reference to doing research specifically within the male context. I took a huge leap in changing my focus (from my Master studies) from females to males, in that I identified much more with females and the experiences of females, making it easier for me to advocate on their behalf. Therefore, in essence, my decision to enter the world of males is like a blind man entering the world of the seeing. In the beginning I struggled to identify with males and while doing the literature study, I found myself constantly understanding the experiences of the females better, thereby almost 'taking their side'. I am a bit of a feminist myself which means that I get upset regarding patriarchal oppression which is very much prevalent in the African communities in South Africa. However, this was the reason why I chose to explore the world of the opposite sex – in a way I wanted to challenge myself and serve my curiosity in understanding why men are behaving in this way. The biggest challenge I experienced in doing research with these specific boys, is moving away from my stereotyping of black men. As a white South African woman I am acutely aware of the presence of hate crime in South Africa at the moment and the fact that many white women are sexually abused, attacked and even killed by black perpetrators, this sometimes being a fear I have. I had to move away from the idea that men oppress women and men abandon women. I had to literally move away from every idea, every prejudice, my sense of fear and even feelings of anger towards men who use and abuse women. I had to even move away from being a woman, thinking like a woman and acting like a woman – I had to reject my whole being as a woman. This was challenging and strangely exiting. I experienced a world that I never thought possible.

As the research developed and as I developed a relationship with the co-researchers, my perspective changed bit by bit. Suddenly I understood, and even more than understanding, I had empathy for men and boys living in South Africa, specifically within impoverished communities. This change did not happen quickly and I had to challenge myself constantly by moving out of my comfort zone, not only physically but also mentally. At some stage I even found myself advocating on behalf of men. To say the least, I am changed forever, as a researcher, as a therapist and as a woman. I can also see the change in my co-researchers because someone actually thought of listening to their stories and experiences as males, and as black males, amidst the wave of feminism which floods our world. I think the fact that I am a woman, and even more, I

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am a *white* woman, struck them as peculiar, although they never voiced their experience of this fact. Come to think about it, I should have actually enquired how they experienced my paradoxical presence and interest in their lives.

In summary, I have learned much from the research process, regarding myself as a researcher and a therapist, and also regarding the topic at hand. The experience I gained has given me insights into my shortcomings, and things I would do differently the second time around, but even more so, I have witnessed my own growth and strengths which I would not be aware of if I did not conduct this research. This process has also equipped me better in reflecting about my experiences and the experiences of others and enabled me to move out of my own comfort zone in exploring the narratives and the experience of others; which I would not even be aware of or concerned with, if I did not go through this process.

In recommendation of *further research to be conducted*, I would definitely recommend more research into the lives and experiences of black African men, specifically in South Africa. There is still a huge gap in research regarding black men in South Africa, as I found it almost impossible to get literature regarding this topic. Even research done overseas lacks in information regarding the experiences of black men, and this might be the result of both being concerned formerly with white sovereignty and currently, with the plight of women, and specifically black women in the context of HIV and Aids.

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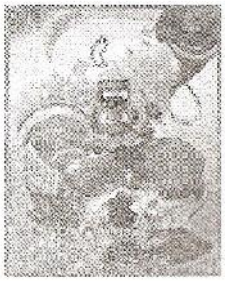
ANNEXURE 1 Co-researcher invitation letter



Co-Researcher Invitation 2009

Dear Co-Researcher

My name is Juanita Meyer and I am a PhD student from the University of Pretoria. To be a PhD student means to do research on a specific topic and hand in an assignment on one's findings. I am doing research in the field of family therapy, specifically around boys who have lost either their mother or their father in some way and their experiences around God. For this research I need boys to volunteer to be a co-researcher with me who can help me better understand his life circumstances and feelings. I am also involved with Heartbeat - I work closely with the care workers and social workers at your centre.

Therefore I would like to invite you to take part in my research, to teach me about your life, your fears, your successes, your challenges and your beliefs. If you agree to be part of my research - to be my co-researcher - I will ensure that whatever you tell me and you want to be kept confidential, will be kept confidential. I will not use your real name unless you want me to. I will inform you of what will be done with the information and will give you a copy of my assignment if you would like to read it. The point is that you will do the research *with* me and therefore have a say throughout the whole process. The aim of the course work is not just for me to better understand you, but to also guide you through things that might be a bit sensitive, some emotions you might experience, or answer some questions that you might have. After the course work you will also better understand yourself and relationships you have.

If you agree to honour me with expert knowledge of your life, please complete the consent form attached to this document.

I look forward to our journey together!

Yours Sincerely

Juanita Meyer

University of Pretoria

PhD Pastoral Family Therapy

Faculty of Theology, Department of Practical Theology

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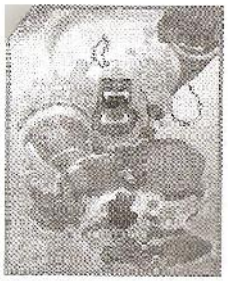

Co-Researcher Invitation 2009

Juanita Meyer (Researcher)

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of study: "*A deconstruction of the spiritual and psycho-social gender specific narratives of male adolescent orphans, affected by HIV and Aids and poverty*"

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by **Juanita Meyer**, from the department of **Practical Theology** at the **University of Pretoria**. The results of the research will be contributed to a thesis which will be ssubmitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Philosophiae Doctor** (PHD).

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact **Prof. Julian Muller**, promoter of the degree at 012 420 2669, or **Juanita Meyer**, the researcher at 082 5510 793.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the research is to obtain narratives of adolescent (orphaned) boys affected by factor such as poverty and HIV and Aids. It will be determined if these narratives can inform us of these boys' view of God and role of God in their lives, which in turn is affected by the lack of a father-figure. This is a qualitative study and does not oim at generalising the findings, but rather at describing their personally created narratives and understanding how these narratives influence their everyday lives. We are also interested how the child himself changes his narrative into an alternative narrative, which will act as a motivator for future behaviour and the establishment of future relationships, including the spiritual relationship with God. The research is based on the theoretical viewpoints of Post-foundationalism and Social Constructionism and therapeutic methods used is derived from assumptions held by Narrative and Gestalt therapy.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Take part in an eight-week course where a facilitator will work through some course work with you
- Complete the activities stated within the workbook
- Complete the activities with complete honesty and integrity

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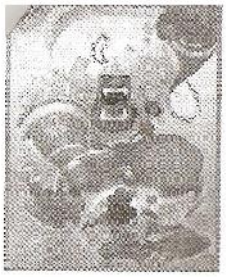

Co-Researcher Invitation 2009

Juanita Meyer (Researcher)

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of study: "*A deconstruction of the spiritual and psycho-social gender specific narratives of male adolescent orphans, affected by HIV and Aids and poverty*"

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If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact **Prof. Julian Muller**, promoter of the degree at 012 420 2669, or **Juanita Meyer**, the researcher at 082 5510 793.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the research is to obtain narratives of adolescent (orphaned) boys affected by factor such as poverty and HIV and Aids. It will be determined if these narratives can inform us of these boys' view of God and role of God in their lives, which in turn is affected by the lack of a father-figure. This is a qualitative study and does not aim at generalising the findings, but rather at describing their personally created narratives and understanding how these narratives influence their everyday lives. We are also interested how the child himself changes his narrative into an alternative narrative, which will act as a motivator for future behaviour and the establishment of future relationships, including the spiritual relationship with God. The research is based on the theoretical viewpoints of Post-foundationalism and Social Constructionism and therapeutic methods used is derived from assumptions held by Narrative and Gestalt therapy.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Take part in an eight-week course where a facilitator will work through some course work with you
- Complete the activities stated within the workbook
- Complete the activities with complete honesty and integrity

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- Take photos with the camera given to you and return the camera to the facilitator.

Your participation will not exceed the eight-week period and each session will not exceed one-hour.

The completed thesis as well as the data will be available to you at any time. You have to request these materials from your facilitator.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

No reasonable risks are foreseen; however, some of the activities might elicit sensitive feelings, emotions and memories, in which case the facilitator will be available immediately to conduct debrief counselling.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Benefits of this study are three-fold:

Firstly, to Heartbeat as a community development organisation: Research findings and summaries will describe specific gender-related psycho-social and emotional needs and desires which will be beneficial for care workers and social workers who work with these children. They can plan their interventions and programmes around these needs, thereby delivering a service which is relevant to in-context experiences.

