

1 BECOMING PART OF ANOTHER'S NARRATIVE

So it is more useful to watch a man in times of peril, and in adversity to discern what kind of man he is; for then at last words of truth are drawn from the depths of his heart, and the mask is torn off - reality remains. Lucretius

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is about people who are disadvantaged in mobility. It is concerned not only with the concept of mobility restrictions, but also with how people who have mobility disadvantages interact with their societies and what this means for pastoral work through the Christian faith community.

Usually Christian faith communities respond in faithfulness to God to an internal calling to serve and care for their members and an external calling to serve and care for the community around it (Gerkin 1997:127, Volf 1996:16). *Thus, the concern of this study is: How can pastoral work praxis, namely mutual care, pastoral care, pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy, through Christian faith communities, contribute to the narrative identities, that is personal and collective, of people who are mobility impaired?*

It is this question that stimulated my thoughts about people who are disadvantaged in mobility. In addition, in a pastoral statement made by the catholic bishops of America, the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD 1978) called for disability to be recognised as a process of living instead of reacting to perceptions about difference because of people's disabilities. The Roman Catholic Church of the United States called for the church to embrace the responsibility of meeting the need for integrating people who are disabled into the Christian community and

participating more fully in their lives. The document stressed the need for the church to educate the public on what living with disabilities is about.

Another stimulation of my interest was reports of statistics about people who are disabled. *The SA Health Review* of 1998 estimated 2 657 714 cases of self-reported disabilities in South Africa (Simon-Meyer 1999). Goldstein (1999) maintains that statistics indicate half a million children in South Africa are disabled and only 3% of these children receive any kind of rehabilitation or health care, although 70% could be rehabilitated.

Moreover, the number of people who are disabled is increasing, which ultimately increases the problems of disability. In October 1996 the first census of a reintegrated South Africa revealed that the population of South Africa was estimated at 37.9 million persons, which is almost double the population since 1970 (Bradshaw 1997). The impact of this, Bradshaw (1997) points out, is that over the next ten to twenty years the population of the elderly is expected to increase from approximately 6.1% of people older than 60 years in 1995 to an expected 9.2% by 2020. It means that chronic illnesses that plague the aged and the frequently disabling consequences of frailty will increase.

Furthermore, poverty is closely associated with malnutrition, which frequently results in disability. Stucky (1998) points out that contagious diseases, such as meningitis, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, feed on situations of overcrowding prevalent among the disadvantaged. This means that the cycle of disability and poverty is perpetuated since disability entrenches poverty. It means that not only is there a higher proportion of people who are disabled among the poor, but there is also an increase in families living in poverty as a result of disability. For example, the child who is paraplegic, an amputee or unable to walk for other reasons, is often deprived of access to education. The result is future limited opportunities for employment with the prospect of increased poverty.

Other problems that increase disabilities are domestic violence, motor vehicle accidents, agricultural accidents, criminal offences and hijacking. Hijacking is reported to be on the increase. Simon-Meyer (1999) reports that car hijacking is the single largest cause of quadriplegia. Most victims of hijacking are shot from the side, which makes the spinal cord very accessible to injury. In 1993 admissions owing to accidents outnumbered incidents of personal violence. However, the number of victims of personal violence is now double that of vehicle accidents. This means that mobility disabilities have become even more prevalent. Together these problems may present a sizeable population of people who are disabled or may become disabled. At the same time disability may predispose narratives of change and chaos that physical impairment can create in people's lives.

To understand narratives of people who are restricted in mobility, there is therefore a need to explore what mobility impairment is about. We need to know the objective point of view about mobility impairment to understand it. By objective reasoning I mean theoretical reasoning about what mobility impairment is. Although there is a need to understand the objective reasoning about disadvantages in mobility, a deeper understanding of the intimate experiences of living with mobility impairment is important. Accordingly, we need to understand the subjective experiences of individuals who live with disabilities in their ordinary daily lives to gain a holistic understanding of mobility impairment.

Authors such as Boylan (1991); Clapton (1997); Eiesland (1994); French (1993); Macfarlane (1996); Oliver (1993); Priestley (1999); Rolland (1989); Sternbach (1978) and Tunks, Bellsimo and Roy (1990) discuss what experts say about disability. Each, however, agrees that enough has been written about what different experts, professionals and academic disciplines have to say about disability. Each suggests that the subjective aspect of disability needs more attention.

Furthermore, Kaufman-Scarborough (2001:431) points out that the Americans With Disabilities Act 1990 (ADA) promised employment and market access to the nations' 54 million disabled persons. The Census Bureau 1994 reported that there were over 54 million people who experienced some limiting life ability. The above author notes that numerous assessments and criticisms have been made as to the success of the ADA, but only a few academic studies in relation to marketing have been done, with the disabled consumer the focus of study. An approach that focusses on architectural violations in retail settings is limited. More academic studies need, therefore, to make the disabled consumer central to research (Kaufman-Scarborough 2001:432).

This makes sense to me because the consumer market place is a part of essential daily life. Nobody can exist without it, yet frequently it is made almost impossible for the person who is mobility disadvantaged to participate in this essential part of life. It can relegate these people to isolation.

It is also noteworthy, as Philpott and McLaren (1997) point out, that despite the emergence of strong social theorists' appeals, South Africa lags behind other countries in this area. They write:

Disability has often been regarded as a peripheral issue in discussions on health services. Despite a number of progressive policies included in the South African Constitution that declares equal rights for all, and the White Paper on the Transformation of Health Services in South Africa, disabled people are still regarded in the main as an insignificant minority.

It is for this reason that I propose that we also need to know how systems that are supposed to assist these people affect them and their families in the context of their daily living. Thus, focus is placed on subjective

narratives recounted by people living with mobility restrictions. Focus is also placed on exploring the need to identify with their significant others or their social, political and religious communities' beliefs, values and meanings in their daily experience of living with mobility impairments.

1.2 THE INTELLECTUAL PUZZLE

Jennifer Mason (2002:18) suggests that forming some kind of intellectual puzzle helps to construct and produce an explanation to the puzzling concepts that a researcher is attempting to discuss and argue logically about a topic. In relation to this suggestion I will attempt to construct an intellectual puzzle in connection with people who are disadvantaged in mobility and their struggle to adjust to changes that often give a sense of loss of control of their lives. The advantage of this is that it will provide background on the specific problem to be addressed through the study.

I will, therefore, explain the intellectual puzzle by working from a general to a specific description of the problem of living with disability that this thesis addresses (Henning, Gravett and Van Rensburg 2002:66-67). Also my preference is to write mostly in the first person, which follows the usual academic trend of present contemporary research. It serves the purpose of clearly orientating myself to the reader (Bak 2004:96).

Physical impairment can cause changes to bodily functions and perceptions about disability. A person who is paralysed, for example, most probably cannot walk and must rely on mechanical aid for mobility. This study addresses what can happen when bodily and social changes occur because of mobility restrictions. The perception about body changes may provoke a distorted response from people who have no obvious physical impairment.

McCollum (1994:126) suggests that sometimes through the social, political and religious structures in a community people who are mobility impaired are treated as if their embodied self is merely a physiological body. This means that personal identity is constrained in a physical body alone. There is no selfhood beyond the body. It means that these people are perceived and treated as if their personhood is dependent on their body image. Thus, their capacity for being accountable and responsible for others is disregarded. The “disabled identity”, therefore, robs these people of being accepted in their capacity of “being” as a physical, psychological and social person (McCollum 1994:127).

