

PARTICIPATORY PASTORAL CARE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF  
SOCIETY

by

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# DECLARATION

Student Number: 3381-177-6

I declare that *Participatory Pastoral Care and the Transformation of Society* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

Signature

(MRS C SWART)

.....

Date

## **SUMMARY**

A number of previous studies have examined lay counsellor training within a modernist paradigm. By contrast, this study collaboratively presents ways of training pastoral caregivers using a participatory approach to practical theology and pastoral care in the postmodern time in which we live. The research journey starts from the premise that postmodernity calls for the mediation of a new approach to practising theology, pastoral care and giving authority to ordinary members of the church through training in pastoral work. This work therefore describes Participatory Pastoral Care (PPC) training as a suggested way to train people of God to use participatory approaches.

The research journey also explores how the PPC training constructions they participated in brought about transformations in the co-researchers' lives, relationships, caring practices and the societies in which they live. This practical theology research document introduces the participants as co-researchers and theologians. The recollections shared by the participants reveal a rich variety of stories as these participants reflect on their lives, caring practices and faith journeys.

This research document is viewed through the lens of a postmodern epistemology that builds on social constructionist and poststructuralist perspectives. Thirty-three participants embarked on this feminist narrative participatory action research journey, not only to tell their stories, but also to negotiate and challenge ways of training pastoral caregivers within a participatory practical theological and pastoral approach. This research document informs the church, theological institutions and broader caregiver practices through narratives about what the participating members of various congregations find helpful in the co-construction of participatory pastoral training and what they do not find helpful. The methods used to gather the recollections of the participants were multiple reflexive conversations and the discussion of a semi-structured questionnaire.

This research journey therefore offers a deeper understanding of the experience of being part of a postmodern construction of training for participatory pastoral caregivers that has the transformation of society as its theological aim.

**Key terms:** contextual practical theology; ethicising research; ethnographic writing; feminist theology; local theology; multiple reflexive conversations; Narrative therapy; ordinary believers; participation; participatory pastoral care approach; participatory practical theology; pastoral training; postmodern epistemology; social construction discourse; transformation.

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# CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE:</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>FOREWARNINGS OF RED SHOES</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 THE 'I' IN THE RESEARCH TEXT .....	3
1.3 MY STORY.....	5
1.4 THE STORY OF PPC TRAINING .....	6
1.4.1 The title of the research journey .....	9
1.4.2 The contents of the PPC training.....	9
1.5 MY RE-SEARCH CURIOSITY .....	11
1.6 THE AIMS OF THIS RESEARCH JOURNEY .....	12
1.6.1 Constructing knowledges.....	12
1.6.2 What knowledges were collected? .....	14
1.6.3 Contributing to the practical theological field.....	15
1.7 INVITING PARTICIPANTS TO JOIN THE RESEARCH JOURNEY .....	16
1.7.1 Multiple reflexive conversations.....	17
1.7.2 Semi-structured interviews.....	18
1.7.3 A listening team as co-researchers .....	20
1.8 INCLUDING THE VOICES OF THE PARTICIPANTS .....	21
1.8.1 Capturing the stories .....	21
1.8.2 Telling stories .....	23
1.8.3 Participatory ethics in research.....	24

1.9 CHOCOLAT .....	26
1.9.1 The <i>Chocolat</i> story .....	27
1.9.2 Red shoes as a metaphor.....	30
1.10 THE CHALLENGES OF THE RESEARCH JOURNEY .....	30
1.10.1 <i>An experiential approach to training laity for pastoral care</i> (Shires 1983) .....	33
1.10.2 <i>The development of a pastoral-therapeutic training programme for members of a congregation: A Narrative approach</i> (Roux 1996) .....	34
1.11 CHAPTER OUTLINE .....	35
<b>CHAPTER TWO: .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>TIMES FOR RED SHOES .....</b>	<b>37</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	37
2.2 WHAT IS A POSTMODERN PARADIGM? .....	37
2.2.1 Social construction discourse .....	41
2.2.2 Poststructuralism.....	44
2.3 PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AS A CHILD OF MODERNITY .....	46
2.3.1 A subject of modernity.....	46
2.3.2 Practical theology as mediation .....	47
2.3.3 The need for new mediation .....	48
2.4 A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH TO PRACTICAL THEOLOGY .....	50
2.4.1 Origins from below .....	51
2.4.2 Knowing is contextual .....	52
2.4.3 Voicing change.....	52
2.4.4 Doing theology with.....	53
2.4.5 Feminist theology .....	54
2.5 A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO PRACTICAL THEOLOGY .....	56



2.5.1 Knowing is local.....	56
2.5.2 Constructing practical theology within a community .....	57
2.5.3 Guidelines for a participatory approach to practical theology.....	58
2.5.3.1 Everyone as theologians.....	59
a) Participation .....	59
b) Theology practised by all .....	60
2.5.3.2 Acceptance of difference and otherness.....	61
2.5.3.3 An ear for the unheard voices.....	62
a) Giving a voice to human experiences.....	63
b) Facilitators of ordinary believers' voices .....	64
c) Narratives of human experience .....	65
2.5.3.4 Continual transformation as aim .....	66
2.6 CLOSING REMARKS.....	68
<b>CHAPTER THREE: .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>PARTICIPATING IN RED SHOE CARE .....</b>	<b>69</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	69
3.2 A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO PASTORAL CARE .....	70
3.2.1 Doing spirituality .....	72
3.2.1.1 What is spirituality? .....	72
3.2.1.2 Doing spirituality in community .....	73
3.2.1.3 Respect for difference .....	74
3.2.1.4 Awareness of God in spirituality .....	75
3.2.2 A journey of caring with.....	76
3.2.2.1 Care as social practice.....	80
3.2.3 Participatory consciousness that knows with the other .....	81

3.2.4 Care that heals and does not hurt .....	83
3.2.5 The role of Scripture and dogma .....	85
3.2.5.1 Scripture as participant .....	85
3.2.5.2 Everyone has a valid understanding .....	86
3.2.6 A collaborative journey.....	89
3.3 PARTICIPATORY PASTORAL CAREGIVERS .....	91
3.3.1 Pastoral? .....	92
3.3.2 Pastoral care? .....	94
3.3.3 <i>When bad Christians happen to good people</i> .....	96
3.3.4 Participatory pastoral caregivers .....	97
3.3.4.1 More than mutual care .....	97
3.3.4.2 Not pastoral counselling.....	99
3.3.5 Interactive co-journeymen.....	101
3.4 CLOSING REMARKS.....	102
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: .....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>RED SHOES FOR TIRED FEET .....</b>	<b>103</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	103
4.2 STORY .....	104
4.3 A NARRATIVE APPROACH .....	106
4.3.1 A respectful and non-blaming approach .....	106
4.3.2 People as experts .....	108
4.3.3 The problem is the problem .....	111
4.3.3.1 A reflexive perspective .....	112
4.3.3.2 Deconstructing the discourses that assist the problem .....	113
4.3.3.3 Take action against the problem .....	114

4.3.3.4 Acting from skills and values.....	116
4.3.4 Writing alternative stories.....	117
4.3.4.1 Alternative stories as unique accounts.....	117
4.3.4.2 Re-authoring conversations.....	119
4.3.5 The deconstruction of power relationships.....	120
4.4 DOING CONVERSATIONS IN PARTICIPATORY PASTORAL CARE .....	125
4.4.1 The art of transformational conversation.....	126
4.4.2 The conversational art of listening.....	129
4.4.3 The conversational art of asking questions.....	131
4.4.3.1 Setting the stage through questions.....	132
4.4.3.2 How can we set the stage?.....	132
4.4.3.3 Questions of discovery.....	133
4.4.4 Doing language.....	134
4.5 THE ONLY WAY? .....	137
4.6 CLOSING REMARKS.....	140
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: .....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>TRAINING RED SHOE CAREGIVERS.....</b>	<b>141</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	141
5.2 TRAINING WHILE RESPECTING UNHEARD VOICES .....	142
5.2.1 Laity and clergy.....	143
5.2.2 The people of God .....	144
5.2.3 Moving from clean slates to local knowledge.....	145
5.2.3.1 Drawing truth from everywhere.....	146
5.2.3.2 Valuing participants' contributions .....	147
5.2.3.3 Participating in enhancing and sharing skills .....	149

5.2.3.4 Dialogue between local knowledge and postmodern pastoral care.....	151
5.2.4 The facilitator .....	151
5.2.4.1 Deconstructing power as a facilitator.....	153
a) Sharing life, wisdom and examples .....	154
b) Asking questions .....	156
5.3 TRAINING WHEN EVERYBODY IS A THEOLOGIAN.....	157
5.4 TRAINING IN DIFFERENCE AND OTHERNESS .....	160
5.4.1 Sacred spaces for different stories .....	161
5.4.2 Creating safe spaces .....	161
5.4.3 Accepting diversity and otherness.....	163
5.5 COMMUNITY AS A VEHICLE FOR TRAINING.....	165
5.5.1 Moving from individualistic to community learning.....	165
5.5.2 Training in community.....	166
5.5.3 Learning as an interactive process.....	168
5.5.3.1 Mutual learning.....	168
5.5.3.2 Learning by doing.....	169
5.5.4 A continuous changing journey .....	170
5.5.4.1 Changing community .....	170
5.5.4.2 Facilitating this constant change.....	170
5.5.5 Helping each other to learn.....	171
5.5.5.1 Reflection as learning.....	172
5.5.5.2 Socially produced knowledge .....	174
5.5.6 Training through conversation .....	175
5.6 TRAINING AS CARE.....	177
5.7 CLOSING REMARKS.....	181

<b>CHAPTER SIX:</b> .....	<b>182</b>
<b>NARRATIVES OF RED SHOE TRANSFORMATIONS</b> .....	<b>182</b>
6.1 INTRODUCTION.....	182
6.2 A THEOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATION .....	182
6.3 PARTICIPATORY PASTORAL CARE AND THE PPC TRAINING AS AGENTS OF TRANSFORMATION .....	185
6.4 TRANSFORMATION OF FAITH AS THE AIM OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY...	187
6.4.1 New images of the life of Jesus .....	188
6.4.2 New and deepened dimensions to spiritual life.....	189
6.4.3 New and deepened dimensions in relationship with God.....	190
6.4.4 Participating with God .....	191
6.4.5 Challenging my own faith.....	192
6.4.6 What in the training construction brings God closer? .....	193
6.5 TRANSFORMATION OF SELF .....	195
6.5.1 Identity transformed in dialogue.....	195
6.5.2 Accepting self .....	196
6.5.3 Writing new stories about self .....	199
6.5.4 Re-negotiating self .....	202
6.5.5 Self and the future .....	203
6.5.6 I have been helped to help myself .....	204
6.5.7 Ready to serve .....	205
6.6 CLOSING REMARKS.....	208
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN:</b> .....	<b>209</b>
<b>RED SHOE PRACTICES OF TRANSFORMATION</b> .....	<b>209</b>
7.1 INTRODUCTION.....	209

7.2 TRANSFORMATION OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALL PEOPLE.....	210
7.2.1 Relationships with those who are different.....	211
7.2.2 Doing relationships in new ways .....	212
7.2.3 Partner and family relationships .....	215
7.2.4 Other significant relationships.....	220
7.3 TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES .....	224
7.3.1 Participating in the new South Africa.....	225
7.3.2 Re-writing a school's story .....	229
7.4 A TRANSFORMATION OF LIVING AND CARING PRACTICES .....	230
7.4.1 Living practices.....	231
7.4.2 Caring practices .....	233
7.5 TRANSFORMING PRACTICES .....	234
7.6 OUTCOMES OF TRANSFORMATION .....	239
7.6.1 Liberation.....	239
7.6.2 Healing.....	242
7.6.3 Hope .....	242
7.6.4 Justice.....	245
7.6.5 Peace.....	246
7.6.6 New language .....	246
7.6.7 Readiness to change .....	247
7.7 CLOSING REMARKS.....	248
<b>CHAPTER EIGHT:.....</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>TAKING RED SHOES TO THE WORLD .....</b>	<b>249</b>
8.1 INTRODUCTION.....	249
8.2 MY REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH .....	249

8.2.1 Reflections on my own reflexivity .....	250
8.2.2 The influence of the research process on my practice as a pastoral therapist and facilitator.....	252
8.3 REFLECTIONS BY THE CO-RESEARCHERS .....	254
8.3.1 What did it mean to you to take part in the research journey? .....	255
8.3.2 A vignette of a conversation about the research.....	257
8.3.3 How did it help to watch the film <i>Chocolat</i> together? .....	260
8.3.4 What alternatives came to life through your participation in the research journey? .....	261
8.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION.....	263
8.4.1 PPC training actions.....	264
8.4.1.1 Dilemmas that emerged as a result of the PPC training.....	264
a) In what ways did the re-writing of participants' stories bring discomfort to their relationships?.....	264
b) When close relationships suspect the participatory approach .....	265
c) When the PPC training is too difficult to apply inside close relationships.....	266
d) Challenges within training .....	266
8.4.1.2 Suggestions for action.....	268
a) How can we deal with the discomfort in another way?.....	268
b) How can we include our families from the start? .....	268
c) Do we need to fix this discomfort?.....	269
d) Having more conversations and further training will help .....	270
8.4.2 The next great truth.....	270
8.4.3 Suggestions for a new kind of seminary .....	271
8.5 THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS RESEARCH JOURNEY TO THE PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL FIELD .....	272
8.5.1 Looking back at the journey.....	272
8.5.1.1 How has the PPC training influenced and transformed the facilitators' and	

participants' lives? .....	273
8.5.1.2 How has the influence and transformation brought about by the PPC training influenced the societies in which the participants live or have lived over the past ten years? .....	274
8.5.2 Giving voice to ordinary believers.....	275
8.5.3 The construction of participatory pastoral training .....	279
8.5.4 Accountability for our training.....	280
8.5.5 Equipping believers for a new South Africa .....	283
8.6 FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPLORATIONS.....	285
8.7 IMAGINE .....	286
8.8 CLOSING REMARKS.....	287
<b>WORKS CONSULTED .....</b>	<b>289</b>
<b>ADDENDUM ONE .....</b>	<b>316</b>
<b>ADDENDUM TWO.....</b>	<b>319</b>
<b>ADDENDUM THREE .....</b>	<b>322</b>
<b>ADDENDUM FOUR.....</b>	<b>323</b>
<b>ADDENDUM FIVE .....</b>	<b>325</b>
<b>ADDENDUM SIX.....</b>	<b>327</b>



## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **FOREWARNINGS OF RED SHOES**

It must be our clothes. In this garish land the people are drab. Color is a luxury; it wears badly. The bright blossoms of the roadside are weeds, invasive, useless.

(Harris 1999:4)

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

We are proud to call the people of South Africa, a multicultural and multireligious country, a rainbow nation. We are a nation where colour is not a luxury, but a given. But in the midst of the colour there is drabness, as the challenges that our country faces sometimes make blossoms seem like weeds, invasive and overwhelming. We live in a country where many need care, a country 'saturated with pain and ache not yet finished, not yet answered, not yet resolved. And we are left with the demanding question, What shall we do with so much...hurt that is left unfinished?' (Brueggemann 1995:ix).

It is against the background of this paradox of drabness and hurt on the one hand, and of colour and blossoms on the other, that this research journey<sup>1</sup> took place. This journey is documented as a text of hope within the discipline of practical theology. This text of hope is communicated in the colourful clothes of some of the participants and facilitators of the Participatory Pastoral Care (PPC)<sup>2</sup> training that was held in Gauteng and

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<sup>1</sup> In the documentation of the research text I refer to the search for knowledge about participatory pastoral care and the transformation of society as a research journey. This term emphasises the exploration and struggle from which the research text was born, as well as the notion that the search for knowledge is ongoing, as the facilitators and the participants continue to co-construct training in participatory pastoral care.

<sup>2</sup> In the rest of the study I use the abbreviation PPC to refer to the Participatory Pastoral Care training that was co-constructed by the facilitators of the Institute for Therapeutic Development. I chose to use this abbreviation to avoid any confusion with a participatory approach to practical theology and a participatory approach to pastoral care that plays a prominent part in this research journey as discussed in more detail in Sections 2.5 and 3.2. The basic PPC training material is copyrighted and is therefore not discussed in detail. Each group starts from this basic material and then co-constructs all the remaining material. This means that each group's journey is unique, and it is impossible to describe exactly what could happen in each group.

Mpumalanga by the Institute for Therapeutic Development (ITD)<sup>3</sup>. These participants and facilitators told their stories, confessed and revealed transformation in their own lives and spoke of the relationships and contexts in which they participate.

These narratives tell of tremendous challenges facing the praxis<sup>4</sup> of pastoral care in a postmodern age. In view of these challenges, we have to ask what form a training construction that can bring about transformation in such a context could take. In addition, we also explored what kind of approach to practical theology could embrace, challenge and transform our postmodern times. These are only some of the questions that the research journey was committed to answering. A description and discussion of the postmodern paradigm is given in Section 2.2.

I wove the background of the research journey, the explanation of my epistemological position, the research approach and methods, and the literature review into the research text. The literature reviews are organised around the ‘recollections’<sup>5</sup> (Louw 2003:60) of the participants, because the aims of the study were exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. In this regard, Mouton (2001:94) remarks that the aim of a literature review is ‘to provide examples – across a wide range – of the phenomena which may illustrate or demonstrate a certain point’.

In this chapter, I introduce the reader to the different voices that speak throughout the research text. There is the voice of the story of the PPC training, the film *Chocolat*<sup>6</sup>, my

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<sup>3</sup> The Institute for Therapeutic Development (ITD) was established in 1995. Its main goal was to provide training in counselling and therapeutic skills. The training is aimed at professional and non-professional people involved in a relationship attempting to help other people through the primary or secondary use of conversation. As part of these activities, ITD presents courses in pastoral therapy in collaboration with the Department of Practical Theology of Unisa. Students enrol at ITD for the theory and practical workshops; and upon successfully completing their ITD training, they obtain an MTh or DTh degree in Practical Theology, specialising in Pastoral Therapy, from Unisa.

<sup>4</sup> According to Forrester (2000:7), the term ‘praxis’ emphasises the reflective meaning of behaviour and usually refers to transformative practice. Praxis therefore involves making things and changing things.

<sup>5</sup> I prefer the term ‘recollections’, to ‘data’, ‘field texts’ or ‘empirical materials’.

<sup>6</sup> The film *Chocolat* was produced by Miramax Motion Pictures in 2001. It starred Juliette Binoche as Vianne Rocher (the protagonist), Victoire Thivisol as her daughter Anouk, Alfred Molina as the Comte de Reynaud (the antagonist), Lena Olin as a battered wife, Judi Dench as a diabetic grandmother and Johnny Depp as Roux (an outsider who becomes Vianne’s lover and partner).

own story and voice, the voices of other participants and facilitators of PPC training constructions, the voices of literature and the voices of other research journeys. These different voices convey the need for the study and the contribution that the study makes. Hence, the construction of the research journey can be seen as what Fox (1996:350) describes as a 'multivocal narrative'. In this multivocal and multi-authored (Louw 2003:12) narrative, the participants' voices were given prominence in determining the emerging themes, and eventually also in describing which contributions were to be emphasised in documenting the research journey. This is discussed in more detail in Section 1.7.3. At the end of the chapter, a map for the journey ahead is also provided.

*Participatory pastoral care and the transformation of society* is an account of my own journey and crafted out of my life. The 'I' who is so often not acknowledged in academic discourse speaks throughout the text. The reasons for this choice are explored in the next section.

## **1.2 THE 'I' IN THE RESEARCH TEXT**

In the research text the voice of the researcher, my voice, speaks in the first person singular to reveal an 'I' that not only argues, but also experiences and feels, as described by Jones (1990:4). The inclusion of the 'I' is important, because of the postmodern feminist nature of this research inquiry, which therefore also values the visibility of the author (Jones 1990:4). Like Dudley-Marling (1996:36), I believe that hiding the 'I' is a pretence that forces me to 'hide my passion, to deny who I am, and to pretend that my words are separated from me'. My preference for including the 'I' in the text also relates to my choice of a style of writing (Jones 1990:6) in which I acknowledge myself as a participant in the writing of this research text on training participatory pastoral caregivers.

The visibility of the author in the research text is now possible, because postmodernity 'celebrates the constructedness of accounts opening a gap for authors to legitimately reveal themselves in their work' (Jones 1990:4-5). Because the 'voice of the researcher/writer is never absent in a social constructionist project' (Gergen 2001:45), I recognise and overtly show how I inscribed (Jones 1990:6) my reality on the research

text. The social constructive nature of this research text and the research journey that led to this text is explored in more detail in Section 2.2.1. As a result, the research journey is viewed, filtered and constructed through my temporal lens, that of Chené Swart, a middle-class white Christian woman, shaped by Afrikaner culture, by my class, race and personal experiences as a teacher and pastoral therapist. The postmodern and feminist nature of the research journey which flows from this position is discussed in more detail in Sections 2.2 and 2.4.5.

The inclusion of the 'I' in the text is also a political choice, as the voice of women in academic discourse is often counted as 'outside of, and inferior to, the distanced, neutral and measured (male) public academic discourse' (Jones 1990:5). It would be unethical for me to write about a participatory approach to practical theology and pastoral care in a text where I reproduce an 'elitist academic discourse' (Jones 1990:6) in which the participants and I do not participate visibly. I believe that when the word participation does not denote the actions of both the participants and the researcher, this inviting word is changed into 'idle chatter, into *verbalism*, into an alienated and alienating "blah"' (Freire 1993:68) [Freire's emphasis]. When I acknowledge my own voice in the research text and make it visible as author, I give legitimacy to the voices of the co-researchers<sup>7</sup> that speak later in this account of the research journey. I believe that my own boldness in speaking will also open up the way for the participants to speak their boldness. In this regard, I hope that the participants' voices will not be treated as the voices of an other that has no right to speak, but will be acknowledged as equal to all the voices that are invited to participate in the research journey.

The next section provides the reader with the background to how my story and the story of the PPC training intersected.

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<sup>7</sup> 'Co-research refers to a participatory search in which the "researcher" and the "subjects" of research become participants in co-searching for new knowledges about which all participants have a say' (Kotzé 2002:25). I sometimes refer to the participants in the research text as co-researchers.

### **1.3 MY STORY**

I tell my story as a teacher, pastoral therapist, facilitator, marriage partner, member of a congregation of a Reformed church and mother. I therefore write as a woman who loves to teach. I have a passion for religious education and am energised by the challenge of inviting others to explore, explain and co-construct in safe spaces of learning that transcends ordinary meaning and that engages in transformational ways of knowing and caring.

After a profound spiritual encounter when I was 13 years old, two aspects soon became extremely important in my life: community and teaching. I drank in every teaching of the Christian faith I could find and in return used every opportunity I had to share with and teach whoever listened. These two themes have always played an important role in my spiritual journey, but during the last two years their significance increased, as a new journey of community and teaching became part of my life.

In 2003, my supervisor at the Institute for Therapeutic Development, Dr Johann Roux, enquired whether I would be interested in joining a pastoral training journey in which he has been involved for the last ten years. I was excited about the prospect of becoming a partner in the PPC training co-constructions. In January 2004, I started out with 11 participants as teacher, participant and facilitator. From the outset, the enthusiasm of the participants was overwhelming. The liberation, repentance, safety, joy and community experienced within the group became a refuge to the participants and to me. This unexpected spin-off soon became indispensable and, partly in jest, I began to refer to Wednesdays, when I facilitated two groups, as the day God comes to my home.

The opportunity to facilitate the PPC training brought new meaning and a new story to my being with the local church congregation. The reciprocal care that I experienced on Wednesdays has become a transforming force in my life, in the participants' lives as well as in the society in which we live. As I engaged with the material and the participants, I became excited once more about the potential of care available within a community of

ordinary believers<sup>8</sup>. Consequently, facilitating PPC training constructions has helped me to re-discover and re-claim my place and my calling in the church. My interest as a researcher and facilitator in PPC training is therefore both personal and political.

The journey *with*<sup>9</sup> the participants in the PPC training constructions has turned out to be an enriching 'lived experience' (Reinharz 1992:258) that has inspired and influenced my work as a pastoral therapist. As demonstrated in the above reflections, participating in this training has encouraged a re-authoring of my own life story that has given me hope.

In the next section I introduce the reader to the history and epistemology<sup>10</sup> of the PPC training.

## **1.4 THE STORY OF PPC TRAINING**

In 1996, Dr JP Roux completed his doctoral dissertation. In it he told the story of the creation of a pastoral therapeutic programme for and with members of two congregations. This research study was called *Die ontwikkeling van 'n pastoraal-terapeutiese toerustingsprogram vir lidmate: 'n Narratiewe benadering*<sup>11</sup>. Nearly ten years have passed since Roux started his pastoral training programme. To bridge the gap, I had a conversation with him in October 2004 to clarify the context and conditions that gave rise to his research study. This interview also enriches the description of the background of my research journey and is transcribed below:

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<sup>8</sup> In the research text I use the term 'ordinary believers' interchangeably with the word 'laity'. I prefer this term in agreement with Astley's (2002:49) emphasis on the worth of the everyday life of believers and I use the term to show that I acknowledge and respect what local or ordinary knowledge and experience can bring to the field of practical theology. I therefore share his perspective and concern that Western culture tends to undervalue what it regards as ordinary in everyday life.