Secondly it will provide the child himself with an opportunity to share painful experiences and emotions with a trustworthy confidant. This facilitator can at the same time do counselling with this child. The child will learn much about himself during the coursework which will provide insight to future feelings and emotions. At the same time he will learn new coping styles which can be utilised when confronted with similar experiences or emotions in the future. In essence the coursework teaches skills which will help him to change negative experiences into learning opportunities. It will help him to retain positive, empowering memories admits suffering and sensitive experiences. These memories can be used as powerful motivators for future behaviour and aspirations.

Finally any organisation who works within the field of HIV and Aids, poverty and orphan hood, can also get some insights on the difference in spiritual, emotional and psycho-social experiences between boys and girls. This can help to transform intervention strategies in being more relevant to in-context experiences as well as subjective gender related experiences. South Africa has a great need in developing intervention and support strategies which can tend to the emotional and psycho-social frame of reference related to boys - if we can strengthen the value and moral system of boys,

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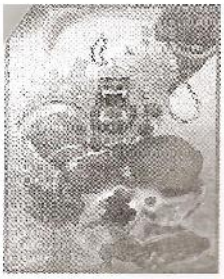

and empower them with skills and knowledge which they can use to secure their future, we can for sure, decrease crime, poverty and sexual related diseases - within African communities patriarchal systems are still very powerful. However, before we can empower, we must understand – 'understanding' is the primary aim of this research.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will not receive any monetary rewards for participating in this study, as the course will form part of one of the 'support group' services Heartbeat provides at the centre. Therefore the will to participate in this research must be sincere; otherwise validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the data will be compromised. It can be agreed upon later; however, that some sort of 'closing-party' can be held at the end of the coursework.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study. Confidentiality can be achieved by using anonymous indicators or by changing the name and the location of the co-researcher. If the co-researcher feels at any point in time that specific information cannot be published, he has the right to state this.

Data obtained in this research will primarily be published in my thesis and a journal article, which will be available to scholars in the field. It might also happen that scholars might use the findings in their future studies or publications. However, no data will be made available to any form of public media.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics

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SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I have read the information provided for the study "*A deconstruction of the spiritual and psycho-social gender specific narratives of male adolescent orphans, affected by HIV and Aids and poverty*" as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Participant (please print)

_____

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

_____ _____

Signature of Participant or Legal Representative Date

[The name and signature of the legal representative is ONLY necessary if the participant is not competent to consent. If the participant is competent, please do not include these options].

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

_____

Name of Witness (please print)

_____ _____

Signature of Witness Date

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ANNEXURE 2 Tree of Life Certificates

Certificate of Appreciation

This certificate is awarded to

Johanna Jacobs

in recognition of valuable contributions to the Tree of Life Camp

For being the best _____

Sikelele Magaliesburg

_____ _____

Signature Amanda Richter Date

_____ _____

Signature Juanita Loubser Date

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ANNEXURE 3 Co-researchers Songs or Poems

8. Write your own TREE song: Remember to give it a title and indicate the style your writing it in.

Mommy I missed you
life ain't the same
mommy without you
remember all the good day good time
when I used to cry
by your side
yeh I miss that
my heart keeps
bleeding when I'm down
by your grave
I right now
mommy I'm somebody's fault
I wonder
how it feels
to be right where
you should my angel

Chorus!
Through out ~~my~~
my struggles
through my pain
but I stand I stand.

Figure 6: Kgotoso song to mother

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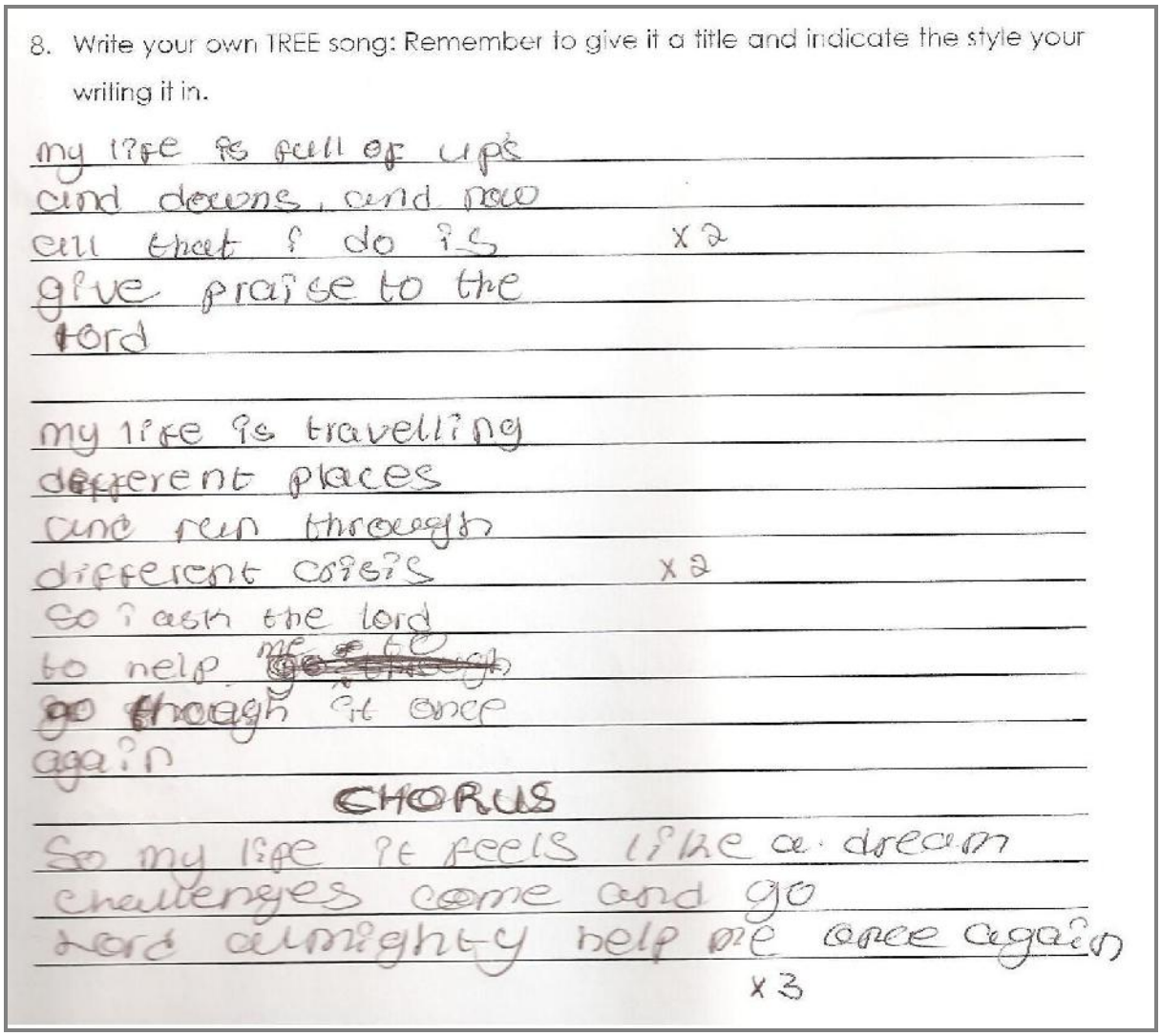

8. Write your own TREE song: Remember to give it a title and indicate the style your writing it in.

my life is full of ups
and downs, and now
all that I do is x 2
give praise to the
lord

my life is travelling
different places
and run through
different crisis x 2
so i ask the lord
to help me to
go through it once
again

CHORUS

So my life it feels like a dream
challenges come and go
lord almighty help me once again
x 3

Figure 7: Manqoba song about life

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8. Write your own TREE song: Remember to give it a title and indicate the style your writing it in.

Tittle : The morning

I wake up everyday
an i don't feel the morning shine
I took another look into the sky

Hoping that the sun will shine
an all i feel is the rain
that brings me pain

I kept on praying and praying
preparing for ang pressures of lye.
until one day morning

When the rainbow was in the sky
The pain went away and i flew into the sky
I cryed tears of joy and i prayed Thank
you lord.

