

**APPENDIX A
LETTER OF PERMISSION**

Letter of permission

I,, give my permission to Helene Schoeman to use my name and my words in her thesis for the university.

- I understand that I was invited to join a group of women at School to give me a chance to tell my story to other women because I have a lot of knowledge about surviving difficult times.
- I understand that our conversations were a way to celebrate my strengths and special qualities.
- I understand that our conversations were there to support me.
- I understand that our meetings and conversations were a way to share my wisdom and knowledge with other people, especially women.
- I understand that should I decide that I do not want my words or story to be published I can withdraw my permission at any time.

I have the following to say about the meetings and the conversations I had with Helene:

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Signature

Date

Dear Aunty Jane,

I have tried to capture our conversations so that we can remember what we spoke about. I am concerned that I may not have picked up on everything you shared with us or may have got some things wrong. Can you help me to write your story in a way that you prefer? If there is anything you would like me to change or add in, I would do so gladly. I will make all the changes and then I shall send you a final copy.

Aunty Jane, you shared with us, Salome, Shirley, Wendy and I, that you have been involved with community work for 28 of your 74 years. You said that you retired last year because your physical strength had become less since a lot of illnesses have tried to take over your body. These illnesses, you said, can't stop you from continuing to do chores, cooking and looking after your grandchildren. I wonder whether Brentino has learnt about determination from you because this quality is also one of his strengths?

Aunty Jane, you said that your faith in God has helped you over the years and that you ask for strength every day so that you will be able to do what you need to do. You said that you would not allow the illness and the devil to push you down. Even though you are not rich in possessions, you say you are rich in your heart because of all the people in your life. You always have faith that you will get what you need. You shared with us that your mother always said that when you have no food in your home, you should put a pot of boiling water on the stove and before sundown there will be something to eat. And this, you said, really was true in your experience.

We learnt from you that you have always, since a young age, been a Catholic and stayed Catholic even after your marriage. You shared with us that a very special relationship with the Lord started for you when some Christian people arrived at your door and asked if they could pray with you. You said that your door is always open for the Lord and that you always invited people in and gave them a chance to share the message they brought. Was it your community spirit that gave these people a space to share their message rather than chasing them away?

You told us about the dream you had as a young person. This dream was about a room with white beds in a row. You said that only when you started nursing sick people did you know what this dream meant – you say that you know it was the work you had to do. You worked for the Home-carers Bureau for many years. You showed us the trophies you were given for your unstinting service over the years. You say that your heart is always with people, that you love people and that you love your community. You shared that this love helped you see that the old people at the old-age home were just sitting there and so to keep them going and to stimulate them, you started sewing classes for them and started playing games with them. You said that you had to ask for donations of food and money for the Bureau and that you always managed to get something from the places where you went. I wonder what you did to get the people to listen and open their hearts to give? You said that you were not shy to ask people for donations towards supporting your work. You said that you are sure you were born under a lucky star because everything that you have taken on has worked out successfully. Aunty Jane, do you think that your lucky star is the love you feel for people and that you made a commitment to care for people and that you were willing to ask for help?

You told us that you think every person is important and that is why you greet each person you meet along the road. You say that this is a way of noticing people and a way that people can get to know you. If something happens to you then people will know who you are and will help you. This love you have for people and your community also makes you very

generous because, you said, you are prepared to give up a lot if it will help other people. Is this why the people still ask you to come back to work when they meet you somewhere?

You say that you care for children especially and that you have raised 6 foster children. Is the love you have for children the reason that you took up foster parenting? One of your foster children, Rachelle, still lives with you and will not leave you. You also help her by caring for her children. You also said that, for years, you used to have a pot of soup ready for the children in the neighbourhood and they always knew that Aunty Jane would have something for them. You grew up in a godly home, a decent home and so you gave your children and grandchildren the same kind of home. You say that you are not a person that needs to be praised and rewarded for your generosity towards others.

Aunty Jane, you also told us how you grew up. You said that in your early years you lived in Waterkant Street in Cape Town. Your mom was from St' Helena, a miss Abrahams. Your dad you said was a Christian Indian from Johannesburg. You said that he had left you when you were still quite young. You also told us how you used to walk to school barefoot and quite far too! Aunty Jane, what happened to your father? Why and when did you move from Waterkant Street? How long did you live there? How many children were you? Were you the eldest?

You told us that your mom worked really hard and used to arrive home quite late. She gave you tasks to do when you came home from school in the afternoons. You remembered how, at age nine, you used to collect firewood from the woods. This was one of your afternoon chores. You also had to make the bread. Was it from your mom and these years where you all struggled together that you learnt determination and to think about ways that communities can care and support each other, even if it is just in the family?

Times got hard, you said, during WW2. You were twelve years at the time and you had to walk a great distance to get to school. Did you enjoy school? Was there a teacher that was really good to you? To help your mum, you started working at Atwell's bakery. Was it because you already knew how to bake bread so well that you got the job? You also said that eventually worked for a Dutch family who took you with them wherever they went and who cared for you a lot, but they paid too little so you were forced to find another job.

Aunty Jane, you said that you know about cooking! With a little bit of anything you can do a lot – you can stretch food so that everybody can eat and then there is still left over! You said that you buy R5 mince every week and then your family has a tasty meal! You said that you learnt about cooking at the Cumberland Hotel where you were the second-chef. You moved from the Cumberland Hotel and worked in a Chinese restaurant where you just cooked the whole time. The Chinese people were very good to you. After you got married, at age 21, they used to collect you for work every day because they wanted to hold on to you. Aunty Jane, were you their 'lucky star' and so they went to a lot of trouble to keep you working there? What did these people see in you that made them want to hold on to you?

Your son was born when you were 22. Your husband often was at sea on deep-sea tankers and that he had to stop work at 50 because he had injured his back. He has been a pensioner for the past three years on a disability grant. You said that he had started working at the age of 15 on whaling boats. You said that you had learnt to be independent and to look after yourself because you couldn't wait on a man to fix things. Did your independence help your 'lucky star' to help you make a success of the things you started – like becoming a foster parent and starting the home-care and thinking of ways to look after the people at the old age home?

Aunty Jane, you say that when trouble comes into a relationship then you will choose to keep quiet when anger wants you to talk fast. When you keep quiet, you said, and wait for things to calm down you know that you will get a good answer. By doing this, you also ensure that

you do not say things that are hurtful. What quality of yours helps you to make the effort to resist trouble to getting better of you and your relationships? Where did you learn to deal with trouble in this way?

You said that you think women can have better ideas and that women need to start thinking for themselves, think out their own ideas and stand forward in what they decide. You said this when we spoke about the way women will live with a man even if that man abuses and neglects his wife and children. You said that it is important for women to know that they must teach the children right from wrong – if we do not teach the children, they will not know what their choices are. You said that you believe a man and a woman need to form a circle, they need to stand together and not each do what they please because this brings conflict into a home. Where do these ideas come from? What are the effects of these ideas – did they invite success into your life or perhaps something else? Are you able to think this way because the success in your life came from choosing to think for yourself, teaching your children through your own example and getting people to work together?