In response to her understanding of the way societies perceive bodily changes, Adele McCollum (1994:128), who lives with a physical disability, tells how she finds that her body is always present even when it is changing and unpredictable. The above author experienced the process of a disability that brought changes to her bodily functions without warning. Thus, McCollum argues that, because of physical challenges of an altered body-image, people who are disabled are shifted into a shared identity of the disabled because the fixed identity of a person is based on the perfect body-image.

For McCollum, however, any notions of fixed reality and unchanging identities are not part of her experience (McCollum 1994:129). What the above author argues, suggests that personhood is more than a perfect body image. Accordingly, being ignored as a full person can make identifying with people of their communities a major lonely task for people who are disadvantaged physically.

I am convinced that it may be the reason why people who are mobility disadvantaged can have problems with identity. Another reason is that these people may be perceived as being consumed by their disabilities and completely dependent on others, instead of being accepted as multi-faceted

persons with intact abilities in other areas.

In addition, social acceptance, political fairness and economic viability are part of daily living and assist people to identify with unfolding social narratives in a way that encourages a sense of belonging (Leach 1996:88-89). However, people living with restrictions in mobility are often excluded by society. They constantly endure being politically invisible, economically obstructed and socially excluded because they are identified as disabled (Leach 1996:90).

Political invisibility can result in these people often not being given enough attention and assistance when fighting their cause against exclusion and discrimination as members of a society and culture. Obstructions to economic viability are put in their way because being unemployed or being wrongly employed remains an obstacle. Society ignores these problems and faith communities often do nothing about them.

With regard to faith communities ignoring the problems associated with disability, Eiesland (1994a:20) refers to the disability rights movement. Such movements have resisted the experiences of people who are disabled having to conform to crippling theological categories and have exposed the church's complicity with societal perceptions about disability. The above-mentioned author maintains that the history of the church shows that the church has often supported attitudes of pity and paternalism towards people who are disabled. Eiesland (1994a:20) writes: "For many disabled persons the church has been a 'city on a hill' - physically inaccessible and socially inhospitable". Churches have made little effort to bring about the changes necessary for full accessibility and participation for people who are mobility disadvantaged, but sometimes rather support secular society through their attitudes and actions.

Webb-Mitchell (1996:xv) supports the above thoughts when he maintains

that the church is often influenced by the patterns of thought, language and strategies adopted by society surrounding the church. Webb-Mitchell (1996:xv) writes:

By and large, the church has adopted the language used by health-service professionals and groups who serve as advocates for people with disabilities. By adopting that language, we also adopt strategies and approaches framed by the world but not necessarily by the Gospel of God.

It means that often faith communities remain silent and offer no language to address what it means to be disabled in relation to God and to the church (Webb-Mitchell 1996:xv). This suggests that the church is lacking in its responsibility to the “different other.” Although the comparison between faith communities and the social environment may seem rather harsh, it is necessary to make faith communities aware of their apathy towards people who are physically disadvantaged. I am of the opinion that such apathy can result in ignorance of the powerful emotional, social, political and religious implication for people who are disadvantaged in mobility in their struggle to regain some kind of control of their lives.

People may feel they have lost control of their lives because they are limited in mobility and this can be a problem because this influences social interaction. Social interaction is important for identifying with significant others. The point to be made is that it is important for people who are disadvantaged in mobility not only to be included in intimate and public interaction to form personal identity, but also to form collective identities with their societies. Watson (2003:34) points out that social institutions, social movements and social structures provide the subject matter for the sociology of disability, but these structures all emerge through the conduct of people. Thus, the social structures all have underlying meanings, values and cultural beliefs that are experienced as outcomes through social and

cultural expressions. Indeed social structures are seen as the product of discourse that occurs through language during social interaction.

It is therefore important to note that social structures are instrumental in shaping personal identity through social interaction that facilitates a sense of belonging to the collective social beliefs, values, cultural expressions and meanings of the communities in which people who are mobility impaired live. I will argue that lack of social interaction can make it difficult for people who acquire mobility impairments to form both personal and collective identities. Such a lack can result in people who are disadvantaged in mobility experiencing a loss of a sense of belonging in their societies. Restrictions in mobility can, therefore, have the negative effect of stunting the usual opportunities of strengthening identity that occur through relationships and interaction between people. *I will argue that this means that people who live with mobility impairment may struggle with the questions: “Who am I?” “Where do I belong?” They may feel at a loss as to where they belong and lack a sense of being rooted.*

Two main questions are the central focus of the thesis, namely: *What are the implications of acquired mobility impairment for personal identity and collective identity?* This study is also about considering the challenges for pastoral work practices with people who are mobility impaired and whether Christian faith communities can help to bring hope for changing this struggle for identity to a strong sense of identity. Thus, the second question is: *How can we in Christian faith communities, through pastoral work, facilitate a sense of belonging to strengthen personal identity and collective identity for people who are mobility disadvantaged?*

There are many ways in which the problem of finding identity and restoring the loss of a sense of belonging can be explored. Narrative theory is one

way that can contribute to our insights into identity. There are many ways in which narrative theory can be understood, but I will refer specifically to the theory of narrative identity proposed by Ricoeur (1992, 1995), which is addressed in chapter two.

Another way to address the loss of a sense of belonging experienced by people who are disadvantaged in mobility is through the caring actions of Christian faith communities. I suggest that the notion of narrative identity, combined with a theology of embrace, can be considered for a pastoral work praxis through faith communities. It is a means to find ways to assist people who are living with mobility restrictions to reframe the loss of control of their lives, facilitate belonging in their communities and strengthen identity.

Accordingly, I argue in this study that narrative identity theory and pastoral work theology can connect with each other in a way that contributes to insights in identity. Considering the intellectual puzzle of this thesis will help to clarify how the relationship between narrative theory and pastoral work theology can contribute to gaining insights into the “problem of identity”. It will allow for exploring the idea of both social identity and religious identity. By social identity I mean that individuals’ identity is shaped by social beliefs, values and meanings of their society (Watson 2003:5). Religious identity means that an individual’s religious identity is shared with a collective religious body’s traditions, that is, the beliefs, values and meanings that are accepted as one’s own (Sterkens 2001:36,42, 76).

1.3 THE AIMS OF THIS STUDY

The two main research questions are: 1) *What are the implications of acquired mobility impairment for personal identity and collective*

identity? 2) How can we in Christian faith communities, through pastoral work, facilitate a sense of belonging to strengthen personal identity and collective identity for people who are mobility disadvantaged? These questions relate to three specific points, namely: the “problem of identity”; people who are mobility impaired can experience a fixed identity of the “disabled”, and pastoral work through Christian faith communities can help to deal with the “problem of identity” through facilitating a sense of belonging through collective identity that can strengthen personal identity. The overall goal, therefore, of this thesis is to find ways to deal with the “problem of identity”.

The specific aims of this study are:

- 1) to reflect on identity from a narrative perspective through theoretically exploring the notion of narrative identity in chapter two;
- 2) to provide a theoretical framework for our understanding of mobility impairment which is considered in chapter three;
- 3) to deepen our understanding of the implications of acquired mobility impairment with regard to identity through empirical research which is discussed in chapter four, and
- 4) to present a theory of pastoral work for people who are mobility impaired which is addressed in chapter five.