Figure 8: Molimi Song

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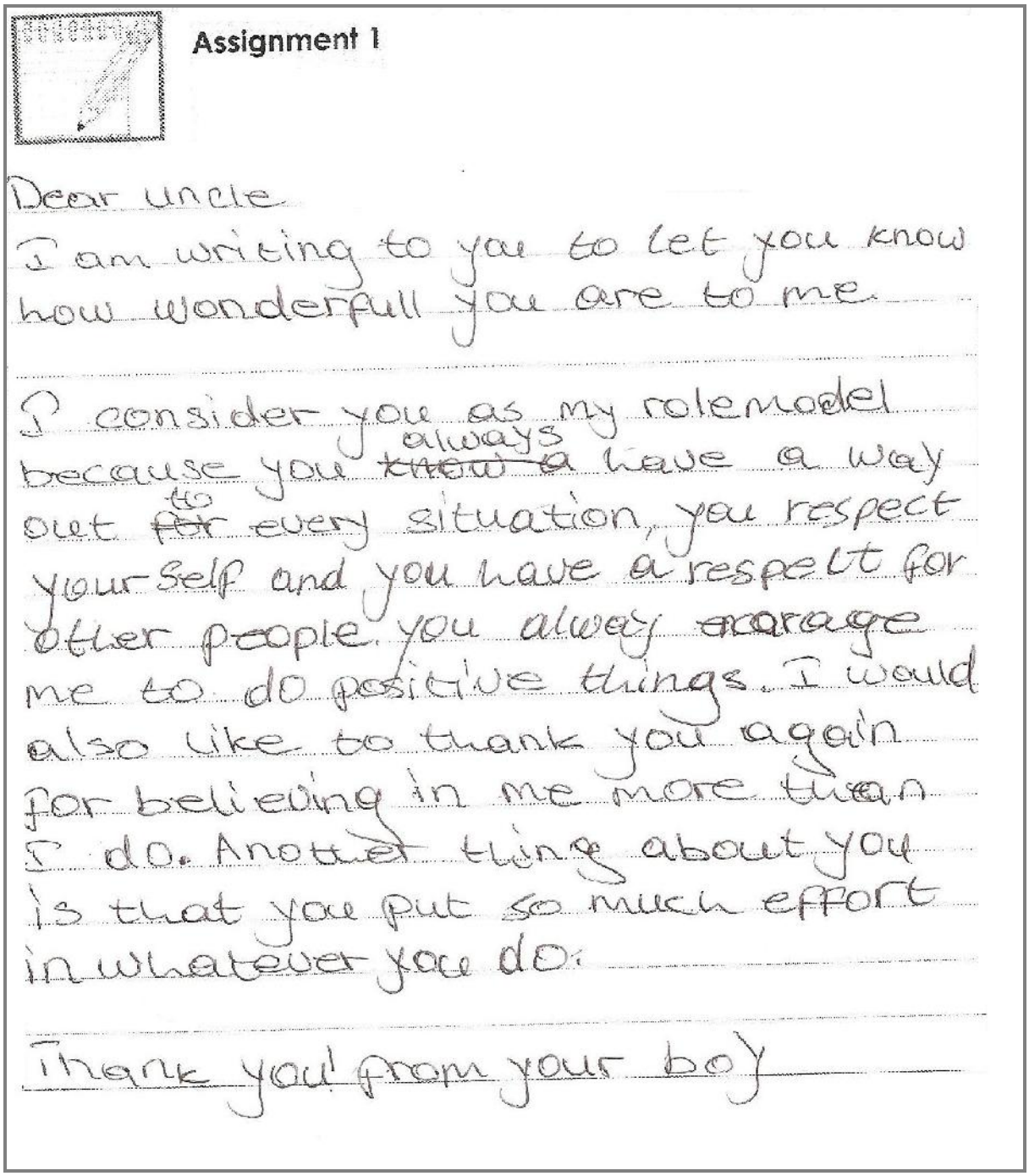
ANNEXURE 4 Co-researchers' letter of appreciation


Assignment 1

Dear uncle

I am writing to you to let you know how wonderfull you are to me.

I consider you as my rolemodel because you ~~knew~~ always have a way out ~~for~~ to every situation, you respect yourself and you have a respelt for other people. you always ~~manage~~ me to do positive things. I would also like to thank you again for believing in me more than I do. Another thing about you is that you put so much effort in whatever you do.

Thank you from your boy

Figure 9: Kgotoso letter to uncle

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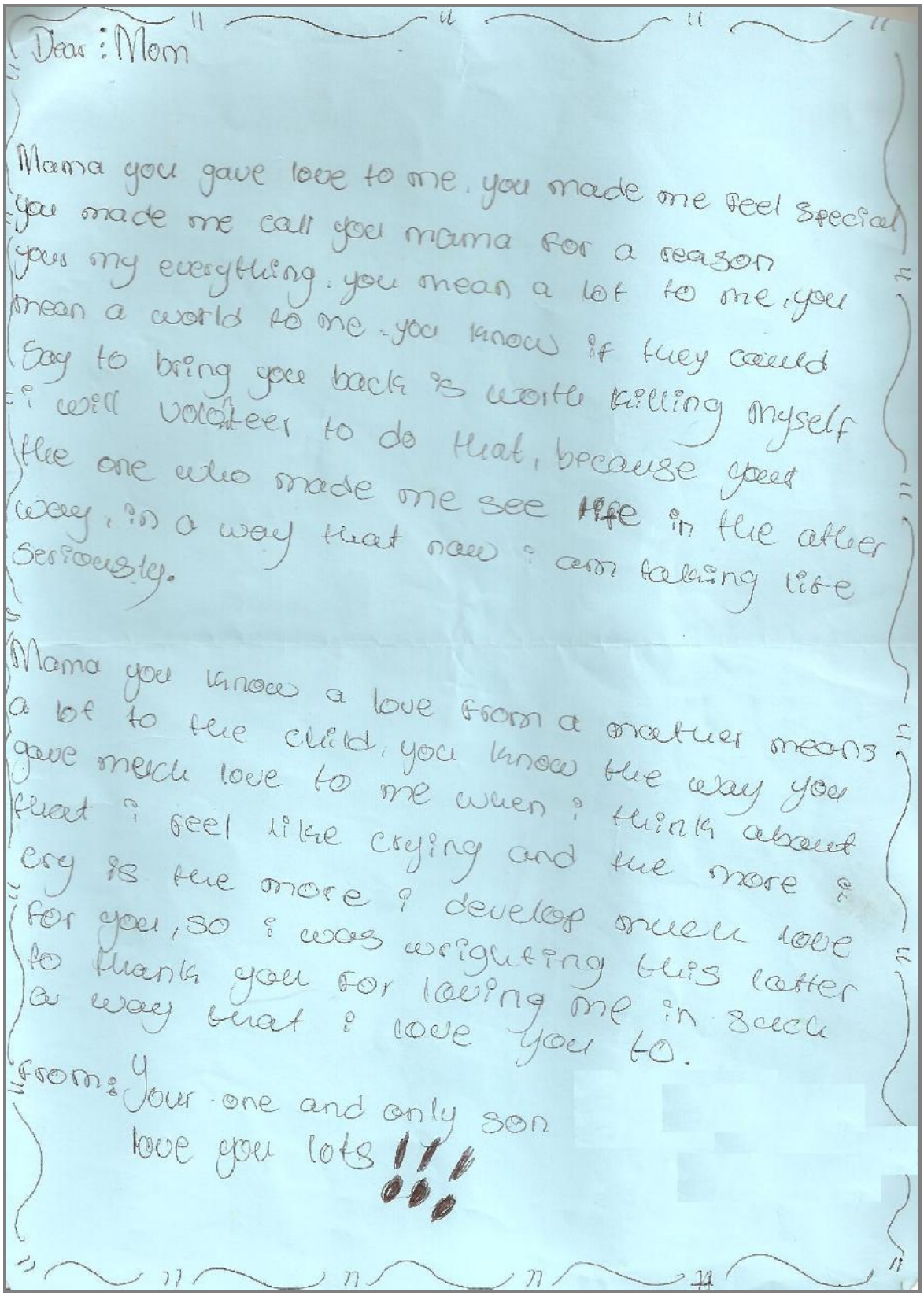

Dear: Mom

Mama you gave love to me, you made me feel special you made me call you mama for a reason you my everything, you mean a lot to me, you mean a world to me, you know if they could say to bring you back is worth killing myself I will volonteer to do that, because your the one who made me see life in the other way, in a way that now I am taking life seriously.

Mama you know a love from a mother means a lot to the child, you know the way you gave much love to me when I think about that I feel like crying and the more I cry is the more I develop much love for you, so I was wrigting this letter to thank you for loving me in such a way that I love you to.

From: Your one and only son
love you lots !!!