<sup>9</sup> Like Paulo Freire (1993:30; 1994:26), I believe that, as educators, facilitators or teachers in postmodern times, we must strive to stop speaking 'to' people and start speaking 'with' people. This kind of speaking or engaging implies respect for the knowledges of the lived experiences of people. Throughout the research journey, I attempted to speak 'with' people.

<sup>10</sup> According to Roux, Myburg and Kotzé (2003a:45), the term 'epistemology' requires us to ask ourselves the following question: *'What can we know and how can we know it?'* [Roux et al's emphasis].

<sup>11</sup> This title can be translated as follows: *The development of a pastoral-therapeutic training programme for members of a congregation: A Narrative approach*. In the rest of the research text, I refer to the translated title of Roux's (1996) research study.

*Chené:* Where did it all start?

*Johann:* I entered full time ministry in 1991. I was captivated by the action of pastoral care. Pastoral care became very real when I had to take care of five families in the congregation who had lost family members due to violent murders. I soon realised that I was just not able to care for all these families and be responsibly engaged with my other pastoral duties. Apart from this local predicament, I became aware of a gloomy national situation. Reading a book on the human resources available for the helping professions, I discovered that there were plus minus 50 000 so-called professional or trained people. Fifty thousand people to help 40 million people! One person to be available for eight hundred people! I was bewildered!

After numerous conversations and readings I anticipated establishing therapeutic communities to lessen the burden. If we can train members of communities to become therapeutic, we would be able to, I thought, help society transform through re-action and pro-action. An aside: initially I thought one needs to establish, with the emphasis on establish, therapeutic communities, but later I changed my view. Currently I think about these communities as communities that are already established as caring communities. I therefore rather use the term communities of care. As facilitators we merely have the privilege to participate in enhancing and sharing skills.

Ecclesiastically the priesthood of all believers is of paramount importance to me. Providing the members of the ecclesia<sup>12</sup> take the priesthood of all believers seriously, you have a resource in the ecclesia that can provide resources beyond our wildest imagination. Being local and global, they walk, talk, play and work in the world. In the wake of these visions, concepts and thoughts, I started two coinciding journeys – a research journey and a training journey.

The research journey was called *The development of a pastoral-therapeutic training programme for members of a congregation: A*

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<sup>12</sup> According to Greider, Johnson and Leslie (1999:26), the *ekklesia* refers to the elect, those called to a 'biblically promised human community in God, infused with justice-love'.

*Narrative approach.* The research was conducted from a social constructionist premise. I invited two groups of people in two different congregations to join the research journey as a training journey. The participants were excited and enthusiastic!

*Chené:* How did you decide to include other facilitators in this training programme?

*Johann:* As life is an unknown adventure, it so happened that since 1997 I became involved full time at the Institute for Therapeutic Development. At the Institute I am responsible for academic programmes and community projects. The training of pastoral caregivers became one of the community projects. During this time, I trained more or less three hundred people. The feedback from people doing the training was an enormous encouragement. People shared how their family lives changed; how they were able to cope more with life in general; how their relationship with God enhanced and how society is transformed by their actions.

I have not yet answered your question, but I think the background information is important. Your question: I think there was one sentence somebody spoke to me that made me realise that if we can have more facilitators we can increase the number of people that can respectfully care. For the last four years I was doing some training at Northfield Methodist Church in Benoni. The training was done in collaboration with Sue Skidmore, director of the Pastoral Care Centre<sup>13</sup> at Northfield. More or less a hundred people were trained in this context. One day Sue mentioned to me that a thousand people's lives are touched monthly by the pastoral care initiative. A thousand people per month! Her words kept occupying my thoughts. I decided: we need to expand. So we did. Currently there are four facilitators in Gauteng and one in Mpumalanga.

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<sup>13</sup> Sue Skidmore (one of the co-researchers) states that the training facilitated at the Northfield Pastoral Care Centre is called 'An introduction into Narrative ideas'. This training gives the counsellors at the Centre some skills around Narrative ideas, but people from other backgrounds, such as psychologists, Life Line volunteers, hospice staff and members of congregations have also used this training opportunity.

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Consequently, *Participatory pastoral care and the transformation of society* is an extension of and reflection on the journey that was documented in 1996, and on its evolution since then.

### **1.4.1 The title of the research journey**

As in Dr Roux's research groups, the participants in the groups I facilitated reflected on the challenges, changes and transformation brought about by the PPC training. Change and transformation are both common outcomes of participatory action processes (McTaggart 1997a; Reinharz 1992) of which the PPC training is an example. The research journey is therefore a reflection on the participatory action process constructed during the training. In this process, the facilitator 'makes him/herself available to a community in need, and using all his/her skills, participates with this community in bringing about change' (Gergen & Gergen 2003c:63).

The title for the research project was phrased as *Participatory pastoral care and the transformation of society* because transformation continues to be a theme in the story of the participants of the PPC training. The meaning of the term transformation is explored along with the narratives of the participants in Chapters Six and Seven. The first part of the title of the research journey, *Participatory pastoral care*, is the description of an approach to both practical theology and pastoral care that are explored in detail in Sections 2.5 and 3.2. Participation is the main lens through which the training, care and the research journey are therefore viewed.

The next section provides the reader with only a brief outline of the contents, methods and process of the PPC training, as the different approaches in this kind of training are explored in detail in Chapters Two to Five.

### **1.4.2 The contents of the PPC training**

The Level One PPC training as offered by ITD is co-constructed over a period of 18 weeks. The group spends 54 hours of that time learning together as a group. The training is aimed at adult members of various congregations. The PPC training helps

these members to construct participatory pastoral care conversations<sup>14</sup> with people in need in the various contexts that they are involved in (Roux 1996:25).

The conversations that are co-constructed do not constitute a training programme or course. Instead, a discourse is constituted regarding the training of participatory pastoral caregivers, for a certain context and a specific time (Roux 1996:319). Therefore the training is co-constructed by the trainer and the trainees. This implies that the participants are co-writers of the training. Although common values are shared in the training constructions, diverse contexts create unique outcomes and constructions for each group.

Hakala (2001:45) writes that when the life situations of the students are taken into account in the planning and implementation of a training process, the constructivist curriculum is not very detailed. Practical solutions are found in co-operation with the students. In this learning context, learning does not take place in a vacuum, but is always related to social cultural factors (Hakala 2001:45). The design of the co-construction of the training is therefore based on a learner-centred approach, focusing on experiential and reflective methods of training.

The PPC training is viewed and constructed from a postmodern Narrative stance that starts from a social construction discourse epistemology. Multiple reflexive conversations are also employed as a methodology to construct the training. An integrated continuous process of reflexive conversations establishes the theoretical constructions used. Furthermore, the content of the training consists of participatory pastoral theology, therapeutic skills, as well as Narrative and collaborative therapy approaches. Participants are frequently invited to take part in reflexive conversations, but are never forced to share or participate with stories from their own lives that they do not feel comfortable sharing (Roux 1996:29).

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<sup>14</sup> In this study, the word 'conversation' refers to what Harlene Anderson (1997:109) calls 'dialogical conversation'. This means the following: 'In this conversational arrangement participants do not assume they know what the other person is saying, means, or wants; rather, each is committed to learning about and trying to understand the other by negotiating meanings through the use of language' (Harlene Anderson 1997:112).

In PPC training constructions, time is spent studying and acknowledging the influence of contemporary culture on the participants' lives and caring practices. In some training contexts, participants are requested to perform an exegesis (McLaren 2001:162) on selected films. When they come back from these adventures they talk about what they have seen and what it means to be a caring Christian in our world. This practice informed the discussion by my co-researchers and me of the film *Chocolat*, as discussed in Sections 1.7.1 and 1.9, and that inspired the 'red shoes' metaphor used throughout this text.

The training journey also focuses on how different theological and philosophical approaches produce different universes or models of reality. In PPC training journeys, participants see how their beliefs and values create a way of life. McLaren (2001:162) understands these ways of life as spirituality. In the process of training, the participants are therefore invited to state and evaluate their own theological and pastoral lenses and to renegotiate these lenses if they so wish. As a result, the participants are invited to share their particular values and religious beliefs, to become aware of their own assumptions and of the way their beliefs and assumptions affect their pastoral work, as suggested by Hakala (2001:154).

My own experience with the PPC training and the story of the PPC training gave rise to my curiosity around the area explored in this dissertation.

### **1.5 MY RE-SEARCH CURIOSITY<sup>15</sup>**

My initial re-search curiosity was guided by the following two questions: How have PPC training constructions influenced and transformed the facilitators' and participants' lives? Furthermore, how has the influence and transformation brought about by the PPC training influenced the societies in which the participants live or have lived for the past ten years?

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<sup>15</sup> I prefer the term 're-search curiosity' (Andersen 1997:125) to the more traditional term 'research problem', because I feel that it describes the different areas that I was curious about in this research journey, as I wanted to re-search what I had regarded as familiar before.

As I gathered knowledges from the participants, guided by these initial questions, I became curious about other issues that linked up with the title of this research journey. What knowledges will these findings bring to the field of practical theology, pastoral care and pastoral care training in the postmodern age in which we live? Linked to the previous question is the question of how all of these fields or disciplines can become part of a transformation of society through a participatory approach to practical theology, pastoral care and pastoral training.

The next section shows the reader how these curiosities developed into the aims of this research journey.

## **1.6 THE AIMS OF THIS RESEARCH JOURNEY**

In this section, the aims of the research journey relating to the above curiosities are discussed. First, I attend to the way the knowledges<sup>16</sup> of the participants were constructed during the research journey, and then I focus on the further aims that arose as my curiosity was drawn to more questions growing out of the initial questions.

### **1.6.1 Constructing knowledges**

My first aim was to situate the research journey within a postmodern paradigm, the paradigm which the PPC training and a participatory approach to pastoral care and practical theology use. As a result, I chose to use a qualitative approach (Denzin & Lincoln 1994a) to ensure research that ‘is better designed to respect the integrity of personal narratives than analytical investigations’ (Gergen 2001:29). Qualitative research used to study the effectiveness of training at an individual level has been criticised because it is based on the student’s own evaluations (Hakala 2001:37). However, I clarify throughout the research journey why I nevertheless chose to situate my research journey within a qualitative approach. Measuring transformation in people’s lives is a daunting task under any circumstances, but I believe that the qualitative methods provide sufficient understanding of the participants’ experiences and

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<sup>16</sup> In agreement with Roux et al (2003a:9), I prefer the plural to indicate the ‘multiplicity of knowledge’.

perspectives and is well suited to exploring training processes and outcomes (Hakala 2001:61):

Firstly, as human beings we are storying beings that make sense of our own lives, of others' lives and the contexts in which we live by telling and listening to stories (Sikes 2002:xvii). I invited the participants to tell the stories of the changing tapestry of meanings in which their actions and experiences are embedded (Hoffman 1997:xiv). The power of these stories is that they communicate complex experiences and ideas in a way that is commonly accessible (Ballard 1996:107). I used a semi-structured questionnaire and multiple reflexive conversations to provide the necessary space for participants not only to tell their stories, but also to make meaning of others' stories and the contexts in which the participants shared.

Secondly, a qualitative research journey is a situated activity that allows a researcher to be an 'I' located in the world (Denzin & Lincoln 2000b:3-4) and to avoid the pretence of being a detached observer who is not touched by what is observed. The qualitative research practices that I employed set the stage for people not only to tell their stories, but also to engage with the transformational stories that resulted in making the world that they encounter in their daily lives visible for everyone who read this document. I believe that these research practices can and will transform the world (Denzin & Lincoln 2000b:3-4) as they reveal transformation through the stories that are told. Because each of the practices mentioned above makes the world visible in a different way, I was committed to using more than one interpretive practice to get a 'better fix' (Denzin & Lincoln 2000b:3-4) on the re-search curiosity.

In this postmodern research journey, my aim was to explore and co-construct with the participants how the theory and practice of participatory practical theology 'inform and influence each other in such a way that all practice includes theory, and theory can only be discerned through practice' (Anderson 2001:21). The further purpose of the research journey was to develop, to construct and to story the intertwining of theory and practice through the significant vehicle of 'narrative and story' (Anderson 2001:20). As a result, I embarked on a journey of discovery with other believers living in different realities. They were invited to participate and to tell the stories of the meanings they attached to their

experiences.

The knowledges emanating in response to the questions in Section 1.5 were gathered by collecting diverse narratives during multiple reflexive conversations (Botha 1998; Gergen 1994; Kotzé 1994; Roux 1996), using post-participatory action research and a semi-structured questionnaire as suggested by Gubrium and Holstein (2003). Multiple reflexive conversations formed the basis of the research journey and were utilised on as many occasions and between as many participants as possible, as proposed by Roux (1996). How these methods were used is explained in detail in Section 1.7. The questions that guided the collection of knowledges in the research journey are available in Addenda Four and Five.

### **1.6.2 What knowledges were collected?**

To answer the questions of the re-search curiosity, the semi-structured questionnaire and multiple reflexive conversations focused on the influence of the PPC training in the participants' and facilitators' lives and relationships with God, fellow Christians, their partners, friends, children, family and colleagues. The participants in the research journey were also asked to reflect on how and where their participation in the PPC training brought about transformation in their lives and relationships. Transformative actions and processes were therefore not only assessed in the relationships and societies in which the participants live, but they were also storied in terms of the participants' or co-researchers' own lives and views of themselves.

In addition, the questions enquired about the transformations that the participants had experienced regarding their knowledges in relation to pastoral care, their ways of giving care and their thinking about pastoral care, as well as the ways in which they see themselves as pastoral caregivers. Furthermore, collecting knowledges via reflections on the PPC training journey drew attention to the role of the facilitators, the training methodology and the contents of the PPC training. Gathering knowledges from the participants highlighted the connection between participatory pastoral care and training, and the realization of transformation in various ways. These transformative experiences

are discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.

An additional aim of the research journey was to engage with and collect knowledges from other research documents pertaining to the training of pastoral caregivers, particularly ones that gave a voice to the participants in a meaningful way and that were situated within a postmodern discourse. The people who are directly affected by pastoral training constructions, namely caregivers, are seldom invited to participate or privileged to take part in arguing right and wrong and, as a result, their voices are often silenced. Participants in the PPC training were therefore invited in this research journey to help to decide ‘what counts as ethical’ (Kotzé 2002:17). In Section 1.10, I discuss the challenges involved in collecting knowledges from other research journeys and texts documenting those journeys.

### **1.6.3 Contributing to the practical theological field**

Because the research journey was conducted against the backdrop of postmodern times, another aim of the journey was to understand how the PPC training helped the participants to equip themselves with skills and values that can assist them in their ability and desire to care with people in a postmodern world. In addition, it was also important to understand how the PPC training helps participants to cope in postmodern times.

The further aim of the research was thus to provide a useful resource for practical theologians active in the pastoral field by listening to, hearing and recognising the stories of ordinary believers or the so-called laity<sup>17</sup> of the Christian faith who experience a transformation of society in their daily lives (Pattison 2000a:194). This travelogue or record of the research journey invites practical theologians who read this text to participate in this dialogue regarding participatory pastoral care and the transformation of society. They are encouraged to map out the presence and status of ordinary believers in theological reflection. In this regard, Astley (2002:49) contends that ‘there is much about “ordinary believers” that others who are less ordinary can and should recognize as

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<sup>17</sup> The laity, according to the *Oxford School Dictionary*, are people who do not have specialized knowledge, or training, or people who are not ordained as members of the clergy.

being valuable'. It is therefore through the theological reflection presented in this record of the research journey that the co-researchers and the researcher hoped to make a contribution to the practical theological field.

The stories recorded in this travelogue are a way of sharing the rich possibilities that could guide ordinary believers, members of the clergy and theologians to a better understanding of what congregational members feel is helpful or is not helpful in the construction of pastoral training. I believe that my interpretations and re-interpretations of the participants' stories will contribute to a dialogue on practical theology, pastoral care and pastoral training within a postmodern paradigm that considers transformation as one of the focuses of these fields. The contributions of this research are fully discussed in Chapter Eight.

The chapters in this research dissertation represent explorations in practical theology that contribute to a re-mapping of this subject in our postmodern times. The intended audience of this record of the research journey is therefore therapists, members of various congregations, members of the clergy, spiritual leaders, leaders within the structures of the church, lecturers at seminaries, members of church boards and anyone involved in congregational and broader care-giving practices and training programmes in South Africa.

The next section will help the reader understand how these aims were pursued during the research journey.

## **1.7 INVITING PARTICIPANTS TO JOIN THE RESEARCH JOURNEY**

The methods of reflexive conversations and semi-structured interviews were chosen to free the participants' 'pent-up knowledge, and in so doing liberate their hitherto stifled thoughts and voices, thus stimulating their creativity and developing their analytical and critical capacities' as suggested by De Roux (2003:105).

The main criterion for the selection of participants was that they had completed Level One PPC training and had a desire to share their experiences with others. In the next



section, I introduce the reader in more detail to the various kinds of research interactions that formed the basis for the research text, and then to the co-researchers who chose to participate. The names of the participants involved in the research are either their own, or pseudonyms they chose themselves. To increase anonymity and confidentiality I do not indicate which names are pseudonyms.

I have my own story as a facilitator of the PPC training and I also regarded each participant's story as unique. Every participant and facilitator was treated as the expert of his/her own story and I did not presume that I knew what their story was all about. Within this not-knowing position, I was also guided by my curiosity to learn from the participants. I agree with Anderson and Goolishian (1992:38), who say: 'It is this curiosity and not-knowing that opens conversational space and thus increases the potential for the narrative development of new agency and personal freedom.'

The reader is invited to meet the co-researchers of the research journey, who are introduced in the next section.

### **1.7.1 Multiple reflexive conversations**

I first shared my intentions to undertake the research project with a group of participants in the PPC training that I facilitated in White River during the first half of 2004. The work and the training in which we had participated together for 18 weeks became the focus of our reflections together. This group consisted of seven women and one man, all from an Afrikaans-speaking Dutch Reformed Church congregation in a small town.

We convened once a week for 8 weeks. Each session was two hours long, enabling us to talk about the influence of the PPC training on our lives. We discussed the questions in the semi-structured questionnaire in Addendum Five, but, because we had more time than in face-to-face interviews, there were also opportunities to converse more freely about some other questions we wanted to explore. Avoiding controlling the co-researchers and developing a sense of connectedness with the participants was a priority in my being with them and my dealings with them. Underlying this way of working is 'the feminist ethic of commitment and egalitarianism' (Reinharz 1992:27) that expects

the researcher to abandon control and adopt an approach of openness and reciprocity (Reinharz 1992:181). The commitment of the process to these approaches allowed new questions to surface. These questions are also included in this travelogue of the research journey, and they are woven into various chapters.

In multiple reflexive conversations, as suggested by Botha (1998), Gergen (1994), Kotzé (1994) and Roux (1996), we reflected on the PPC training and its influence on our lives; our current situation as pastoral caregivers; and on a film, *Chocolat*, which we watched together. These conversations also established a platform from which accountability and trustworthiness of the research could be established: 'Multiple reflexive conversations used in the postmodern discourse acts as ways of deconstructing the power/knowledge relation. In this way the number of interpretations are expanded and "subjects" are made "participants", co-producing research, training and therapy' (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:11).

The telling of the participants' stories in these conversations was a re-presentation of experience and a re-construction of history in the present. These re-presentations reflect the participants' re-description and re-explanation of their experiences in response to what the researcher did not know. As a result, I was allowed to explore 'the resources of the "not-yet-said"' (Anderson & Goolishian 1992:37) with the co-researchers.

The participants that took part in these conversations were Bruce, Coba, Leonie, Reisingenoot, Karissa, Queen, Mari and Ann.

### **1.7.2 Semi-structured interviews**

As the group described in Section 1.7.1 consisted mostly of white Afrikaans-speaking women, I was left with a question that left me curious. I wondered how men and people from other cultures and language groups made meaning of their experiences. To help me try to answer this question, Dr Roux provided me with a list of names of participants of PPC training over the last ten years who could present diverse narratives.

To make it easier to record the recollections of these participants, I used a semi-structured questionnaire, which is set out in Addenda Four and Five. It enabled me to focus the conversation or responses on the influences of the PPC training and to ask

additional questions with regard to the transformation that this training brought about. Another reason for choosing interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire was that I live far away from most of the co-researchers. I was therefore not able to see all of the participants in face-to-face interviews. When further questions arose from the questionnaire, I continued the research relationship via e-mail or the telephone.

The first group of interviewees is currently busy with the PPC Level Two training in Gauteng. They completed their Level One training nearly four years ago. This group consisted of both facilitators and previous participants of PPC training. Dr Roux handed out questionnaires to these participants at one of their training meetings on 7 October 2004. Both the facilitators (see Addendum Four) and the participants (see Addendum Five) received a set of questions that addressed their particular level of interaction with this training and these participants were asked to answer the questions via e-mail. The participants were Desbe, Anne, Patricia, Nan, Benita, Maureen, Megan and Lorna.

With the second group of interviewees I had face-to-face conversations and each participant had an opportunity to recount his story. These conversations were again guided by the questionnaire in Addendum Five, but the order of the questions, their clarifications, and the probing questions varied, depending on the situation and the person, as suggested by Hakala (2001:62). The questions from the questionnaire helped me to use the interview time in the most effective way. The participants were Gawie and Van.

I engaged with the third group of interviewees by means of individual conversations. Again Dr Roux arranged for me to have interviews with two of the participants who had participated in his research journey and the PPC training in 1996. These participants were Gerhard and Piet.

The fourth group of interviewees were a group of young Black men I interviewed in Etwatwa at the John Wesley Centre. The John Wesley Centre is a community project run by the Northfield Methodist Church in Benoni, where members of the Etwatwa community are caring for aids orphans. Dr Roux and some of the members of the Northfield Methodist Church facilitated a training group at the above-mentioned centre. I visited seven of the members of this training group one Friday afternoon and the

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following young men joined this research journey with their contributions: Vusi, Richard, Wiseman, Sam, Lucky, Reginald and Welcome.

The fifth group of interviewees consisted of facilitators of various PPC training groups that I also had face-to-face interviews with, namely Sue, Retha and Johan. Sue Skidmore was appointed to the position of Pastor of Counselling at the Northfield Methodist Church in 1999, and in May 2000 the Pastoral Care Centre was officially opened. Addendum One tells the reader more about the background of the Centre and about the role that Narrative training plays in the life of this congregation.

In November 2004 I had a conversation with Retha and Johan, who facilitate PPC training conversations in Gauteng. I report on vignettes of this conversation throughout the research journey.

### **1.7.3 A listening team as co-researchers**

In April 2005 I was introduced to the congregational studies reading team convened by Patrick Keifert and Pat Taylor Ellison of the Church Innovations Institute and I decided to borrow some of the ideas that they work with. I invited participants to act as a reading team for the transcripts of the research conversations and interviews. We convened once a week for six weeks during which I read the transcripts of the conversations and they listened for the repeated words and ideas such as discourses<sup>18</sup>, themes, values, problem stories, alternative stories and theologies. We also conversed about the following questions: With what else can we work? What can be helpful? What about these transcripts makes you wonder? What culture are you hearing?

Naturally, I read some literature throughout the research process, but I consciously avoided studying it in great depth before the basic sorting of the recollections into the themes identified by the reading team. I wanted the themes, headings and chapters to emerge from the recollections of the co-researchers, not from pre-existing models or

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<sup>18</sup> In this research journey, a discourse refers to 'a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events' (Burr 1995:48).

theories. This procedure is suggested by Hakala (2001:71). However, I am aware that it was inevitable that my knowledges and experiences also affected and influenced the analysing process.

Within a participatory approach to research one cannot merely call such a team a reading team. They are and do much more, because the members of this group are co-participants and co-researchers in the project. The themes and discourses discussed in the documentation of the research journey are therefore also viewed through their contributions. These participants were Papillion, Magna, Leonie, Karissa, Ronel and Reisgenoot.

Altogether, 33 people participated in various capacities in the research journey.

The next section will help the reader to understand how the participatory ethical approaches to research developed in the process of capturing and re-telling the participants' narratives.

## **1.8 INCLUDING THE VOICES OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

### **1.8.1 Capturing the stories**

During my search for knowledge with the participants, I was guided by the realisation that research is 'not a neutral or innocent act, but an ethical-political process that cannot be anything but an ethicising process, act or art. The search for new knowledge is primarily an ethicising act' (Kotzé 2002:21). Hence, the face-to-face conversations with the participants were recorded on audiotape and in notes taken during the conversations to enable me to reflect on the stories, as agreed in terms of the consent form each participant signed. The form is indicated as Addendum Three. I transcribed and translated the participants' words as accurately and ethically as possible. In addition, I verified my transcripts and sent each participant a copy which he/she could change, add to, review and edit according to the meaning she/he attached to the conversation. I know that these recollections are only constructed 'representations of our experience' (Clandinin & Connelly 1994:422) together, but I believe that, because the transcript was collaboratively constructed with the co-researchers, it is representative of the research

and our experience together.