There is a need to explore what the experience of being disadvantaged in mobility is about. There is also a need to understand what role Christian faith communities play in addressing the “problem of identity” so as to reflect on the caring practices of faith communities.

I therefore want to achieve the above aims primarily through theoretical

analysis from literature sources. I want to contribute to the theory and praxis of caring in a way that empowers and liberates. This will be achieved by making a critical analysis of theories from literature about the actions of caring through faith communities, disability, narrative identity and a theory about embracing people who experience not belonging in their societies. Furthermore, limited empirical research will be undertaken to deepen our understanding of the implications of acquired mobility impairment with regard to personal and collective identity.

1.4 THE REASONS FOR THIS STUDY

Webb-Mitchell (1996:127) makes a salient point about faith communities and their involvement with children who are mentally disabled. Although critical about faith communities' involvement in assisting children who are mentally disabled to be part of the church, this author points out that despite the largely apathetic attitude of the faith community there is a glimmer of hope in trying to raise the church from its apathy. Webb-Mitchell (1996:127) writes:

Indeed, the church, the body of Christ, may have to explicitly proclaim itself a sanctuary and become a place of safekeeping, practicing the gestures of God's mercy for people considered disabled, because of their treatment in an increasingly heartless world.

In the same way I am convinced that Christian faith communities have the ability to come alongside people who are mobility disadvantaged and together with them address the "problems of identity". What Webb-Mitchell (1996:127) writes is relevant for this study because faith communities should be the embodiment of the mercy of God. In other words, faith communities should image God in his mercy.

Because of this conviction I began to ponder over the questions: How can Christian faith communities exercise care in a way to make space for people who live with physical restrictions? How can the faith community through pastoral work assist people who are mobility impaired with the “problem of identity”? How can these people’s stories be recognised and acknowledged? Is it possible to change the story-line of individuals’ narrative to accomplish meaningful interpretation of their daily existence?

The above questions challenged me about my own role in the drama of mobility impairment. This will give insight into why this research project was chosen. Relevant to this is what Ricoeur (1995:309) writes, “But unlike a closed literary narrative, life is open at bothends ...” and:

This open-endedness places us in a situation where we can bring ourselves together narratively only by superimposing in some way a configuration with a beginning, middle, and an ending. But at the same time, we are always in the process of revising the text, the narrative of our lives. In this sense, we may construct several narratives about ourselves, told from several points of view.

This brings me to my own story that contributed to my choice of studying people who are mobility disabled in relation to problems with identity. Considering what Ricoeur (1995:309) writes about us being in a process of revising the narrative of our lives, such revision of the text of my life contributed to me embarking on this study from a narrative perspective. I will refer to three different plots that are connected in my life that persuaded the direction of this study. By plots I mean what Ricoeur (1992:146) refers to as the numerous events and actions that connect over time to tell a story.

My story begins with what seems a long time ago. I once walked, but for the past 15 years I have been using a wheelchair for mobility. My legs, in

a sense, became wheels to facilitate my movements. As I tried to make sense of my experience, I felt at a loss as to who I was. I felt not only imprisoned in my body, but also that the prison bars were closing in on me. As a walking person I had felt comfortable in the opportunities afforded me, but “the world of the walking” now closed doors to those opportunities. My familiar world of the walking had become distant to me. “Who am I?” “Where do I fit in?” “Where am I going?” These questions repeatedly sang like a chorus in my head.

Another part of my life story contributed to the way I reflected on the notion of mobility impairment. It was during the process of my theological studies that the children of our family had to take both our parents to a frail care home because they were no longer able to care for themselves. After our father died, a new will had to be made with the help of a social worker and my brother; my mother’s signature was a thumb print next to an x. After her death, when I saw the x on a copy of the document, it distressingly reminded me that this was what my mother had become in today’s world: an x. Her only crime was that she had grown old, frail and disabled like so many of the residents in the frail care home.

It was while my parents were in the frail care home that I watched the other residents. I often saw the same confusion at the loss of their independence. Parents became children and in turn the children became the parents. People who had held positions of esteem in society and who served others were now served by nursing staff, welfare organisations and voluntary helpers. They were told how to do things, when to do things and decisions that they had made before, were made for them. It was as if the chorus was singing again: “Who am I?” “Where do I fit in?”

The next significant event is that I became a practical theologian and accredited as a pastoral therapist. I had worked in a psychiatric clinic as a pastoral counsellor for a number of years and had counselled numerous

people with various religious, social and emotional problems. However, there came a time when, as a female practical theologian in a wheelchair, I began to think about the way I could contribute to the field of practical theology and to the practice of caring through the Christian faith community.

What Musimbi Kanyora (1996:9) writes, had relevance for me: “Neither do we see theology as what we are taught by someone, but we see theology as taking an experience that we have and bringing meaning to that experience, so that we can see God in what we do everyday.” Considering what Kanyora (1996) writes, I pondered how these events of my life could help to bring my experiences to people who are mobility disadvantaged in a way that could give meaning to their lives. How could I contribute to both practical theology and to people who are disadvantaged in mobility?

Furthermore, Polkinghorne (1988:6-7), in discussing narrative meaning, points out that sharing stories is important to human living because it gives understanding and meaning to people. Through discourse, interaction and relationships with others, identities are developed. Where stories of cultural, social and religious communities are recounted, the individual’s story is also recounted. This means that during individual and collective narrative exchange people discover who they are. Thus, narratives that are shared between people can strengthen identity personally and collectively.

Moreover, Ricoeur (1995:310) points out that “We are also a character in others’ stories and histories...In short, being caught up in others’ stories is what creates an inextricable aspect to our lives.” I realised the relevance of Ricoeur’s (1995) statement: because of my own grappling with issues of identity I can be an asset in the field of pastoral work to people who are disadvantaged in mobility. My own experience of being mobility impaired provides me with compassion and passion while being caught up

in the stories of people who are living with being disadvantaged in mobility.

Compassion ignited my passion for this study and the idea that the notion of narrative identity can assist in finding new meaning of life and that gaining a sense of belonging can empower people living in disadvantaged circumstances. Furthermore, this study can be a contribution to practical theology because, as a pastoral therapist, I am concerned about people who are disadvantaged in mobility. Thus, as a practical theologian and a woman in a wheelchair I have a passion for the cause of these people as well as for the role that pastoral work can play through Christian faith communities. Hence, these above-mentioned three narrative plots in my life merged to prompt this research project from a theological point of view.

Consequently, in the next section I will describe my theological positioning followed by my research positioning, which will entail the research methodology. Lastly, the plan of the study and the conclusion of the chapter are discussed.

1.5 THEOLOGICAL POSITIONING

My focus is on three positions, namely: practical theology and specifically pastoral work, communal and contextual theology and lastly a theology of embrace.

1.5.1 A practical theological position

This study is from the perspective of practical theology and reflecting on a theology of embrace. It takes a specific perspective of pastoral work practices to people who are disadvantaged in mobility. In addition, consideration is given to the responsibility of Christian faith communities'

pastoral work and what effect it has on people who are mobility impaired. This means that a practical theological perspective of community-based and contextual pastoral work is considered.

What, then, is practical theology about? Practical theology is the branch of theology that considers actions that embark on ensuring that the Word of God reaches people. Thus, the object of study for practical theology is the religious actions of people. It deals with issues that concern preaching, caring, instruction, worship and service (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:1-2).