Figure 10: Manqoba letter to mom of appreciation

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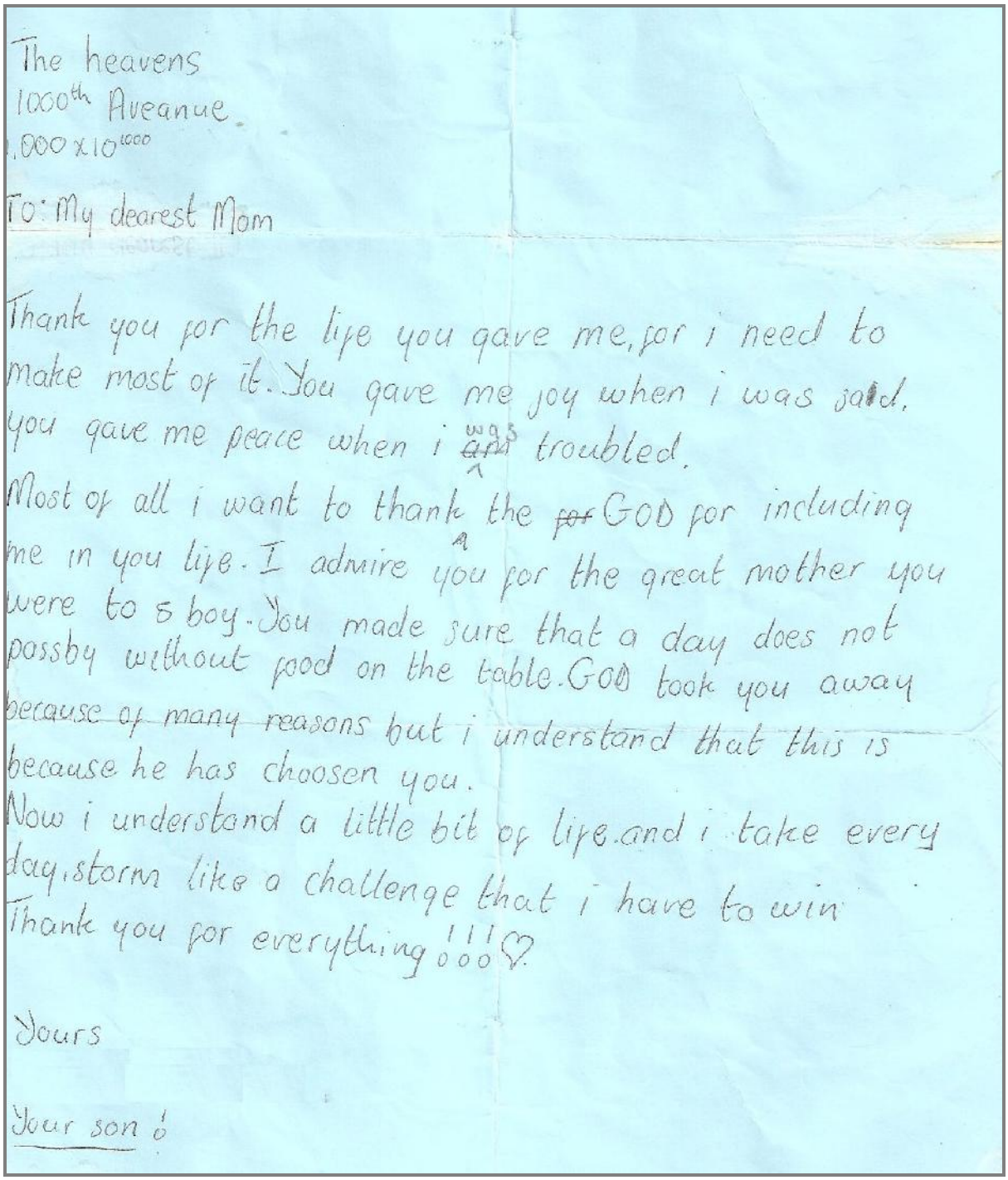

The heavens
1000th Aveanue
1,000 x 10^1000

To: My dearest Mom

Thank you for the life you gave me, for i need to make most of it. You gave me joy when i was sad, you gave me peace when i ~~are~~ was troubled.
Most of all i want to thank the ~~for~~ GOD for including me in you life. I admire you for the great mother you were to a boy. You made sure that a day does not possby without food on the table. GOD took you away because of many reasons but i understand that this is because he has choosen you.
Now i understand a little bit of life. and i take every day, storm like a challenge that i have to win
Thank you for everything !!! ooo ♡

Yours

Your son !

Figure 11: Molimi letter of appreciation to deceased mother

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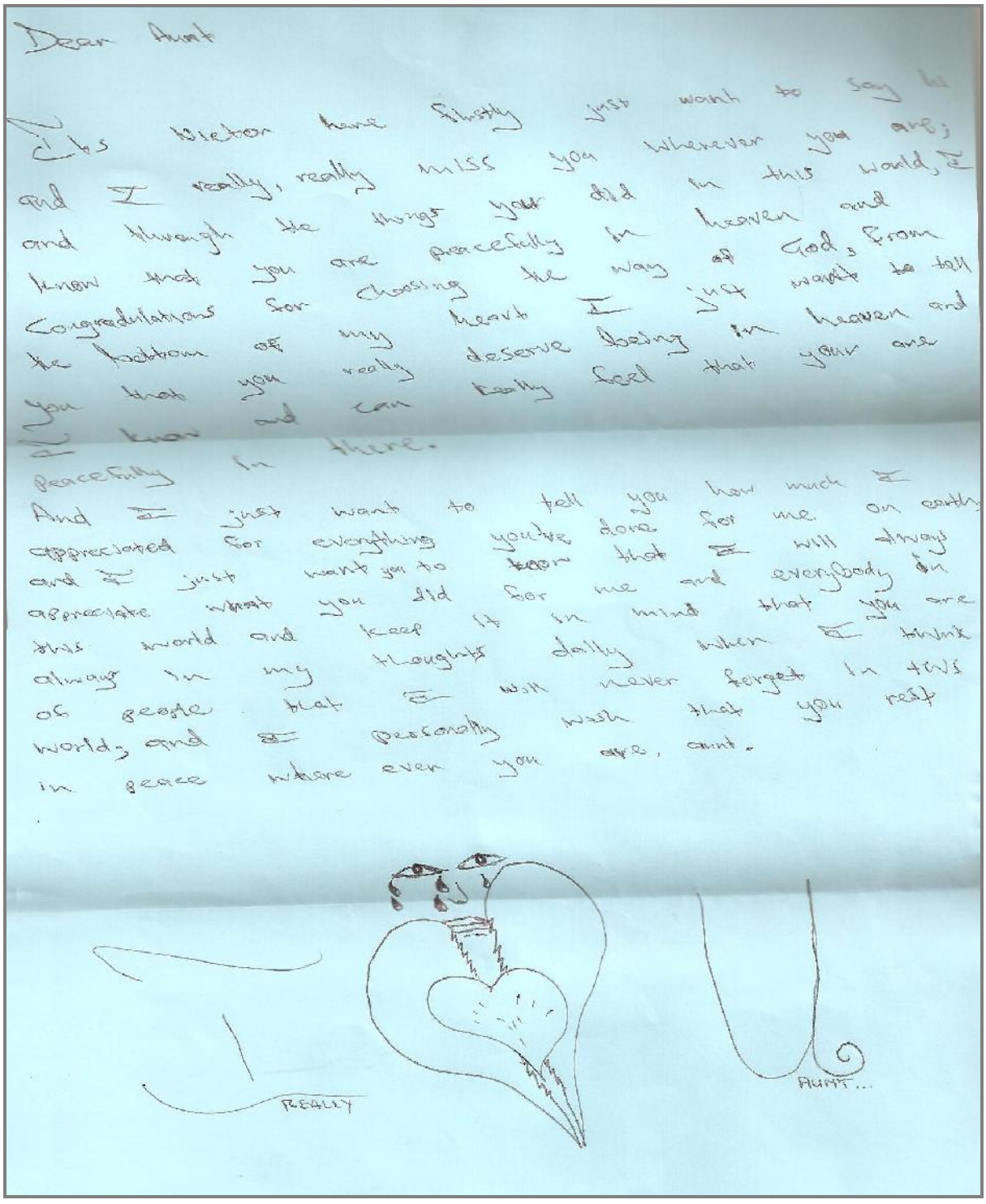

Figure 12: Mpho Letter of appreciation to deceased aunt, who was like a mother to him (Mpho's mother abandoned him as baby)