Even though you are retired, people still come to find you to talk about their worries and you also help some people organise their lives or do the phoning so that they can get their tablets. You may not be going out much but the community service is continuing from your home! You shared how a young woman keeps coming to you to talk about the HIV/Aids that is taking over her life and you have arranged care for her. You say that she came to you because you are the oldest and that you have great experience. Auntie Jane, do you think that together with age and many years of experience, Wisdom starts to accompany one? I am wondering what it was in your conversations with this young woman that speaks to her of experience or wisdom or perhaps something else?

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to hear your life story. I know there is much more that you will be able to tell and teach us! I wonder how you came to be a person who cares so much for other people? When I telephoned you the other day, you said that you liked the conversations because it was good to talk about your life and share those stories and to remember. I really appreciated it when you told me that you loved me from that very first time we met with each other. It gave me hope that I am busy growing into a warm, caring, interested and kind person, the kind of person I would really like to be. This is also the kind of person that I have experienced you to be.

Thank you for reminding us women to think for ourselves and to stand forward, to take the lead. I thought a lot about the way you greet people along the way and how it helps people to notice each other – I thought it was such a lovely way of looking after oneself and others. I was very inspired by the little bit of mince that goes a long way and I had this idea that it was like your own life – your mother love stretched wide to foster children, sick people, people in the old age home and to strangers coming to your door, and still there is lots left! I hope that I will grow to love like that.

If your mom could read this letter, or other family members, would they think: 'yes, we always knew Jane would be someone who kept on trying different things and makes a go of it. Yes, we are not surprised that Jane is a 'lucky star' for so many people!' Would your mom be surprised at all or would she just smile and say, 'That's my Jane!'

I would be interested to know what your thoughts are after you read this letter. I would appreciate it if you let me know.

Take care,
Helene Schoeman

APPENDIX C
LETTER TO SALOMÉ ADONIS
(Translated into English from Afrikaans)

Dear Salomé,

I have tried to capture our conversations so that we can remember what we spoke about. I am concerned that I may not have picked up on everything you shared with us or may have got some things wrong. Can you help me to write your story in a way that you prefer? If there were anything you would like me to add in, I would do so gladly. I will make all the changes and then I shall send you a final copy.

Salomé, I got to know you when we spoke together about Orion and made plans to be in her team against the trouble that tried to overtake her life. You came up with a plan immediately, because Orion told me that you always say: “n boer maak ‘n plan’. You immediately supported her and helped her to become more organized and you also found a book with good ideas. I just knew that would be good to have you join our conversation group as you know so much about planning, taking action and determination.

Thank you for sharing your story with us, Aunty Jane, Shirley Brickles, Wendy Matthews and myself. You said that your standard eight-year stands out in your mind. During this year you made the impossible possible by attending school, nursing your bedridden mother, keeping house for your dad and your brother and sister and working part-time in a shop to help your father. I was quite amazed when I heard that a girl of 16 could do so much to help her family survive! Where did the courage come from and what kept you going? You told us that before going to school you made your mother comfortable for the day and then rushed home after school to change the colostomy bag and then washed her and settled her down for the night when you came from work at 8 o'clock. You said that your mom had been ill for a very long time and was diagnosed with Münchhausen-syndrome. You also used to give her the necessary injections. Salomé, when you think about that 16 year old girl, what words would you use to describe her? I wonder if the words loyalty, responsibility and care would fit with such a description?

You told us that growing up was difficult. It was difficult because there was never much money at home. Besides this, from the age of nine, you took on the role of mommy in your home and you started cooking for the family. This responsibility made you aware of your Daddy's struggle and you did not always know what to do to help him. Your dad mostly struggled along by himself until you decided to find a job. Your dad did not know about your job until you brought him the first pay packet. You believe that he accepted you as a support to him from that time and that he started taking over more of the responsibility for your sister and brother. You said that he acknowledged your contribution and praised you for supporting him. You took action because you had the idea that your dad was depressed and was not coping with everything. You also realized that you would not be helped to get what you need unless you yourself made it happen and so by taking on this responsibility for yourself (and the others) your family survived. You said that you still are the pacifier ('tietie') of your family. Your brother, Dominique, does not take responsibility for his life and often comes to you for help. Your sister, Sonja, is also someone that is dependent on you for support and assistance. Even though frustration grows big at times and sadness sometimes takes over when your brother and sister are so careless you still care for them – even when you have little contact with them. I wonder where you learnt about keeping families together and about taking responsibility? Where did you get these ideas? Was there a person you had observed or who had encouraged you?

Salomé, you told us that your mother was a good gymnast and that she received trophies for her skill. You said that she was also a cabaret dancer and was a member of the Dixie dancers. Later she started nursing and got married at the age of nineteen. You said that your father was from Zirelda Steyn.

You told us that you learnt to cope by cutting yourself off and getting lost in books. You said that your dad was shared a lot of warmth with you and that he was the main figure in your life. He was the one that kept your family together and you say there is a very special connection between him and you. What you find very special, you said, is that you can be completely open with him and talk to him about anything. I asked you if you thought it unusual that a man of his age, and from South Africa, to be able to talk openly with his child, almost like a mother? You said that you believe that he was an unusual father because he did not believe in hiding anything from his children. I wondered whether there was something about this special connection that you hold close to you heart for support in troubled times? Wow, just think, this country would probably be completely different if there were more fathers like your dad! You told me that dad grew up with people, whom you got to know as your grandpa and grandma, who were very loving towards each other. You said that you remember this couple as eccentric. So, although they were old and eccentric they were still able to be a loving example to your dad. You said that your dad always said that a white man with a bottle of sweet wine bribed your dad's mom for sex and that is how he was conceived.

You also told us that your daughter Orion was born when you were 24 years old and that her dad was a married man. You said that you chose to tell your dad about this yourself. You explained that this was a difficult time for you because you struggle a lot against anger and resentment, but what helped was that ~~there was~~ a neighbour over the road that you were able to share your concerns with.

Salomé, I gathered from your description that you worked for a long time at a shop and that the owner and his wife bought everything you needed for Orion. They seemed, from what I understood, to depend a great deal on you in the shop. It sounded as you were playing mommy for a long time already because the boss' wife used to send their children to the shop for you to after. You said that you taught the boy to count and taught him the alphabet. You said that they really loved you and that one of them had said: 'Aunty Lomé is my mommy.'