Accordingly, central to practical theology is the word “action”. Practical theology’s focus is on studying specific actions of people in relation to God (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:6-7). Thus, how practical theology is described becomes apparent in the way these religious actions are qualified. Fietz (1986:26-29), for example, describes practical theology as communicative actions in service of the gospel message. For Gerkin (1984:63-64) the focus is on the action of the incarnation and the coming of the kingdom of God to people. Heyns and Pieterse (1990:6) understand practical theology “...as concerned with actions that propagate the gospel and promote God’s coming to the world.”

Because practical theology’s object of study is usually the actions of the Christian faith community and people’s religious actions, it is concerned with praxis. Therefore, practical theology can be described as a branch of theology that critically reflects on what the Christian faith community is doing. It also reflects on people’s religious actions in society (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:12).

Although practical theology studies the actions of the Christian faith community, it is not responsible for the practice of these actions. The Christian faith community has the task of accomplishing the theory of actions, studied by practical theologians, in the praxis of the congregation.

Thus, the members of the Christian faith community are responsible for preaching, worship and celebration, instruction, service and caring actions.

Thus, for this study, the Christian faith community's tasks are the actions or operations of its own "Christian living" and the "Christian living" in society. By "Christian living" I mean, firstly, how the daily practices of the gospel message are conducted in the church and secondly, actions that promote the Word of God in society. Consequently, practical theology is not only Christian faith community orientated, but also includes the study of Christian religious praxis in society and all who practise liberating religious actions (Pieterse and Dreyer 1995:32-33).

It means that the main fields of practical theology studies may be broadened depending on how Christian faith communities qualify actions that describe the operational fields. The practical theological object of this study, for example, is the actions of the faith community whose members are mediators in bringing God's Word to people through acts of caring. The actions of caring are performed through the services of pastoral work. Thus, for this study the operational fields of pastoral work actions may be seen as the members of the church, the home, the hospital, the consulting rooms and the social context of people who are impaired in mobility.

Specifically, pastoral work incorporates the different types of care (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:160). By pastoral work I therefore mean the different types of care, namely mutual care, pastoral care, pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy through faith communities. I will argue that all four types of pastoral work actions, referred to by De Jongh van Arkel, should be faith community-based practices. This will be given more detailed attention in chapter five.

The demarcation of pastoral work actions of faith communities referred to above is for analytical purposes, but in practice there is an overlapping of

actions and operational fields. Also, the actions of preaching, pastoral work, instruction, service and celebration to some extent have dimensions that overlap at times (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:13-15). In relation to pastoral work it means that the actions of preaching or communication, instruction, service, worship and celebration should each have a pastoral dimension. Therefore, the absence of a pastoral dimension may be negative, for example a sermon that intellectualises a theological discourse about repentance when the congregation has experienced the tragic death of a group of their children, will have a negative impact. By a pastoral dimension I mean that the faith community is concerned with the issues of the specific needs of people in all its fields of operation.

It means, for example, that the action of preaching not only has a prophetic (proclaiming) role, but also a priestly (pastoral) role (Nichols 1987:58). A detailed explanation of this will be given in chapter five. It is this interdisciplinary interaction that gives holistic care to people with specific needs.

The above discussion suggests a communal-contextual approach to the actions of caring about people. Communal means that the focus is on community interaction. A contextual approach refers to faith communities being concerned with the interaction of the Word of God in relation to the context of specific human situations (Ferguson 1988:164).

1.5.2 Contextual and faith community-based theology

Since the formal ending of apartheid in South Africa in 1994, the country has faced the massive task of reconstructing and instilling democratic intentions toward all people. The challenges were and still are enormous because of gross poverty and suffering, HIV/AIDS, economic and political reconstruction, unemployment and homelessness. Dreyer (2002:1-2) points out that the overflow of apartheid injustices combined with post-apartheid

reconstruction poses immense contextual challenges that challenge the Christian religion to contribute to meeting them.

Christian faith communities cannot assume that they can play a role in South Africa. Undeniably the past history of active or passive support of apartheid ideology by most faith communities played a large part in creating these contextual challenges. It raises the question: Can Christian faith communities contribute in the post-apartheid era to meeting contextual challenges in South Africa?

Unquestionably, there were religious leaders who did play an important role in creating a path to democracy in South Africa. Leaders, to mention a few, such as Desmond Tutu, Stanley Mogoba, Beyers Naude and Bishop Michael Nuttall worked actively behind and in front of the scenes to dismantle apartheid. Christian faith leaders were part of preventing a civil war and assisted in the period of political and social transition to democracy (Cassidy 1995:107-118).

Consequently, the conflicting narrative of South Africa and the role of the Christian religion points to both the massive task that challenges faith communities, yet the hope and conviction that faith communities can follow the examples of these leaders who struggled for new hope in South Africa and the practice of contextual theology.

What is meant by contextual theology? *The dictionary of pastoral care and counselling* (Hunter 1990:224) describes contextual theology as:

All theologizing is done from a particular point of view, in terms of the perspectives (including the biases) of the producers of the theology. Those who are doing the theologizing have particular questions in their minds arising from their life experience within the culture in which they participate. As they study and reflect on

the Scriptures (and/or other sources to which they look for assistance) they seek to discover and formulate answers to those questions. In this way, theology comes into being.

Moreover, Russell (1993:21-22) argues that for feminist theology the connection in the faith community is through faith in Jesus Christ working for the full humanity of women and all Gods' children. Feminist theology has contributed to the development of contextual theology. Feminist theories evolved from trying to make sense of women's reality in their experiences of oppression. Feminist theories have different approaches to express values, beliefs and meaning. However, the different forms of feminism have in common the cause of discrimination against and oppression of women. Liberation theology is an example of a feminist approach that is concerned about empowerment of women, but also includes any person who is marginalised in society. The emphasis is on the experience of the oppressed while living in their societies (Russell 1993:22-23; Watkins Ali 1999:64).

Thus, the form of contextual theology that I will consider is a form of liberation theology that seeks to liberate and empower all people who are marginal persons, excluded, rejected and stereotyped because they are perceived as the different other. Doebling (1999:105), while considering some criteria related to contextual pastoral theology, reminds the reader that recent contextual theologies combine hermeneutical and emancipatory praxis methods. These methods have created an understanding of pastoral care as part of a broader cultural, social and religious context. Similarly, Watkins Ali (1999:63) writes about what she calls pastoral theology; that a departure point to a contextual approach "begins with a focus on experience indigenous to the particular cultural context".

Because focus is given to the communal-cultural and contextual dimensions of life, feminist theory gives attention specifically to the ordinary lived

experiences of women and people who experience being oppressed by society. Russell (1993:21) comments that in terms of feminist interpretation of the church the central connection is how to work out bringing faith, feminism, church and world together. Miller-McLemore (1999:80) maintains that to think about practical theology from a feminist theological perspective needs prophetic, transformative challenges to be brought to systems of power in society and religion. The above author therefore suggests that a broader perspective of the functions of conventional pastoral work is needed when dealing with people considered different.

Thus, Miller-McLemore (1999:80) refers to Hiltner, who in 1958 described the actions of care as healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling and adds that this description was amended in 1964 by Clebsch and Jaekle to include resisting, empowering, nurturing and liberating. But as Miller-McLemore (1999:81) points out, the modalities introduced by feminism and womenism include pastoral practices of resisting, empowering, nurturing and liberating. These extra modalities must be given more attention because they create a broader scope in which to consider a pastoral work praxis. This extended scope is explained by the above author as a feminist pastoral theology that breaks the silence of shame and guilt. It insists on telling the truth and calls for confession and repentance that move towards forgiveness and reconciliation. In other words, it is about a practical theology of embrace. This will be explained in a later section of this chapter.