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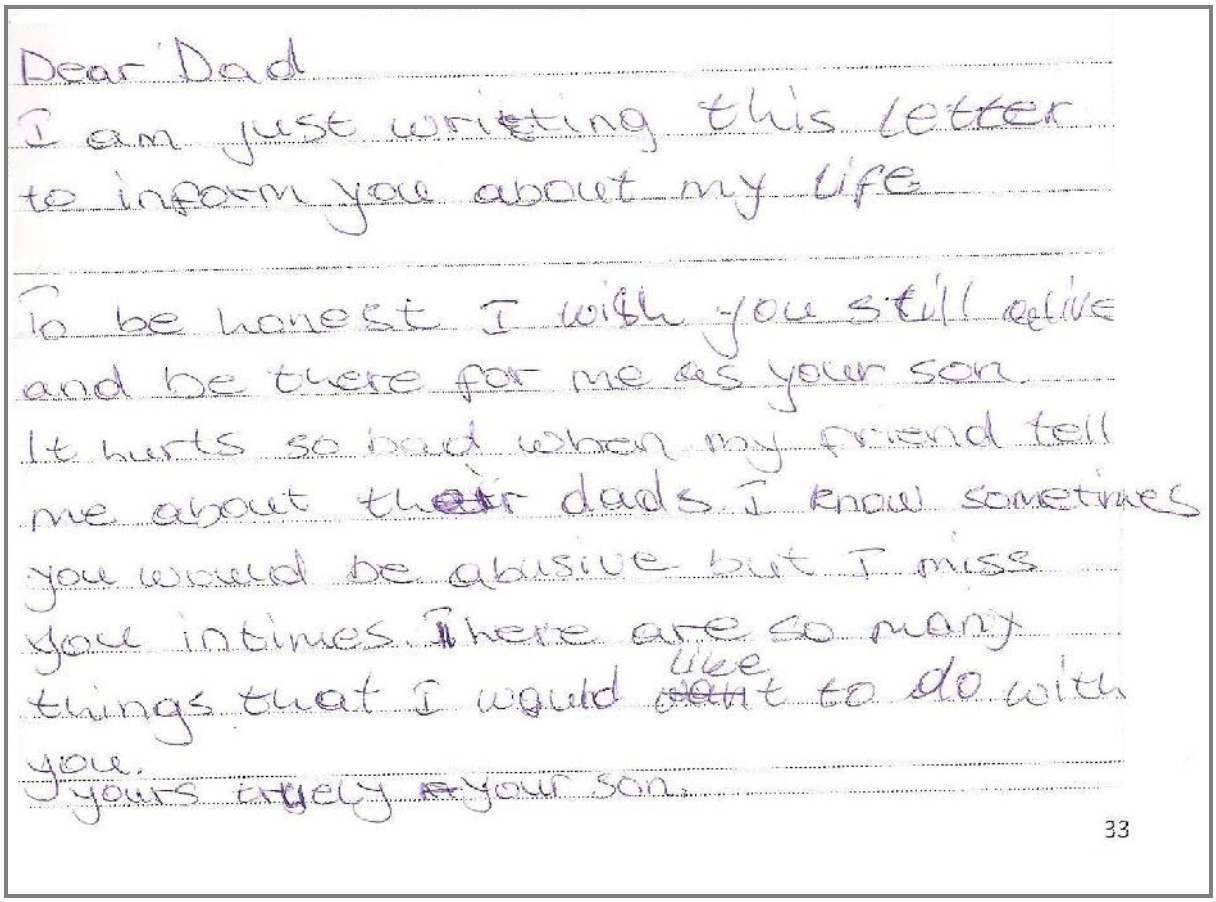
ANNEXURE 5 Co-researchers letters to father



Dear Dad

I am just writting this letter to inform you about my life.

To be honest I wish you still alive and be there for me as your son. It hurts so bad when my friend tell me about their dads. I know sometimes you would be abusive but I miss you in times. There are so many things that I would like to do with you.

Yours truely your son.

33

Figure 13: Kgotoso letter to deceased father

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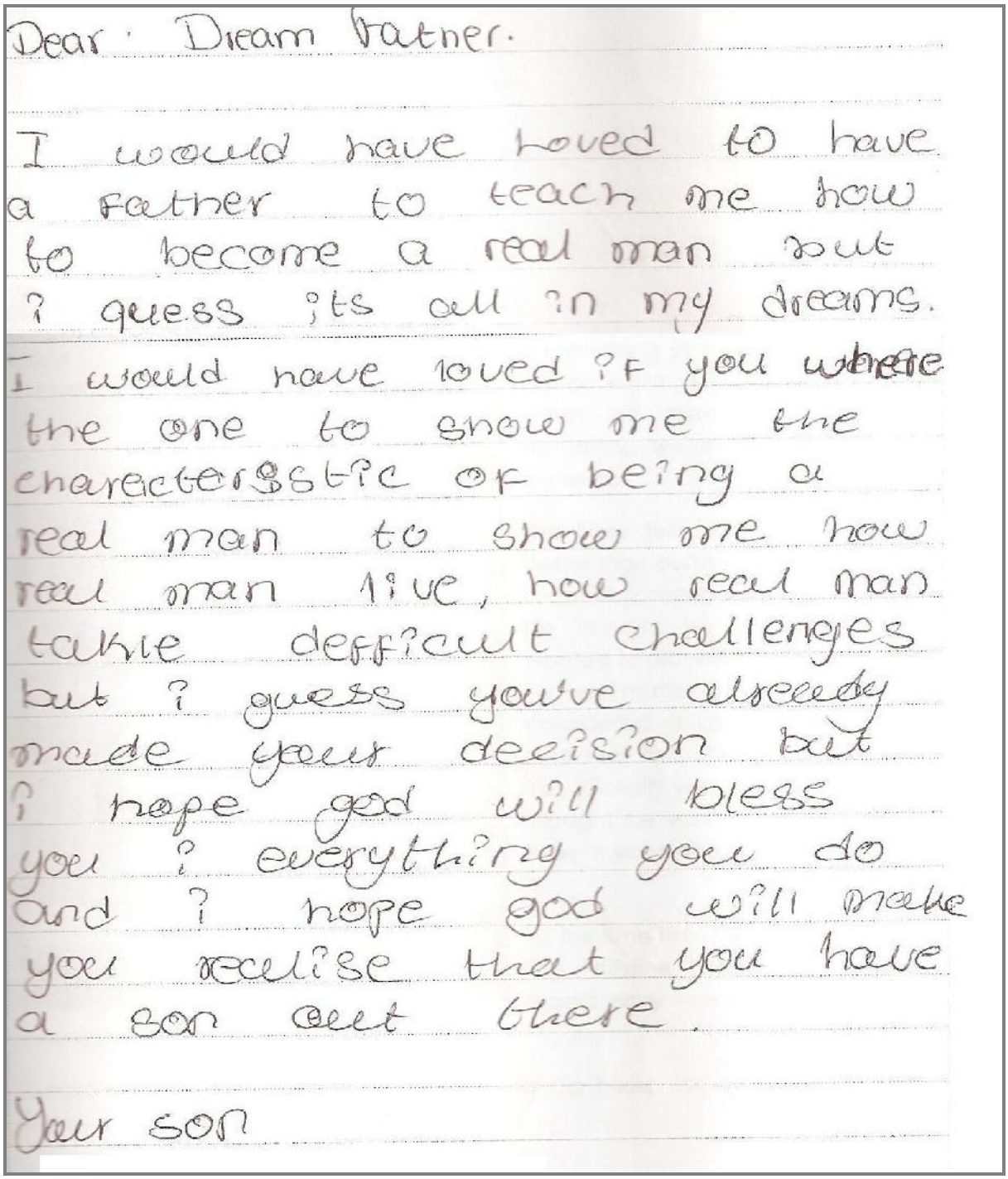

Dear Dream Father.

I would have loved to have a father to teach me how to become a real man but ? guess its all in my dreams.

I would have loved if you where the one to show me the characterstic of being a real man to show me how real man live, how real man takie deffiCult challenges but ? guess youve already made your deeision but ? hope god will bless you ? everything you do and ? hope god will make you realise that you have a son out there.