I asked the participants for consent to show the transcripts to my promoter and to share the comments with him. Moreover, because I could not assume I know what the participants and facilitators knew, thought and felt, I submitted a draft of this research text to the co-researchers so that they could weigh the search for new knowledges and comment on the ways they had experienced that search.

Because I am aware that I could re-shape the stories told in my presence, I bore in mind the following ethical considerations, as suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (1994:422):

When we enter into a research relationship with participants and ask them to share their stories with us, there is the potential to shape their lived, told, relived, and retold stories as well as our own.... As personal experience researchers, we owe our care, our responsibility, to the research participants and how our research texts shape their lives. We all can find ourselves in the eventually constructed research texts.... For researchers these issues of responsibility are always foregrounded as we construct research texts.

Since this research is part of a construction within a postmodern paradigm, the trustworthiness of the research cannot be determined by the researcher alone but is also determined by the outcome of our collaborative constructions, where every participant experiences the research as comprehensively representative. The participants were therefore given an opportunity to comment, change and edit the text, so that the end product of the research text had their approval. In this sense, the participants were empowered, as expressed in the 'politics of the revised text' (Jones 1990:20).

With regard to the research text, 'authentic participation' (McTaggart 1997b:28) was very important to me. I therefore asked all the participants to choose their own pseudonyms and decide how they would like to be presented in the research text. In this way, the participants became 'co-owners of the research' (Kotzé 2002:28) and were not left out of any stage.

The next section informs the reader about considerations in the representation of the

recollections of the participants in the research text.

### **1.8.2 Telling stories**

The stories in the research text were documented in a postmodern style. McLaren (2000:178-179) describes this style as follows: 'In the postmodern world we have to hold a mystery like a lover, and a story like a child. We need to tell our own stories: unedited, unsanitized, rough and lumpy, not squeezed into a formula.' In order to make the values mentioned here applicable to the representation of the participants' voices in the research text, I approached the documentation of the research journey in the manner set out below.

It was important that the participants did not become mere subjects of research but were given an opportunity to participate. As a result, the participants' ideas, narratives and views played a prominent role throughout the research text. It would defeat the object of a participatory process if the research text were not participatory. I was therefore impelled to include the voices of these believers in the research text as a political choice. I wanted to give a voice to the participants within the written academic discourse through this research document. In this regard, Gergen and Gergen (2003c:62) claim that the 'constructionist dialogue generate[s] reflective pause' which means that a researcher is no longer the 'sole arbiter of the real' with ultimate authority, and that 'the voices of those we "study" are now granted the right to speak for themselves; which emphasises the shifting of research [to] a more dialogic direction'.

I regard quoting the participant's narratives as a form of ethnographic writing, as described by Bochner and Ellis (1996:27-28):

[T]he knowledge we're seeking in ethnography [is] the kind that helps readers use other people's sorrows and triumphs as a way to reflect on or recontextualize their own, enhancing their capacity to cope with life's contingencies. *Composing Ethnography* is a modest attempt to do this. What we're trying to do is to enlarge the space to practice ethnographic writing as a form of creative nonfiction...to feel the ethical pull of converting data into experiences readers can use.

This form of ethnography appealed to me because of my conviction that I needed to voice the participants' narratives in such a way that I became a 'storyteller, someone who used narrative strategies to transport readers into experiences and [made] them feel as well as think' (Bochner & Ellis 1996:18). In the role of a storyteller, I did not want to write such formal, abstract, impersonal and dispassionate prose that the participants could no longer participate in the text. I am therefore committed not to indulge myself in complex writing that would, in the end, exclude the participants that enriched this very text and who can participate in transforming practical theology (Pattison 2000a:248).

It was important to me that the voices of the participants were heard throughout the research text, and not only as an afterthought or a stamp of approval at the end of the journey to confirm that they had said what I wanted them to say. Therefore their voices were included wherever possible, in block text with a hanging indent and with their pseudonyms. The participants or co-researchers are quoted directly in the research text in the following manner:

*Sue*: We call the training that we facilitate at the Northfield Pastoral Care Centre  
'An introduction into Narrative ideas'.

Sometimes the answers to the questions were abrupt or confusing and then I had to add words or sentences to help the recollections make sense. These additions were, however, sent to the participants to verify whether my interpretations of what they wanted to say was correct.

But what does it mean to let the co-researchers participate in the text in an ethical manner?

### **1.8.3 Participatory ethics in research**

My work as a researcher originated from my search 'for ethical ways to participate' (Kotzé, Myburg & Roux 2002:ix) with the co-researchers in this research journey. I agree with Kotzé (2002:18), who describes the demands of participatory ethics as follows:



*Participation of all is a primary commitment if in any way we aspire to being ethical...* Those who have a voice and power have an ethical obligation to use the privilege of their knowledge/power to ensure participation with the marginalised and silenced, to listen *to* them, but not to decide *for* them, and to engage in participatory solidarity *with* them. The question, 'who benefits', becomes a central and guiding challenge [Kotzé's emphases].

Consequently, I was challenged to make a 'deliberate choice to construct my understanding of the world' within an 'ethical epistemology' (Kotzé 2002:12) that was continuously guided by the question, 'Who benefits?' Because it was impossible to include all the data collected during the research process, the question, 'Who benefits?' was therefore also the lens I used to make my choices about including and/or discarding data. I included recollections that elucidated how participants did and did not benefit from the PPC training in the text. I looked at the benefits to the participants through the lens of the title of the research journey, which focuses on participatory pastoral care and the transformation of society.

In addition to my commitment to ensuring that the participants benefited, I also considered the following questions while I was writing the dissertation: How will pastoral therapists benefit from collecting narratives co-constructed by the participants and facilitators of PPC training? How will the current training of caregivers in the pastoral field be challenged by the dissertation? How will the faith community or society benefit from the research? How will the families, friends and congregations of trainees eventually benefit? What contribution will the research make to people who stand outside faith communities? These questions are explored throughout the research journey.

I also participated in discussions with my promoter who helped me to ensure ethical practices. He oversaw the 'protective system' (Stake 1994:244) and was, in turn, accountable to the Institute for Therapeutic Development (ITD) and the University of South Africa (Unisa). This protective system played a part in my response to the ethical demand that I ask myself who benefits from the research.

The knowledges documented in this travelogue of the research journey are therefore

quite different from the knowledge discovered as the product of applying...theories to uncover an understanding of what 'is'. [In this regard, knowledge] is an ethical process, co-constructed in the course of relating with others in a specific context or situation, at a specific moment in time.

(Kotzé 2002:6)

As a result, in this study, theological questions about ontological truths were not considered of primary importance. Instead, the focus was on the ethical effects of the truths by or of which we choose to live (Roux et al 2003a:67). The fulcrum of the research journey was the ethical effects of the truths of the PPC training on the participants' lives. Instead of merely summarising and evaluating the writings of other practical theologians, it seemed more useful to try to explore the actual implications that participatory practical theology has for pastoral care, pastoral care training and the transformation of society.

While we related with one another during the research journey, the film, *Chocolat* also came up and discussing it added to the richness of the research journey, as I show in the next section.

## **1.9 CHOCOLAT**

During a Doctoral class at ITD in May 2004, some of the students (DTh Group 2004<sup>19</sup>) proposed that I include the film *Chocolat* as a discussion document for the participants of the research group that I facilitated. The students believed that this film conveys beautifully the story of the transformation of a whole society through the care of one woman. The research group I facilitated agreed with this suggestion. Along with a set of focused questions relating to the title of the research journey, we spent two sessions

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<sup>19</sup> Questions and contributions constructed during our doctoral class conversation at ITD in May 2004 are referred to in the text as DTh Group 2004. The participants were Ryna Grobbelaar, Bridgid Hess, Prof Dirk Kotzé, Dr Johann Roux, Nevi Basson, Retha Biggs, Meiring de Wet, Dr Trix Truter, Pieter de Wet, Michelle Harrington, Linda Coetzee and Elonya Niehaus.

conversing about the film. Our reflexive conversations therefore flowed out of watching the film together and reflecting on these questions, which are included in Addendum Six.

The film *Chocolat* provided an excellent platform to help us as a group re-think the subject of pastoral care and transformation. The group's contributions in these conversations are included in this travelogue of the research journey under the name Red Shoe Co-Researchers. The participants of the Red Shoe conversations thoroughly enjoyed the film and felt strongly about the inclusion of some of the metaphors emanating from *Chocolat*. These metaphors are explained in Section 1.9.2. The research text as travelogue therefore frequently used metaphors drawn from this film, as these co-researchers felt that *Chocolat* enriched their own views on care.

The prominence of film as texts in postmodern times is explored by McLaren (2000:182) as follows: '[F]ilm has become, like music, a kind of universal language, and people appreciate it when we take the time to learn their culture and exegete it with respect, not disdain.' The readers of the dissertation are therefore advised to watch the film *Chocolat* if they have not already done so, in order for them not to miss out on the richness of the research text viewed through the lens of this film as an intertext.

The next two sections briefly discuss the story of the film, *Chocolat*, and the metaphors drawn from the film and used in documenting the research journey. What we as co-researchers learnt about care and transformation through this film is discussed from Chapter Three onward.

### **1.9.1 The *Chocolat* story<sup>20</sup>**

The film *Chocolat* was adapted from Joanne Harris's popular novel by Robert Nelson Jacobs. The film was directed by Lasse Hallstrom. This enchanting narrative is set

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<sup>20</sup> The following websites were used to compile the information in this section and were accessed on 15 May 2005: [http://www.allwatchers.com/Topics/info\\_3940.asp?BSID=19096819](http://www.allwatchers.com/Topics/info_3940.asp?BSID=19096819);  
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/B00005K3OT/102-9404727-7785726?v=glance>;  
<http://www.filmcritic.com/misc/emporium.nsf/0/171dd4c9693f993f882569bc00085d17?OpenDocument>;  
<http://www.hollywoodjesus.com/chocolat.htm>; [http://www.ransomfellowship.org/M\\_Chocolat.html](http://www.ransomfellowship.org/M_Chocolat.html);  
<http://www.ronaldbrucemeyer.com/2ndlook/chocolat.htm>; [http://www.scottsmovies.com/films\\_c.html](http://www.scottsmovies.com/films_c.html) and  
<http://www.thezreview.co.uk/reviews/c/chocolat.htm>.

against the backdrop of a quaint village in the French countryside. The mysterious Vianne Rocher and her spirited 6-year-old daughter Anouk are literally blown into town by a 'sly wind' from the north in the winter of 1959. This small French town, Lansquenetsous-Tannes, is then turned upside down and transformed by the arrival, actions and very being of these unusual strangers.

Three days after her arrival, Vianne opens a luxurious *chocolaterie* crammed with the most tempting of confections and offering a mouth-watering variety of hot chocolate drinks. Vianne's shop is decorated with artefacts from a pagan past, and many of her chocolates are made using secret recipes handed down from the ancient Mayans. What inspired Vianne to move to this strait-laced community and to open a *chocolaterie* is never explained, but her effect on the populace is profound and immediate.

Although the townspeople of this French village live in the twentieth century, the patterns of their lives were established long before they were born and have changed very little over time. The town is filled with busybodies who have nothing better to do than to spy on one another, until the two new arrivals provide fresh grist for the mill. The town is, in many ways, defined by its mayor, a resident nobleman, the Comte de Reynaud. The Comte stands by the town's tradition of strong Roman Catholic faith, and of an ancient class system.

When the mayor goes into the shop to greet Vianne, he learns that she does not go to church and that her child is illegitimate. The Comte concludes that Vianne and her shop are dangerous and undesirable in this apparently peaceful community. Fearing that she will ruin his town, he pits himself against Vianne and tries to forbid anyone from entering her shop, hoping to run her out of town forever. He himself fasts excessively during Lent<sup>21</sup> and he automatically assumes that the very idea that someone would bring chocolate to town at such a time must be sinful.

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<sup>21</sup> According to the *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English* (Crowther 1995:675), Lent refers to the 40 days from Ash Wednesday to the day before Easter, a period during which some Christians fast in memory of Christ's suffering. This custom is observed by many Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox Christians and Anglicans, amongst others.

However, the townspeople do not turn away from Vianne. Instead, townspeople succumb to the magical love of her personality and her chocolate. Vianne's kindness, good humour, and delectable chocolates soon win customers, and slowly her shop becomes a shelter for broken people. Apart from merely satisfying a craving for sweets, these chocolates bring healing into relationships and hope into otherwise desperate lives. These hurts have never been allowed to break through the guarded placidity of village. Vianne soon finds allies in the community. She makes life happier and better for a battered wife and a diabetic grandmother who misses her grandson. Nobody could have imagined the impact that she and her spirited daughter would have on this community so stubbornly rooted in tradition.

The town's choice to embrace Vianne leaves the determined Comte to start a protest against the newcomer and her shop. The apparently pious mayor sees Vianne as the enemy, and his war against her peaks with the arrival of the 'river rats', led by an outsider, Roux, whose attraction to Vianne is immediate and reciprocated. Roux joins forces with Vianne. A dramatic confrontation arises between those who prefer the ways of the past and those who revel in their re-discovered taste for pleasure. When Vianne announces a Grand Festival of chocolate commencing on Easter Sunday, it is all-out war: war between the Comte's church and chocolate, between good and evil, between love and dogma. The mayor hatches a plan to foil her festivities, but his rigid righteousness does not prevail.

*Chocolat* is a tale that explores the postmodern notion of tolerance in a pluralist society. The institutionalised Christians depicted in the film are sad, if deeply devout, believers who are fearful of those who do not share their convictions and values. They react to anything new by becoming increasingly legalistic and withdraw from life in an effort to preserve the purity of their faith. The mystical neo-paganism represented by Vianne is attractive by comparison, and reminds us that when the truth ceases to be beautiful, it is no longer compelling. *Chocolat* is also a challenge to those of us who are committed to the gospel of Christ to ensure that our faith is winsome and joyfully welcoming, and full of grace.

### **1.9.2 Red shoes as a metaphor**

The red shoes that Vianne wears became a leading theme and metaphor in our research groups' conversations after we had watched the film together. In the film *Chocolat*, the red shoes that the main character, Vianne, wears stand out against the background of the dreary, gloomy and grey time of Lent, just before the coming of spring, in the little town she wins over by opening her *chocolaterie*. Most of the women in the town wear black shoes, but Vianne's red shoes and lifestyle bring colour and life back into relationships and into the lives of people for whom the town did not hold out any hope. The titles of the chapters of this research journey originated in the conversations I had with the Red Shoe Co-Researchers. The Red Shoe Co-Researchers believe that our caring practices should be like Vianne's red shoes, standing out and challenging the predictability of life and of care in our societies.

By the end of the film, during Vianne's festival on Easter Sunday, the town is full of colour, life and diversity as Vianne's unconditional caring compassion mystically and mysteriously transforms the society in which she lives. For the members of the Red Shoe Co-Researchers, the colour red come to suggest that they differ with those they care for from other people about the selective care that society, and sometimes even Christian society, gives to those in need.

The next section informs the reader about the challenges that I as a researcher faced in collecting appropriate literature and research material to converse with.

### **1.10 THE CHALLENGES OF THE RESEARCH JOURNEY**

One of the greatest challenges I encountered in my research journey was finding other research to converse with. I found a curious dearth of articles and research pertaining to postmodern lay counselling training, and research where the participants reflect in their own voices on the influence of training constructions on them, instead of a researcher's own opinion backed by statistical data. Hakala (2001:57) expressed a similar concern about the scarcity of qualitative research material regarding the influence of training on pastoral caregivers when she began looking for research materials for her study, *Learning by caring: A follow up study of participants in a specialized training program in*

*pastoral care and counseling*. In Hakala's (2001:57) study, she examined the professional and personal growth of pastoral caregivers, mostly pastors and chaplains, who participated in a two-year training programme in pastoral care and counselling offered jointly by the Center for Family issues, the Center for Hospital Chaplaincy, and the Institute for Advanced Training of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Hakala (2001:57) mentions the titles of a few other qualitative studies, but these studies focus on the effects of training on members of the clergy and chaplains, not ordinary believers. Little has therefore been written on the implications and influence of pastoral training on ordinary believers as participants.

One has to ask oneself what the reasons for the lack of such research and literature might be. Is it a reflection on ambivalence among theologians regarding the training of members of a congregation for a field that has become more and more professionalized?

I believe that the answers to these questions can be explored at many levels. They are discussed in detail in several sections of this travelogue of the research journey. The lack of resources, voices and literature can be traced to both the history of and approaches to practical theology, as discussed in Sections 2.3 and 2.5. The distinctions between the laity and the clergy in most church traditions are suggested to be one of the reasons for the silence of ordinary believers' voices in literature and research, as discussed in Section 5.2. I believe that language and meaning-making also play a part in the fact that the red shoes of ordinary believers and those of academia so seldom dance together, as I discuss in Section 3.3. Lastly, in Section 5.2.3, I also discuss an approach to education that does not regard the laity as blank slates which the clergy can mysteriously inscribe with their specialist knowledge. Freire (1993:53) calls the notion of bestowing the gift of knowledge upon others, such as the laity, that presumably know nothing of the 'banking concept of education'. He explains that when people 'receive the world as passive entities', this approach to education makes them even more passive, and 'adapt[s] them to the world' (Freire 1993:57).

I therefore propose an approach to pastoral training that values training *with* believers, as opposed to training *for* believers, as described by Freire (1993, 1994). In this

approach to training, believers are acknowledged as partners who can co-construct a training programme dialogically. Such an approach serves what Freire (1993:105) calls 'the pedagogy of the oppressed...where the oppressed must participate'<sup>22</sup>. In such an approach, as this travelogue documents, many participants elaborate on how the PPC training has given them an opportunity to participate, as discussed in Section 5.2.3.

There are many resources regarding the conversation about and suggestions on the training of lay counsellors in a modernistic paradigm (Anderson 2001, 2003; Bartoletti 1973; Cerling 1983; Clinebell 1971, 1984; Collins 1987; Collins & Tornquist 1981; Hightower 2002; Kay & Weaver 1997; Lukens 1983, 1987; Manickam 1998; Osborn 1983; Prater 1987; Roy 1994; Sawatzky & Paterson 1982; Stone 1996; Sunderland 1994; Tan 1990; Van Wagner II 1977; Ward 2000). However, little has been written from a postmodern stance. Is the paradigm of the expert knowledges of modernism so prevalent that we can fully trust the theological expertise of trainers, omitting to ask the participants to tell us in their own voices whether they found these training opportunities helpful and life-changing, even transformational? I therefore found it difficult to engage with literature where the participants' voices were not reflected upon, as I felt forced to take the trainer/teacher/facilitator's word for it that the participants had indeed benefited from the training construction. If 'Who benefits?' is the ethical criterion, how can I answer that question if the voices of those that should have benefited are not heard at all, or are portrayed only as a numerical value?

One might also ask why it was so difficult for me to find pastoral literature on the training of believers in postmodern times. Perhaps there is still too much scepticism and there are still too many questions regarding the postmodern paradigm for pastoral trainers to engage with training material for pastoral caregivers in this paradigm. Maybe we are satisfied with the current availability of training constructions or possibly we are still expecting pastors to do the 'real' pastoral work? These are some of the issues I

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<sup>22</sup> In co-constructing the PPC journey with the black participants at Etwatwa, the white facilitators were conscious of their educated middle class position. They were therefore sensitive in deconstructing their power, as well as in co-constructing this training journey with the cultural diversity and multiplicity of perspectives of the participants present in the group. The values of training participatory pastoral caregivers explored in Chapter Five were therefore also employed in this co-constructing training journey, so that those who could be potentially oppressed by the process could participate fully.



wondered and was curious about as a result of the limited research literature. Most of these questions are addressed in the travelogue documenting my journey and therefore I do not try to answer them in this chapter. With regard to the limited availability of relevant literature, I see the research journey as an invitation to talk about and explore the themes and areas for further conversation and research raised by the facilitators and participants in this study of a postmodern pastoral training construction.

As discussed above, I found it difficult to locate other research material that included the voices of ordinary believers as participants in the research journey. The two research journeys that I did find and engaged with are Shires's (1983) dissertation, *An experiential approach to training laity for pastoral care*, and Roux's (1996) dissertation, *The development of a pastoral-therapeutic training programme for members of a congregation: A Narrative approach*. In the next section, the contributions made by these two research journeys are discussed.

### **1.10.1 *An experiential approach to training laity for pastoral care* (Shires 1983)**

*An experiential approach to training laity for pastoral care* is the title of the research project on which Shires (1983) embarked when he trained a group of five members of his congregation in pastoral care over a period of six weeks. Shires provided the participants in the training with reading material and biblical texts pertaining to pastoral care on which they reflected in the sessions. The training also consisted of real life pastoral conversations where the participants needed to reflect on the pastor's conversation with a candidate by doing what he called 'write-ups' of the conversations. These write-ups were then discussed in his next session with the participants.

Shires (1983:16) explains his training method as an experiential, on-site method in which he took some of the participants with him into certain pastoral care settings and demonstrated *his* method and approach to offering care in these situations. Shires explains that the learning and teaching used a modelling approach where participants see what the pastor does and then learn to do the same, but the participants do not

become little pastors.

The participants were also asked to reflect on the training. However, in Shires's (1983:89) conclusions on their reflections of him as trainer and pastor he sometimes argued that their contributions were not 'honest enough'. Shires's research project, which ran 23 years ago, still represents a training journey driven to a large extent by the expert knowledge of the pastor and it leaves little room for the knowledges of the participants. The contributions of the participants to the research project are thinly described, but at least Shires makes an attempt to allow a voice to their contributions in his appendix.

Shires's (1983) contribution to the field of pastoral care lies in his recognition of the effect of his pastoral training programme on the participants and his acknowledgement of their voices in their reflections on the training. Shires also reflects on his own effectiveness and the training material he presented. In his conclusions, he mentions what he would like to do differently in future. His contribution is that it starts to acknowledge that pastoral training does things to participants and that it influences their lives as well as the life of the trainer and, in this case, the researcher.

### ***1.10.2 The development of a pastoral-therapeutic training programme for members of a congregation: A Narrative approach (Roux 1996)***

Roux's (1996) research journey was based on a postmodern Narrative stance that took a social construction discourse epistemology as its point of departure. The aim of his research project was to develop and describe a narrative training programme for pastoral caregivers from a postmodern social construction position (Roux 1996:21). He integrated several modern training discourses into the research project. This integration started from a postmodern 'both/and' position, where both modern discourses and postmodern discourses were used in the construction and co-construction of the training (Roux 1996:21). Roux pioneered the PPC training approaches used by the groups who participated in the current research journey.

The training methodology of multiple reflexive conversations and the epistemological position used in the PPC training explored in this study, as described in Section 1.4.2, has remained the same, as the PPC training is still co-constructed and co-written by the trainer and the trainees as participants. While Shires (1983) made the evaluation of the pastoral care and research project by his research participants available in an addendum, Roux (1996) included the voices of the co-writers of his research study in the main research text. The participants' voices were storied in extracts from transcripts of reflexive conversations that took place during the training.

Whereas Roux's (1996:22) dissertation had koinonial<sup>23</sup> constructions as its focus, my research journey has transformation and the participatory nature of care as its focus. In his dissertation, Roux (1996:325) invites further reflexive conversations to take place on the conversations that he documented. He also invites new contexts to join in a new conversation which he calls Context X. Context X has now emerged, as the participants of this research journey come from more diverse backgrounds than Roux's participants and were exposed to four other facilitators. The construction of this new research journey also conveys how a participatory approach to practical theology and pastoral care has become encultured in these diverse contexts.

In conclusion, I agree with Patton (1994:34) when he writes: 'The process of dealing with this human or pastoral text is postmodern in that it includes an acute awareness of its *limitation*' [Patton's emphasis]. Given the above limitations, the narratives of the participants, literature on postmodern practical theology and pastoral care and training has given enough scope for this exciting journey to result in colourful challenges and action.

### **1.11 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

The arrangement of the chapters in this account of the research journey emerged from my efforts to invite the participants to participate in the dialogue as soon as possible. An

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<sup>23</sup> Koinonial constructions refer to the multiple reflexive conversations of the 'faith community as they share things in common under God' (Burck 1982:140).

overview of the remaining chapters of this research journey is presented below. These chapters illuminate the lives and transformation presented by the co-researchers from different angles.

Chapter Two, 'Times for red shoes', emerged from the questions regarding the place, the background and the setting, from whence the research journey departed. This chapter describes the mediating role of the discipline of practical theology with regard to a postmodern culture. A participatory approach to practical theology is described as an offering in understanding and making sense of postmodern times.

In Chapter Three, 'Participating in red shoe care', the narratives of the participants and facilitators of PPC training journeys show how these co-researchers see the development of participatory pastoral care practices in their own lives and the lives of those people they journey with.

Chapter Four, 'Red shoes for tired feet', speaks about the kind of care needed in the postmodern time in which we live. I propose that the Narrative and collaborative therapy approaches create respectful and open conversations where participants can experience connection. This chapter also explores what makes such connection possible.

Postmodern pastoral training and what that entails is discussed in Chapter Five, 'Training red shoe caregivers'. The participants and facilitators reflect on various aspects of the training process and its contents.

The transformational character of theology, as well as narratives of transformation pertaining to the self and the participants' relationships with God, are explored in Chapter Six, 'Narratives of red shoe transformations'.