Salomé, you said that you believed that a special gift you have is your concern for people and that you know how to care for them. Relationships are important to you and that is why everybody just wants to be with Salomé. You said that you decided to speak to Orion like you would to adults and that you choose not to give the children hidings. You said that the time, when lying and fighting had tricked Orion, was bitter for you. But then you decided to tackle things in a new way because you are a person who is able to come up with a plan when there is a need for one, and your relationship with Orion improved. I remember you said you made time especially for Orion so you could give her your undivided attention and help her with her homework. You said you stopped everything you were doing, even in the middle of preparing food or you would switch the oven off even a cake was halfway done, to help her first. You also said you help her to get her chores done and you would compliment her for doing them. What words would describe you as mother in your relationship with Orion? I wonder, did your relationship with your father also teach you something about parenting Orion?

I wondered how a loving heart like yours managed to stay strong amongst all the busy-ness, people and work and you told me you make time for yourself by reading the bible or sitting in

the toilet. You said the psalms always had something in them to encourage you. When things get too much for you, you said, you just walk in any direction to heal yourself. You also have Clive, and this, you say, is a great support because you have good conversations with him and at times when he is calmer than you, he is able to support you when you are struggling.

We talked about the way in which your wisdom helped you collect mummies when you had to be mommy to your brother and sister. You said that, growing up, you were always able to open your heart to Mamma Pearly, a neighbour, and now you have Sister Jacobs, the pastor's wife. You receive a lot of support from Mrs. Jacobs because you are able to speak to her about any concerns you have about your family, or your children or something as painful as a miscarriage. By finding support against struggle and stress, you help yourself to keep your hopes up. I wonder about your wisdom to reach out to others for support. Would you call this self-care or something?

Your dream, you say, was to become a doctor but your plans changed a lot while you were still at school. To realise a bit of your dream you decided to do a course in Home-nursing. You said this was good decision because now you experience satisfaction with what you are doing. You said that Clive supported you by helping you to pay for the course and this made you feel good. The studying brought new inspiration for you. By completing the course and achieving such a high pass mark you realised that you also can be a good student. You said that you did not achieve high marks at school and now you have proven to yourself that you can. You also said that you received a good recommendation from the lecturer and she told you that she hasn't found someone as capable as you for a long time. You said that this helped you to appreciate yourself. What you have learnt is: what you put into something is what you will get out of it. You also said that you are able to look back on your life and appreciate what it brought and you are able to look forward and go for what lies ahead – you know you can survive. I wonder if there is someone in your life who would not be surprised when you say that you know you will be able to survive? What story would this person be able to tell about your survival skills? I wonder what your father would tell me?

Salomé, you laughed when I said that I think you have actually acquired a doctorate in survival, that you actually are a heart-doctor. Then you told me that you are often the mediator between people sitting with a conflict; you are able to take this role because you can distance yourself from people's actions so you do not have to choose sides. You are able to help them listen to each other to solve problems. You also said that initially your husband's family did not accept you but your lovingness and dependability won their acceptance of you.

I asked what qualities or yours got you the doctorate in survival and you told me that you believe it is because you are a loving person, that you maintain that ' 'n boer maak 'n plan' (a farmer makes a plan), that you are reliable, that you put relationships first in your life and that you are generous. You said that you also believe people need to be touched lovingly therefore you hug others easily. Salomé, you said that you realise that your greatest riches is in your heart and how you are with people.

You also said that when you work with people and children, you keep in mind that there were times that you were naughty and got hidings. You said that, even as a small child, you were strong-minded and that you started thinking for yourself. You said that sometimes you had to tolerate hidings because you insisted on speaking your mind. You reckon that this determination - to stand up for what you believe and want to get done - is what helped you survive in life. It has also helped you realise that people, and your children, need to have their say. How will this determination influence the steps you take in the future?

You also said that the Lord's church is where one is, in what one says and in what one does. You explained that you do not like gossiping and you enjoy the knowledge that you are in service of the church, that you are the church of God's hands and feet on earth.

Salomé, you said that you enjoy talking like this because it brings back memories, good memories and it makes you feel proud to see what you have survived. You almost have to ask yourself: Is this really me?"

Salomé, thank you for sharing your life story with me. I am inspired by your tolerance and service to continue learning about tolerance and service. My heart was stirred by your willingness to be a mother to people and that you don't give up easily. At times, when I feel despondent, I hold on to your voice which said that relationships important to you and that "n boer maak 'n plan'. I feel breathless when I think of everything you have managed in your life and I admire you because you always bring a laugh and cheerfulness to our conversations, even when worry is in your life. I can only imagine what Steenberg would be like if all the mothers could learn from you about ways to find help, making plans and caring for their children – then we would have a wonderful area in the Cape.

Lots of love,
Helene Schoeman

DOKTORSGRAD IN OORLEWING

Hierdie sertifikaat word toegeken aan:

Salomé Adonis

OORLEWINGSVARDIGHEDE

'n Liefdevolle hart en arms wat drukkies gee
Verhoudings kom eerste
Wiskrag
Aanhouvermoë
Gewilligheid om planne te maak
Gewilligheid om hulp te vra en te soek
Gaan vir wat voorlê

Signature

Date

Bereidheid om te leer en nuwe kwalifikasies te kry
Mediator vir mense
Verdraagsaamheid
Vrygewigheid
Betroubaarheid
Soek spesiale vriende vir aanmoediging

Signature

Date

APPENDIX E
LETTER TO SHIRLEY BRICKLES
(Translated into English from Afrikaans)

Dear Shirley,

I am trying to capture our conversation so that we don't forget what was said during the conversation. I am concerned that I did not understand everything clearly. Can you help me to write your story in a way you would prefer? Maybe there are things we haven't heard that you would like to add? I will make the changes and send you a neat copy.

You told us that you were married to Grant's father but divorced him because he had a problem with alcohol. You said you had another partner after your divorce and that he is Donna's father. Both fathers pay maintenance for the children but you always cared for, and raised, the children. Last year you took in your brother's son because he had been in a home and later on lived with a foster mother.

You told us that your brother, the boy's father, dropped in at your house with his new wife but Zane was not with them. When you inquired after him, they didn't know but said that the last they heard was that he was in the Elsie's. They also told you that the welfare had taken him away because he had tuberculosis and was very neglected and he kept running away from home. You started looking for the child and eventually found out that he lived with a foster family. You fetched Zane and discovered bit by bit that he was a survivor of much abuse. You said you couldn't rest until you found him – partly because he was family, but also because you couldn't allow a child to be neglected so badly. You said, once before, that no matter how hard it is for you, you will never send him away because he also deserves a chance in life. Your problem, you say, is the rest of your family, your brothers and sisters, who show no interest and offers and the boy and you no support. His father is totally uninvolved and his stepmother only came to visit once.