Your son

Figure 14: Manqoba letter to father

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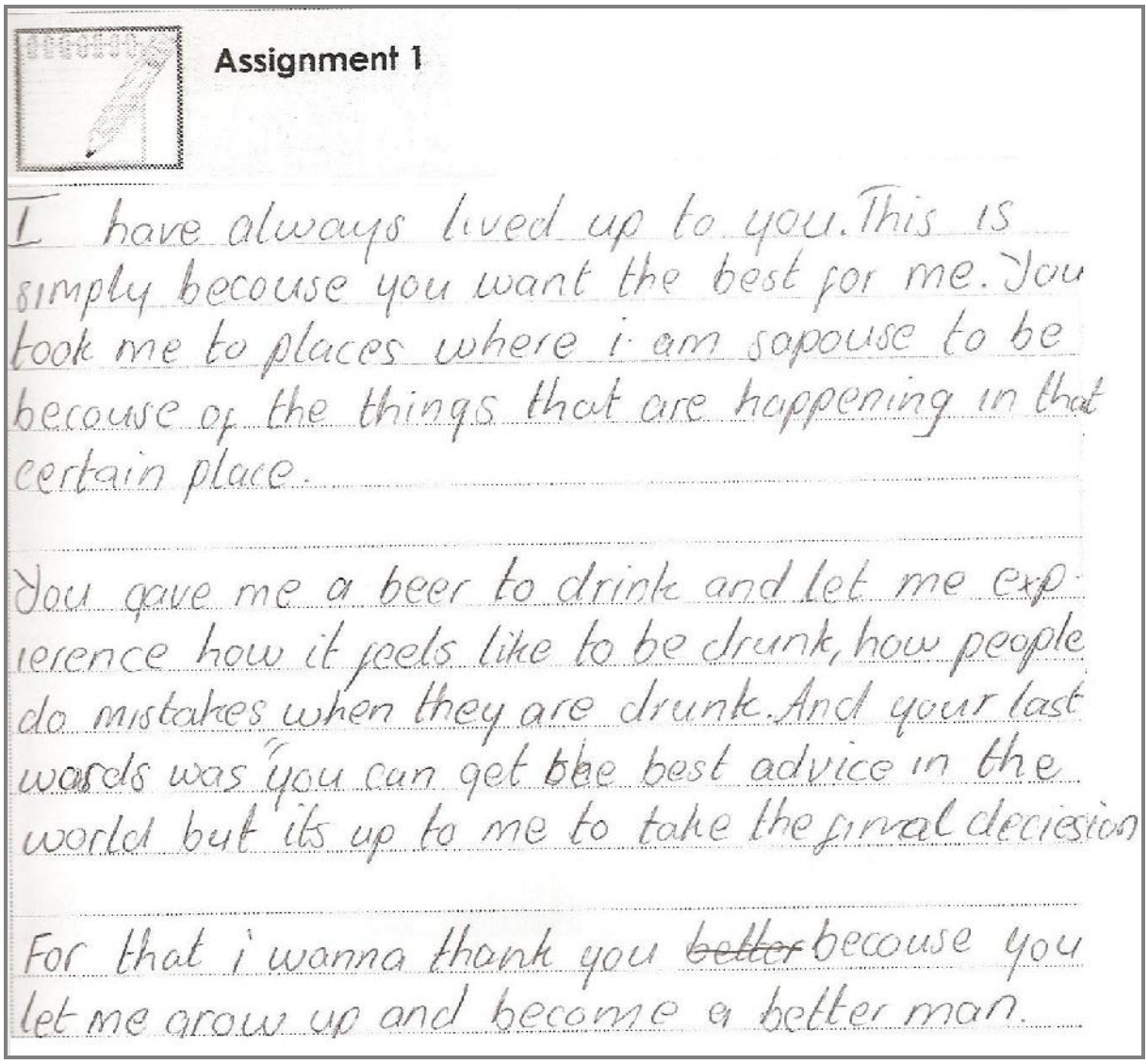

Assignment 1

I have always lived up to you. This is simply because you want the best for me. You took me to places where i am sapouse to be because of the things that are happening in that certain place.

You gave me a beer to drink and let me experience how it feels like to be drunk, how people do mistakes when they are drunk. And your last words was "you can get the best advice in the world but its up to me to take the final decision

For that i wanna thank you ~~better~~ because you let me grow up and become a better man.

Figure 15: Molimi letter to brother

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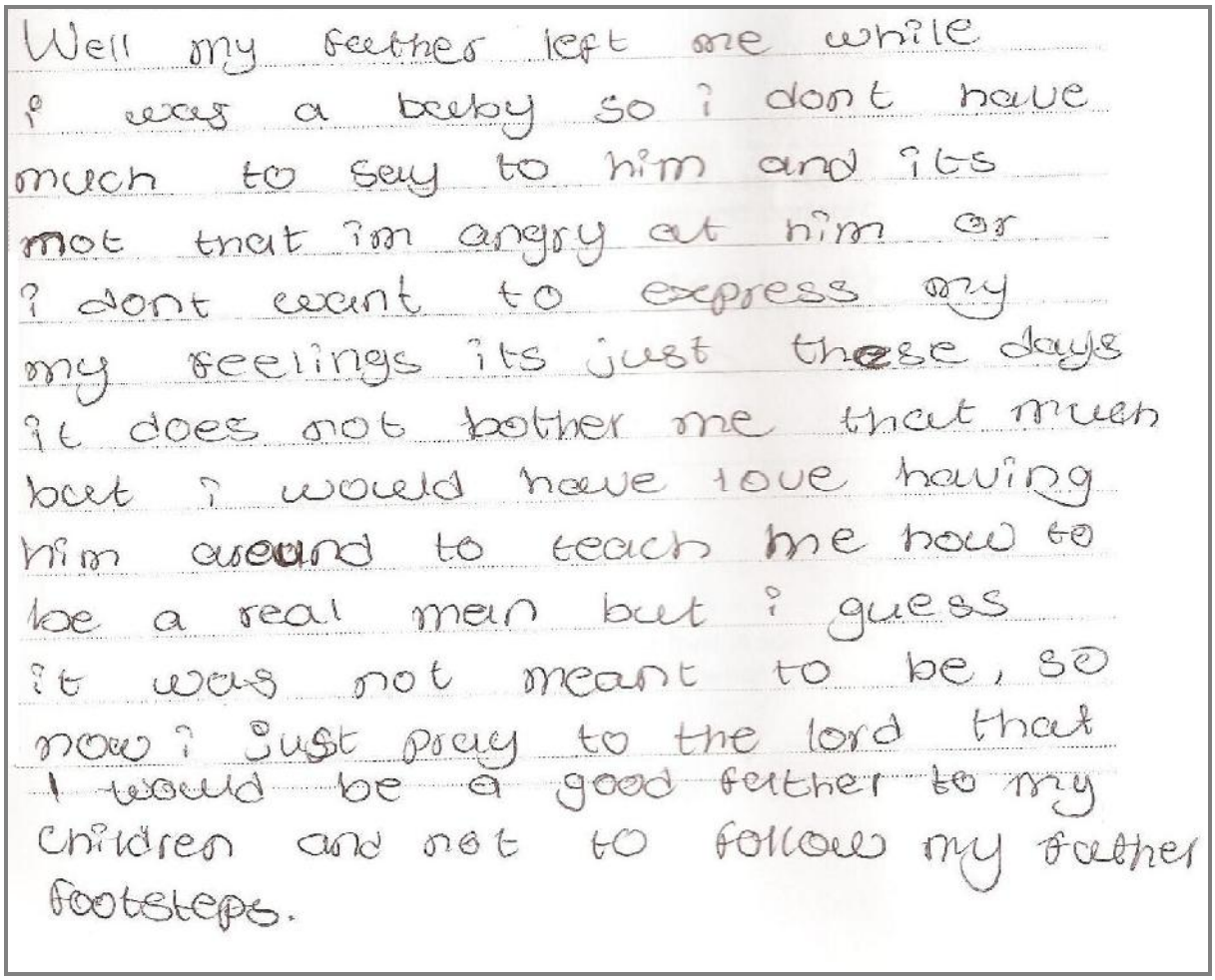
Well my feather left me while
i was a beby so i dont have
much to sey to him and its
not that im angry at him or
i dont ecant to express my
my feelings its just these days
it does not bother me that much
bcet i would have love having
him aweund to teach me how to
be a real man but i guess
it was not meant to be, so
now i just prey to the lord that
i would be a good feather to my
children and not to follow my feather
footsteps.