In Chapter Seven, 'Red shoe practices of transformation', the participants tell of their experiences of transformation in various areas of their lives.

The last chapter, 'Taking red shoes to the world', examines the recommendations for and contributions to practical theology emerging from this participatory research journey.

## **CHAPTER TWO: TIMES FOR RED SHOES**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The red shoes of all the co-researchers in this research journey walk on the streets of our multicultural and multireligious country at a very specific time in the history of South Africa, a time ‘when old habits are hard to break and hope is still fragile’ (Ackermann 2003:65). In the gap between breaking old habits and finding ourselves in a new era, there is a need for hope. This chapter tries to give hope by exploring what the transition to a postmodern world view has to offer to practical theological reflections. Hence, this chapter attempts to make sense of some of our experiences of our time with the limited view and understanding currently at our disposal.

This chapter discusses how contextual and participatory approaches to practical theological practices empower those who wear red shoes to walk caringly in our challenging, fragile, and ever-changing postmodern time. The concept of participatory pastoral care training in general, and the PPC training in particular, arises from contextual and participatory approaches to practical theology. Exploring these approaches provides a background for the stories of transformation in the co-researchers’ lives, relationships and contexts.

This chapter also provides the epistemological background or ‘lenses’, as Hoffman (1990) calls this background, that enabled the knowledges of the participants to be collected and documented in a participatory way. These lenses provide the platform for liberating the participants’ voices to speak clearly throughout this travelogue of the research journey.

### **2.2 WHAT IS A POSTMODERN PARADIGM?**

The focus of this section is to provide a lens that will help the reader to look at participatory pastoral care training in general, the PPC training in particular, practical theology, pastoral care and the research journey. This section does not attempt any

comprehensive discussion of postmodernity, or of its being better or worse, right or wrong, than modernity.

According to Dockery (1995b:13), the term postmodern 'primarily refers to time rather than to a distinct ideology'. Even though at this time there is no distinct ideology which we can grasp and of which we can say 'this is postmodern', a postmodern world view contains very strong values, which I discuss below.

I share Kotzé's (2002:8) view that postmodernity is a paradigm that 'challenges the practice of placing modernist positivist scientific notions such as neutrality, objectivity, theory-practice distinctions and others in the foreground, while keeping ethical reflections and implications in the background'. In this regard, a postmodern paradigm represents a questioning and rejection of many of the fundamental assumptions of modernism. So, for example, it rejects the notion that there can be an ultimate truth and it 'emphasises instead the co-existence of a multiplicity and variety of situation-dependent ways of life' (Burr 1995:13-14).

Postmodernity's emphasis on multiplicity and variety has often made institutionalised Christians oppose postmodernity as the new evil that Christians have to burn at the stake. In this regard, Preston (1999:52) quotes Dean Inge as saying that "He who marries the spirit of the age soon finds himself a widower." However, unlike Dean Inge, most of the participants of the PPC training who joined this research journey have found the knowledges that they co-constructed regarding the spirit of a postmodern age both enriching and liberating. The participants felt that they were challenged by a different way of thinking from that which they were used to; they felt that this new way of thinking broadened their horizons, challenged the societies in which they live and their own values. They would not agree that this new way of looking at the world widows them. This is what they said:

*Nan:* I have been challenged to begin to look at life from different perspectives and to see there are many roads ahead to follow, crossroads too, where one can change, even backtrack a little and set off in an exciting new direction.

*Queen:* I now live according to a new way of thinking, which does not always fit into the ways of society. Is it worth taking notice of this? In the past I was quite concerned about what people would think or say about it. Now I may say: 'I beg to differ.'

According to Kotzé (2002:11), postmodernity therefore also begs to differ, as it is a form 'of ethical-political resistance – against the injustices resulting from the scientific and technological power regimes of modernity itself'. In this sense, I see documenting the research journey as a form of ethical-political resistance, because this travelogue acknowledges the 'stories and voices of those who by virtue of class, race and gender constitute the "Other"' (Van Wyk 1999:6) within the hierarchy of some of our churches. Postmodernity in its many forms is therefore an explosion of 'forgotten, marginalized, and repressed realities of Enlightenment modernity – the other, the different, and above all the fragments which disrupt all totality systems' (Caputo & Scanlon 1999b:14).

I chose to position myself within a postmodern paradigm, because such a paradigm challenges many of the meta-narratives that are supposedly universal, absolute or ultimate truths and are often used to legitimise various political and scientific projects (Appignanesi & Garrat 2003:103). Hunter (2001) refers to postmodernity not only as a challenge to meta-narratives, but also as 'a cultural and social landshift in which a long-standing confidence in certain habits of mind and social practices long associated with the Enlightenment in Europe have collapsed'. The implications of this cultural and social landshift are explored more fully throughout this research journey.

I agree with Schweitzer (2001:169) that as long as 'the idea of postmodernity is considered vague or even depressive and nostalgic, concepts of modernity and modernization still exert a continuing influence' in most practical theological writings. We are in a time of transition between two paradigms. Jamieson (2003:16) describes this time of transition as

[t]he changing societal culture that the contemporary Western dwellers find themselves in; specifically this time of transition between erosion of influence of modernity and the increasing influence of postmodernity.

Kaufmann (1999:283) claims that '*Christianity still has to prove that it is able to*

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*inculturate also under modern conditions and in a post-modern culture*' [Kaufmann's emphasis]. I believe that the documenting of this research journey not only provides narratives of enculturation into a postmodern culture, but also allows insight into the transformation of postmodern society, as voiced in Chapters Six and Seven.

Some authors, such as Min (2004:3), believe that the time of transition has already passed and that we have entered into postmodernity: 'Postmodernism [as] an interpretation of our time with its absolutization of difference may be over, but Postmodernity as the reality of our time is very much around' [Min's emphases]. In line with Min's argument, this chapter emphasises ways in which a postmodern paradigm can help us as Christians, instead of our seeing it as a villain that wants to destroy everything that modernism has presented us with. In this regard, I share Botha's (1998:399) view that postmodernity is a vital opportunity for the Christian message and creates a climate, however risky, that will 'revitalise spirituality'. In this mood of a revitalisation of spirituality, faith is no longer an embarrassment, as it was in the modern world, where faith was seen as something one settled for when one could not have scientific certainty. 'In the postmodern world, it seems, everyone lives by faith' (McLaren 2000:175).

In the light of this perception of faith in the postmodern world, I concur with McLaren (2000:194) that one of the 'signs of the postmodern revolution is the re-dignifying of the word *spiritual*'. Caputo and Scanlon (1999b:11) also assert that

in the modern period religion was ignored, tolerated, repressed, and (sometimes without reason) persecuted. But today we witness a massive return of religion, with all of its ambiguity, together with a return of God to the center of theology.

In Section 3.2.1, I look at opportunities for doing spirituality in our time that emerged from the considerations of a participatory approach to pastoral care by my fellow travellers in the research journey and me.

In writing this section and the dissertation, I was conscious of what Botha (1998:400) calls the 'fluidity of our postmodern epistemology'. I know that I cannot 'absolutize the postmodern condition', as doing so would be 'modernistic and un-scientific in the light of



the postmodernistic social construction discourse as epistemology' (Botha 1998:400). I was also aware that the postmodern social construction discourse epistemology is a product of social discourse and is always changing. Thus I knew that a postmodern paradigm has a 'limited shelf life' and will eventually be replaced by something else (Botha 1998). But as postmodernity is our cultural context, the now we are living in, I reflect on, and in, the fluidity of these changing times.

Following on from the above discussion, I introduce the reader to social construction discourse and poststructuralism as two lenses that support my own values within a postmodern paradigm and help me to voice my values.

### **2.2.1 Social construction discourse**

Social construction discourse is a 'page from the postmodern text' (Gergen 2001:2), a lens for knowledge that I employed throughout the research journey, in the PPC training, as well as in exploring participatory approaches to practical theology and pastoral care. Social construction discourse (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997) is therefore one of the lenses that I believe make the red shoes of care possible and helpful in the postmodern times we live in.

First, social constructionists have no difficulty with 'locally claimed realities; these may be anticipated and honored' (Gergen & Gergen 2003f:228). The locally claimed realities of the 33 participants who shared the act of documenting the research journey in various capacities were therefore honoured by giving them a chance to speak as theologians in the academic discourse. Section 2.5.3 explains this process in detail.

Second, Kotzé (2002:9) writes that within social construction discourse, knowledge no longer

represents the world as it is, but is now taken as referring to our interpretations, resulting in realities that are socially constructed by people in specific contexts, with specific purposes and with real political and ethical effects.

Consequently, in the following chapters of this travelogue of the research journey, our reflections on our cultural life after completing the PPC training are regarded as

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'readings; they are not accurate probings but provocative ways of interpreting our ways of life' (Gergen & Gergen 2003e:194) [Gergen & Gergen's emphasis]. The reader will not find 'maps or pictures of the way things are, but lenses of understanding. In this sense, the narratives of the co-researchers invite 'collective dialogue from which new futures can be created' (Gergen & Gergen 2003e:194). It is my hope that this research journey will spark such a dialogue as its contribution to society, that it will provide readings and lenses of understanding that invite and include everyone as participants collectively to make new meaning (Hoffman 1997:xiii) and create a new future through conversations.

Third, within the postmodern paradigm we are 'challenged to be creative, to initiate new ways of producing knowledge that are tied to our particular values or ideals' (Gergen & Gergen 2003c:60). My particular values see the narratives that are presented throughout the research journey as a creative way of producing knowledge from experience and participation. In my search for equality for all, I do not rate the knowledges of some writers more valuable than the knowledges of others, as I believe that the ideals of the Christian faith tradition should make no such distinctions. The research journey sought out ways to give a voice to the participants' experiences through their narratives and to honour their contributions as knowledge that is worth listening to.

Fourth, I remind the reader that in my documenting of the research text, I assumed that 'individual minds are not the source of knowledge, but the communities – people in relationship. Individual knowledge, on this account, is not a private achievement but owes its origins to community participation' (Gergen & Gergen 2003b:3). The PPC training that I describe is a participatory collaborative process and that the interactions within the various relationships which the participants are in have resulted in stories that are communal rather than individual.

Social constructionist inquiry is principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live.... From the constructionist position the process of understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship.

(Gergen 2003:15)

Gergen and Gergen (2003b:2) explain that 'what we take to be knowledge of the world and self finds its origins in communal interchange'. They add that the social constructionist dialogue 'increasingly invite[s] an appreciation of relationship as central to knowledge and human well-being' (Gergen & Gergen 2003b:2).

The process of attaining knowledge in the PPC training is a construction of the community of believers in that particular group. Consequently, the construction of knowledge by a current group inevitably also invites the constructions of knowledges of all the groups that have gone before it and is mediated through the facilitator. As a result, the knowledges of the group members and their families, relationships, work environments as well as the legacies of the history of every participant feed into the narratives that you are about to read. Within social construction discourse, knowledge is therefore seen 'not as something that a person *has* (or does not have), but as something that people *do* together' (Burr 1995:8) [Burr's emphases]. Anderson and Goolishian (1988:378) express a similar notion when they say that their view is that 'communication and discourse define social organization and that reality is a product of changing dialogue'. By implication, language plays an important role within social construction discourse, and I therefore discuss the role of language in more detail in Section 4.4.4.

Lastly, I agree with Gergen and Gergen (2003b:2) that the 'communal view of knowledge also represents a major challenge to the view of Truth, or the possibility that any one arrangement of words is necessarily more objective or accurate in its depiction of reality than any other'. The words of the participants in the following chapters are therefore no less true or accurate than those of the so-called academic world. This implies that 'all authorities of truth' in this research document 'are thus both legitimated

and relativized' (Gergen & Gergen 2003b:2).

Social construction discourse challenges those forces that would like to reduce the co-researchers' narratives to mere subjective stories that do not have to be taken seriously. 'Social constructionists emphasize intersubjective understanding focusing upon the idiographic and examine the multiple meanings of everyday life constructed by people within the context of their particular language and culture' (Sears 1992:147). As a result, the multiple meanings of the transformation of everyday life constructed in the PPC training is conveyed in the particular language and culture(s) of the co-researchers.

In the next section, I introduce a second postmodern lens through which the research journey was viewed.

### **2.2.2 Poststructuralism**

The red shoes of participatory pastoral care also dance in our postmodern time on the floor of poststructuralism, which creates a platform to value the subjugated knowledges of ordinary believers and acknowledges the power relations that form part of our daily lives. In addition to social constructionist notions of communal and relational knowledge, as mentioned above, I also draw upon what the French philosopher Foucault (1980:82) calls

subjugated knowledges...knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity.... [I]t is through the re-appearance of this knowledge...[that] criticism performs its work.

In my journey as a researcher I drew upon the subjugated knowledges of the participants to write an alternative story of being participatory pastoral caregivers through the 'reactivation of local knowledges' so that 'subjugated knowledges' (Foucault 1980:85) would be released. The subjugated knowledges of the co-researchers therefore re-appeared through the inclusion of their narratives as documented in the travelogue of the research journey.

I also situate the research journey within postmodern and poststructuralist feminism

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which views the world 'as endless stories or texts' (Olesen 1994:164). Although Olesen (1994:164) believes that many of these stories and texts continue to 'sustain the integration of power and oppression', I believe that my fellow travellers on this research journey and I want to tell an alternative story. In this alternative story, I openly admit the integration of power and oppression still present in distinctions between members of the clergy and the laity, as discussed in Section 5.2.1. The incorporation of the subjugated knowledges of the participants also tells a different story of the inclusion of believers in the power relations of the written academic discourse. In the words of Foucault (1980:83), I therefore

entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges [of the participants or co-researchers] against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects.

In the kind of filtering and hierarchising of knowledge that Foucault exposes, we often hear the members of the clergy and academics tell us about the laity. However, we seldom expect to hear the laity talk about the members of the clergy and academics, because so often the laity are seen as ordinary believers with no knowledge or too little theological knowledge to participate in a discussion on theological issues. Consequently, both this research journey and the PPC training are wary of the 'manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body' (Foucault 1980:93).

The work of Foucault (1980) helped me to understand and acknowledge that 'power/knowledge' relations are inescapable in the research journey, training such as the PPC training, and even in participatory approaches to practical theology and pastoral care. There is nothing about my practice as researcher, facilitator and therapist that exempts me from the reproduction of these power relations. As a result, I accepted my responsibility to structure into my work processes that acknowledge and identify these relations of power. The use of multiple reflexive conversations, as mentioned in Section 1.7.1, and participatory ethics, as discussed in Section 1.8.3, acted as ways of deconstructing the power/knowledge relation in research, training and therapy.

If we accept the views of knowledge presented by a social construction and poststructuralist discourse, we also have to consider the narratives and stories of the participants as knowledge. In Sections 2.4 and 2.5, I look more closely into this matter. Before I discuss this, the next section shows how the knowledges and stories of ordinary believers were lost to the discipline of practical theology under the influence of modernity. Flowing from this discussion, I also examine the implications of the re-emergence of the local knowledges of ordinary believers for practical theology in postmodern times.

## **2.3 PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AS A CHILD OF MODERNITY**

In the challenging postmodern times we live in, the questions arise whether practical theology has kept pace with the times and whether this discipline has found adequate ways to address and mediate faith. This section gives a brief background on this pressing question and then invites the reader into the possibilities of making meaning in and of these red shoe times.

In this section I do not deal with an extensive explanation or exploration of the history of practical theology within modernity, because there are several detailed explorations of this topic, for example, the work of Dingemans (1996), Heitink (1999a) and Schweitzer and Van der Ven (1999). However, a brief overview is provided to enhance understanding of the dilemmas of practical theology in postmodern times against its modernist background.

### **2.3.1 A subject of modernity**

According to Schweitzer (2001:175-176), the original understanding of practical theology as an academic discipline is closely linked to the emergence of modernity in the 18th century. Bons-Storm (1998a:8) expresses a similar view, arguing that practical theology is a 'subject of Modernity' that took 'shape as the discipline [which] had to provide the tools for the clergy to lead, educate and counsel the community towards the goal of the congregation'. Initially, the subject of practical theology was therefore regarded as a kind of 'technical training for the priest's fulfilment of his role' and the discipline had a

'narrowly clerical focus' (Forrester 1999:18, 2000:33-40). In the context of the clerical paradigm of the time, the 'leading imagery is that of the shepherd leading his flock of sheep towards the stable' (Bons-Storm 1998a:9; Pattison & Woodward 2000a:3). Section 5.2 pays closer attention to the implications of this modernist background for the perceptions and training of ordinary believers.

### **2.3.2 Practical theology as mediation**

In his 'bi-polar' approach to practical theology, Heitink (1999b:265) sees the task of practical theology as wider than technical training of members of the clergy to take on the role of mediation:

Practical theology is an empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian tradition in the praxis of modern society....This mediation between the Christian tradition and modern society is at the core of practical theology and has its effects in three directions, the individual, the church, and the society. This mediation requires a continual critical interrelation between theological theory and the context of modern society.

Heitink (1999a:258) sees the differentiation of these three directions, individual, church, and society, as supported by three theories: practical-theological anthropology, practical-theological ecclesiology, and practical-theological diaconology.

Given the imbedded nature of practical theology within modernism, the 'main challenge consisted in the sharp tension between the *Christian tradition* on the one hand and *modern culture* on the other' (Schweitzer 2001:175) [Schweitzer's emphases]. The role of practical theology was therefore to mediate between 'tradition and modernity, between religion and rationality, and between the church and the life worlds of modernity' (Schweitzer 2001:175). Schweitzer (2001:177) goes on to explain how, in the modern paradigm, the practical theological field

has worked towards separating the different fields of religion. The public was conceived of as secular or, if not so, as undergirded by civil religion. The religion of the individual person was restrained to the private realm (religious privatization). Consequently, the distance between church, the public, and

individual life was not only increased empirically but it was turned, at least in part, into a permanent situation guarded by legal as well as political principles. In this view, the public must be secular, the individual persons must keep their religious 'preferences' to themselves as long as they are in public, and the church is not to interfere with this situation.

Because of the close relationship between modernity and the emergence of practical theology as a new theological discipline, we should therefore ask what the role of practical theology in postmodern times could be (Schweitzer 2001:170). This is particularly important because we still, to some degree, face the sharp distinctions and distance between the private, the public and the secular. This travelogue of the research journey attempts to break down these sharp distinctions, because the so-called private lives lived in the public secular sphere come into the academic field to inform the reader. This could perhaps be the start of a new form of mediation.

### **2.3.3 The need for new mediation**

In an article entitled 'Practical theology and postmodern life: Do we need a new paradigm?', Schweitzer (2001:176) challenges the field of practical theology to reconsider its mediating task and to act as a midwife for the religious potential of postmodern times. He calls for the same mediation that Heitink (1999b:265) called for. We may well ask how this mediation process will develop within the practical theological field when different constructions of the individual, church and society are being negotiated in the red shoe times in which we live.

The rest of this chapter explores the kind of action or praxis that postmodern times need and that are already embodied in believers' lives, in line with the following insight by Fowler (1999:83): 'When a community of faith begins to recognize that new challenges and conditions call for new patterns of response and *praxis*, a process of intentional practical theological engagement can be the result.' I support Schweitzer's (2001:177) proposal for a kind of mediation that entails 'building connections and making voices heard' embedded in a 'willingness to listen to the people and to become open for their actual life experiences'. I believe that this research journey is an example of a



willingness to listen and a building of the connections that Schweitzer proposes.

In addition, I consider transformation and participation as part of the mediating task of practical theology, as the narratives of the participants conveys. What happens when we merely mediate? Is there any room for change, action or praxis? For me the mediation task lies in conveying a Christian message in a language (Forrester 2000:38) and a 'being with' that people embedded in a postmodern paradigm can understand and relate to, and again this calls for participation.

As a result of the limited success of my search for literature on postmodern practical theology, I have to agree with Schweitzer (2001:169) that, on the whole, practical theology has not sufficiently 'dealt with the issue of postmodernity'. Like Schweitzer (2001:176), I believe that practical theology must tap into the potential of postmodernity whilst remaining in '*critical resistance* to what cannot be accepted of these times' (Schweitzer 2001:176) [Schweitzer's emphasis]. I share Schreiter's (1985:29) belief that the transformational character of Christianity can change things about the postmodern culture that are in any way oppressive or harmful. The question then remains what form of mediatory action is needed in our postmodern time.

Although there are diverse approaches within the field of practical theology, I discuss the two approaches that to my knowledge provide the mediatory action needed in postmodern times, namely the contextual and participatory approaches to practical theology. In these approaches, I found an understanding of practical theology that is inextricably linked to my epistemology and that provides a guide to my understanding (Roux et al 2003a:62).

Against the background of the epistemological lenses provided in the previous sections, the rest of the chapter offers the reader a glimpse through the lenses that allowed the participants of this research journey to know and construct knowledges within approaches to practical theology that include their experience and acknowledge their participation in this field.

I share Brueggemann's (1993:8-9) view that we are in a 'new interpretive situation' and therefore the 'practice of Christian interpretation...is *contextual, local and pluralistic*'

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[Brueggemann's emphases]. This contextual, local and pluralistic knowing is woven throughout the exploration of the contextual and participatory approaches to practical theology in the form of narratives of human experience. Using contextual and participatory approaches to practical theology, both the participatory and transformational values of the PPC training and the research journey are also addressed.

I concur with McLaren (2000:14), who proposes a 'new framework for our theology. Not a new Spirit, but a new spirituality. Not a new Christ, but a new Christian'. This suggests that postmodern times call for a 'new paradigm for doing theology' (McLaren 2000:67) that needs to be unpacked, negotiated and discovered, as described in the next two sections.

## **2.4 A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH TO PRACTICAL THEOLOGY**

In a public lecture at Unisa, Professor Dirk Kotzé (2005) explained that the fighting and war-like metaphors of contextual theology is no longer relevant in South Africa's new democracy, because we must now participate together as equals in our rainbow nation. Although such democratic co-operation might be true of our new government, the ordinary believers' voices in the field of practical theology are still not adequately acknowledged, invited to participate or made audible. As a result, I chose to look at my research journey through the lens of contextual practical theology too.

Bosch (1991:421) claims that it is 'only fairly recently that [the] essentially contextual nature of faith has been recognized'. Bosch (1991:421) adds that the contextual approach to practical theology can be described as 'evolutionary (political theology and the theology of development) or revolutionary (liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology etc). The revolutionary side of the contextual approach to practical theology is discussed in more detail in Section 2.4.5 and in Chapters Six and Seven, where the participants convey how the PPC training brought about transformation in various aspects of their lives.

In addition, the PPC training is part of the evolutionary side of contextual practical theology, because participants also reported that this training empowered and enabled

them, as their narratives in Chapters Five and Six reveal. When I use the word 'empower' in referring to the PPC training in the research text, I do not mean a handing down of a power that comes from a place of higher or greater authority to provide participants with something which they did not previously have, whilst leaving me/the other facilitators in a more powerful position than them (Becvar 1997:68). On the contrary, the participants were respected as co-creators of the training context and were invited to participate as equals with the facilitators, as discussed in Chapter Five.

Where does the contextual approach to practical theology with its revolutionary and evolutionary character come from and what does it value and emphasise in its daily praxis?

### **2.4.1 Origins from below**

According to Dingemans (1996:28), the contextual approach to practical theology did not start as an academic discipline or church programme, but as the reflections [Dutch *reflectie*] of the people [Dutch *volk*], the 'praxis popular'. Bosch (1991:423) supports Dingemans's assertion that since the time of Constantine, 'theology was conducted *from above* as an elitist enterprise, its main source was *philosophy*, and its main interlocutor the *educated non-believer*' [Bosch's emphases]. A contextual approach to practical theology therefore claims to be 'an epistemological break when compared with traditional theologies' because it is theology '*from below*, its main source is the *social sciences*, and its main interlocutor [is] the *poor* or the *culturally marginalized*' (Bosch 1991:423) [Bosch's emphases].

This contextual approach to practical theology is employed in both the documentation of the research journey and PPC training, because it voices the reflections of the people of God from below as they live their lives of faith and care in the specific context of the new South Africa. Chapter Five pays more attention to the training of believers when their theologies and reflections from below are valued and respected. In that conversation Freire's (1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 1999) work plays an important role.

### **2.4.2 Knowing is contextual**

The term 'contextual' suggests that the current situation is taken into account and the word is 'generally associated with a strong socio-political awareness' (Roux et al 2003a:51). From a postmodern epistemological perspective, reality is not perceived as an objective given; but, instead, our 'knowing is [seen as] inherently contextual' (Brueggemann 1993:8; Astley 2002:59), because within this approach 'the knower helps constitute what is known' (Brueggemann 1993:9).

As the participants of the PPC training were involved in the process of knowing, they also influenced the knowledges co-constructed in documenting the research journey. The diverse socio-economic and socio-political realities of the co-researchers were therefore decisive for the co-construction of knowledges as they constituted the 'readily available possibilities of what we can know and how we can know' (Roux et al 2003a:46). In line with this argument, we must therefore acknowledge that theology is always 'contextual, as it is set in some context [and] rooted in some life experience or issue' (Astley 2002:3; Schreiter 1985).