The relevance of what Miller-McLemore (1999) suggests, in my opinion, is that pastoral work actions can play a role through practices of resisting and empowering that can liberate people to reclaim personal identity. It means that any resistance of oppressive social structures is not merely passive disagreement, but rather also a political act. It means that systems of exclusion, any denial to people of a sense of belonging, need to be

acknowledged and actively resisted. Because of this broader perception of caring that is concerned with social and political practices, feminist theologies can contribute to this study.

The above argument links communal and contextual praxis in a common goal. Monika Jakobs (1996:36) makes a salient point, that women's movements in churches recognised that what was required was not only a call for equal rights, but also full participation in forming theological theory as a priority. It was and still is a prime source for an alternative understanding of theology and praxis of faith communities. The relevance of this, therefore, is that theory and contextuality or praxis must have equal importance so that a theology of liberation and empowerment relates to the religious and individual situation and the reality of historical, political and social situations of life.

What Jakobs (1996:36) suggests definitely means that theory and praxis are closely linked to a theology that liberates and empowers. It is the task of practical theology to study the actions of Christian faith communities. Practical theologians reflect on actions of care in the context of religious values and meanings of the Christian faith in the context of people's ordinary daily lives. These meanings and values are based on biblical teachings, but understanding these biblical teachings is not detached from people's ordinary daily lives.

It means that Christian faith communities are one of the many institutions that are entangled with the narratives of people who are mobility disadvantaged. I will argue that the church should enact the embodiment of the gospel message. This means that faith communities imitate a concrete form of the love and compassion of the Triune God's love in remembrance of the event of Jesus' self-giving on the cross (Volf 1996:70). It is a love that embraces all humankind.

However, people living with physical restrictions often experience exclusion in their everyday lives and can find that a sense of belonging is absent. Some people who are disabled and consequently experience exclusion because they cannot regularly get to church, such as the elderly frail, can feel that they have been forgotten by their churches. Without reservation there is a need for these negative connotations about faith communities to be rectified. Thus, a theology of embrace is a primary consideration of this study in an attempt to find a way to change these negative connotations to positive ones, an embrace based on biblical beliefs and values.

Nonetheless, our understanding of the narratives in the Bible give enough support for practices of embrace that can address the ordinary daily context of the lives of people who are mobility impaired. An example is the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:33-37 NASV). The Samaritans were despised and excluded from identifying with the Jews. The Samaritan had every reason to walk on the other side of the road. Instead, he chose to see to the needs of the injured Jewish man lying on the roadside. He subjected himself to the circumstance of the injured man. He could have been attacked and robbed by those who had robbed the man, but he was willing to take the risk and to attend to the injured Jew. First, he attended to his bodily needs, then his material needs and then provided for his needs in the future. Jesus concluded this story by saying “Yes, now go and do the same” (Luke 10:37 LB).

In relation to people who are disadvantaged in mobility, it means that faith communities need to start thinking about what can bring meaning in life for people who live with mobility disadvantages. Theology based on our understanding of the Bible plays an important role in this reflection with the aim to stimulate actions of change that enable these people to experience identifying with their faith communities and to have a sense of belonging.

I will therefore argue that a theology of embrace is about identifying with another with compassion, love and passion. Identifying with another with compassion, love and passion is illustrated in the story of the good Samaritan.

1.5.3 A theology of embrace

For this study the operational fields of pastoral work were qualified as the church, home, hospital, consulting rooms and social daily living context of people. How then may we consider a pastoral work of embrace within these operational fields?

According to Volf (1996:127) the compassion and passion of the Triune God embraces all humankind. God identified with humankind through giving himself for the sins of the people he created. In a theology of embrace we need to reflect the same compassion and love of God with a passion. In every sense a theology of embrace is communal and contextual in the interaction between the faith community and people's lives.

Volf (1996:101-112), refers to a Christian discipleship that involves the metaphor of "embrace" that can be of help in the above consideration. Volf (1996:146) writes:

As a metaphor, embrace implies that the self and the other belong together in their mutual alterity. For the self shaped by the cross of Christ and the life of the triune God, however, embrace includes not just the other who is a friend but also the other who is the enemy.

In other words, the metaphor "embrace" is used to form a model of how human beings should relate to one another. According to Volf (1996:100) four main themes shape the notion of embrace. These are repentance,

forgiveness, making-space-in-oneself-for-another and healing of memory. Although Volf gives considerable focus to the idea of reconciliation, I elect to use the framework of the theme of reconciliation as the background in the discussion about faith communities' pastoral work praxis to people who are mobility impaired. The main focus will be on making space in oneself for another and healing of memory, with some attention being given to confession of wrong doing, repentance and forgiveness.

The importance of the background of reconciliation is Volf's (1996:100-102) proposal that it means addressing the spirituality of the person. It means that from a Christian spirituality point of view dealing with the daily living situations of people in their religious, social, cultural and political societies that render them powerless (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:53-54, Schneiders 1995:20).

It means that Christian faith communities need to embrace those suffering the sin of oppressive structures in societies. Sterkens (2001:75-76) points out that human beings live in a pluriformed society. Different beliefs, values, norms, interpretations and meanings of reality co-exist and are manifested in political, cultural, social and religious structures of human existence. The result is diverse viewpoints of different socialising entities that infiltrate from the macro-level of society to the micro-level of daily lives. Berger and Luckman (1991:13) refer to symbolic universes that represent bodies of theoretical traditions integrating different meaning through institutional order. In other words, world-views are established as a social process of constituting meaning for human existence. "World-view" according to Sterkens (2001:7) "relates to conception, ideas, notions, opinions and views which are prevalent in a society and the effective behavioural patterns which, so people believe, accord with such notions".

Accordingly, from the point of view of pastoral work praxis, it means that a society's traditions, which are made up of beliefs, values, meanings and

expectations that have been shaped by the collective members of that society, need to be taken into consideration. Religious, socio-cultural, political and economic systems of beliefs, values and meanings are part of the process of developing and fixing the expectation of a society. Thus, traditions influence the collectively developed expectations of a society and can become power structures or agencies of a society, which may include specific dimensions of political, social, religious or cultural power structures that have an influence on those in a particular social living environment. As Young (1990:56) expresses, powerlessness is frequently experienced in modern society because some social agents dominate and thus assume the power to decide for others. Thus, a theology of embrace needs to assume the position of “making-space-for-another” in counter-resistance of oppressive social agencies or structures. I will therefore continue to argue throughout this study that a theology of embrace can help faith communities to make-space-in-“self”-for-another, take moral responsibility and embrace the suffering of “another”.

The reason for the emphasis on empowering the powerless is the point that the state of powerlessness and the structures that render people powerless, must be actively resisted. The idea is that the role of the victim and perpetrator must never be reversed to avoid any possibility of rendering any person powerless again (Volf 1996:104-106).

An example of this may be given when we consider the past oppressive structures of apartheid in South Africa. The dismantling of apartheid systems empowered people who had been rendered powerless. However, what must be kept in mind and prevented is that apartheid must never happen again in any form whatsoever.