Shirley, you said it is important that your children grow up with good values, so they will avoid doing things that will endanger their lives or steal away their chances of making a good life. I wonder, if I asked one of the children to tell me about the good values they learnt from you, what would he or she say? You explained that not one person raises their children for themselves; they have to go out in the world and adjust. So they must not be rude, because they are carrying their mother's name with them. You also said that your daughter is involved at church and that you strongly encourage her to go. A while ago you told me that when Zane came to live with you, she had gone to fetch some holy water because he was sleeping badly and angry all the time. He is also involved at the church and you also said that the Sunday school teacher told you he prays beautifully. You also told that he was a very restless sleeper when he came to stay with you and so you used to pray with him every night. After a while he his sleep became more peaceful. I wonder what helps him to sleep peacefully now? Is his sleep more peaceful because he knows there is someone in his life that supports him and protects him or is it something else?

You spoke about the great care you feel for your children. You show this care through your loving actions, like when you get up early in the morning with Grant when he goes to work, you make him breakfast and then you see him off to work. You said you know it isn't pleasant to rise so early when one is the only one that has to do so. Later in the morning, you said, you do the same for the other two children when they have to go to school. You explained how carefully you plan so that there will always be food for the children – they know they can trust you to care for them and that you know what children need in life. In the afternoons, you said, you wait for the children and you keep an eye on the road to see them

coming along. You said that you are able to see at a distance when something is wrong from their body language and that you immediately ask them what the problem is. Do you think all mothers are as perceptive about their children and will make time to talk to them? You are a lot like your mother, you said, sensitive toward children. You also said that a few years ago you had a dream and your mother and father was in it. You woke up with the idea that something was wrong. This dream helped you decide to take your children to school and to sort out your life.

You told us that it is important to you that family stand together and support each other. You said that you came from a large family, 10 children, and that some of you visit each other regularly. You find it a huge responsibility to raise your children single-handedly; that is why it is important that you have your neighbour's support on a daily basis. You said that you help each other with bread and sugar when there is a need. You also said that you would not be silenced or frightened by young crooks that hang around in the streets and behave as if they are your equals. I wonder if your neighbours and children know how lucky they are to have someone like you who will not shelter crooks or accept rude behaviour. You said you would not even protect your own children if they were to do crooked things because then you would be an accomplice and you believe they need to accept the consequences of their actions.

Shirley, would you agree that you know about responsibility and therefore you ensure that your children also know about it? Why is it important to you that your children invite responsibility into their lives? Does this responsibility mean that other people can trust your word and that you are reliable? Does responsibility help you care for your children in spite of the health problems, despondency and struggle? Do you think, if the adults in Steenberg could learn from you about responsibility that it would be a much safer place for children? Does responsibility support you and your neighbours to stand with each other so that you are supported and can carry on? Is it your responsibility that caused you to provide Zane with a family, to give him a chance in life and love him? Was it your responsibility that brought you to help out at the school? Was it your responsibility that helped you to find a job so that you could stand on your own two feet and not have to wait for and worry about the next income?

Shirley, you said that you believe that the strength to carry everyday even when the struggle is huge comes from God, from up there comes the help. Is this the strength we see when continue being responsible for your children and cooperate and share with your neighbours? Is it the strength from above that opened your heart to take in Zane in spite of the financial struggle you were in?

I just want to say thank you for sharing your story with us. I was touched by the way you opened your heart to Zane and the way you faithfully continue to take responsibility. I had a good look at my life and tried to check how I take responsibility for people and things in my life. I also started paying attention to pick up the body language messages from my children and other people so that I can support them better.

I would like to hear about your work and whether you have found more people to support and encourage you? I wondered if you had learnt anything or got new ideas from the conversation you, Wendy, Salomé, Aunty Jane and I had? Was there anything in the conversation that strengthened you or encouraged you to do something differently or to try anything new?

Greetings,

Helene Schoeman

APPENDIX F
LETTER TO GALIEMA SOLOMONS
(Translated into English from Afrikaans)

Dear Liema,

I am trying to capture our conversation so that we don't forget what was said during the conversation. I am concerned that I did not understand everything clearly. Can you help me to write your story in a way you would prefer? Maybe there are things we haven't heard that you would like to add? I will make the changes and send you a neat copy.

Liema, we met last year after the mother's day celebration at the school. You said you decided to meet with me after I invited the mothers to feel free to come and talk to me if they need some support in their life.

You explained that once you have decided to do something you are not the kind of person that will sit around. Therefore, when the little problem, as you called it, made your life difficult you did something about it immediately so that you could live with it. After our conversation you decided to come to school to read with the children so that the problem wouldn't get so much of your attention. Since then the school has kept you very busy by inviting your help in the classroom and to sort out the library.

Mr Kruger says, almost every time I arrive at the school, that he wishes mummies of Lourier's children could learn from your example. He tells me, every time we talk, how valuable you are to the school and that he appreciates the loyalty and diligence with which you tackle a task and make a noticeable difference. Would you agree that the way you got stuck into the library is proof of your loyalty and diligence? You worked for weeks on end to dust bookshelves and sort out books. Mrs Solomon said she doesn't know how the school would have managed without your help. Since then you have also been a teacher in the school and you are running the school's tuck shop. You told me that you enjoy being at the school and that you have decided you would not sit around at home any longer. You said that you enjoy doing things and being part of the school community. I wonder if the 'little problem' likes the fact that you are so busy and on top of that, enjoying yourself. What happens to the 'little problem' when you are so busy?

Liema, you also told me that you have, for years, been the mother of your home and that you were the reliable one that stayed at home all the time and looked after everybody. You said you grew up between Muslim and Christian and that your housekeeping is based on Muslim ways. You are the cook and you do loads of laundry (by hand) and you keep the household running smoothly. You are also the one that kept an eye on the children in the afternoons after school. In spite of being so busy at school you are still doing all of this work! Are you surprised that you can keep so many things going or is this something you have always been capable of? You even started a tuck shop from home and you said that it was doing well.

You said that you and your son, Shane, live with your mommy and that your sisters also live there. You said that you are all single women living together and that it works well most of the time. You said that you women know how to survive on your own. I wonder what wisdom one could learn if one had the opportunity to live with a group of women who know how to survive? You told me that the members of your family are close to each other and that you support each other and include each other in what you do. You said that your mom is 75 now and that you are the youngest of 14 children. I understood that you live a quiet life, that you do not go out very often and that you also do not have funny habits because you believe that you have to be an example for your children.

You said that you are a person who speaks directly and honestly from your heart and that you do not walk around with resentment. That is why, you said, you will speak openly and honestly when you see things that worry you in the school, especially when people take things actually meant for the children or when the teachers are not doing their work. You also said you enjoy people, especially children, and that you like being amongst the people at the school. You also said that you gladly help people but sometimes you find it difficult to say 'no' when you are asked for help. You know you bring a little bit of sunshine into people's lives, you are always the same and you will give everybody a friendly greeting, even if you don't feel like it. You prefer to always be the same, you explained, because people will know where they stand with you. I wonder what made you to choose to be a straight talker but also be a sunshine bringer at the same time? Does this help you to get along with people around you?