Figure 16: Manqoba story about father

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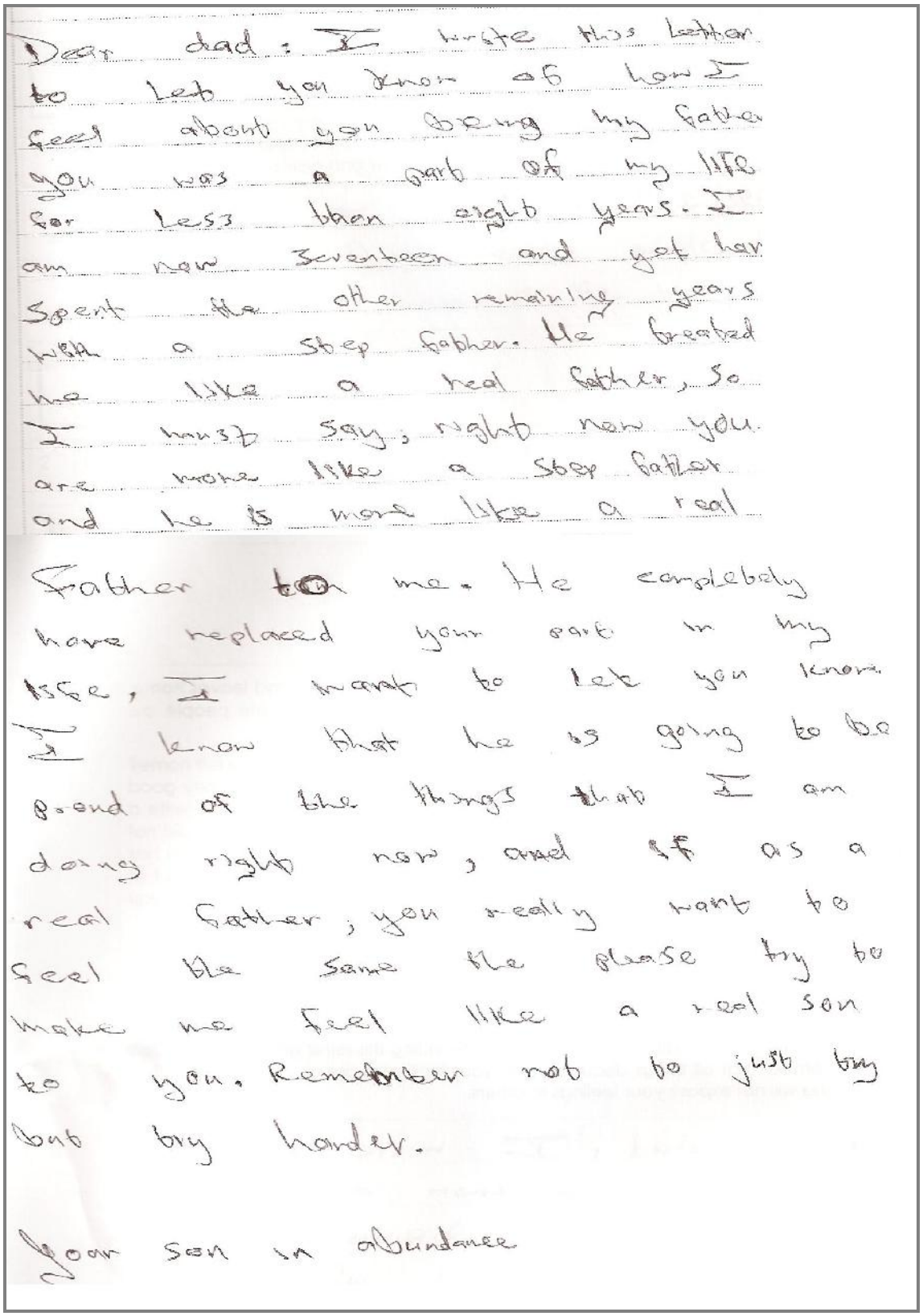

Dear dad: I write this Letter to Let you know of how I feel about you being my father you was a part of my life for Less than eight years. I am now Seventeen and got har Spent the other remaining years with a Step father. He treated me like a real father, So I must say, right now you are more like a Step father and he is more like a real father to me. He completely have replaced your part in my life, I want to let you know I know that he is going to be a part of the things that I am doing right now, and if as a real father, you really want to feel the same the please try to make me feel like a real son to you. Remember not to just try but try harder.

Your son in abundance

Figure 17: Mpho letter to biological father who abandoned him

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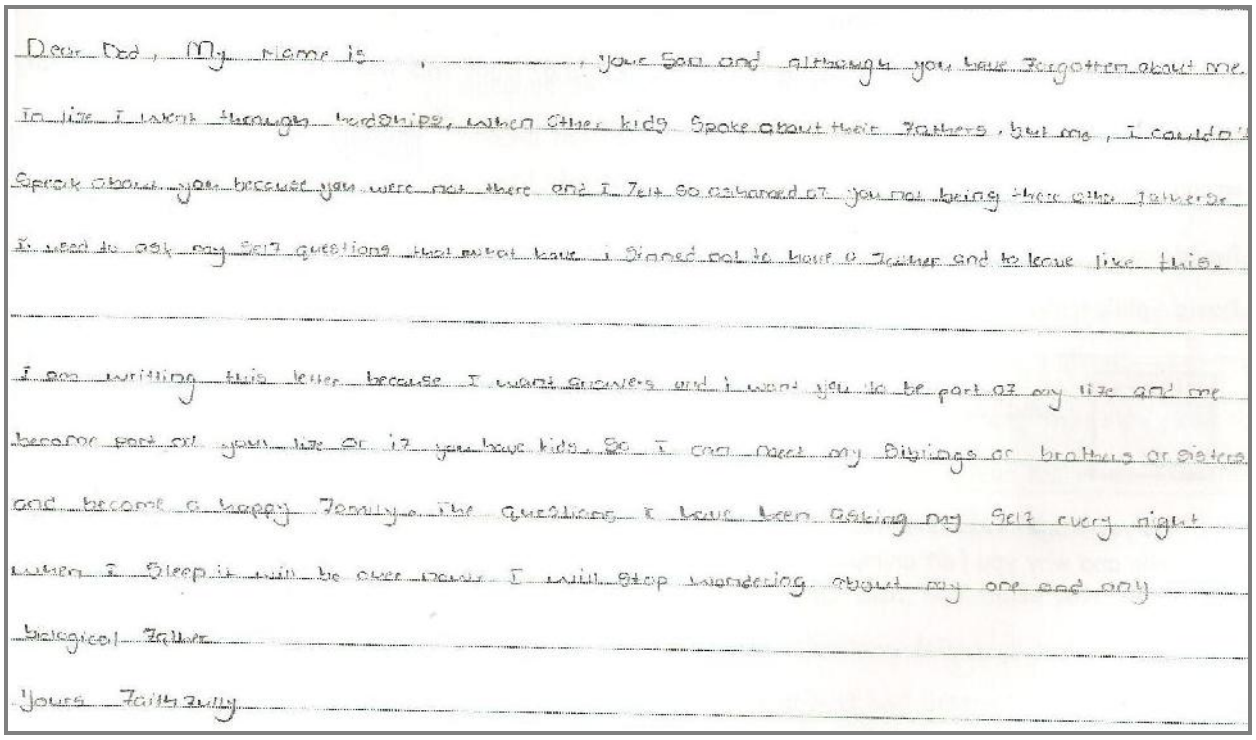

Dear Dad, My name is _____, your Son and although you have forgotten about me. In life I went through hardships, when other kids spoke about their fathers, but me, I couldn't speak about you because you were not there and I felt so ashamed of you not being there as a father. I used to ask my self questions that what have I sinned not to have a father and to leave like this.

I am writing this letter because I want answers and I want you to be part of my life and one become part of your life or if you have kids. So I can meet my siblings or brothers or sisters and become a happy family. The questions I have been asking my self every night when I sleep it will be over never. I will stop wondering about my one and only biological father.