It is because of unresolved situations of powerlessness, liberation that reconciles between the “privileged” and the “powerless” in a society is difficult to establish. Situations of oppressive socio-cultural structures are

experienced by people, such as victims of full-blown AIDS, terminal illnesses, some chronic illnesses, people who are frail and elderly, high-level quadriplegic persons and people experiencing some psychiatric conditions.

In society where the emphasis is placed on uncritical normative meanings and values there is the marked danger that distorted ideologies of oppression can pave the way for exclusion of the above-mentioned people. Sometimes human actions that are guided by critical ethics embodied in the narrative of the gospel of Christ are discarded. The danger is that Christian faith communities may not always be wholeheartedly involved in resisting exclusionary practices. The danger of the idea that we are waiting for final reconciliation in heaven and that we pray for this because nothing much can be done about the evil of oppression now, often leaves a distorted utopian system of religion that succumbs to “pie in the sky” pastoral work. It results in a perspective about oppression that results in ignoring, avoiding or being indifferent to the sufferings of people. Cochrane, De Gruchy and Petersen (1991:61) when speaking of the church in relation to the poor write “churches tend to harbour petit-bourgeois aspirations, hence the stress on respectability and conformity...”.

Thus, I argue that it is vital to focus not on how to obtain the final reconciliation, but rather how to live with situations when the final reconciliation is absent. It may help provide what Eiesland (1994b:116) refers to as a communion of struggle that brings change to exclusionary practices. The communion of struggle refers to the resistance by Christians against any oppression of people.

When, however, reconciliation between the destructiveness of oppressive structures and empowerment from oppression in societies is seen as the work of the Triune God it suggests a communion of struggle in the present situation. Also, when it is seen from the perspective of a new beginning to

this world that rests in the passion of God's compassionate love, then the notions of "embrace" and a "communion of struggle" can be developed in the "here and now" of Christian living in conflict and non-reconcilable situations. It continues the Christian metaphor of the kingdom of God being accomplished in the present and moving toward completion eschatologically (Eiesland 1994b:116; Volf 1996:110).

Consequently, the hope for eschatological completion is found in the "here and now", of what I refer to as the conflict between powerlessness and empowerment, in the notion of "embrace". It is the self-giving act of the Triune God through the self-giving of Christ by suffering the cross for the "other" of humankind. The act of the suffering Christ conveys repentance and forgiveness (Volf 1996:112). Although Jesus demanded changes to oppressive situations the core of his message was the unconditional love of God and the need for repentance of all humankind.

This means that to restore communion between two conflicting sides, or social points of view, Christians have an example that God gave up himself on the cross in order not to give up on humanity. It is in the passage of "embrace" that Christ refused to be defined by the sins of all humankind and made space in himself for all humanity.

Two dimensions of the passion of Christ are, therefore, emphasised by Volf as: 1) the self-giving love which overcomes human conflict and enmity; 2) the creation of space in himself to reconcile humanity to God. Both elements are present in the love of the Triune God and each person of the Godhead identifies with the passion of Christ on the cross. The Triune God makes it possible for sinful humanity to be reconciled with God (Volf 1996:128).

The important point to the self-giving of Christ is that the passage of old into new through Christ's death and resurrection incorporates the actions

of remembering and forgetting. Christian living, therefore, is about remembering what has taken place in the death of Christ, while it also brings us to forgetting, in the sense that Romans 8:18 (RSV) describes. Paul writes, “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.” Accordingly, Volf (1996:138) writes that in the eschatological hope is the promise of being surrounded by God’s glory where the redeemed will embrace each other with healing and non-remembering in the final reconciliation.

How then does a theology of embrace have relevance for the social life of the person who is mobility impaired? Volf (1996:148) considers the metaphor for social life in the concept of “covenant” (Volf 1996:149). The above author found that “covenant” as a metaphor for social relations is open-ended, morally ordered and reciprocally committed. It needs to be noted, though, that a “covenant” can be broken. Volf (1996:153) continues to discuss “covenant” from a theological reflection on the new “covenant” as a metaphor for social relations and this is what I want to focus on.

This means that the new “covenant” as the centre of theological reflection on social issues means enquiry about the relationship between the cross and covenant. The making-space-in-oneself for social relations implies moral commitment to each other. Consequently, the point that is relevant to this study is the moral commitment to liberation in the sense of empowering in the midst of the conflict derived from the evil or sin of oppression.

In summary, the core of Volf’s notion of embrace that is important for this study is the themes repentance, forgiveness, making-space-in-“self”-for-the-“other” and healing of memory, which are fulfilled in the passion of God through Christ’s suffering on the cross. Thus, it is an example of identifying with each other with the same passion for all humanity. Faith communities therefore have an example to follow in responsibility to God and humans to make space in self-for-another who is suffering.

This brings me to the consideration of the research positioning that will be used in co-operation with the theological position of this study in the exploration of a theology of embrace for pastoral work contributing to dealing with the problem of identity. Consequently, I will first discuss some elements of a practical theological stance in relation to using empirical research methods followed by the research methodology. Lastly, I discuss the plan of this study and the conclusion of this chapter.

1.6 THE RESEARCH POSITIONING: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

When discussing the research positioning I explain the importance of practical theology in relation to the empirical research. The reason is that practical theologians do use the methodology of empirical research, but from a theological perspective. Qualitative research design and the methods of the empirical level of the research are described. Jennifer Mason (1996:2) writes: “Qualitative researchers need to be able to think and act strategically in ways which combine intellectual, philosophical, technical and practical concerns rather than compartmentalizing these into separate boxes.” I will therefore present the research philosophy in context of specific strategies of how the empirical research will be considered.

1.6.1 Practical theology and empirical research

Practical theologians use the methodology of empirical research to describe, analyse and explain pastoral and ecclesiastical problems from the point of view of theology (Van der Ven 1993:3). The methodology can be

described as intradisciplinary. It means that empirical methods of data generation, analysis and interpretation are used to gain theological knowledge about hermeneutic-communicative praxis in Christian faith communities and society, with interdisciplinary interaction with other theological disciplines and the social sciences (Van der Ven 1993:101).

Practical theologians, however, emphasise the inclusion of critical theory to allow for continuous critical interaction between theory and praxis that is kept at a bipolar tension. This is to avoid epistemological assumptions and ideology that support the researchers' own interest instead of contributing to a theology of reconstruction (Pieterse and Dreyer 1995:35). Hence, the emphasis on critical hermeneutics that adopt a critical self-reflective stance to the research being done and contributes to a reconstructive theology that includes political, economic, social, cultural and ecological factors influencing religious praxis in the church and society.

Consequently, practical theologians who use empirical research can include contributions from the social sciences disciplines. "Social sciences are disciplines which study human beings, their society and institutions" (Deist 1984:239). Sociology, psychology, anthropology and political sciences are such disciplines that study human beings.

Previously, in this chapter, I referred to Watson's (2003:34) point about different social structures, such as social movements and social institutions as subject matter for the sociology of disability. For this study the important point is considered that social structures emerge through the conduct of people and are formed from social and cultural expression underlying meanings, values and beliefs.

I am therefore interested in the relationship between people who are mobility impaired and their social interaction with social institutions, such as health care institutions. Social and cultural structures and expressions,

such as social movements and the emergence of the sub-culture of resistance in the disability movements are also vital considerations. Family traditions and religious traditions will be considered, as well as and the beliefs and meanings that are experienced as outcomes through social and cultural expression (Watson 2003:35-36).