You spoke about the loves of your life and how these loves brought disappointment into your life. You feel you must get someone in your life, but often you do not feel like it at all. These loves you spoke about helped you decide that you would never take a partner that drinks or a man that is too attached to a mother that keeps telling him what to do. You said that you would enjoy having someone but it has to be someone who cares about you and Shane and a person who will share responsibility with you to make a good life together. Liema, many women I have spoken said that they landed up with men, sometimes the first they could find, because they hoped the men would care for them and often it is not the case. Did you use the disappointments the loves brought you to stop you from being trapped into taking any man that comes along? Is the idea, that a woman has value with or without a man, that it is not the man that makes a woman valuable or special, an important idea for you? Has the time that you have been single taught you that you, as a woman, are a person in your own right? Have I understood correctly? I wondered if this belief, that you are a person in your own right, enabled you to end the last relationship because you were not sure that the guy would be a good parent for Shane and also because he used to drink alcohol.

You talked about raising Shane on your own because his father already left when you were pregnant with Shane. You said that he does not contribute any support money and that you have taken legal steps to get support but it is going very slowly. You said that you work very carefully with the income you have and that you can adjust, what you have you stretch until it gets better again. You said that your brothers make a contribution at times and this helps your mother and as you are the housekeeper it helps you as well. Liema, you said that there are times that you have very little money but you get through it together. I wonder, is your ability to work carefully with money one of your strength? If so, what name would you give this strength?

You told me that you decided to come chat with me because of the huge sadness in your life. You said that you were very strong during this time and that you prayed a lot but now you need someone to talk to. The sadness, you said, was a double sadness; your brother, Lesley, died in a motorcar accident and at that time, his wife fetched his son from you. You said that your brother, Lesley, brought the two-month old Neil to you and that you did everything for him. You said that Neil called you mommy and that it was a huge loss for you when he left. You said that you were the mommy who was always there, who talked to him, who was patient with him, who gave him lots of love, helped potty train him and from who he learnt to speak. You said that Shane also loved Neil a lot. You also said that you know Neil loved you very much. You said you know Lesley trusted you with his child and that he could see how well Neil was doing and how safe and happy he was with you.

Liema, you told me that when Lesley died in the motorcar accident his wife fetched Neil who had lived with you for four years to live with her. At the funeral Neil ignored you and this made the sadness grow bigger. What upset you the most was that Neil's mother did not discuss her decision with you to help you adjust to his going, after all, you had been his mother for four years. You also said that worry about Neil had grown a lot because you know he stops eating when he is homesick and you fear that he may not get the love and attention and care that your family used to give him. You said that you cannot visit him, nor does his mother bring him to visit you and this brings more sadness. You also said that your mother misses him a lot.

Liema, Lesley used to do flowers with your mom and he arrived at your house every morning to accompany your mom. You and him used to have a cup of tea in the kitchen, then you watched Days and then he and your mom left for Cape Town to sell flowers. Before Neil lived with you full time, Lesley used to bring the baby to you every day and later on he was content to leave Neil with you all the time. You said that your brother was a reliable man who looked after your mother and he always used to bring something for the household. He also did all the shopping for his family. You say that you often see him standing there in the kitchen where you drank tea together and that he is always with you in that way. You are glad, you said, that the two of you got along better in the time before his death and that you were able to have the chats in the mornings. You also value the knowledge that he was content to leave his child in your care because he knew how much you love children.

During our conversation you said that you know you have done a lot for Neil. You told me that you were a good mother and you know you did your best to care for him, to teach him and that these things will not be lost. Neil will remember what it is like to be a beloved child and that he will long to see you and ask to be with you. You believe that mothers are the people who teach their children religion and make plans to care for children, like you do when you see that Shane and Neil get little extras when you have money to spare. You say that you hardly buy yourself anything because you put the children's needs first. If you heard another person saying this, would you think that those children are privileged to have a mother that puts them first in her life?

You said that you care so much for children that your dream is to open a 'have' and that you would like to do an educare course. I wonder if the work you are doing at school can be compared with the work that you would do at a 'haven'? If you do not do the work, who would be prepared to do it? Mr. Kruger says that you are one of the few mothers that did not disappear from the school after a while. I wonder what Mr. Kruger could tell me about what it tells him about you when he is able to depend on you at school?

Liema, you mentioned that after our conversation your courage grew stronger, that you felt better about yourself and about the things that came into your life since your brother's death. You said you are happier because you remembered that a mother gives her best and that one cannot buy children's love but you get their love by giving a lot of love – and you know you did this for Neil. As it turned out, Neil did come back to you for a few months. When his mother took him back last week, you said you were a lot easier about it than before.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to get to know you. I learn from you about doing things well and about doing little things for people, like when you clean the classroom upstairs out of care. I was surprised at the manner in which you got stuck in and opened a space for yourself in the school – by working very hard but keeping the sunny smile! That sunny smile of yours has helped me feel better on many an occasion when sadness about all

the sad children wanted to overtake me and also, I knew that your children are not sad children. Liema, I often think about the way in which you make work look so easy and that you just get going and get it done. Many times, when I think something is too difficult for me, I remember that Liema would just get going and then I do!

Lots of love,
Helene Schoeman

APPENDIX G
LETTER TO WENDY MATTHEWS
(Translated into English from Afrikaans)

Dear Wendy,

I am trying to capture our conversation so that we don't forget what was said during the conversation. I am concerned that I did not understand everything clearly. Can you help me to write your story in a way you would prefer? Maybe there are things we haven't heard that you would like to add? I will make the changes and send you a neat copy.

You told us, Auntie Jane Summers, Shirely Brickles, Salomé Adonis and me, about your childhood years. You mentioned that you are the youngest of 12 children and that you are a close family. The eldest child in the family is 52. You said that your mother is already very old and that you take care of her because of her poor health.

You said that your father came from Malmesbury and your mom from Hardevlei. Your granny had a farm and farmed with pigs and sheep. You said that your mom always looked after the children and that she could make really good toffee apples. Your grandfather was a soldier.

Wendy, you talked about your standard 4-year which brought a huge struggle into your life and that mathematics was your ever-end. The standard 4-teacher bullied and hurt you so badly that your nerves snapped. From then onwards, schizophrenia has tried to take over your life. You said that you think you need to be more open about this illness in your life. You commented that you do not find it easy to talk about the illness because other people do not always understand. I just wondered how you know whom the people are you can talk to about the illness? What knowledge have you gathered over the years, helps you to know when and with whom you can share your story?

You think, you said, that the pills are something that helps, they stand with you like a good friend. I heard you say that you continued with school up to standard six but then the illness got so strong and you preferred to stay at home with your mommy and daddy. You also said that you had been in Valkenburg a few times to help you get the illness under control but that it does not frighten you. You also said that during the time that teacher bullied you, you did tell anybody. It was only afterwards that Moema found out what had been going on. I wonder what had silenced your voice like that? How is it possible in our world that bullies manage to silence the people they are bullying? Surely they win doubly then – they hurt us and they are protected because no one points them out?