Yours faithfully

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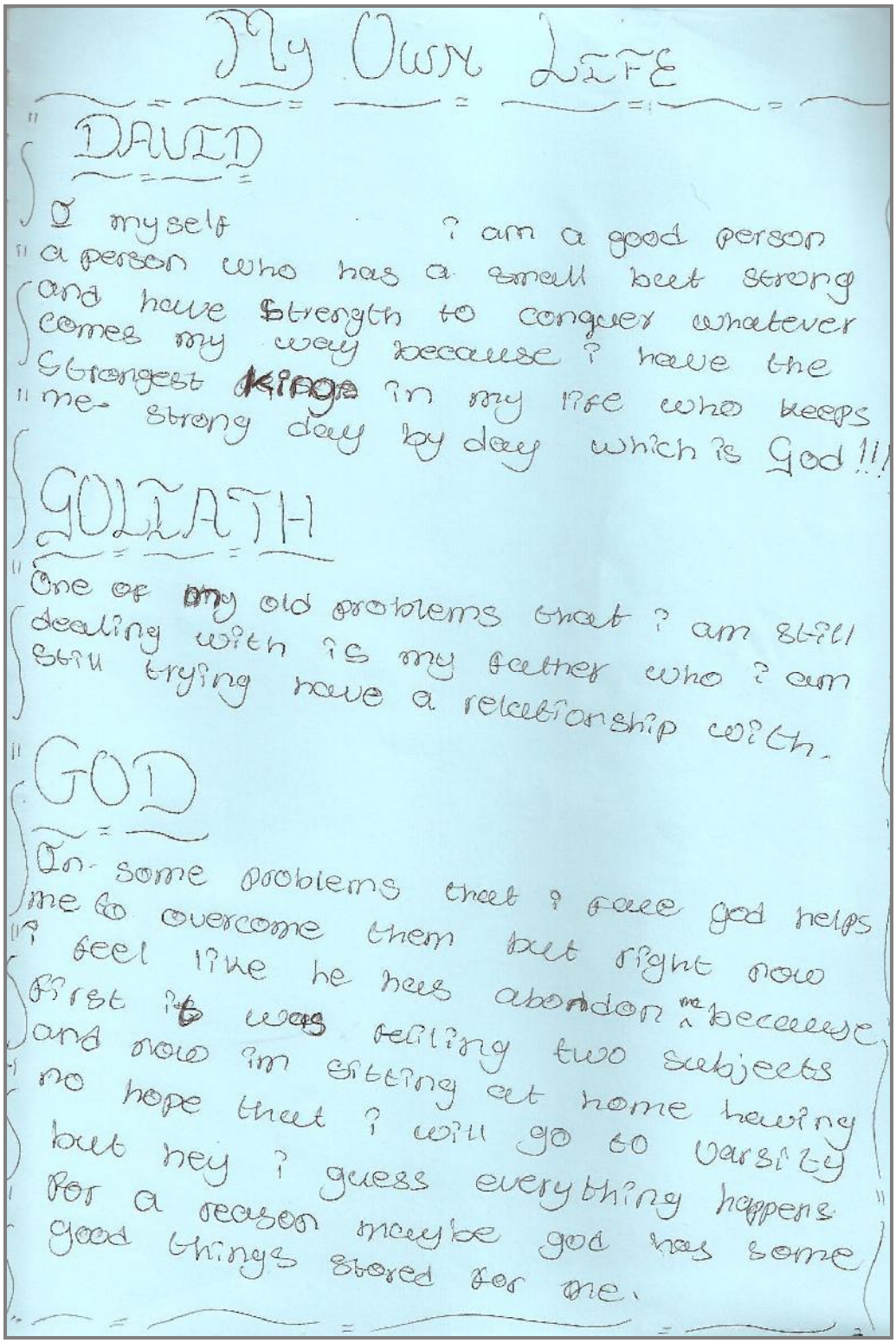
ANNEXURE 6 Co-researchers David and Goliath comparison



My Own Life

DAVID

Of myself ? am a good person a person who has a small but strong and have strength to conquer whatever comes my way because ? have the strongest ~~kings~~ in my life who keeps me strong day by day which is God !!!

GOLIATH

One of my old problems that ? am still dealing with is my father who ? am still trying have a relationship with.

GOD

In some problems that ? face god helps me to overcome them but right now ? feel like he has abandon me because first ? was failing two subjects and now im sitting at home having no hope that ? will go to varsity but hey ? guess everything happens for a reason maybe god has some good things stored for me.

Figure 19: Manqoba David and Goliath comparison

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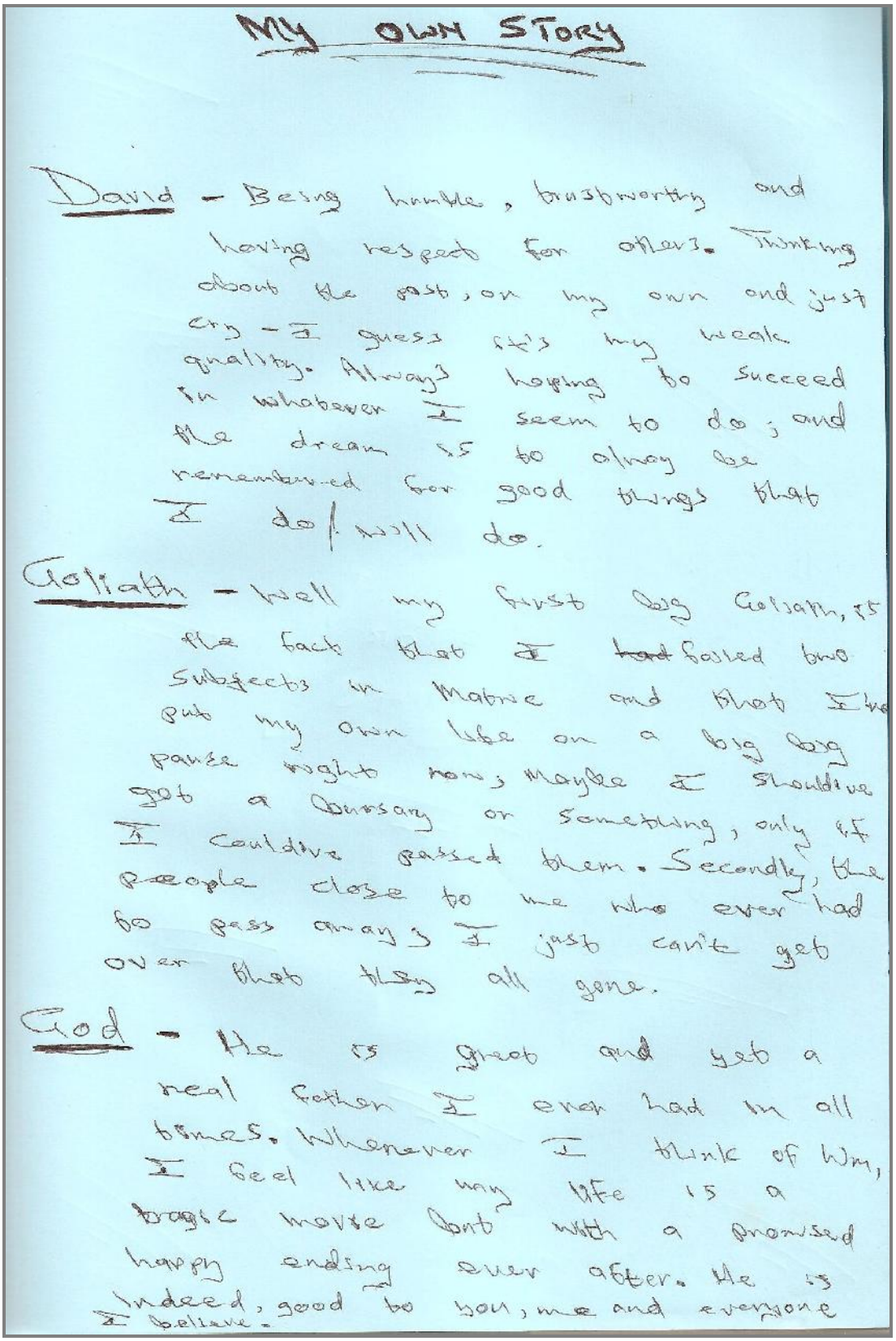

My own story

David - Being humble, trustworthy and having respect for others. Thinking about the past, on my own and just cry - I guess it's my weak quality. Always hoping to succeed in whatever I seem to do; and the dream is to always be remembered for good things that I do/will do.

Goliath - Well my first big Goliath, is the fact that I ~~had~~ failed two subjects in Matric and that I've put my own life on a big long pause right now; maybe I should've got a bursary or something, only if I couldve passed them. Secondly, the people close to me who ever had to pass away; I just can't get over that they all gone.

God - He is great and yet a real father I ever had in all times. Whenever I think of Him, I feel like my life is a tragic movie but with a promised happy ending ever after. He is indeed, good to you, me and everyone I believe.

Figure 20: Mpho David and Goliath comparison

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