Like O'Brien (2001:292), I believe that by drawing on the experiences of ordinary believers in the particularity of their culture and historical situation, theology is of necessity contextualized. Through the contextualized and ongoing reflection of the believers of the PPC training in the variety of Christian communities in which they live, theology is challenged to rethink supposedly universal assumptions and to play with tensions in ways that lead to new insights.

### **2.4.3 Voicing change**

This research project and the PPC training apply a contextual approach to practical theology, because this approach refuses to endorse a view that sees the world in which members of congregations live as 'static', as something that 'only has to be *explained*, but rather [sees it] as something that has to be changed' (Bosch 1991:424). Practical theology within this approach is not seen solely as a discipline of the communication of the word or as the shepherding of the church but has more to do with the social change

and acts of Christians in their being with other Christians and non-Christians alike.

One of the aims of the research journey was therefore to co-construct and put into language these changes by voicing change in the written word. I agree with Bons-Storm (1996:125) that 'doing theology is a political act' in which one has to responsibly 'choose the speech-community from which one wants to speak', and choose whose 'interest, values, and truth one wants to share'. The transformations that were apparent in the societies in which the participants live were therefore negotiated through their participation in the PPC training and are voiced in Chapters Six and Seven.

#### **2.4.4 Doing theology with**

I share O'Brien's view (2001:292), that Christians should be encouraged to understand themselves as 'doing theology' when they engage in theological reflection. Within the contextual approach to practical theology '*doing* theology' or spirituality must be '*done with those who suffer*' (Bosch 1991:424) [Bosch's emphases]. Most of the participants of the PPC training have been caring with people who have suffered in various circumstances and in diverse contexts for some time. As a result, the research relationship, especially with the participants who live close to me, was a form of doing theology together, as we as caregivers care with suffering individuals. This emphasis on doing theology, 'since doing is more important than knowing or speaking' (Bosch 1991:424-425), moved me to practise care with these participants beyond the research relationship, through letters, phone calls, sms-messages and conversations.

Consequently, in addition to the contextual approach to practical theology, the research journey is also informed by feminist theology in various ways. As feminist theology resides within the contextual approach to practical theology, in this chapter I only discuss the ideas and values that have not been addressed in the above section. The transformational character of feminist theology is discussed and unpacked in greater detail in Chapters Six and Seven.

### **2.4.5 Feminist theology**

Because the aims of feminist liberation theology are 'critique, correction and transformation' (Ackermann 1991:107), this approach to theology was an obvious choice in the light of the title of the research journey.

As a researcher I am drawn to the values of a feminist theology of praxis as described by Denise Ackermann (2003:35-36). She argues that the word 'praxis' describes the 'inseparable relationship between reflecting and acting, between what I think and believe and what I do to achieve the goals of my beliefs' (Ackermann 2003:35). In addition, she does not see praxis as the opposite to theory and she is opposed to separating theory and practice. The 'continuous movement from action to reflection and back to action is one in which actions and thinking about these actions cannot be separated. This is praxis' (Ackermann 2003:36). As PPC training has to do with a praxis of theology, I cannot but see it in the way that Ackermann describes. This research journey is a reflection on the action of various participatory pastoral training constructions and how these have informed, helped, and sustained the co-researchers' faith journeys.

In the reflective action mentioned above, feminist theology therefore starts by looking at social reality by recording stories: 'Narrative is the lifeblood of this kind of theology, for it is in stories that the validity of a host of very diverse experiences is found' (Ackermann 2003:xvi). Consequently, 'muted persons in the community of faith' were given an opportunity to 'contribute to the dialogue of faith' (Bons-Storm 1998b:23) by sharing narratives. The participants' narratives of transformation and hope are included in the chapters that will follow.

Growing out of social reality as a starting point for reflection, I agree with Ackermann (2003:xiii) that feminist theology is rooted in its 'social and political context', which is in 'constant dialogue with the recent turbulent history of South Africa'. In line with postmodern thinking, feminist theology with its contextual values therefore aspires to address the needs of people at a particular time, in a particular country and with particular challenges. Hence, the participants' narratives concerning the influence that the PPC training had on their participation in a new South Africa are shared with the

reader in Chapter Seven.

Feminist theology also aims to expose the harmful effects of a hierarchical model in various religions, while promoting an egalitarian model. The friendship quality of equality (Isherwood & McEwan 1993:102) is something I employed in my research journey, as well as in the PPC training journeys that I have facilitated. By employing this friendship quality, especially with those participants that live close to me, I hope that my research was experienced as a 'trusting and caring holding space' (Weingarten 2002:35). I deconstructed my power as a researcher to create a safe space of equals and friends where we could speak the unspeakable and hope the unthinkable!

In addition, the research journey is documented through the lens of feminist theology, because it is committed to 'participating in solidarity with all who struggle to find healing and freedom' (Ackermann 2003:xvi). In my experience, the participants of the PPC training not only came to be trained as pastoral caregivers but also came to find healing for the stories of their own lives. After they had completed the PPC training, most of the participants also felt that they could now share with others the healing, grace and community that they had found.

I agree with Ackermann's (2003:xvi) view that theology is an

'organic' enterprise, one that is close to the ground, that can nurture the fragility of our lives as we struggle to put out shoots of new growth. In the search for meaning we need to test the evidence 'from below' in the contestation of truth.

In the organic enterprise of the documentation of the research journey I hope that when the evidence is tested from below, by the participants of this research journey, it will not be found wanting, but will bring hope, new life, dialogue and perhaps transformation.

According to Schreier (1985:12), the contextual approach to practical theology embodies the ideals of what local theology is to be about. The participatory approach to practical theology also pursues the actions of doing theology as maintained by the contextual and feminist approaches mentioned above. The next section will help the reader understand why participation within the local theology of the people of God in this

research journey is so important.

## **2.5 A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO PRACTICAL THEOLOGY**

The participatory approach to practical theology is practised at the ITD in Pretoria, where I was introduced to this approach for the first time. Professor Dirk Kotzé (2005) explained at a public lecture on this approach that his selection of the word 'participatory' is a deliberate choice, because it is an accessible word familiar in the 'ordinary-ness' of everyday life. He argues that because, as South Africans, we have all moved into the same house of democracy in the new South Africa, the participatory practices of this approach can play a role in enabling us and our society to live together in this house. The word participatory would therefore be accessible and understandable even for people who have little or no formal education. Kotzé (2005) also believes that a participatory approach to practical theology can help to create a culture of participation in South Africa, According to him, this is part of the task of practical theology. He therefore proposes this approach as way of understanding practical theology for and in the new South Africa because he believes that society should benefit from practical theology.

'The *doing* of practical theology' within a participatory approach therefore reaches 'beyond a mere practice of theology' (Roux et al 2003a:66). This participatory approach refers to a shift from the 'general to the local' and from 'Western theology claiming universal validity' (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:5) to 'true participation among all participants of practical theology' (Roux et al 2003a:66). The sections below explore how knowledge is viewed within this approach, how theology is being constructed and who is allowed to participate in this approach.

### **2.5.1 Knowing is local**

The contextual nature of the participants' knowledges has already been explored in Section 2.4.2. It is clear from that discussion that these knowledges are 'quite local' (Brueggemann 1993:9). Within such local knowledges, it is 'impossible to voice large truth. All one can do is to voice local truth and propose that it pertains elsewhere' (Brueggemann 1993:9). A participatory approach to practical theology acknowledges the



local character of knowledge and therefore of theology as well. As a result, this research journey does not claim to inform anyone of large truths that will be appropriate for all pastoral caregivers in all contexts at all times.

Bosch (1991:427) calls the kinds of theology that everyone can practise ‘local theologies’ and explains that they have an experimental, provisional and hypothetical character and are always in ‘ongoing dialogue between text and context’. In his description of local theology, Astley (2002:56) uses the phrase ‘ordinary theology’ as his term ‘for the *theology and theologizing of Christians who have received little or no theological education of a scholarly, academic or systematic kind*’ [Astley’s emphasis]. The participatory approach to practical theology therefore not only recognizes the local nature of knowledge, but also the local theologies of participants and the constructedness of theology within individual communities.

### **2.5.2 Constructing practical theology within a community**

With regard to the participatory approach to practical theology, I agree with Poling’s (1991:186) description of practical theology as a

critical and constructive reflection within a living community about human experience and interaction, involving a correlation of the Christian story and other perspectives, leading to an interpretation of meaning and value, and resulting in everyday guidelines and skills for the formation of persons and communities.

In the first place, participatory practical theology is not ‘something out there that we discover, but something we construct within our local religious or spiritual community’ (Roux et al 2003a:62; Schreiter 1985:4,16). Like Wallace (2002:203), I believe that theology is a ‘*constructive* enterprise that selects from previous works, thought forms and vocabulary that can be usefully recombined and refashioned in an idiom expressive of the hopes and desires of our age’ [Wallace’s emphasis]. As a result, the local theology that is constructed in PPC training is a culmination of the participatory approach to practical theology, care and training, as well as the local theologies of the communities of faith represented in the participants who participate in the training. Communities of faith therefore play an important part in our knowing (Anderson 2001:20) within this

approach to practical theology as ‘theology is something lived and experienced by a particular community’ (Anderson 2001:23). Consequently, the community becomes the ‘author of theology in local contexts’ (Schreiter 1985:16). In this regard, I share Schreiter’s (1985:17) opinion that this ‘emphasis in the role of community as theologian has been an important one in correcting the idea that only professional theologians could engage in theological reflection’.

In view of Astley’s (2002:60) understanding of ordinary theology, I believe that this research document can reveal the fascinating way theology is constructed and co-constructed as a process in the more ‘tentative, personal and *developing* form’ [Astley’s emphasis]. The co-researchers invite the reader to share and participate in their ‘theology-in-construction, a belief system that is “on the way”’ (Astley 2002:60). Most local theologies are never written down (Schreiter 1985:4), but in this travelogue of the research journey, the reader is invited to share in the local, critical, tentative and constructive reflections of the co-researchers.

Secondly, in the construction of participatory practical theology in the course of the research journey, the co-researchers constructed everyday guidelines and skills for the formation of persons and communities. According to Farley (1988:ix), such everyday guidelines and skills can be referred to as ‘the reflective wisdom of the believer’. The everyday guidelines and skills or reflective wisdom of the co-researchers form the heart of this document on the research journey as they show what they found helpful in a participatory pastoral training construction and what they did not find very helpful. They illuminate the kind of pastoral care that is helpful and criticise that which is not helpful. In addition, the participants speak about a practical theology that has both action and transformation as its aim.

### **2.5.3 Guidelines for a participatory approach to practical theology**

In accordance with the description of practical theology by Poling (1991:186) mentioned in the previous section, Roux et al (2003a:67-68) developed a number of guidelines for participatory practical theology. I discuss those guidelines that I found applicable for the

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research journey below and apply them in the sections that follow:

- Practical theology should reflect the current plurality and heterogeneous descriptions of lived experience. The presence of difference and otherness in experience should be accepted as given.
- Practical theology should develop an ear for unheard voices and interpret these voices as critically and constructively as the familiar voice of tradition.
- Practical theology should not be a terrain allocated only to practical theologians as academically trained theologians. Practical theology should include the unheard voices of so-called 'non-theologians'.
- Practical theology should be aimed at the continual transformation of faith in God as He/She reveals him-/herself throughout history.

As one reads through these guidelines, the following question comes to mind: What will need to change in our effort to invite everybody to participate within the participatory practical theological field if we want people to take up that invitation?

### **2.5.3.1 Everyone as theologians**

#### *a) Participation*

A participatory approach to practical theology is practised against the backdrop of a postmodern paradigm that sees the study of theology as a 'commitment to participation' (Herholdt 1998:224), a commitment which goes beyond the doing of theology. I believe that if practical theology is seen as a practice done by all, we can really claim to liberate communities of faith where we 'ethicise' by doing 'everything in participation with others, or rather, with everyone participating' (Kotzé 2002:21).

According to Dingemans (1996:31-32), there has been a shift in practical theology to a point where the individual as a person has come of age (Dutch *mondig*). He explains that the emphasis placed on the individual is not on the individual in the liberal sense, but on an approach to the individual who becomes a person through others. In the old

form of practical theology, members of a congregation were seen as the subjects of the church's care (Dingemans 1996:108). As Forrester (1999:26, 2000:10) puts it, if the ministry 'regards itself as a "profession" it relegates the other members of the church who share in the royal priesthood of the whole people of God to the status of "clients" or "patients", recipients of ministry rather than participants in ministry'. Today, there are many members of congregations who are no longer passive recipients of care, services and the activities of the church, but who work as volunteers, talking along and bringing with them their insight into matters. This makes the church the biggest organisation with volunteers (Dingemans 1996:110). Within a participatory approach to practical theology, congregations are no longer seen as consumers of church services, but rather as participants and co-workers (Dingemans 1996:111). It is in this honouring and acknowledgement of what ordinary believers contribute to the ministry that the research journey will find its fulfilment.

*b) Theology practised by all*

If we acknowledge every believer as an equal participant, there can no longer be a faith discourse that speaks of a subject/object relationship between professional members of the clergy and congregations (Dingemans 1996:112). They stand in a subject-subject relation to one another which calls for a shift in the position of congregations to a point where everyone is seen as a theologian, seeking the truth about God (Dingemans 1996:116). Against this background, postmodernity's inclusive practices challenge the old distinctions and ask that the voices of believers be heard. Hence, in a participatory practical theological approach, religious communicative actions 'should be conducted on an equal footing with the freedom of every participant to bring her/his perspectives, interpretations, and ideas to the communication on, and of, faith' (Pieterse 1999:419). As I understand it, the equal footing mentioned by Pieterse in the above quote is not something that has been already attained in participatory practical theology, but is a value that is continuously constructed, negotiated, invited and striven for by its practitioners. The value of equality is negotiated against the background of Foucault's (1980:98) ideas. He sees individuals as 'vehicles of power' that are always in the 'position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power'. These notions

regarding power and equality have already been discussed in Section 2.2.2 and are again addressed in Section 4.3.5.

Consequently, the participatory approach to practical theology is seen as ‘practised/done by *all* people grappling with an understanding of the presence of the spiritual, holy, “Other”, or God in our human circumstances’ (Roux et al 2003a:66-67) [Roux et al’s emphasis]. Because I have been engaging with so-called ordinary believers through our participation in PPC training for two years, I know that theology cannot be limited to the inner circle of the theologically trained. I believe that theology is also voiced by those outside the academic world ‘who struggle to live the life of faith in a world that is often unwelcoming’ (Ackermann 2003:xiii), sometimes antagonistic and forever changing.

### **2.5.3.2 Acceptance of difference and otherness**

In the diverse struggles of daily life, our knowing and theology are contextual and local, but also pluralist. In his pluralist view of theology, Schreier (1985:4) notes that all theologies therefore have ‘contexts, interests, relationships of power [and] special concerns’. To put it another way,

[a] theology that pretends to be a timeless and closed system of theological knowledge, unaffected by cultural shifts, runs the risk of becoming obsolete, and is itself a reaction to preceding cultural developments. Isolating theology from culture is a coping strategy by theology – to deal with the challenges that culture poses to a specific theological interpretation of the world.

(Rossouw 1993:895)

As a result, the ‘contemporary Christian theological scenery has to be described, in effect, as a pluralistic existence of several theologies *within* the “contemporary paradigm” together with quite different ones co-existing *beside* it’ (Nipkow 1999:94) [Nipkow’s emphases]. Operating from within a participatory approach to practical theology, I therefore accepted the ‘presence of difference and otherness in experience’ (Roux et al 2003a:67) and theology as a given with the participants and facilitators I journeyed with. As discussed in Section 1.7, I endeavoured to ensure that the plurality of experiences of participants with the PPC training was expressed in the invitation to and documentation

of the research journey. The acceptance of difference and otherness in plural perspectives and experiences is discussed in more detail in Sections 3.2.1.3 and 5.4.

The knowledges that we bring to the dialogue as co-researchers are 'inherently *pluralistic*' (Brueggemann 1993:9) [Brueggemann's emphasis], because within the diversity of claims people bring with them, each claim rings true to its own supporters. Consequently, we 'voice a claim that rings true' in our different local contexts and that 'applies authoritatively to our lived life. But it is a claim that is made in a pluralism where it has no formal privilege' (Brueggemann 1993:9). Against the background of such a pluralistic understanding of knowledge, I see theology as a 'choir of many voices' (Bons-Storm 1996:126) that needs to be allowed to speak in this research journey.

### **2.5.3.3 An ear for the unheard voices**

Viau (1999a:xvi) believes that the future of practical theology depends upon this discipline's ability to produce a discourse built on living practices. Viau (1999a:3) maintains that practical theology claims to have a privileged relationship with the experiences of believers living in their faith communities, but their voices have so far seldom been heard in this discipline. In this research journey, I listened to hitherto unheard voices and interpreted these voices as 'critically and constructively as the familiar voice of tradition' (Roux et al 2003a:68). I believe that within this participatory practical theological approach, the co-researchers' voices have made a contribution. Because a participatory approach lies within an 'epistemology that takes knowledge as a way of knowing that includes personal experience' (Herholdt 1998:223), the participants and facilitators of the PPC training's personal knowledge and experience are therefore included in the understanding of God as God discloses himself/herself to these participants.

Within the context of practical theology, this research document aims to 'take hold of and give account of its practices...as it attempts to produce a discourse' (Viau 1999a:xvi). In this attempt to produce a discourse, I am committed to these participants and facilitators 'as the first act of theology' (Bosch 1991:424). This was especially important as neither the institutional church nor the academic community has paid much attention to the voices of the so-called laity in academic discourse. This research document not only

shows a commitment to ordinary believers by giving them a voice, but, in my theological reflection within this 'contextual, transformative orientated theology' (Pieterse 1999:414), the local theology of the participants I listened to is valued and respected.

*a) Giving a voice to human experiences*

When we view knowledge as contextual, local and pluralist, it means that we can have 'knowledge of reality, of God and of ourselves *only in an indirect way* – in the form of human experience' (Roux et al 2003a:46) [Roux et al's emphasis]. It is relevant in this regard that Heitink (1999a:221) explains that the word *empiricism* is derived from the Greek word *empeiria*, which means 'experience': "Empiricism" is the term for an epistemological approach that attempts to show that all scientific knowledge is based on experience and can in all respects, through sense perceptions, be deduced from experience' (Heitink 1999a:221). According to Pattison (2000a:241), we are only now beginning to take human experience as a primary source for practical theology seriously.

The faith experiences of ordinary believers who participated in the PPC training therefore give them life and move them to act inside human experience. As a result, I believe that the function of practical theology is to say something about a practice of faith that is incorporated into human experience. Consequently, language is the vehicle of these representations and it plays an indispensable role, particularly because it serves to construct a discourse. In this regard, I share Viau's (1999a:82) view of the relation between practical theology and human experience, which he explains as follows:

Indeed, one can only 'discourse' using faith practices that humans carry out in their experience. Practical Theology is therefore a discipline whose main function is to produce discourses which convey occurrences of Christian faith practice, which itself is incorporated in human experience.

According to Heitink (1999a:153), practical theology 'starts from the situation, the praxis'. The experience the participants have had (praxis) becomes the object of reflection on basic theological statements (theory) (Heitink 1999a:153). Thus the actions of the believers as conveyed through their stories in the research document are in fact the embodiment of the PPC training's locally-based practical theology (Pattison 2000a:240).

These '*actions are bound to space and time, they are local and particular, not universal*' (Kaufmann 1999:277) [Kaufmann's emphasis]. In this regard, I share Anderson's (2001:48) view that '*actions are themselves theological* and as such are open to theological reflection and critique' [Anderson's emphasis].

Viau (1999b:40) agrees with Heitink (1999a) that the 'discourse of Practical Theology' is 'drawn from experience', but Viau (1999b:44) goes further when he asks "Who knows?" in practical theology. This question can be extended when we ask who is allowed to know in practical theology. In answering the question of 'Who knows?', I agree with Loder (2000:26) that 'the dialogue between theology and science, which is so central to practical theology, must take place at a level of personal knowledge if its outcomes are to be truly comprehensive.' The documentation of the human experiences of the participants is therefore based on the assumption that their experiences and practices are regarded within the practical theological field as knowledge worth attending to. I would argue that this knowledge is worth attending to because the co-researchers have expert, contextual and local knowledge of their own lived experiences and beliefs within the Christian tradition.

#### *b) Facilitators of ordinary believers' voices*

When I acknowledge the lived experiences of the co-researchers, I have to concur with Schweitzer (2001:174) when he explains the task of 'a contemporary practical theology' as that of a '*mediator and midwife to [the] potentials*' [Schweitzer's emphases] of our time. In this regard, O'Brien (2001:292) believes that some 'persons (ministers and/or academics) will assume roles as "practical theologians" in mediating between the ongoing reflection and ministry of Christian communities and the academy'. For this reason, this study serves as a midwife to the potential(s) of believers, as it invited the participants not only to convey their experiences but also to participate in the construction of a document that can enlighten the academic field in our postmodern time.

Kotzé (2005) goes further than O'Brien (2001) when he argues that practical theologians should be facilitators of the theologies that people are using on the ground to make



sense of their lives. These participatory conversations should not be facilitated with an attitude of knowing better about God, but rather with respectful engaging (Billman 1996:31-32) as equal partners with these local theologies. In addition, these facilitating practical theologians should be open to the notion that their own theologies might be challenged or changed in their participation with these local theologies.

I therefore see myself as a midwife and facilitator who removed 'the obstacles which prevent faithful people from expressing their faith' in a 'two-way traffic' (Bons-Storm 1998b:23-24), which was one of the aims in my research. Astley (2002:56) describes such a two-way traffic consisting of the '*content, pattern and process of ordinary people's articulation of their religious understanding*' [Astley's emphasis]. Being a theologian is therefore to reflect on the daily struggles and joys to 'live and act as a person of faith' (Ackermann 2003:28). Farley (1988:88) remarks that in the

older sense, theology was not just for the scholar or teacher but was the wisdom proper to the life of the believer. This presupposed that faith, as a mode of existence before God...[i]ncluded a kind of knowledge. Faith was a practical knowledge having the character of wisdom because it had to do with the believers' ways of existing in the world before God.

According to Heyns and Pieterse (1990:3), theology 'can at most study people's statements about God and about faith in God'. Consequently, the travelogue documenting the research journey functions as one of the 'manifestations of religious experiences and of relationships between God and human beings' (Roux et al 2003a:63). I have purposefully taken a position that accorded the previously marginalized voices of congregational members a voice through the collection and re-collection of their stories.

### *c) Narratives of human experience*

Because the diverse knowledges of the participants' human experiences are indeed valued and acknowledged, story or narrative is used as a way to convey these knowledges in the research text and participatory practical theology. The life stories or lived narratives of the co-researchers are therefore employed as an '*action source*'

(O'Connell Killen & De Beer 1994:55) [O'Connell Killen & De Beer's emphasis] in the research text to help in a move toward insight. Taking this 'narrative turn involves a hermeneutical<sup>24</sup> stance, in which the individual biography and religious construction are valued over general descriptions and statistical averages' (Ganzevoort 1998:24). This invites the co-researchers to speak. The co-researchers' narratives of their expressions of religious experiences come in the form of stories that 'flow from their understanding of God and the story they find [themselves] in' (McLaren 2001:161). Like O'Brien (2001:292), I believe that with the inclusion of these stories of ordinary believers, the theological enterprise as a whole will be re-conceived as the narratives of these unheard voices inform us from below.

#### **2.5.3.4 Continual transformation as aim**

The last guideline for the participatory approach to practical theology is aimed 'at the continual transformation of faith in God as He/She reveals him-/herself throughout history' (Roux et al 2003a:68). If we take a participatory approach to practical theology seriously, we will constantly be on the lookout for transformation and be committed to the profoundly formative and transformative nature of faith.

I believe that the transformative value of a participatory practical theological approach can be constructed or facilitated, as social change is often the reason that local theologies need developing in the first place (Schreiter 1985:44). Because a participatory approach to theology is an enterprise from below, it is able to address the immediate needs of believers and be a truly responsive theology that captures the sense of a culture holistically and with all its complexity (Schreiter 1985:28). In its service to the local community, I also believe that a participatory approach to practical theology engages in the very important task of learning to listen and of being open to the transformations that can ensue from it (Schreiter 1985:45). In the mediating action required in our postmodern time, I believe that a participatory practical theology provides a place and space where 'religious beliefs, tradition and practice meets contemporary experience, questions and actions to engage in a transforming dialogue which has

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<sup>24</sup> 'Hermeneutics deals with the rules and principles for understanding as well as the study of the ideas and required conditions for understanding' (Roux et al 2003a:42).

substantial practical implications' (Pattison 2000a:217). I also believe that this approach to practical theology 'can productively engage the critical challenges of our time' (Wallace 2002:203).