Your dream, you said, from the age of six, was to become a nurse. You said that you did a bit of voluntary nursing for two years. You also hope to complete the course at the Home-carers Bureau and then to do the work you are interested in.

You say that you are a quiet person and that you do not have many friends. While you were growing up you just played around at home, around your mom. Your friends were your mother and also your brothers and sisters. You said that your father used to pay you for the chores you did. You were prepared to do the things the other wouldn't do because it brought you a little pocket money. You said that he worked at the dockyard and rode to work on his bicycle every day. He was, you said, strict and set a time when everybody had to be home at night. I understood that you said that he was a man who loved the Lord very much.

Since the illness came into your life, you explained, you had lived with your mother and father. You married Isaac when you were 18. Your life with Isaac was difficult because he

did not treat you with respect. You explained how disappointment and sadness grew big in your life because he gave you the impression he would treat you well and be committed to you. He had told you that he used to get around a lot before you were married and that he did not want to be like that anymore. He let you believe that when he married you, he wanted to be with you only.

You told me Isaac often hurt you and eventually you started fighting back. Isaac used to pinch your inner-thighs and hurt you a lot. You said that you even went to the social workers about the pinching and nothing came of that. You explained that you lived in a flat for a while but that you had to leave because Isaac did not pay the rent and you moved in with his family. After a while you could not stand the fighting anymore and when you were pregnant with Jessica, you moved in with Moema. Your in-laws did not support you, even when they knew that Isaac was hurting you, and they told you after you left that you had to stay away from their place. Isaac, as I understand it, moved in with you but he still behaved disrespectfully and rudely to you. Isaac did not make an effort with your relationship and so you could not plan together about getting on and helping each other along in life. Besides this he went to his mother's house after work and came home very late at night.

You also told me that he left, after seven years of marriage, and that you were left to care for Jessica and Ethan while he moved in with another woman for three years. He paid the children very little attention during the three years. You say you that it was difficult for you because he did not provide financial support and that you always made the plans to give them what they needed, you went to a lot of trouble to let them know that you stood by them and to teach the right. You want them to carry a good name into the world, for you, and for themselves. Your brother Edward was more of a father for the children because he took them on outings, he bought them what they needed and he supported you by talking to them when things did not go well.

You said that you got an interdict against Isaac and made application for maintenance. You said that Isaac filed for divorce and that this took a long time to come through. Just before the divorce was final Isaac stopped it and asked you to lift the interdict. You say you thought that after this you were left in exactly the same position as when you started; and you are still the only one the children can rely on.

Wendy, you say that during the time that Isaac moved out 'the illness' stayed under your control. It was important to you for it to be under control because, as you said: " what will happen to my poor little children? They only have me and I am always there for them." You said you got along well when Isaac wasn't around, that it was peaceful at home and the children progressed well. During this time you also were able to manage without the tablets. However, when Isaac returned and said that he wanted to live with you again, only then, did 'the illness' get a chance to take over. You said that it is the stress about Isaacs behaviour and his rudeness towards you that causes 'the illness' to try and take over. Is 'the illness' something that comes to show you that you should not live with abuse? When the abuse is gone, it seems, 'the illness' gets under your control. What do you think?

When Isaac returned, you hoped that this time you would be able to live together as a family and that at last, your children will have a father, because you believe that children should know their father. You decided that you would tolerate Isaac's rudeness for the children's sake. With him there, you hoped he would help care for the children and also help with the money. You noticed that Isaac showed very little interest in the children, he does not play with them or pay them attention and that he would even chase them away when they tried to get his attention. You are always the one asking about their school day, about what

happened and you are also the one who helps out when the school needs mummies' help. You noticed that since his return trouble has started taking to over and Jessica started back chatting and was drawn into fighting in the road. You, Wendy, were the one who came to school to ask for help and to find a way to help Jessica cooperate with everybody and this is how I met you. You, not Isaac, were the one that talked with Jessica and helped her to understand that she will get more with cooperation. Wendy, has the abuse ever tried to convince you that you are not a good mother? If it did, I wonder how you managed to stand up to it and proved that you are able to care for your children, just as you did with Jessica. You also mentioned that it brings you sadness that Ethan is so attached to this father that hardly makes an effort with him.

In this time, as I understood it, you said that Isaac did not try to change his ways and you say he is amazing terrible. He continued to 'skel' (verbal abuse) you and call you names, he did not take you seriously and he had gone around, you discovered, telling people things about you, which made them stop their support and help to you. One of the places was the day hospital. You said that you also went to the pastor of the church to ask for help and he told you that you should not attend the church again. You shared how the bitterness and anger about the unfairness in your life got so strong that sometimes you were overtaken by outbursts of anger. I wonder, are these outbursts a way of saying that abuse and rudeness is not acceptable for you?

Wendy, you also said that the disappointment, anger and despondency nearly managed to convince you to take your own life and that you took a lot of pills. You said that Isaac uses this illness to his advantage – he gets what he wants when he manages to get you upset. You said that he says that it is his right to make sex with you and as a result you got a disease from him, whilst you were expecting Shannon. You said, that even for this disease, which you did not bring to your body, you were the one treated badly at the day hospital and Isaac did not care a bit about it. You also said that Isaac tried to convince you to find a house with him, but you don't think you can trust him – you think he may be using you for his own purposes. He said you would be able to get a house sooner because of 'the illness'. These actions of Isaac's give despondency a lot of power over you and want you to fall and stay down. Do you think that is what he wants for you? Fortunately you said, you are not one to fall and stay down, you are the woman who gets up. I wonder if there is a person in your life who would not be surprised that you manage to get up when something or someone has pushed you down? Who might that be and why would this person not be surprised?

When Isaac recently moved out again, while you were expecting Shannon, you told him to take all his stuff as well. You decided not to allow him into the room again, particularly because he spat on the floor. You decided that you would use your tablets regularly so the 'the illness' would not have a chance to work with Isaac against your life. You also decided to talk about what was going on all along. You also found out for yourself how things work with 'the illness'. You put your name on a waiting list for a house to be kept for you when new houses are available. You said that you decided to choose your own life and to settle first, that is why you stand up for yourself and your children. I wonder what it says of your values that made you decide to Isaac out of your life? I wonder if respect between a man and a woman and equal rights for you as a woman would fit into the values you have?

Wendy, all these years, 12 years, you continually forgave Isaac and other people for their unfair and mean treatment of you and you kept giving them another chance. How did you manage this? What helped you to forgive people? You also gave Mr Kruger another chance and forgave him. You said that you liked being without anger. You said that a person keeps forgiving because it is good for you, for your health. You also said that you laugh, because laughter is good for a person and helps you to feel better, even when your heart is sore. Would you say that many people could learn from you about this?