The reason for the focus on this perspective of sociological understanding of disability is that it can disclose how these social structures emerge through the conduct of people in a society. It can give insight into the influence that expressions of social and cultural expression have in shaping personal identity through social interaction or the influence the lack of social interaction has on personal identity.

Jenny Morris (1993b:102-106) makes the point that through prejudice experienced by people who are disabled in their daily interaction with people who are not disabled, conduct emerges that supports segregation and oppression. She points out that it is necessary to understand how people who are disabled view such conduct in their accounts of their daily interaction with the general public in their communities. In this way an understanding of the patterns of cultural and social oppression can be gained through the stories told by people who are mobility impaired and the interpretation of these .

1.6.2 Qualitative research design

My chosen research approach is a qualitative research design. Qualitative research has developed out of a wide range of intellectual and disciplinary traditions. Thus, qualitative research is commonly associated with certain schools of research that fall broadly into interpretivist, sociological traditions, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionist, grounded theory, biographical method, historical method, applied or action research and even has some postmodernist interest in the form of discourse analysis. Feminism has also had a strong impact on challenging scientific

discourse and postmodern feminism considers a range of research issues that are grounded in qualitative research methodology (De Vos 1998:80-81; Mason 1996:3; Mason 2002:2-4).

The point is that different philosophical viewpoints and methodological techniques are implied in the term qualitative research. De Vos (1998:80) points out that qualitative research does not usually provide a step-by-step plan for the researcher to follow, in contrast to that usually found in quantitative research. Whereas quantitative research design determines the researcher's choices, the qualitative researcher's choices and actions will determine the design.

In addition, each tradition, school and discipline has specific viewpoints as to what is meaningful in the social world and what it is about. Consequently, traditions of qualitative research are not uniform in philosophy or methodological principles. Careful attention must be given to different qualitative research methodologies that may be combined in the research process (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:29-32; De Vos 1998:80-81; Mason 2002:2-3).

Fawcett (2000:62) writes: "Theorising and researching are associated activities, but the relationship between the two areas is often far from straightforward." This is evident when trying to link feminist and narrative theory to empirical data and a workable analytical interpretive framework.

Accordingly attention has been given to narrative theory and postmodern feminist critical theory because the research methodology used in this study is informed by these positions held in the context of the research project. As a narrative researcher I position myself within a moderate postmodern feminist perspective. This has implications, therefore, for the way I try to be truthful in doing research.

My research project consists of two levels, a theoretical and empirical level. The purpose of the theoretical level is theory generation in the chapters that follow. I will describe the research project's approach on the empirical level below.

The empirical research level addresses the question: What do people who are mobility impaired experience in relation to the "problem of identity" in their ordinary daily lives? There are three main reasons why a qualitative research design was found suitable for this study.

1) Firstly, an aim was to listen and enter into the "stories" told by the research participants being interviewed. Obtaining data generation through an objective stance would not expose personal interpretations and understanding of what living with physical disadvantages mean to the person who is restricted in mobility (Charmaz 1990:1162; Riessman 1993:55-56). No attempt was therefore made to generate data objectively; it was rather attempted to gather subjective interpretative narratives through participant interaction.

2) Secondly, statistical logic and random sampling techniques are not necessarily appropriate for study of the meanings of ordinary contextual experiences (Mason 2002:24). The intention, therefore, was not to make any generalised claims. Thus, another aim was to focus on a few individuals who are quadriplegics, and to make their stories of their experiences with mobility impairment, in relation to the "problem of identity", heard.

I am of the opinion that narratives shape the human reality into wholes and manifest the value and meanings of life (Polkinghorne 1988:159). The perspective, therefore, taken in this study assumes that human action depends on the meanings people ascribe to circumstantial consequences from social interactions, negotiations and structures of power (Charmaz

1990:1161-1162).

Accordingly, the strategy of this research is grounded in the exercise of exploration and adopts the approach to narrative generation or data generation and analysis from the perspective of peoples' actual life experiences. Qualitative research from a narrative perspective is, therefore, suited to small-scale studies that provide personal details of people's actual world (Barnes 1992:116).

3) A third reason is, because this research deals with the subjective narrative world of the participants, qualitative methods are more appropriate for analytical strategies, policy intervention and political acceptability (Riessman 1993:5). It means that listening to people "storying" their lives can be the means of discovering the way they interpret related cultural, political and religious influences in their lives. A narrative method of exploring could uncover the personal perspectives of people's lives (Polkinghorne 1988:157). Thus, it can uncover new ways to intervene and restructure change to policy-making and political and social acceptability.

1.6.2.1 Sampling strategy

According to Mason (2002:120), sampling strategy is about principles that are used to identify and gain access to relevant sources to generate data. I aim to use a method of data generation and analysis in this study to provide meaningful illustrations of what living with mobility impairment is about. I prefer to use the term text or narrative generation and analysis because narrative methods are used as described by Murray (2003:117). I therefore chose methods of sampling that follow a purposive or a general form of theoretical sampling. Hence, themes derived from linking the biological and psychosocial dimensions of mobility impairment provide a framework of common themes or narrative plots related to living with

mobility impairment. It allows for comparisons to test my argument that prime psychosocial narrative plots related to mobility impairment can be highlighted.

In addition, the sampling is linked, through illustrations from narratives analysed, to theories about disability. Therefore, narratives analysed from data generation in the interviews with the research participants are linked with illustrating claims made in chapter two about narrative identity and in chapter three about disability. Thus, the analysed transcribed texts are used, in chapter four, to illustrate how disadvantages in mobility influence personal and collective identity in relation to narrative identity theory.

Consequently, sampling is linked with the generation of theory and the process of explanation inductively derived through the transcribed texts (Mason 2002:125). Despite the intention of sampling being illustrative, it could also be something that represents a wider population of people, although this research makes no fixed claim to the extent it does this (Mason 2002:126). Selection of the research participants is explained in detail in chapter four.

1.6.2.2 Participant observer

The words participant observer and research participants are understood as the researcher in co-researching with participants in the research process. Some researchers argue that there are creative and imaginative ways of scientific study to understand human interaction, such as narrative perspective, where the researcher works within a framework of co-exploring and co-authoring narrative analysis with the research participants (Rossiter 2000:27; Trinder 2000:51). The stance is one of interaction between the researcher, the research participants and the text transcribed from interviews.

Accordingly, narrative generation is by means of a tape-recorder to gain understanding of experiences with mobility disability. A detailed account of data generation methods is given in chapter four. Once the narratives have been analysed, the interpretation of each interview will be discussed with the participant and an agreement established. A discussion with each participant regarding the final text will be conducted to obtain final consent to use the narratives analysed for the text in the thesis (Charmaz 1990:1167; Fawcett 2000:64-68; Rossiter 2000:27-28; Trinder 2000:51). It will enable me to enter into the participants' "world" and to give them a choice of what they want shared in text. A detailed account of the ethical methods of data generation of the research participants is given in chapter four.

1.6.2.3 Narrative analysis process and reporting of results

During analysis of the narratives, narrative methods are used that are based on the forms of fringe and mould-breaking narratives. By fringe narrative I mean what Booth (1996:239) refers to as a means of giving voice to previously unheard or suppressed perspectives. Mould-breaking narratives are narratives that help to cast something in a new light in an attempt to change our understanding.

The opinion is that the strength of narrative is that it would provide an inner view of the participants about their own story of living with mobility impairment and would enable the reader, through imagination, to enter their worlds. It is also a way of making previous theoretical claims of oppression, exclusion and conformity more accessible through grounding them in concrete lived experiences. The relevance for this study is that narrative methods make it possible to link the individual and social world. At the same time it allows for narrative plots to be identified that can also belong to a group of people (Booth 1996:240).