A participatory approach to practical theology not only describes and reflects on 'religious practices theologically, but theorises about renewed praxis that is transformative in nature in the light of the reign of God' (Hestenes 2004:60). Chapters Two to Four contribute to an exploration of and theorising about a re-newed and transformative praxis. Because we cannot command transformation, the PPC training strives to facilitate the kind of formation that is most conducive to the possibility of transformation, as discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapters Six and Seven describe and reflect theologically on the religious practices in the documentation of the continual transformation of the co-researchers' lives. As a result, the narratives of the participants in Section 7.5 bear witness to how the different co-constructions of the PPC training led to changed perspectives that also resulted in changed practices, as suggested by O'Brien (2001:295). Through their engagement in the process and through their faith in the Christian belief, the participants of the PPC training identified the small transformations that were occasioned by their ministry and the relationships in which they stood (O'Brien 2001:300).

In conclusion, I agree with Nipkow (1999:93) that in the present moment we only have '*frames of discussion*' [Nipkow's emphasis] when it comes to describing practical theology in postmodern times. As he points out, we 'have not reached, however, a new and agreed-upon frame of reference, neither for Christian theology in general or for practical theology in particular' (Nipkow 1999:93). But then again, theology is never final; it is always in the process of becoming and is continually re-authored (Louw 2003:228). Both the approaches to practical theology and to pastoral care presented in this research construction are committed to remaining open-ended, flexible and able to accommodate further new developments in serving and searching with the people of our time and culture(s) (Kotzé 2005). This section was my contribution to joining and contributing to this frame of discussion within my own epistemology.

## **2.6 CLOSING REMARKS**

This chapter has set the theological background for the red shoes of the participants in the postmodern time, as it has looked at contextual and participatory approaches to practical theology. I believe that practical theology can contribute to the repair of our fragile and injured world using these two broad approaches, and I agree with Moore (1999:206) that if this was not the case, we would not 'need practical theology'.

The next chapter explores how the red shoes worn by my fellow travellers in the research journey are walking and repairing this world, caring within these approaches to practical theology. The unpacking of the participatory pastoral care approach in the next chapter is an attempt to illuminate the background of the stories of transformation in the co-researchers' lives, relationships and the contexts in which they are involved.

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **PARTICIPATING IN RED SHOE CARE**

We might as well be invisible; our clothing marks us as strangers, transients.  
They are polite, so polite; no one stares at us.

(Harris 1999:3)

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

How can we achieve inclusion rather than exclusion, connection as opposed to the isolation by polite stares demonstrated in the above quote from the novel *Chocolat* (Harris 1999)? We live in such a diverse and rapidly changing society that we need an approach to pastoral care that takes on the challenge of inclusion in new and innovative ways.

This chapter expands on the discussion of an approach to pastoral care called participatory pastoral care introduced in the previous two chapters. Participatory pastoral care involves a response to human experience in the social cultural context of our time (Gerkin 1997:21). This approach to care provides a lens that reveals how the mediating action of care in postmodernity can be realised, as it responds to the changing needs of people and the rapid changes in our time (Gerkin 1997:21,37). These mediating actions are informed by contextual and participatory approaches to practical theology, as discussed in the previous chapter. I therefore hope that this chapter will provide an approach to pastoral care in the field of practical theology that is critical and creative, responsible and responsive, imaginative and skilled, adventurous but also accountable (Pattison 2000a:xii).

There are no well-established narratives about the experiences of believers as participants in a postmodern pastoral training programme other than Roux's dissertation, which was completed a decade ago, in 1996. This chapter therefore begins to explore PPC training as a place and space where believers can write their lives in practices of theological education that they share in this travelogue of the research journey as their 'living knowledge' (Bird 2005b). Chopp (1995:21) calls this sharing of living knowledge

the practice of 'narrativity', which refers to the

active agency of writing one's own life in the context of human and planetary relations.... The power to write one's own life as an active agent is the power to participate, potentially and actually in the determination of cultural and institutional conditions.

My fellow travellers in the research journey, the co-researchers, are all members of Christian churches in our postmodern time. I therefore believe that their narratives provide a 'rich tapestry of life experiences and reflection upon them' (McEwan & Isherwood 1996:x). As a result, the chapter tells the story of some of the participants and facilitators of PPC training from 1996 to 2004 and of how a participatory approach to pastoral care has influenced their lives and views of care, creating hope-filled narratives of red shoes in various ways.

### **3.2 A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO PASTORAL CARE**

In his book *A new kind of Christian*, McLaren (2001:x) proposes that the time in which we live requires us to 'learn to be Christians in a new way'. I am inspired by McLaren's assertion to believe that the time has also come to care in new and creative ways. This section elucidates how a participatory approach to pastoral care can be incarnated in our postmodern time. I would like to remind the reader that this approach to care flows from the values and practices of contextual and participatory approaches to practical theology, the lenses already presented in Sections 2.4 and 2.5. However, comparing the participatory approach to pastoral care with the pluralistic perspectives of other approaches is not the focus of my study, so, instead, this chapter explores a particular way of being *with* (Clinebell 1984:75) people in need of care. As one of the co-researchers put it:

*Megan:* Care is a context where people are enabled to find and take hold of what they need.

In line with postmodern discourse, this chapter does not postulate definitions of pastoral care, but describes our present values and explores how we perceive and practise participatory pastoral care. Both the research journey and the training of the PPC

participants were positioned within a participatory approach to pastoral care ‘captured by the action of pastoral care’ (Roux 2004) in a very specific way. This approach is committed to a ‘participatory ethical care’ that does not ‘care *for* but care *with* people who are in need of care’ (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:7) [Kotzé & Kotzé’s emphases]. This caring with people is not confined to a particular context, environment, circumstances, setting or location, but occurs wherever we encounter ‘suffering, hunger, malnutrition, unemployment, rage and anger, crime attacks, violence, rape’ (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:2). When we witness this kind of suffering, we as pastoral caregivers cannot but take an ethical position, and that entails a ‘commitment to transformation, positioning oneself on the side of those suffering, and against all oppressive or exploitive discourses and practices’ (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:3).

In line with the description of a participatory approach to practical theology by Roux et al (2003a:67-68) in Section 2.5, I adapted these guidelines suggested in my presentation and exploration of a participatory pastoral care approach:

Pastoral care should reflect the current plurality and heterogeneous descriptions of lived experience. The presence of difference and otherness in experience should be accepted as given in our journeys of care with people.

Pastoral care should in addition also develop an ear for unheard voices and interpret these voices as critically and constructively as the familiar voice of tradition.

Pastoral care should not be a terrain allocated only to pastoral theologians as academically trained theologians. Pastoral care should include the unheard voices of so-called ‘non-theologians’.

Pastoral care should be aimed at the continual transformation of faith in God as He/She reveals him-/herself throughout history.

(Adapted from Roux et al 2003a:67-68)

The next section therefore articulates and elucidates how these guidelines were realised in this approach called participatory pastoral care.

### **3.2.1 Doing spirituality**

A participatory approach to pastoral care not only values the '*doing of theology*' (Clinebell 1984:50) [Clinebell's emphasis], but is also 'committed to a participatory way of *doing spirituality*' (Roux et al 2003a:39) [Roux et al's emphasis]. When we care with people, we are acting and doing spirituality with them. Louw (2003:213) explains that in this journey of doing and acting spirituality with people, we co-create 'sacred maps' whereby we live and make meaning of our lives.

#### **3.2.1.1 What is spirituality?**

Doing spirituality includes what Ackermann (2003:143) describes as the 'lived experience of relationship with God, with people, and with creation, fed by a longing for justice and wholeness and a resistance to all that thwarts well-being'. In a participatory pastoral care conversation, lived experiences of a relationship with God are not only valued but also challenged or re-negotiated wherever the well-being of participants is thwarted, because this approach is fed by a longing for justice and wholeness.

I support the aims of the Warehouse 242 Staff Team (2003:248-249), who constructed a church community for postmodern times. They explain how they value doing spirituality as a way of living their communal life as follows:

We do everything that we can to help our folks understand that spirituality should pervade all of life, when we rise in the morning, when we drink coffee, when we sip wine, when we eat, when we make love, and when we work. Everything we do ought to be seen as an act of devotion and an act of worship...where Christianity is not a discrete activity from the rest of life, but an experience of community that fuels the rest of life.

The caring practices of a participatory pastoral caregiver can therefore be seen as a way of life, a doing of spirituality that is not a discrete activity from the rest of his/her life. Although I largely agree with Botha (1998), as is clear from the rest of this chapter, I differ from Botha (1998:159) to some extent in that I do not believe that a pastoral conversation necessarily needs theological motifs to constitute it as a pastoral conversation. A pastoral conversation therefore does not mysteriously begin the moment



we refer to God, the Bible or Spirit. Instead, I agree with Clinebell (1984:123) that 'God is continually active in all relationships, whether or not formal religious words or practices are used'.

I believe that God is deeply concerned in and with every aspect of our lives and that whatever concerns us, as Christians and non-Christians alike, is important to God. What makes a conversation a pastoral conversation is then perhaps that we as pastoral caregivers are there, ready to minister to whoever needs it, that is to serve that person with care<sup>25</sup>. Participatory pastoral care therefore does not depend on whether the other person is a Christian or not. In this hurting world, pastoral care can be seen as a 'sacrament of the loving care' (Goodliff 1998:138) of the God in this world that invites us to care for all humankind<sup>26</sup> as a vehicle of divine love and a visible sign of this love and presence in the world. A participatory pastoral caregiver therefore participates in doing spirituality with whoever is in need of care and therefore administers God's care to whoever is in need of this sacrament. This openness to a broader vision of care within a participatory approach conveys a public style of practical theology and not just a church practical theology, as will become apparent in later chapters.

*Coba*: Care is not a command, it should be second nature. Care shouldn't be the directive of a visioning committee. Care shouldn't be heard, it should be seen.

### **3.2.1.2 Doing spirituality in community**

Another description of spirituality not only values individual spirituality, as in modernity, where everything was privatized, atomized and individualized, but focuses on spirituality itself as communal in that believers bring their experiences with God to the community (Herbert Anderson 1997:4) and share it like a 'common meal' (McLaren 2001:155). The metaphor of a common meal also describes a communal activity of care in which

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<sup>25</sup> The word 'minister' originally meant 'servant' (*Cassell's Latin – English Dictionary* 1993:373).

<sup>26</sup> 'Humankind' literally means 'human family', from the Anglo-Saxon word 'cyn(n)', meaning race, family, people (According to the glossary C L Wrenn's edition of '*Beowulf*' 1973:226).

people's lived experiences of God are shared with one another in participatory pastoral care.

As discussed in Section 2.5.2, spirituality is local in that the lived identity, culture and skills are rooted in a particular community (Herbert Anderson 1997:4): 'Christian spirituality is therefore not a private matter [but] is rooted and sustained in relation to an ongoing community of faith' (Herbert Anderson 1997:4). In sharing the common meal in a participatory pastoral conversation, a 'community-making God' (Burck 1982:148) is also present and, I believe, also participates in the conversation.

The question then arises how the PPC training construction provides a community from which unique spiritualities can grow. The answer to this question is addressed in Chapter Five.

### **3.2.1.3 Respect for difference**

Doing spirituality in participatory pastoral care also recognizes that every person's ideas of God are influenced by a plurality of perspectives that include a religious language, religious documents, class, race, gender, family background, interests, prejudices, commitments and concerns (Roux et al 2003a:58). Within a plurality of perspectives, every person 'imagines God personally and differently, although this does not exclude the religious feeling that my God is also your God' (Herholdt 1998:225). Listening to the diverse stories of the 33 participants and experiencing their different images of God helped me describe God in new ways in my own life.

Because our understandings of God are tied up with or constituted by our existing social constructions (Roux et al 2003a:46), a participatory pastoral care conversation therefore co-constructs a conversation where the caregivers value their own and other people's understandings of God and know that an understanding of God is constituted by existing social constructions and that a participatory pastoral care approach values and respects plurality and difference. A participatory approach to pastoral care respects and acknowledges the plurality of perspectives in various traditions regarding the images of God (Roux et al 2003a:59). This perspective helped the participants in the PPC training to understand God as '*Divinity-in-Diversity*: female/male, Black/White, and so forth'

(Bons-Storm 1996:130) [Bons-Storm's emphasis]. Participatory pastoral caregivers can remain open to new ideas and views on God because they realise the social constructedness of their own ideas and views on God. Within this approach to pastoral care, the 'certainties' of theologies are opened up to 'refreshing breezes of curiosity and wonder, in which multiple realities can coexist and relationships can evolve' (Griffith 1995:127).

#### **3.2.1.4 Awareness of God in spirituality**

In my commitment to doing spirituality, I believe that we 'need to open up to the mystical awareness of God's unfathomable presence, being able to accomplish a sincere surrender to God' (Roux et al 2003a:58). I therefore agree with Hakala (2001:154) that pastoral care and the training of pastoral caregivers are rooted in a belief in this divine activity and a surrender to the unfathomable presence of God. Mari expressed this sincere surrender to God in the following manner:

*Mari:* There is a huge excitement; it is like the effervescent tablets one adds to water. All of a sudden it starts sparkling and when it reaches the surface; your face is spattered with cool droplets. It's much like when you're talking to someone about Jesus, but you know it's Jesus who does the work. I experience that same excitement when the light begins to dawn on the person, but you know you haven't really done something. You have this warm feeling inside.

Since our understanding of reality is 'influenced or informed by our socially and culturally constructed understandings.... Our knowledge cannot...fully encompass God. God is always more and often other than we believe about Him/Her' (Roux et al 2003a:46) and therefore our images of God are only partial (Pittman et al 1996b:59). The richness and complexity of the divine presence is therefore found in the many images of God (Cozad Neuger 2001:59).

Kaufmann (1999:281) expresses a similar view to that of Roux et al (2003:46) when he notes that the '*commitment to the Christian Gospel never ended with the end of a specific constellation of its social and cultural forms but always found new expressions and followers in a new context*' [Kaufmann's emphasis]. Doing spirituality therefore

includes a creative component that never reaches finality and is always preliminary, always appealing for a new interpretation of our environment and ourselves. A participatory pastoral approach to care acknowledges the evolving nature of the Christian Gospel, and the uniqueness of the co-creation of the evolving story with God experienced by each human being. Griffith (1995:137) sums up this idea most appositely when she says:

It is in this context...that a person continues to co-create an evolving story with God that is uniquely his or her own, not dominated by my story, nor a psychological story, nor even the story of his or her particular religious doctrines.... [P]rimacy must be given to that person's story as the person describes his or her experiences...and the possibilities and surprises that are encountered.

The PPC training and participatory pastoral care therefore helped my co-researchers and me to become aware of our views of God and our spirituality. This awareness helped us to live more integrated lives in respect of our spirituality and also helped us to do spirituality with those we journey with.

### **3.2.2 A journey of caring with**

Using the above approach to a pastoral care conversation, the pastoral journey becomes a participatory process of exploration and discovery. Perhaps this caring-with-conversational-journey can also be described as a pilgrimage (Webb-Mitchell 2001:78-101), where people sometimes leave behind places of desperation and hurt and long to journey to another place in the hope of finding the miracle of transformation. The expectation that a person cannot be the same as before is characteristic of a pilgrimage, and thus the journey is the ultimate, not penultimate, experience.

In a participatory pastoral care journey, the pilgrim is never alone, as pilgrimage is an act of a community or the quest of a lone traveller for community. Both the caregiver and

care receiver<sup>27</sup> participate as pilgrims in community on such a journey of care. As we do spirituality with the people we journey with, stories transport us to times and places we do not always know. Through shared narratives, we therefore become 'spiritual travellers undaunted by time, distance or new landscapes' (Anderson & Foley 1998:4). Many of the participants in the PPC training spoke of the journeys they now undertake with fellow travellers or pilgrims, like the journey portrayed in the following lament psalm by Anne Weems (1995:xvii):

In the godforsaken, obscene quicksand of life,  
 there is a deafening alleluia  
 rising from the souls  
 of those who weep,  
 and of those who weep with those who weep.  
 If you watch, you will see  
 the hand of God  
 putting the stars back in their skies  
 one by one.

This participatory approach to pastoral care therefore values the journey of caring with someone as a pilgrimage of togetherness, as Karissa, one of the co-researchers, explains:

*Karissa:* It is to live and walk with someone's story, maybe crying, laughing, hoping, praying and believing together.

Before participating in the PPC training, quite a few of the participants felt that it was their sole responsibility to help others and to solve and fix the problems of those they *cared for*. Consequently, *caring for* others was an effort and a responsibility, sometimes a burden too heavy for the caregiver to carry:

*Coba:* In my case my boldness was dangerous and rash. I immediately accepted caring as a responsibility. Since I felt responsible for people and decided that they did not have the skill or the time I had, I would simply do it for them. So, my responsibility went over into action. I solved their problems for them. This responsibility exhausted me; it was really an effort for me. I

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<sup>27</sup> When I use the term 'care receiver' I refer not to a passive recipient of care, but a valuable participant in a caring community that also has gifts to offer and has the power to care, as suggested by SteinhoffSmith (1995:147).

actually deprived people of a lot by saying, “give me your pain”. I did not have the right; I was very forceful and determined. It’s actually a flippin’ cheek to try and solve somebody else’s problems.

A participatory approach helps participants to see that *caring with* is something we do *with* people and not *for* people, and it helps participants to see that caring is not solely their responsibility. A participatory pastoral caregiver is therefore ‘enormously free of anxiety about and responsibility for the outcome’ (Brueggemann 1993:63) of the conversation, as the participants in the conversation themselves must respond to and take the journey. In a participatory approach to caring with people, responsibility is taken by both partners in the conversation. After participating in PPC training, most of the participants described this way of caring as a participatory co-operative walk and exploring alongside people:

*Ann:* You are walking alongside someone in search of the light at the end of his/her tunnel. There where there’s only darkness.

*Anne:* Caring for a person means being with them in the following ways: respecting, accepting, non-assuming, listening to, being with, interested, having empathy, in my case backing up with support, walking alongside, empowering.

*Maureen:* I see ‘care’ as being with a person where they are, accepting them for who they are, respecting their beliefs and feelings, listening to them, and walking with them on their journey, giving them a safe place to be themselves.

Participatory pastoral care is also a way of being with people in need of care that values care as two-way traffic. This journeying with the notion of two-way traffic is not a passive process where one can be an onlooker while the other ‘does’. A willingness to journey with people is a necessity:

*Nan:* The training has changed my story of care, making it much more of a participatory co-operative walk alongside the person seeking help. Hospital visiting is one of my caring ministries that produces the two-way traffic effect that is so often the result of pastoral care. The patient, isolated from

the usual events of life for a time, has the opportunity to express and explore their immediate situation and the gratitude and special relationship that happens is a great reward for the one offering ministry.

*Patricia:* Care is coming alongside a person and accompanying that person on her/his journey for a time enriching and being enriched as we journey together.

Because of this two-way traffic, the pace and goals of care can be determined by the one with whom the caregiver journeys (Cozad Neuger 2001:51). A participatory approach to pastoral care therefore values a pastoral care journey where we journey with people in two-way traffic, acknowledging both partners as participants in the conversation.

Not only are we participants in two-way care traffic, but sometimes we walk with people to the throne of God and ask what they are perhaps too tired to ask. Weems (1995:xvi) asks in her book, *Psalms of Lament*, who will march with these souls to the throne of God and in loud lament cry out the pain that lives in their souls. She then writes the following lament psalm:

Jesus wept,  
and in his weeping,  
he joined himself forever  
to those who mourn.  
He stands now throughout all time,  
this Jesus weeping,  
with his arms about the weeping ones:  
"Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they shall be comforted."  
He stands with the mourners,  
for his name is God-with-us.  
Jesus wept.

Participatory pastoral care marches with these souls to the throne of God and cries with them, treading softly as they become God's hands and feet, in human flesh, reaching out:

*Coba:* Care treads softly. It happens in the presence of God. Care is an extension of God's love. Care is God's arms and legs.

*Leonie:* It is also caring to know the Lord also cares about them.

In this regard, Anderson (2003:178) describes spiritual care as sharing a sacrament through which doors are opened for the Spirit of God to breathe the gift of life. Not only does the Spirit of God breathe life, but the Spirit of God can be seen as a transforming agent (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:76). I believe that in such *caring with* moments, space is created for the Spirit of God to move in transforming ways.

### **3.2.2.1 Care as social practice**

A participatory approach to pastoral care is not only a journey and knowing with, but also a journey of caring with: 'Care becomes a social practice where care-givers and care receivers socially and inter-subjectively construct care' (Roux et al 2003a:39). This action of caring with others moves away from a 'caring response or Christian sense of guilt' and 'away from paternalistic care' (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:7) where caregivers assume that they know what would constitute care for another person. Before their participation in PPC training, some participants felt that they really cared for people and sometimes gave the kind of care to others that they found helpful themselves, and they did not consider whether the person on the receiving end found the care helpful as well. Many of the participants of the PPC training now wonder what they have left behind, especially in those times when they felt that the way they cared helped others, without really knowing or asking whether what they did actually helped the care receiver:

*Gerhard:* I didn't know. I'd never thought about it, because I thought I was smart.  
I thought I could work with people. If you haven't done the PPC training you have somewhat of a don't-care attitude.

A participatory approach to care does not presume to know what constitutes care for the other person, but endeavours to share a journey and a knowing with that constructs care. In this regard, I believe that the social practice of care has to do with how we transcend ourselves in solidarity with others so that we can learn to care together with others 'who are different in class, gender, ethnicity, religion, and culture' (Min 2004:115). We therefore engage in what Hakala (2001:137) calls a prophetic pastoral care that shows an increased sensitivity to cultural, gender, social and racial injustices in the



caring practices we engage in. In addition, a participatory pastoral approach to care can set the participants in such a journey free to discover with others what they find helpful and what they do not find helpful in the social practice of care.

### **3.2.3 Participatory consciousness that knows with the other**

A participatory approach to pastoral care suggests that everybody in a given conversational space participates in the conversation. But what happens when we do not see everybody as participants in the care we construct?

*Leonie:* In my profession as a social worker I so often had so little respect for the people, and regularly adopted a morally superior attitude towards the people who came to see me. I would also sometimes listen to someone with so many preconceived ideas.

*Anne:* I used to be caring and warm, but definitely with a lot more assumptions on my behalf.

*Vusi:* Before this training I used to judge other people who are different from me.

A participatory mode of consciousness as described by Heshusius (1994) negotiates care as ethical care because it does not presume to care, but participates in care. This participation in care goes further than co-operative walking alongside people, as discussed in Section 3.2.2:

Participatory consciousness is the awareness of a deeper level of kinship between the knower and the known. An inner desire to let go of perceived boundaries that constitute 'self' – and that construct the perception of distance between self and other – must be present before a participatory mode of consciousness can be present.

(Heshusius 1994:16)

As a result, a participatory pastoral care relationship between a caregiver and a care receiver in a conversation results from the 'ability to temporarily let go of all preoccupation with self and move into a state of complete attention' (Heshusius

1994:17). Heshusius (1994:15) describes this action of letting go as freeing ourselves from the notions of objectivity and subjectivity as we 're-order our understanding between self and the other and turn toward a participatory mode of consciousness'. Heshusius (1994:18) also claims that when one merges with another person in such a 'selfother' relationship, 'one can come to know even from silence'. Her argument is borne out by the following experience of one of the co-researchers:

*Mari:* For me, care does, in a sense, not have to say something. Just a hug, then something happens.

Min (2004:82-83) also calls for a 'theology of solidarity' which 'implies that there is no privileged perspective, that all are others to one another, that we as others to one another are equally responsible, and that all are subjects, not objects'. Within such a participatory mode of consciousness, pastoral caregivers therefore forget themselves and become embedded in what they want to understand with an 'affirmative quality of kinship that no longer allows for privileged status' and that 'renders the act of knowing an ethical act' (Heshusius 1994:19).

Kotzé (2002:6) claims that within knowing as an ethical act, 'such knowledge of the other becomes knowing *with* the other – a participatory process distinct from the Western perspective of *knowing the other or about the other*' [Kotzé's emphases]. In this self-other ethical knowing, a participatory pastoral caregiver takes responsibility for the way he/she is present, as he/she knows *with* those he/she journeys with.

This knowing with the other incorporates the portrayal of God by Christian faith as 'seeking out the "other"' (Boyd 1996:224). Not only does participatory pastoral care cross the boundaries of selective others, but it also seeks out the other. Such a participatory approach to pastoral care therefore responds to Boyd's call (1996:224) for a 'radically relational, community-enhancing' process that is 'inclusive of the multiple realities of our postmodern world'.

### 3.2.4 Care that heals and does not hurt

Participatory pastoral care is also about being connected (DTh Group 2004) in a self-other knowing and relationship. According to Kotzé (2002:4), 'connective understanding' is concerned with a search for a 'participatory mode of consciousness' (Heshusius 1994:15) that participates not only in constructing care with, but also cares in a way that heals and does not hurt.

*Richard:* The training has helped me to distinguish between caring and being kind. I used to be kind to someone, but not care. Being kind is to be nice and smile in a friendly manner. This training has helped me to know that when you are kind you must also care for that person.

*Desbe:* I think I connect with the people in a new way and this I think enables them to engage in conversation in a meaningful way. The transparency and honesty in conversation helps them to connect.

*Coba:* For me care is connection, concerning myself with [Afr. *bemoeienis maak mef*]. Care should not be heard, but seen. Care is availability, because it is needed at this very moment.

Discernment is also necessary in a caring availability and awareness to heal and not to hurt, as the needs of people otherwise overwhelm the one who wishes to care with someone:

*Leonie:* I pray, "Teach me, Lord, to distinguish the things and do the things that really matter".