For years, you said, you kept quiet about Isaac's treatment, the hurting, bullying and shouting, which came from sacredness, but also because of your loyalty to him as partner. I have seen your loyalty toward Moema, your sisters, your brother Edward, Sister Baartman and you children. I wonder about loyalty: is it a gift that one gives without asking something back or is it something someone needs to earn first? When you show loyalty to a person, what does it say about the meaning those people have in your life?

It is very important to you that your children are cared for, no matter how difficult your situation is. You think it is very important that children should not feel grim in a family, but safe and happy and know that their mother is in charge and stands up for them. You said that you like helping people where you can: your brothers and sisters often talk to you about the worries in their life, the people in Valkenburg used to call you to help and talk with the patients and that you brought these patients calmness. Wendy, you said that you decided to find help when you have a problem, with health or children because that is how you get ideas about the choices you have for taking action.

Dear Wendy, I told my friend Linda about the way you find forgiveness in your heart, how you continue to stand up to the disappointments and anger – and keep forgiving people. She told me to ask you that she wonders what the whole of Steenberg would be like if everybody was able to forgive and laugh and have loyalty for friends and family like you do? I wonder what Steenberg would be like if all the mothers and fathers had tenderness in their hearts for their children and if they kept their children safe and taught them what is right, just like you do? I wonder what it would be like in Steenberg if everybody could learn from you about listening to other and encouraging others? I wonder what the whole of Steenberg would be like if they could also learn to say “No! Enough now!” to abuse and turn away the troublemakers, especially the women who think a bad, no-good, bully of a man is better than nothing, and give their children the idea that women are door mats and nobody says a word?

You and I saw the movie, ‘A beautiful mind’, and you said that you heard that people who live with schizophrenia travel a very lonely road. You asked me if this was true and I said that I don't know and asked what it was like for you? You told me that it wasn't true for you. You said you actually like your life and that you have Moema, your brother Edward, your children and Sister Baartman. You said that these people believe in you and they care about you.

After the movie we talked about the tricks schizophrenia uses by using your brain to create another world in this world and that sometimes it frightens you. You also said that you find some of the things of the other world very beautiful! You said that you saw how the man in the film learnt to check where things he heard or saw belonged – he checked to see if the things came from the world his brain created for him or whether it was in the world where his body is. After our conversation I wondered if schizophrenia wanted you to believe that all your feelings belonged to it. So, when you experience strong emotions, like anger, hurt, or have an outburst, or sadness, despondency, or happiness and chirpiness, or jealousy, or disappointment you think it is schizophrenia. Have you noticed how other people in the world also experience these things in their lives, sometimes a lot and sometimes only very little? What do you think of this? I'd love to hear!

Wendy, you also told me that you told Jessica your story of how schizophrenia tried to take over your life and how you have been standing up to it from the age of 12. Would you say that the schizophrenia is a bit like a bad husband that needs to be taken in hand and controlled? You said that she responded immediately and said: “ Ag, foeitog!” (O shame!). I wonder whether you believe that it was a brave thing to do to tell Jessica your story? So many people hide things from their children and later it often causes problems.

Wendy, you told me about the 'evil' Wendy, the one that can get really angry and who gets hooked into outbursts, shouting, impatience and fighting when it is necessary. I wonder if you realise that other people also experience anger when they are treated with unfairness and meanness? Wendy, I got the idea that you said you would rather keep the peace by keeping quiet, and everybody else talks for you, about you and of you? To me it sounds as if the evil Wendy, the voice that you always try to keep quiet, jumps out to say: 'Hey, don't mistake Wendy's friendliness and soft heart for a sign of weakness! You better listen! I can stand up for myself!' That is how a volcano works, all the hot fire sits in its stomach and churns and churns and churns and one day it lets out a bit of smoke, and then it lets out ash and then the volcano spews all the red-hot lava that burns everything in its way. When it is done, it becomes calm again. Have I got the right idea? I wonder how you can keep that strong voice near the softhearted Wendy so they can watch out for each other to speak up immediately, rather than keeping the ideas and emotions locked up?

Do you think, Wendy, that a woman who managed, for 20 years, to live with schizophrenia and manages for most of the time to keep it under her thumb has reason to believe she is amazing special? Would you think she is amazing special especially when such a woman also manages to raise 3 lovely children, on her own and can get by on what she has, 3 spontaneous children who are progressing well? What would you think of such a woman who is asks for help so that she is able to make good decisions for her life? Do you think a woman like this would need have others tell her what to do all the time? Would you say that a woman like this is actually standing on her own two feet even though others try to tell her that it isn't so and even though she doesn't realise it herself? Do you think that a woman who manages to keep schizophrenia in its place for 20 years has a right to speak out and speak strongly and believe that she has a special place in the world and worthwhile to society? Would you agree that such a woman knows she is actually the adult and that she knows adults take responsibility for their and their children's lives? Do you think such a woman can freely say goodbye to abuse and carry on with her own life? Would you agree that when a woman like this has a bad husband then it is because the man is bad and that it is not the woman's fault? I know a woman like this and her name is Wendy and I wonder what she would answer to all these questions.

You also decided to do window-shopping for a church until you find one that feels like family and where people will stand with you and care for you. You have often said that pray the Lord for strength and support against all the things that come into your life. You said that you lay everything at the Lord's feet and that you endure everything, but sometimes it is too hard. This makes me wonder about a lot of things. Has the Lord ever given you strength when you thought there was nothing left? Has the Lord brought you help when you asked for it? Has the lord helped you with the standing up and doing for yourself? I wonder what the Lord is like for you – more like a man or more like a woman? Would the lord want women to be treated so badly by their husbands, especially when the man knows better and purposely abuses his wife? What do you think the Lord thinks about the Wendy in the paragraph above? I wonder about these things a lot and would like to hear your ideas.

Wendy, we also spoke about the ways in which you are like a church and that your voice is the pulpit. We thought that Moema is just like a church bell; she keeps on and on talking about all the things that has gone wrong with Isaac for everyone to hear and to remind you of his unkindness to you. We wondered what it would be like if we could silence Isaac's voice, which gets Wendy to feel bad about herself all the time, get it off the pulpit and put it out of the church and put Wendy in the pulpit to decide and speak for her life. We dreamt how great it would be, if we could open the church doors widely for the people Wendy wants, to come in and sit in the pews to listen to Wendy's voice telling them what she needs.

We dreamt how wonderful it will be when, at last, Moema can rest in the pews, and that Helene, Sister Baartman, Edward, your children and the schizophrenia listen to what Wendy wants to say about her own life in her own voice.

Thank you that you have given me the opportunity to be part of your life. I enjoy sitting in the pews of Wendy's Church. I have learnt a lot from you about getting up and going on. I was often touched by your honesty about yourself and I often admired your bravery – people have disappointed you so often but still you continue to forgive and love, you stay friendly and keep on looking for calmness. O, Wendy, these are things I long to be better at! I am often touched by the way you laugh with the sadness, you speak about something serious and then you say something in a way that makes you laugh, or you notice your children doing or saying funny things, or you and I can laugh about something. Many times I have this idea that you have the heart of a child, open, fresh and innocent, and I have read in the Bible, that such a heart is the one that sees the Lord the clearest. It is this heart of yours, which is open and can help Wendy dream, and hope, and play and laugh with her children even when trouble is big, that teaches me to see the Lord close-up.