Furthermore, the process of analysis and reporting is active through co-authoring the re-framing of narratives, through reciprocal interpretation with the research participants. Hence, an awareness of theoretical assumptions guide the analysis while simultaneously allowing openness to new ideas (Murray 2003:121). Thus, in contemplation of the narrative analysis, the first choice is to frame theoretical speculations derived from Rolland's (1989, 1993, 1994) idea of a developmental process of a psychosocial model for chronic disease, as well as ideas from my own model of the unfolding process of living with mobility impairment. Theological reflections are added to the frame reference. A detailed description of the process of coding data and analysis and validity is discussed in chapter four.

1.7 THE PLAN OF THE STUDY

In chapter one three notions that were discussed theoretically throughout the study were addressed, namely the “problem of identity”, people who are mobility impaired and a theology of embrace for pastoral work praxis. The positioning of the research and the methodological considerations, the intellectual puzzle and the aims of the study were discussed in relation to these three notions.

In the chapters that follow chapter one I will address the questions asked in connection with the problem that this study explores. Therefore, chapter two discusses the questions: What is narrative identity? How can the concept of narrative identity help us deal with the “problem of identity”?

The problem of a “disabled identity” is addressed through Ricoeur's (1992) discussion about personal identity in relation to narrative identity. People tell stories about themselves and they listen to the stories of others. These stories are entangled with one another in the sense that the individual is

influenced by other people's stories and what these stories communicate to the individual about herself/himself.

At the same time people live in a frame of reference to time, space and place. Narrative places time into human time of past to future. It is the narrative dimension of life that forms personal identity. It is the narrative dimension that facilitates a sense of belonging to a collective membership of society (Brown 1997:109; Crewe 1997:27).

Thus, narrative strengthens personal narratives and through narratives people identify with their significant communities. Therefore, being part of the community's narratives and participating in sharing individual narratives in relation to the collective members in society, not only give meaning, but also give a sense of being accepted by others and the individual feels that she or he belongs (Ganzevoort 1993:279). Chapter two, therefore, deals with theory of narrative identity and how narrative identity can facilitate personal collective identity through a sense of belonging that strengthens personal identity.

Chapter three discusses the questions: What is disability? What is mobility impairment?". In an attempt to answer these questions I will address firstly, physical disabilities in general and the difficulties concerning the term "disability". Although this study addresses people who are mobility impaired, it is necessary to consider physical disability because mobility impairment is an integral part of disabilities in general.

The above is followed by a discussion about mobility disadvantages specifically from the perspective of living with mobility disadvantages that have been acquired later in life. Emphasis is placed on the distinction between disability that is congenital and that which is acquired. Congenital means that the person is born with the disability while acquired disability is some impairment to the body that has occurred at a later stage in life

(Wilson 2003:4,28). In this study three groups of people who acquire mobility impairments late in life include:

1) people who are frail elderly and who are often not perceived as disabled because they are given labels such as senior citizens, elderly, old, aged and frail, which fit into certain generalisations that have categorised elderly people to define this group of people, but people who are elderly and frail are often severely mobility disabled;

2) people suffering from chronic illnesses and chronic pain and who are also often not perceived as disabled, because being confined in mobility is not always included in the perceptions about these people, yet chronic illnesses and pain can incapacitate the sufferers (Jacobs 1996:26-27; Rolland 1989:437), and

3) people who have experienced trauma that has rendered them mobility impaired and who society usually perceive as being disabled or disadvantaged in mobility.

Models constructed about disability are then discussed. Wilson (2003:19) refers to a model or construct as “a representation of the whole or a part of a solid or abstract structure.” Models have been devised as a representation of the style or patterns of certain periods and structures of social life in an attempt to deal with the problems of disabilities. Thus, the biomedical and social models are given attention. The strong points and weak points of each model are considered, as are the ways in which strengths and weaknesses influence people’s thinking and perceptions about disability. A suggested model is discussed, which I refer to as an unfolding narrative model of mobility impairment. It is based on Rolland’s (1989, 1993, 1994) notion of a developmental life theory of chronic illnesses. A shift in thinking is required to answer this question. Rolland’s (1989, 1993, 1994) developmental life theory is referred to in an attempt to

describe a shift in thinking from the medical to the psychosocial factors of living with impaired mobility to make the notion of disability understandable to all people. I also consider the World Health Organisation's (WHO) classification of disability.

Chapter four discusses the question: In relation to the problem of disabled identity, what are the experiences of people who are disadvantaged in mobility? One focus of this study is therefore on the social and emotional dimensions of people living with restrictions in mobility. "Stories" about life obtained from the participants during interviews are used to give insight into the experiences of people who are disadvantaged in mobility. Although the empirical study is limited and mainly used for illustrative purposes, it can contribute to our understanding of the "problem of identity" of people who are disadvantaged in mobility. It can provide insight into the strategies of action that are necessary to bring about change (Dreyer 2002:11).

Chapter five deals with the question: How can Christian faith communities, through pastoral work address the "problem of identity" of those who are mobility impaired? This question will be addressed with reference to how the church regards disability and the strategies of how faith communities, through pastoral work, can practise a theology of embrace.

Pastoral work actions should be directed by the message of love and compassion of God to embrace all humankind, to liberate people from any exclusionary systems, whether social, political, economic or religious and to empower them (Patton 1993:25). This means that the faith community has a responsibility to care for its own members. It also has a responsibility to make its voice heard publicly against social systems that cause suffering.

I will argue that this study gives an emphasis to pastoral work through faith

communities that is contextual in relation to people's daily living experiences in ordinary, everyday social, political and religious environments. Thus, I argue that the stance to be taken by the faith community to "different others" needs to be community-based and contextual. It means that this study is concerned with the personal and public experiences of people disadvantaged in mobility.

Pastoral workers need to expand their vision and co-author with the other aspects of the faith community's operational fields and confront the task that advocates renewal of the faith community's approach to practices toward people who are disadvantaged (Lyon 1995:95). In addition, the Bible provides a number of resources to enable faith communities to confront the issues of identity and exclusionary acts that make a sense of belonging in society difficult. It can enable us to deal with social and political ethics in relation to identity (Steinhoff-Smith 1995:148). Consequently, I considered a praxis of pastoral work that is interwoven with the other pastoral dimensions of faith communities. How these fields of action interact with one another to embrace people who are challenged in mobility with caring that is holistic, is discussed.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the research topic and the research approach. This study is about the "problem of identity", about how people who are disadvantaged in mobility experience a fixed identity of the "disabled" and how faith communities, through pastoral work praxis, should play a role in addressing the "problem of identity". I have pointed out that the struggle with identity and finding a sense of belonging in a society is a very real problem for people who live with mobility disadvantages. However, practical theology can play a role in their lives through reflection on a theology of embrace that strengthens identity through facilitating a sense

of belonging to the societies that these people live in. Our understanding of the stories of the Bible is a major part of Christian faith communities' contribution to such a praxis of embrace.

It was discussed that narrative theory and empirical research can also contribute to a theology of embrace that helps us to deal with the "problem of identity". However, before being enabled to reflect on a theology of embrace we must embark on exploring what narrative theory is about. Thus, an exploration of narrative identity is discussed in the next chapter.