*Ann:* Just to be there in the small things: a cup of tea, picking up the phone. I never thought that these small things could also be seen as care. For me care is now about noticing these care situations, the little things, even if it's only a "thank you".

*Richard:* Caring means that when you see someone go astray, you are there for them.

In this participatory consciousness, where the focus is on how to heal and not to hurt, the

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'ethics of awareness in the immediate moment of presence' (Kotzé 2002:5) guides participatory pastoral caregivers to more than a mere rational awareness. It encourages an 'embodied awareness'. Like Gerkin (1997:91), I believe that, in such embodied awareness, listening involves more than 'simply hearing the words people say'.

Several of my Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) commented that after their PPC training this embodied awareness was fleshed out in that they began to look and see human beings and actions differently. The participatory approach to care co-constructed in the PPC training helped these participants in the PPC training to tune into people's immediate needs. That deepened and broadened their stories of care as pastoral caregivers. Their stories also tell of how they received a new set of eyes through which to view people and of how they acquired a greater sensitivity for where people are in a given moment:

*Coba:* Care is a being there, caring awareness, and sensitive spirit. I am more cautious now, perhaps now I realise that it is holy ground. You have to take off your shoes. I can't just storm ahead anymore [Afr. *nie net meer indonner nie*] with my way of thinking or doing and my experience.

*Gerhard:* The PPC training filled me with more enthusiasm and helped me to pay more attention.

*Anne:* Participating in the training has made me so much more aware of how fragile people can be, and because I am so aware, I think that I am a better person to be with. I have new ways, which have become a part of who I am and I see people responding in a positive way to that.

*Karissa:* It started with an "I can breathe so much deeper" [Afr. *Ek kan so lekker dieper asemhaal*]. It's just so incredibly enriching to be able to listen with greater understanding and see people in a different light. In my own life it touched me profoundly [Afr. *In my eie lewe het dit my baie diep geraak*].

I believe that if we collaborate in pastoral care where we learn both the capacity to listen and to practise an embodied awareness, we will find ourselves called equally into a ministry of care and participation, and into a 'ministry of social and cultural

transformation' (Gerkin 1997:92).

The next section explores how this journey of caring with and knowing with invites Scripture and dogma into the participatory conversation as conversational partners.

### **3.2.5 The role of Scripture and dogma**

We can see participatory pastoral care as an ethical and embodied awareness that breathes life into a kind of caring that aspires to heal and not to hurt. Such care challenges us to be in the caring situation with people, Scripture and dogma in new and respectful ways. In a participatory approach, a pastoral care conversation is seen as 'inter-related' with various participants such as 'religious documents (e.g. Scripture), theological traditions, ecology, women, children, caregivers and care receivers' (Roux et al 2003a:40). I agree with Roux et al (2003a:40) that this variety and these diverse conversations and discourses all participate in and contribute to ethical participatory care.

#### **3.2.5.1 Scripture as participant**

The PPC training not only focuses on each person's understanding of God and spirituality, as discussed in Section 3.2.1, but it also explores how these understandings influence and affect the participants' understanding of Scripture, and the role Scripture plays in their care-giving (Roux 1996:200).

In a participatory pastoral care conversation, the Bible or the 'people's book' (Cochrane et al 1991:20) becomes a companion in the conversation that also calls together and helps to create a sense of community which is a 'catalyst for God's work in our world' (McLaren 2001:53). Thus, by means of co-formulation and co-construction, the 'Story of God becomes a conversational partner in the pastoral encounter' (Botha 1998:160) that helps us to create a sense of community and allows God to work in the pastoral care conversation. In addition, when we see Scripture as a companion that helps to create a sense of community and allows God to work, we can rediscover Scripture for what it really is, namely

an ancient book of incredible spiritual value for us, a kind of universal and cosmic history, a book that tells us who we are and what story we find ourselves in so that we know what to do and how to live.

(McLaren 2001:52)

Based on this understanding of the role of Scripture, I agree with McLaren (2001:52) that we have to let go of the Bible as a modern 'answer-book' in the pastoral conversation, but could rather regard Scripture as an open-ended story that does not stop at the end of the collection of biblical texts. '[I]t concerns the activity of God in all history, a story that continues in the present and is to be fulfilled in the future' (Gerkin 1986:48). The story of God continues even though people live in pluralistic realities, because a 'thousand different voices' in Scripture open up 'the collective and cultural memory of people struggling to live in relationship with God' (Ackermann 2003:44). As a result, the 'pluralism of the Bible reflects the pluralism of religious experience and of perceptions of life generally' (Pattison 2000a:131).

### **3.2.5.2 Everyone has a valid understanding**

Therefore seeing Scripture as presenting us with the activity of God in all history, a pluralistic story that continues in the present and that is to be fulfilled in the future has several implications for a participatory pastoral care conversation.

Roux et al (2003a:56) argue that in such an inter-related conversation with all the above participants, both the person who gives care and the person who receives it has 'a valid understanding of who God is, of how He/She reveals Him-/Herself in Scripture and of what God intends' the lives of the giver and the receiver of care to be.

If all reality is socially constructed, constituted through narrative, and organized and maintained through stories, then we need to allow for the possibility of several meanings of the divine story as it has been mediated through the Bible and religious traditions.

(Anderson & Foley 1998:18)

These valid understandings of who God is take central stage because we 'know God's

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revelation only indirectly, in the form of human experience' (Heitink 1999a:111). If we acknowledge that the caregiver and care receiver both have a valid understanding of Scripture and God, the caregiver's understanding of Scripture cannot be used in a 'prescriptive' (Kotzé 2002:16) way in a participatory pastoral approach.

Because in a participatory approach, we acknowledge these different understandings while accepting that the 'Bible as literature discloses God' (Herholdt 1998:223), we also have to acknowledge that the Bible still calls for interpretation (Kotzé 2002:15). Within a postmodern paradigm, all knowledge is seen as 'part of a continuous stream of interpretation – *we cannot not interpret* (Kotzé 2002:15) [Kotzé's emphasis]. In this regard, McMinn (2001:17) notes that postmodernity provides an opportunity for Christian scholars to 'recognize that even perfect truth must be interpreted by fallen humans'. McLaren (2001:50) therefore emphasises that people in postmodernity know that no interpretation of the Bible is infallible. Consequently, participants in the PPC training are encouraged to realise and explore the lenses of grids (McLaren 2001:50) through which they interpret the Bible. Most of the participants have reported that this exploration of the grids through which they interpret Scripture have created in them an urge and hunger to re-read the Bible in a fresh way.

When Scripture therefore participates in a participatory pastoral care conversation, the interpretation of Scripture is a 'mutual, inter-subjective interpretation...reached through dialogical conversation' (Roux et al 2003a:57). Given the collaborative nature of a participatory approach to care, interpretation of Scripture is something 'both partners in conversation can subscribe to but at the same time present for deconstruction<sup>28</sup> and reinterpretation' (Roux et al 2003a:57). Consequently, I agree with Roux et al (2003a:56) when they emphasise that the use of Scripture and dogma in a pastoral care conversation 'has a lot to do with the responsibility of both partners'.

Pattison (2000a:132) expresses a similar view to Roux et al (2003a) when he writes that the Bible needs a constant re-interpretation and re-expression of new meaning in

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<sup>28</sup> Deconstruction is a postmodern approach to exploring meaning by taking apart and examining taken-for-granted categories and assumptions, making possible newer and sounder constructions of meaning (Nichols & Schwartz 2005:262).

different words if it is to be related to contemporary needs and situations. As a result, the interpretation of Scripture becomes a 'communal affair' (Goodliff 1998:211) as we wrestle with the world and its realities in a pastoral conversation. In this regard, Gerkin (1991:19) notes that pastoral work virtually always 'involves tending this dialogical relationship in which both the particularity of the situation at hand and the horizon of meaning contained in the Christian story become open to reassessment, reevaluation, and reinterpretation'.

When we participate with Scripture as a conversational partner in co-constructing a participatory pastoral care approach, some of the important aspects that we need to bear in mind seem to be the following (adapted from Roux et al 2003a:57-58):

- using the valid understanding of the person in need of care;
- using terminology and phrases that the person in need of care uses;
- seeing the person in need of care as the author of his/her life story (Gerkin 1984:114); allowing him/her to give meaning to his/her life within his/her own context in collaboration with other human stories and with the divine story; and
- understanding the person in need of care and not convincing him/her of your own truths, because pastoral care is not about evangelisation or Christian education.

I also agree with Bosch (1991:489) that in this constant reassessment and reinterpretation we admit that we do not have all the answers in the pastoral conversation. In addition, we are prepared to live within the framework of incomplete knowledge. Our involvement in pastoral conversations is therefore seen as an adventure in which we are prepared to take risks while anticipating surprises as the Spirit guides us to fuller understanding. In this reassessment, we opt for bold humility and humble boldness. We know only in part, but we do know.



### **3.2.6 A collaborative journey**

In this section, I only briefly discuss the collaborative nature of participatory pastoral care conversation, as in the next chapter I explore the practices that make such a collaborative pastoral journey possible in great detail. As I mentioned in the previous sections, this collaborative journey consists of doing spirituality with those in need of care, connectedness, knowing with and being in a participatory mode of consciousness.

In a participatory approach to pastoral care, the caregiver and the person who receives care are equal participants in the conversation and in the process of negotiating meaning (Harlene Anderson 1997:71). The expert local knowledges of both conversational partners (Harlene Anderson 1997:67) are co-constructed in ‘the context of an open conversation that includes a multiplicity of perspectives without awarding a privileged position to any one perspective’ (Boyd 1998:313). A participatory pastoral care journey therefore goes beyond ‘hermeneutics towards co-construction’ because the ‘inter-subjective position of this approach abolishes dichotomies (Word of God versus psychology/sociology) and hermeneutical bi-polarity’ (Roux et al 2003a:40). This partnership in co-construction gives a pastoral conversation a collaborative character (Roux et al 2003a:17) because we privilege and respect the local knowledges of the people we care with and journey with.

As a result, the caregiver and care receiver are conversational partners whose expertise combine and merge in the ‘telling, inquiring, interpreting, and shaping of narratives’ (Harlene Anderson 1997:95). In the social constructionist view of knowledge which this research journey uses as a lens, the emphasis is ‘relationally co-created expertise rather than expertise as a scientific body of knowledge’ (Boyd 1998:314). Although the caregiver may perceive the care receiver’s knowledge as “wrong” or as “distorted”, this knowledge or understanding is the [care receiver’s] way of creating meaning of reality and should be respected’ (Roux et al 2003a:56). In this co-constructed journey of care, a pastoral caregiver therefore ‘develop[s] expertise in facilitating an open-end[ed] collaborative pastoral conversation’ (Boyd 1998:318) that includes respect for the other while negotiating meaning.

Given the collaborative nature of postmodern pastoral conversations, I share Boyd's (1998:317) view that within this approach to pastoral care one can only be on the way to an understanding. Like Boyd, Roux et al (2003b:37) explain that our understanding remains limited in various ways:

In true participation understanding can only be approximated through what one thinks the other is saying. What you understand of what we are saying is not exactly what we are saying, but what you *do* with what we are saying! The more we can engage in conversation, the closer we can come to mutual understanding, or participatory consciousness.

(Roux et al 2003b:37) [Roux et al's emphasis]

In addition to respectfully negotiating meaning, a participatory approach co-creates a 'collaborative conversational process creative of new alternatives and new future stories' (Boyd 1998:319) that is meaningful to the care receiver. A participatory pastoral caregiver is therefore someone who '*conspires and collaborates with others in the struggle to bring forth new life and hope*' (Billman 1996:11) [Billman's emphasis]. In this collaborative journey, caregivers co-labour (Billman 1996:30) with care receivers to name needs, hopes and strategies in the participatory pastoral care conversation.

In such a participatory conversational journey, the extraordinary power to re-describe reality with people comes to the fore. A collaborative pastoral conversation co-constructs previous stories and, in doing so, interprets and alters a previous reality. The new co-constructed story is in itself a novel and alternative story with an alternative ethical stance and view. In this conversational space, we therefore experience the metamorphosis of a story of the self and of relationships, as the Red Shoe Co-Researchers agreed. A participatory pastoral conversation implies that we enter into an ongoing linguistic co-construction process in which stories and the reality they represent in respect of the self, relationships and society change or are transformed (Botha 1998:387).

Doing spirituality in a participatory pastoral care conversation therefore aims to bring about, by means of 'co-formulation or co-construction – an understanding of what it is

that God requires of us in our particular circumstances' (Roux et al 2003a:56-57) through a dialogue between religious documents (such as Scripture), theological traditions, ecology, women, children, caregivers and care receivers in inter-related participation. As a result, both the storyteller and the listener co-construct the conversation as a theological conversation, even if the story of God is not explicitly tabled (Botha 1998:159; Clinebell 1984:123).

The benefits of a participatory pastoral care approach have been discussed above. In the next section, I look at the title given to participants who have completed the PPC training.

### **3.3 PARTICIPATORY PASTORAL CAREGIVERS**

When participants finish their PPC training, they are referred to as participatory pastoral caregivers. By contrast, in other training models for pastoral workers, the trainees are sometimes referred to as lay counsellors or paraprofessionals. When Roux (1996:100-101) chose a name or title to call the pastoral trainees that he originally participated in PPC training with, he chose to keep the context of the faith community clear and not to play into the hands of the hierarchy of the church and somehow give the impression that the kind of care that these participants engage with is second-best in some way. In this, he showed his awareness of the arguments of Clinebell (1984:397). As a result, he chose the title 'pastoral caregiver'. The qualifier 'participatory' was added later to represent a very important value of this approach to care and practical theology. When I facilitated PPC training groups during the past two years, the subject of naming those who completed the training 'participatory pastoral caregivers' was repeatedly raised. In line with feminist theology, as described in Section 2.4.5, I believe that the power of naming is the core of empowering people and cultures that have been disenfranchised (Cozad Neuger 2001:71). Hence, it was very important to me to invite the Red Shoe Co-Researchers as well as all the other participants of the groups I facilitated to voice their understandings of and to participate in the conversation regarding their understandings of this name or label. We therefore explore embedded assumptions about the name and label, as well as some of the diverse meanings attributed to this name-giving process, by exploring the following question explicitly posed by White (1991:40): 'What's in a word?'

and White's (1991:40) answer, 'a world!'

In order for us to understand this world in a word, the sections below are linked with the following questions posed by White (1995:119): 'What knowledges are privileged in a particular process of naming, and what knowledges are rendered irrelevant or are disqualified in this process?' I remind the reader that the discussion documented in the section below was co-constructed with the PPC participants in White River over the last two years, and that it informs us as practical theologians from below. In the sections that follow, ordinary believers share some of their everyday experiences of the taken-for-granted familiar naming we so often and easily use in the field of practical theology.

### **3.3.1 Pastoral?**

The first world that we explore is enfolded in the word 'pastoral'. For several of the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004), the term pastoral was an unfamiliar term. When they told some of their friends about the Participatory *Pastoral* Care training they were involved in, the participants received mixed reactions. Some of their friends thought that the term pastoral had either to do with some picturesque scenery or the herding of sheep (Pattison 2000a:226). The participants, their friends and family were therefore confronted with an agricultural-sounding term attached to the practical work of leading churches (Pattison 2000a:225), and the participants have nothing to do with either the world of farming nor with leading churches.

Some of the PPC training participants' friends, especially those outside any institutionalised church context, regarded the term pastoral as archaic because they had never heard of the word and as a result did not know what it meant. The word pastoral therefore excluded some people from any understanding of what kind of care the participants were presenting them with (Pattison 2000a:9).

A number of the participants commented that the word pastoral sounded too much like church [Afr. *kerkerig*] for them. Roux (1996) believed his choice to include the word pastoral in the label and title for the participants of PPC training to be important in situating pastoral caregivers within a Christian faith community and church. This

implication of the term is also argued by Heitink (1998:13). I believe that Roux's (1996) choice flowed from his understanding of a faith community that values the priesthood of all believers.

The word pastoral does become problematic, however, when the church operates on the basis of a hierarchical understanding in which the priesthood of all believers is not acknowledged. In such an understanding, there is no room for trained believers to participate in the care of the congregation, because it is the pastor's work to care. Furthermore, the institutional church has in some instances become an agent of hurt and abuse. Section 3.3.3 explores more fully why the connection of the term pastoral with a church community is problematic for some.

The term pastoral reminds many people of the word 'pastor' and quite a few of the participants commented that their friends asked them whether they are now becoming pastors through the PPC training. For some people that the participants interacted with, all the meanings of what a pastor can and should do came to mind and portrayed a different kind of care from that which participatory pastoral caregivers engage in and with. The knowledges that are privileged in using the term pastoral are therefore mostly the bodies of knowledge that speak from an expert hierarchical church position (Heitink 1998:28). The knowledges of ordinary believers are sometimes rendered irrelevant and disqualified by the word pastoral, because in a hierarchical understanding of the concept of church, they do not have knowledge, are not allowed to speak and as a result the care that they will provide will have to be second best.

Despite all the above explorations and meanings of the word pastoral, some participants value the distinctly Christian ring that the word pastoral and the world that it implies unlocks. These participants acknowledge the expertise that a pastoral therapist or caregiver can bring to their Christian understanding of life, as opposed to what the worlds of psychology and psychotherapy offer, because the latter worlds sometimes ignore or even criticize (McMinn 2001:15) the influence of pastoral values on their lives.

As can be seen from the above explorations, various worlds and meanings are unlocked or closed off by the use of one single word. What happens when we add the word 'care'

to pastoral?

### **3.3.2 Pastoral care?**

According to Louw (1998:21), the ‘term “pastoral care” is not truly a biblical concept, but stems from ancient [Greek] tradition. In the Greek world, “soul care” was concerned with the development of those ideological elements and ideas which could influence people’s attitudes and enable them to deal with life more effectively’. Louw (1998:21) explains how the Christian tradition accepted the term pastoral care and adds that a variety of additional nuances of the term were constructed over the years:

The more orthodox approach, with the accent on the church and its offices, regarded 'pastoral care' as a learning process aimed at better knowledge and insight into ecclesiastical doctrine. The reformed tradition focused on the purification and sanctification of human life as a result of following Christ. In this approach discipline played an important role in caring. Pietism put the emphasis once again on individual conversion. The influence of the Enlightenment can be discerned in those approaches which viewed pastoral care as the development of virtue and the promotion of human autonomy. Under the influence of psychology, 'soul care' is often understood as the transformation of human beings through psychoanalysis or other psychotherapeutic techniques in order to encourage self-realization.

From this brief historical description, we can see how different contexts and paradigms have culminated over time in different shifts, approaches, languages, emphases and metaphors regarding pastoral care (Gerkin 1997:25). These different languages and views regarding the word and world of pastoral care are therefore informed by the social and cultural shifts that take place over time, as reflected by the following comment by a co-researcher:

*Coba: We are speaking in different languages about care [Afr. Ons praat verskillende tale oor sorg].*

From people’s reactions to the naming of the PPC participants in the previous section, we see how the language of pastoral care still predominantly speaks about the role of

the pastor. The literature, the history and written work regarding pastoral care also emphasises the role of the pastor in this field (Roux 1996:1; Pattison 2000a:12). In this regard, Shires (1983:8) questions the helpfulness of the term pastoral care if it serves to 'limit our understanding only to a special and specialized class of trained servants, the clergy'. Certainly the word pastoral may describe part of what a pastor does, but does this term or label then in effect limit who cares?

Does pastoral care itself indicate that 'caring' is either a very technical term, not to be tampered with or handled by the lay-person like some instrument of the surgeon; or that 'caring' is itself only 'pastoral' to be done only by the pastor?

(Shires 1983:7)

Because distinctions between the clergy and laity are sometimes still dominant in the discourses used in a church context, certain descriptions and expectations are assigned to these categories. Moreover, because the institutionalisation of the church has long been characterised by some form of hierarchy, 'certain dignitaries are made responsible for activities that are an inseparable part of the Christian life' (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:2). As a result, the caring activities of the church are left to assigned people, mostly in the form of paid personnel, in particular, the pastor. Therefore the 'language of dualism is a language laden with value judgements and as such bolsters hierarchy and the divisions between people that such a system implies' (Isherwood & McEwan 1993:106).

Given these distinctions and divisions between the laity and the clergy it might be difficult for some members of congregations to accommodate the existence and care of caregivers, or even to trust pastoral caregivers if they still see the pastor as the sole provider of care in the congregation. In addition, the frequent overemphasis of the pastor's role in pastoral care led Roux (1996:1) to argue that this was a reason for the lack of training available to believers to care with others. This argument is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

The world opened up by the term pastoral care leaves participants in the PPC training in a somewhat in-between space. On the one hand, they are not pastors whose duty it is to

care and who is expected to care. On the other hand, they are no longer laypersons, because they have been trained to participate in the pastoral care of the congregation. Moreover, in some senses, they are also restricted in their caring practices, as some members of the congregation still perceive the paid pastor as the (only) one who can and must really care.

But are there other reasons why the term pastoral care does not always help the PPC training participants and the people that they interact with?

### ***3.3.3 When bad Christians happen to good people<sup>29</sup>***

Because the history of some church denominations is somewhat questionable, a number of people perceive the church as a place for hypocrites, a place where you will be hurt, abused and judged (Yancey 2001:1-10). Therefore several of the participants suggested that to refer to themselves as pastoral caregivers might marginalize them. Using this term would identify them in their title or label as being part of an institution that sometimes hurts and abuses people. This label or title would then limit the caregivers' opportunities to care for whoever crosses their path in society. As a result they experience this title as a barrier to their caring practices.

Consequently the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) dared to ask whether we should call or label our care pastoral in the times in which we live: 'Can't we just call it Christian instead of pastoral'? Yet again, some of the co-researchers wondered whether we can label our care Christian care. A few of the participants even felt that the term 'Christian care' (Shires 1983:9) has become problematic, because over the years it seems that both the church and Christians have not always been as graceful and compassionate as Jesus called his followers to be.

If some of the participants felt that the term pastoral care evoked a world of hurt and abuse, all did not feel that way. In the next section, I explain the world that is opened up when participatory pastoral caregivers enter.

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<sup>29</sup> *When bad Christians happen to good people* is the title of a book written by Dave Burchett (2002) regarding the subject of hurt inflicted by Christians in the church.



### **3.3.4 Participatory pastoral caregivers**

Despite all the meanings that the words pastoral care unlocks, as discussed in the previous few sections, participatory pastoral care challenges quite a few of these old assumptions and paradigms. As I have already extensively discussed the benefits of a participatory approach in Section 3.2, here I only address the issues and benefits that have not yet been explored.

The word 'participatory' opens the dance floor for the red shoes of ordinary believers as a place and a space dominated by the hierarchical language of the clergy for a very long time. Not only does it invite the participants of the PPC training to enter, but those that they journey with also find themselves in spaces of grace where their voices are valued and respected as the voices of theologians. This might lead some people to wonder whether these participatory actions are real.

Sometimes it helps to describe a phenomenon in terms of what it is not, or perhaps in terms of what it is a little bit like. The next two sections must be read in the light of Section 3.2, as what participatory pastoral care is or what we think it is, has already been described there.

#### **3.3.4.1 More than mutual care**

The interchangeability of the term pastoral care with the concept of the work that a pastor does, that lay counsellors do and that the congregation must do, can be confusing. Sometimes what the pastor does is referred to as pastoral care, while mutual care is something that ordinary believers do or the whole congregation should do. Participatory pastoral care is built on the values of mutual care as the 'personal, loving, dialogic concern of one person for another' (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:14), based on an understanding of the church as a community of believers. In addition, care is valued as the 'reciprocal responsibility and reciprocal need [within] a communion of interdependence' (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:15). I therefore believe that mutual care must and does inform participatory pastoral care and forms the basis of all such interactions (Heitink 1998:34). In this regard, Boyd (1996:223) describes these kinds of interactions as informed by 'agape-love' and portrays this '*reciprocal caring* as the basic

Christian way-of-being' [Boyd's emphasis].

But this participatory approach also has a broader vision of care, as 'every bit of listening, empathy, understanding, encouragement, and comfort' (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:14-15) is shared through caring with all who are in need. In this broader view of care, a participatory approach to care also values hospitality, which is understood as 'the creation of a free and friendly space where we can reach out to strangers and invite them to become friends' (Nouwen 1975:79). This reaching out to strangers is also informed by a kind of grace that claims that 'God's love and assurance surround a person before she or he even knows that it exists' (Cozad Neuger 2001:57). Cozad Neuger (2001:58) believes that this kind of grace communicates to the care receiver that his/her reality is to be taken seriously, his/her experience is to be valued, and his/her being is that which is beloved, in particular, beloved by God. As a result, a pastoral caregiver puts him-/herself in the stream of such a sense of grace in order to participate and communicate it to other people.

The words of the priest at the end of the movie *Chocolat* reflect the creation of such spaces of grace when he says: "You can't measure goodness by what you do. You can measure goodness by what you embrace and create, who you include not exclude." But creating spaces of grace implies taking a risk by assuming such a graceful and non-judgemental position. The above ideas regarding inclusiveness made the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) wonder whether they are scared to be as inclusive and graceful as Vianne, because then they might be excluded and judged again in some way by society or Christian society. The risk also remains that participants in the PPC training may exclude some whilst they include others, such as some marginalized people, as Vianne does. Sections 8.4.1.1 and 8.4.1.2 explore the effect of the training on the close relationships of the participants and provide suggestions for further action regarding resistance experienced during the PPC training.