Wendy, my supervisor for the studies asked me to write a story about your life and how we stand together and learn together and how you manage to carry on. Her heart was touched when I told her about you and how I enjoy listening to your voice telling about your life. She thought that many other people would also enjoy hearing your voice. Now is the opportunity to use the pulpit well! I wonder what you think of this idea? I'll only write what the two of us write together so that it is your voice telling the story and I will be the scribe and add my ideas too.

Lots of love,

Helene Schoeman

APPENDIX H
QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO PARTICIPANTS

2 May 2003

Dear

I have been thinking about the times we met as a group last year. I wonder if I could ask you to answer a few questions? I would like to know what your ideas are about the following questions.

1. What made you decide to join the group?

2. What did you get out of the listening to others' stories and the conversations?

3. Can you think of anything we could have done differently or what else we could have done to make the group meetings more meaningful for you?

3. What, would you say, are the kinds of things women in your area would find the most supportive of them? What would benefit the women the most?

4. Was I respectful towards you? Is there anything I could do differently?

5. Did our conversations help you? Can you explain how they helped you?

6. What was your experience of receiving the letter in which the things we spoke about was written up? Did the letter spark any new ideas for you about your life?

I would love to hear what your thoughts on these questions are. I would enjoy meeting with you for a conversation or even appreciate a letter. Thank you for the opportunity you gave me to get to know you better and to learn from you.

Best regards,

Helene Schoeman

APPENDIX I

SUMMARY OF A PART OF A CONVERSATION WITH VICTORIA, SOMIKAZE AND PATROLIA AT UMNQOPHISO PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL.

Patro, you shared with us that your mom also encouraged you to carry on studying and learning new skills and you also loved children, so it was easy for you to decide to become a teacher.

Victoria, your mom visited in 1999, and you say that she was very surprised that you were the head teacher of the only pre-school in Lwandle. You shared that the principal of the Primary school told you that, because the department trained Somi, the money was only for her. Your mother encouraged you to pray, to do things for yourself and not to give up. You said that you saw the principal, because the salary trouble also brought trouble into your relationships. It brought a struggle; especially it brought a personal struggle. You said that because you are the kind of women that you are, it was difficult for you to give up. So you went to see the principal and asked him not to interfere and give advise. He was the principal of the primary school and Victoria was the principal of the pre-school. He had a good heart at the same time, he was willing to listen and apologise.

Victoria, you say that you have learnt, through this work you are doing and being in a leadership position, to deal with people and to speak together with them about personal problems and work problems and to work those problems through. You have learnt to deal differently with people and with the way you do things because you have grown in different ideas, ways of working and dealing with problems and people. Is it that you have grown in to trust your knowledge about working and caring for people?

Somikaze, you say that you are finding it easier to live amongst different kinds of people. You have learnt to be more accepting because of the progress of the school, because you have worked through the ups and downs and have become stronger. You say that if you set the goal, you must achieve it. You say: 'We are working with children and parents and we need to be a good listener and listen rather than talk'.

Patrolia, you said that the sea is big and it gives life to many creatures and there is enough of it, but we can keep taking from it until there is no more food left or we can put something back into it to keep it going. I got the idea that you were saying that people and relationships are like the sea – there is so much we can be for each other and so every time we appreciate someone's doings we are giving it back, we are putting something back into the relationships. You say a way of doing this is to listen to someone's advice because one grows through listening.

Somikaze, you shared that while you were doing your training in 1999 and 2000, that Victoria treated you with respect and that there was no selfishness in the way she was open hearted to take new ideas from the training you were getting. You said that she gave you esteem. You also shared how you used to tell the other students about your principal, that you were working with such a lady. They used to complain about the lack of support they got at their schools and were not encouraged to try out new ideas. When your lecturer came to see your teaching she said to Victoria: 'I was longing to see you.'

You also say that you must do things for yourself as an individual, for the children and that it is important to respect someone's work. This is what Phillipa came to encourage. You think that stumbling blocks are challenges rather than problems. You also said that you believe that even the weaker points are ways to find opportunities to train your strength.

You shared with us that the strength, determination and perseverance that you have shown at the school is with you even when you are not at the school – it has also helped you to make changes in your homes.

You said that when you multiply your goodness to three you are building a nation. You decide to be responsible to be strong for yourself and to be strong for the children of the community.

When H el ene Rykaart came on board, the community started saying that this is a white woman's school, but you reminded the community that this is not a white woman's school – the school is the community's. You want to show the community that when you are doing for yourself – it will extend to the nation. You said that the people of the community are more concerned about houses. They wondered why you built such a big school. All those bricks could have built you new houses. You said that this school was not for you but for the community – that the three of you have become 'the mother at the cr eche' for the children of the community.

You said that you have seen that when you are down, that is where you start, at the bottom. You build yourself first before you can make a change. This is why you invited H el ene Rykaart into your community and asked for help. You also said that by voicing out your needs, no matter what they are, even if you think they are bad, the people who stand with you would rectify you and support you.

Patrolia, you said that it is important for the three of you to say thank you to God for the way you are blessed to have this school. You say you are very lucky to have this school. You say thank you to the Lord each time before you say please. Victoria, you shared that it is important to the three of you to start meetings with appreciation. You notice the things that people do or the things that have happened that have helped you learn and move forward.

Patrolia, you said that through this school and your work with the parents and the children of the community, the time has come for healing wounds, just like the TRC gave people a chance to speak about the hardness, difficulties and bumping and brought a chance to negotiate a way of healing the wounds.

You explained that you think that the growth and empowerment that has come into your lives is like a wheel, a never-stopping wheel. Now that you have started this journey of growth, learning and empowerment you want to continue and take it to the community around you. You want to take the old with the new and bring it together into something new all the time.

Some of the things that you said that you hold very important in your school is:

Forgiveness:

you said that life and relationships bring the ups and downs and that you need to deal with it and move on, rather than staying angry and bitter. Somikaze, you said that your school is for you like the aloe, the leaves are bitter but there is sweetness in the flowers. This school is the flower that grew from your lives of bitter struggle.

Speaking out:

you said that it is important to talk about things that trouble you and are not working in your relationships at school, but it is also something that you do in your homes.

Standing together:

You said that when you struggle on your own it is like walking with a heavy pack on your shoulders and this brings heaviness and slowness. When you stand together it lightens the load, you learn together, you are encouraged to be open-minded and you are able to share ideas to others, like the community forum.

You say that you have discovered that when you do these things and there is a 'touchiness' (closeness) in the heart you are able to sort out problems and help each other and that you are able to rebuild yourselves, like a puzzle.