Often the terms pastoral care and counselling are used interchangeably, as if they mean the same thing. In the next section, I explain my understanding of the difference between these terms.

### 3.3.4.2 Not pastoral counselling

In his explanation of the difference between pastoral care and counselling, Clinebell (1984:26) argues as follows:

Pastoral care is the broad, inclusive ministry of mutual healing and growth within a congregation and its community, through the life cycle. Pastoral counseling, one dimension of pastoral care, is the utilization of a variety of healing (therapeutic) methods to help people handle their problems and crises more growthfully and thus experience healing of their brokenness.... People need pastoral care throughout their lives. They may need pastoral counseling at times of severe crises, usually on a short-term basis.

Heitink (1998:18) also distinguishes between care and counselling. He refers to general care (*cura generalis*) and individual or special care (*cura specialis*). He describes general care (*cura generalis*) as the mutual care that Christians owe one another and special care (*cura specialis*) as pastoral care that is given to an individual by a pastor with training in pastoral care and counselling.

In contrast to Clinebell's and Heitink's explanation and approaches to pastoral care, participatory pastoral care has a broader vision of care that transcends congregational life, as explained in Section 3.3.4.1 above. Although a participatory approach to pastoral care does engage with healing practices, the idea of growth as presented by Clinebell (1984) is replaced by the value of transformation as an outcome in being with people in need of care. Heitink's emphasis on special care given by pastors has already been discussed in Section 3.3.1.

Perhaps it would be helpful to say what the PPC training is not, in relation and as an answer to the approaches presented by Clinebell and Heitink in the above quotations. In this regard, I agree with Roux (1996:100), who explains that he does not want to take an opposing stance toward these approaches, but sees them as narratives within a pastoral training discourse. The unpacking of what the PPC training is not aimed at creating an us/them, a right/wrong, better/worse dichotomous conversation, but a conversation that wants to elucidate and participate in understanding the naming of our experience.

PPC training does not train people as pastoral counsellors because, according to Roux et al (2003a:13), the word counselling is derived from the Latin word *consilium*, which describes a situation where 'someone is either giving or asking for counsel or advice'.<sup>30</sup> A number of the participants' previous care constructions were founded on giving advice, and sometimes unwanted advice, with quick fixes, assuming that that is precisely what the other person needs. Amongst some of the participants, there was a readiness to turn what they thought they saw as wrong in a situation or person 'into speech that states and teaches' (Fillingham 1993:67).

*Benita:* My story of care before the training could be described as somewhat careless, tactless and packing their story with unnecessary information, i.e. extracting information for my curiosity. I would be assuming, giving advice, full of compliments, patronizing and then there were the answers or quick fixes.

*Leonie:* I frequently had the solution all worked out while I was still listening to the people. My previous listening actions were guided by old methods with the appropriate steps that needed to be taken.

Some of the participants just wanted to make those they cared for better as soon as possible:

*Leonie:* It was a concern to improve matters immediately, to give the right advice. I rather advised than listened. The moment I found a connection in somebody's story, I thought I understood and sometimes I told my story.

Participatory pastoral care is therefore not counselling where a knowledgeable advisor, guide or expert gives advice or counsel to a non-expert. The choice not to use the word counsellor also has to do with the expert connotations attached to this term. Roux et al (2003a:15) therefore explain that pastoral counselling is

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<sup>30</sup> Instead of counselling, we rather create a council of equal caring. The term 'council' comes from the Latin *concilium*, which means a 'bringing together...a union, connexion...a coming together' (*Cassell's Latin – English Dictionary* 1993:126).

informed by the modernist ideas of applied knowledge as the only cure to the difficulties people experience in life. In this context both the DSM-IV<sup>31</sup> and the Bible could serve as authoritative documents containing knowledge to be applied to all people under all conditions at all times.

‘Participatory pastoral caregivers’ is the title that at this stage best describes the caring practices that participants engage with. How can we remain open to naming and re-naming our experiences?

### **3.3.5 Interactive co-journeymers**

Given the background of all these terms and words, it is clear that words are not ‘neutral but value laden signs’. The title participatory pastoral caregivers therefore immediately reproduces ‘power-relationships’ (Van Wyk 1999:8) in the lives of the participants. These power relationships have the potential to exclude the participants from caring on several accounts: the role of the pastor and what he/she expects and what is expected of him/her, the history of the church and Christians and the participants’ status as ordinary believers in the church. As a result we could see how this naming is and became a ‘political act’ (Gergen 2001:6), which opened up and closed out worlds for the participants.

We have spent some time exploring how the title and label participatory pastoral caregiver closed worlds through the meaning that it carried with it. However, I believe that this title or term can also open up worlds for the participants when the church is seen as a community of God where every member is called into the priesthood of all believers.

Another option for the participants to find a place in naming their experience is to co-construct another name or title than participatory pastoral caregivers. Hence, the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) proposed the label ‘interactive co-journeymers’ as opposed to participatory pastoral caregivers. The participants recounted that interactive co-

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<sup>31</sup> Roux et al (2003a:20) describe the DSM-IV as the abbreviation for the ‘*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* prepared and published by the American Psychiatric Association. [The] DSM-IV is the major guide of classification, treatment and prognosis of psychological and psychiatric disorders.’

journeying is what they do when they journey with people. They come alongside care receivers and participate and collaborate with them, starting from where they are in their own lives. Pursuing the meanings they attached to this proposed title, the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) also asked the following question: Can't people experience this participatory pastoral care and ask about its origins afterwards? Although that might be an option, we do live in a society where education has become a very important focus for re-constructing the new South Africa. As a result, labelling training in care where other forms of pastoral training do exist is very important, as we need to distinguish the PPC training from other forms of training in some way. I therefore believe that, given the participatory nature of the training journey, the act of co-constructing a label and title must continue as we negotiate language to 'name our experience' (Isherwood & McEwan 1993:108).

### **3.4 CLOSING REMARKS**

In this chapter we were introduced to some of the voices and lived experiences of the participants and facilitators of the PPC training as they reflected on a participatory approach to pastoral care, as well as the term participatory pastoral caregivers. We looked at participatory caring ways that spoke of inclusion rather than exclusion, connection as opposed to isolation by polite stares. As we live in diverse and rapidly changing societies, we are enlightened by a participatory approach to pastoral care that takes on these challenges of inclusion in new and innovative ways.

In the next chapter, we explore how the red shoes of care walk and repair this world as we embark on a journey through the landscape of Narrative and collaborative approaches to pastoral care. We reflect, in a dialogue with the PPC participants and academics, on possibilities for care in a postmodern society as we do spirituality together. Again the background for the stories of transformation in the co-researchers' lives, relationships and contexts is explored through the lens of the practices that led to these transformations.

## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

### **RED SHOES FOR TIRED FEET**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The further exploration of the red shoe caring practices of participatory pastoral care in this chapter looks closely at the struggle with the 'dailiness of faithkeeping in the midst of life's assaults and obscenities' (Weems 1995:xv). Again my fellow travellers in the research journey, the participants in the PPC training, shared their knowledges through the narratives of their lives. In this process, we created 'new forms of narrative agency', as suggested by Chopp (1995:34). In honouring this narrative agency I would like to remind the reader that a postmodern attention to the 'living human document' (Boisen quoted by Patton 1994:35) is therefore

continuous with the older meaning of that phrase in asserting that the text is not just the written verbatim, the tape recorded interview or transcription. It includes at least the following: (a) an *act of ministry*, (b) the *community* authorizing the ministry; (c) the *persons* involved in the event and the histories they bring to it; (d) the *character of the interaction* described; (e) the developing *relationship* between the persons involved; (f) *theoretical concepts* used in interpreting all elements of the text.

(Patton 1994:35) [Patton's emphases]

Like Patton (1994:41), I see the research text as voicing a 'pastoral drama' in which a variety of means were employed to speak to the audience, the reader of the research document. I believe that this text calls on practical theologians, therapists and trainers within pastoral education 'to respect the specificity and limitation of the...pastoral text, recognizing that it cannot do everything pastorally or theologically, but [that] it may offer us enough for our work today' (Patton 1994:41). This chapter therefore focuses on the concrete practices of participatory pastoral care within a Narrative approach (White & Epston 1990) and a collaborative therapy approach (Harlene Anderson 1997). I believe that Narrative and collaborative approaches to pastoral care meet the challenge of finding 'ethics in ways that will be open for participation by all' (Kotzé 2002:20) and thus

provide red shoes for tired feet.

Section 4.2 explores the emphasis on storying in both the Narrative and the collaborative approaches, while connecting storying to the practices of a participatory pastoral care approach. Section 4.3 gives a brief overview of the benefits of a Narrative approach. Section 4.4 elucidates how a collaborative approach can be incarnated in conversational practices whilst valuing ‘*connecting, collaborating, and constructing*’ (Harlene Anderson 1997:133) [Anderson’s emphasis].

## **4.2 STORY**

One of the co-researchers remarked the following:

*Patricia:* My own insight into the influence of people’s stories has improved and the finding of answers within their stories has been remarkable.

According to Gergen and Gergen (2003d:159), a Narrative approach draws its sustenance from a constructionist emphasis on language, and particularly the way in which the understanding of ourselves is cast in ‘narrative structure or “life stories”’. Such socially constructed realities are organised and maintained by stories that are personal, complex, multifaceted, familial and cultural, as they carry meaning at a variety of levels. The strength of such a social constructionist position is that each person’s story is seen and valued for its uniqueness and within its own particular context, so that generalizations are avoided, limiting the power that any one story can have over another story (Cozad Neuger 2001:67).

Within these life stories, we not only tell stories in order to live, but we are our stories (Anderson & Foley<sup>32</sup> 1998:4-5) from which we then construct our sense of identity (Louw 2003:144). In the words of Harlene Anderson (1997:216), we ‘live our narratives and our narratives become our way of living; our realities become our stories and stories become

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<sup>32</sup> Anderson and Foley (1998) focus on the link between narrative and ritual in their book, *Mighty stories, dangerous rituals: Weaving together the human and the divine*, and I want to tap into their wisdom on the mighty and powerful effect of stories, as I use their ideas in this chapter. The wisdom they share connects to Narrative therapy values and the story of the Divine, which both play an important part in a participatory pastoral care approach.



our realities'. We therefore do not simply recount our stories, but we tell what happened from our understanding, interpretation and perspective (Anderson & Foley 1998:5). These stories and narratives do not exist in our heads in an orderly, linear and pre-packed format, ready to be told. 'Every telling of a story is a re-telling – not in the sense of duplicating the previous and existing story, but in the sense of co-constructing a new story' (Botha 1998:390). Within a Narrative approach, people are therefore invited to tell their stories, but also to reformulate a more fulfilling life narrative.

Because the 'power of interpretation is ours', it is always 'possible to narrate our lives in another way' (Anderson & Foley 1998:12). As a result, stories are not only heard or told in a pastoral conversation, but they are also created (Anderson & Foley 1998:4). Out of a rather loose collection of events in a storyteller's life and in the presence of a pastoral caregiver's being and story, a new story is told (Freedman & Combs 1996) that is a co-construction of a reality and identity that brings forth new worlds of possibility. We 'continuously and actively author and co-author' (Anderson & Foley 1998:7) our own life narratives. In telling and re-telling our life stories, not only does a new story emerge, but we as the tellers change in our relationship to the stories as 'the narrating self changes' (Harlene Anderson 1997:109). How these stories are re-written, and not only in the telling as mentioned above, and co-constructed as new or alternative stories, is discussed in more detail in Section 4.3.4.

This co-construction of the new story is also cast in the light of the Story of God if that is something that the care receiver would like to include in the conversation. This opens up different possibilities: 'When we weave together the human and the Divine, we are attentive to another story that is not completely our own, a narrative that has the power to transform (Anderson & Foley 1998:7). Ordinary believers can also understand God as one of the co-authors of their story with the power to transform them and take them to new places (Anderson & Foley 1998:19). In addition, because stories are 'mighty', they also have the 'power to unsettle the lives we have comfortably shaped' (Anderson & Foley 1998:7) and created through them. Where a care receiver sees fit, his/her present life stories can also be challenged and transformed, as is explored further in Section 4.3.4.

The meanings and understandings that people make of themselves and these life stories are negotiated in an open and spontaneous conversation, as discussed in more detail in Section 4.4. The role of a participatory pastoral caregiver is therefore to facilitate and participate in the telling and retelling of stories (Harlene Anderson 1997:96), in a way which leaves the care receiver 'narratively resourced' (White 2004:34). In this facilitation and participatory process, a pastoral caregiver must try to hold all the story themes that are presented to him/her in safekeeping, even the contradictory ones, as the whole story is gathered (Cozad Neuger 2001:52). The stance of a pastoral caregiver is that of a compassionate, curious and respectful listener who pays careful attention to the story in order to find subplots that could assist the caregiver in resisting problem-saturated narratives and oppressive discourses (Cozad Neuger 2001:87).

As a result, Narrative therapy relates to the storied quality of our humanness (White 1995:11-40), which does not only mirror life but also shapes it (Nichols & Schwartz 2005:250). The use of story or narrative in a pastoral care conversation also accords with my belief in its 'transformative power' (Harlene Anderson 1997:148).

### **4.3 A NARRATIVE APPROACH**

A Narrative approach is one of the lenses used within the PPC training as an approach to care that the participants are trained in. It is also one of the approaches employed in this research journey in both the documenting of the journey and as a research method. Narrative therapy began with family therapists in Australia and New Zealand, originating from the work of Michael White and David Epston in the 1980's (Cooper & Lesser 2005:162). This approach to therapy is based on a poststructuralist and postmodern epistemology (White & Epston 1990), as discussed in Section 2.2. The next section looks at my choice of a Narrative approach within a participatory pastoral care approach, as numerous books (Freedman & Combs 1996; White & Epston 1990) and articles have been written on this approach.

#### **4.3.1 A respectful and non-blaming approach**

'Narrative therapy seeks to be a respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling and

community work' (Morgan 2000:2). As a result we can ask the following questions: What is respect? Is respect just tolerating the other (DTh Group 2004)? According to the *Oxford School dictionary*, the word respect as a verb is derived from two Latin words, namely *re*, which means back, and *specere*, which means to look. If we unpack the word respect in the light of these meanings, it has to do with our actions of looking back or looking again. As a result, the word respect can be seen as looking again and anew at people, which is much more than merely tolerating the other. Vella (1994:70) argues that seeing again also implies hearing again.

Some of my fellow travellers in the research journey felt that in line with such respectful ways of seeing people and being with them, we should not trample on people's lives when we listen to their stories, but tread lightly when we journey with them on their holy ground. Harlene Anderson (1997:99) explains that we are guests who visit care receivers for a brief moment as we participate with them in a small slice of their life. Again, with this approach, care is done *with* people rather than *to* or *for* people (Nichols & Schwartz 2005:216).

As we care with people, I concur with Becvar (1997:79) that 'we already create spiritually-infused relationships as we accept, honor, respect, and behave in humane ways' with the people we journey with. Several of the participants reported that respect is both the value they learned more about in the PPC training and the value in their own life that was most challenged. The value of respect therefore brought about transformation in the co-researchers' ways of being with people in need of care:

*Megan:* The training has deeply challenged my thinking and influenced my behaviour in the areas of the importance of respectful practices.

*Benita:* My story of care after the training could be described as being more aware about 'attention to detail'. By this I mean being more tactful and using skills to be aware of not assuming things and using values like respect and being transparent.

*Leonie:* From the first day the word 'respectful' acquired new meaning for me. Not to judge and categorise people is how I will refer to my story of care from now on. I sometimes wish I could start from scratch in my listening to

people [Afr. *Ek wens soms ek kon my luister na mense oordoen*].

*Desbe*: My story of care has deepened and broadened. I have a deep respect for all people now and realise that care goes far beyond caring for people I feel comfortable with.

*Ann*: I learnt to treat people with more respect. I now have a better understanding of where every one comes from. I have more respect for what is right for each one and where the person is in his/her own story. I've grown a great deal in the process and I recognise the hand of the Lord in this.

From the above accounts we see that respect became a new filter through which the participants viewed their lives and the lives of other people. In addition, respect not only became a filter, but also a commitment to continuous growth in being respectful so that these spiritually infused caring relationships could help the pastoral caregivers react and act in humane ways. Participatory pastoral care therefore provides the context for care wherein people are treated with respect and worth, which in return helps them feel connected to humanity in a very profound way again.

*Sam*: For me it is not to judge other people, but encourage others.

*Lorna*: Each person has dignity and worth.

From the participants' feedback it seems that the PPC training engendered a culture of respect for the diversity and humanness of others.

### **4.3.2 People as experts**

Narrative therapy also seeks to be an approach 'which centres people as the experts in their own lives' (Morgan 2000:2). According to Kotzé (1994:115), accepting that people are experts on their 'lives and values, and need to explain their own constructs to the [pastoral caregiver], is one way of developing a *collaborative therapy story*' [Kotzé's emphasis]. As a result, a participatory pastoral caregiver does not presuppose any 'special or expert understanding of the life of the person' (Roux et al 2003a:17) that he/she journeys with, but rather becomes an inquiring learner (Harlene Anderson

1997:63). This can be put in another way:

Listening in such a way has always been an art and a mystery, the profoundest gesture of respect. To communicate, by eyes, face, voice, and posture, that one has something infinitely precious to learn from someone else is to offer back what often seems to be ebbing away – the capacity to touch or enrich another human being.

(Billman 1996:31)

Seeing all people as the experts of their own stories helped some of the co-researchers to centre the other person's narrative and to decentre their own story, so that their own knowing would not interfere with the telling of the stories and with accessing the care receiver's resources (Harlene Anderson 1997:133).

*Coba*: It's not about my story anymore, it's about their story. I think I've been too eager in the past to tell my own story.

In participatory pastoral care, pastoral caregivers de-centre themselves, but not in the sense that they become 'neutral and non-directive' (Roux et al 2003a:39). This notion is explored more fully in Section 4.4. Centring the care receiver as the expert requires what Boyd (1996:221) calls a 'desire-to-learn attitude' of the pastoral caregiver that 'joins with the curiosity' of the care receiver in a 'mutual exploration' of the care receiver's experience and understanding. As a result, the process of interpretation becomes a collaborative journey. A Narrative approach to pastoral care therefore emphasises equality in a caring relationship because it views people in need of care as the experts of their life stories. During this research journey, several of the participants commented on how making people the experts in their own narratives has been a tremendous help in sharing the burden of care.

*Van*: When it comes to people's problems and when you've listened to somebody's story – you don't necessarily try to give an answer anymore.

Making the care receiver the expert in his/her own life story also gives a participatory pastoral caregiver the freedom to be curious in a '*not-knowing*' (Anderson & Goolishian 1992:38; Harlene Anderson 1997:64,133) manner. Such a position forms the cornerstone of a collaborative approach to conversation and relationship. Such a not-knowing approach does not mean 'withholding, pretending dumbness, being deceitful, or maintaining neutrality' (Harlene Anderson 1997:137). In line with the collaborative nature of the participatory pastoral conversation as discussed in Section 3.2.6, the caregiver does not presume to know anything about the care receiver's life apart from what is constructed in the conversation, and therefore the care receiver is the expert in terms of his/her own life story. A not-knowing position allows for the possibility of conversation, because the creation of meaning is an intersubjective process that leaves the caregiver in a position where he/she continuously has to develop an understanding and continually has to be informed by the care receiver (Harlene Anderson 1997:134).

Not-knowing therefore brings with it humility about what one knows (Harlene Anderson 1997:136). The use of the word humble in this context does not mean meek, unsure, or timid; instead, it refers to an unassuming way to participate in conversations<sup>33</sup> (Harlene Anderson 1997:136).

*Nan:* The discovery that most people have within themselves the expertise to develop an alternative story was helpful. To have the freedom to be curious and not-knowing has been responsible for the change in my story of care. I was freed from the pressure to be the expert and to come up with solutions, and yet see how narrative conversations have positive results.

In this regard, Boyd (1996:222-223) calls for a re-appreciation of the motif of *agape* love. For him, this motif depicts the 'not-knowing' way of being with people that Anderson and Goolishian (1992) advocate. He further explains that *agape* love can be a starting point for a theology of pastoral conversation informed by a social constructive perspective

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<sup>33</sup>Pertaining to this sentence and discussed values, I agree with Dr Hestenes, who said in his comments on the final draft of the dissertation that the following question needs further exploration: What do you do with a dominant caregiver or facilitator who does not fit this unassuming pattern, despite assurances to the contrary?

wherein the 'motif of *agape* [is] viewed as a conversational ethic' (Boyd 1996:222). The co-researchers commented as follows in this regard:

*Mari*: Care through love comes patiently, not easily offended, not seeking its own interest.

*Reisgenoot*: Care comes where there is acceptance and respect and where your being is accepted.

Such a radically relational, holistic, *agape* love conversational ethic encourages connectedness in all human relationships as the 'highest fulfilment of the wisdom of Christ' (Boyd 1996:222).

### **4.3.3 The problem is the problem**

We live in a society where we often hear conversations in which a conviction that binds the problem and the person together as one is manifested in statements such as the following: 'He is the depressed husband or teenager', or 'She is the anorexic girl' and 'They are the dysfunctional family'. By contrast, Narrative therapy seeks to be an approach that 'views problems as separate from people' (Morgan 2000:2) and which helps people discard the shame they often feel when they have problems. One of the co-researchers commented in this regard:

*Sue*: As head of the Pastoral Care Centre I sometimes also need to talk to somebody. Some of that kind of embarrassment of needing help, we [at the Pastoral Care Centre] dispel. I will frequently go to some of my team members and ask them if we could have a conversation about something to see if I can clear my head. That is the influence of Narrative therapy; it kind of takes away that shame of your having a problem with something while everybody else is fine. In the meantime they are not.

If Narrative therapy had a motto, it would be 'The person is never the problem; the problem is the problem' (Sween 1998:4). Looking at problems as separate from people is called externalization (Freedman & Combs 1996; Morgan 2000; White & Epston 1990) in a Narrative approach.

*Patricia:* In the Narrative training, insight was gained in seeing the problem as the problem, not the person. The externalizing of the problem was very helpful.

White (2003:163) elucidates the externalizing approach in Narrative therapy as follows:

‘Externalizing’ is an approach to therapy that encourages persons to objectify and, at times, to personify the problems that they experience as oppressive. In this process, the problem becomes a separate entity and thus external to the person or relationship that was ascribed as the problem. Those problems that are considered to be inherent, as well as those relatively fixed qualities that are attributed to persons and to relationships, are rendered less fixed and less restricting.

The next sections clarify why the practice of externalization is very helpful in a participatory pastoral care conversation.

#### **4.3.3.1 A reflexive perspective**

Using externalization is useful in a number of ways.

First, externalizing the problem helps people to identify and separate themselves from ‘unitary knowledges and “truth” discourses that are subjugating of them’ and in addition helps them to ‘gain a reflexive perspective on their lives’ (White & Epston 1990:30). This reflexive perspective can be gained by asking externalizing questions that ‘map the influence’ (White & Epston 1990:42) of the problem. The strength and effects of the problem on the person (or couple, family, community) are therefore determined through these questions. The art of questioning is the focus of Section 4.4.3. Mapping the influence of the problem then helps people to become aware of the erosion that the problem has caused in their lives. One of the co-researchers put it this way:

*Megan:* The most significant impact of the Narrative training has been the approach to problems i.e. the problem is the problem. This approach leaves me freer of the need to judge (others and myself) and thus with more energy to assess the influence the problem is having and a clearer ability to focus on how to take responsibility.



Secondly, externalizing the problem also helps people to separate from the problem. As new options become available to them, they can challenge ‘the “truths” that they experience as defining and specifying of them and their relationships’ (White & Epston 1990:30).

This reflexive capacity gained through narrative structures and externalizing conversations helps people to achieve distance in relation to the immediacy of life and provides them with new alternatives, and a more significant and dramatic engagement with their own lives (White 2004:35).

#### **4.3.3.2 Deconstructing the discourses that assist the problem**

Within Narrative therapy, deconstruction refers to ‘discovering, acknowledging, and “taking apart” the beliefs, ideas and practices of the broader culture in which a person lives that are serving to assist the problem and the problem story’ (Morgan 2000:45). These ideas, practices, beliefs or truths can also be called discourses and they ‘train’ people to react and to be in certain ways.

According to Clinebell (1984:33), the ‘hyperindividualism’ that is still found in pastoral care has caused the influence of societal discourses to be ignored. Knowledge of discourses is therefore important, because, like Pattison (2000a:88), I believe that when pastoral care is solely concerned with the individual it is a misrepresentation, because pastoral care has social and political implications. Consequently, ‘rather than seeing problems as individualised, they are located within and set of specific social and historical cultural practices. In other words problems are understood to exist within a cultural context’ (Morgan 2001:151).

Participatory pastoral caregivers therefore know what discourses are; they are aware and conscious of what discourses can do; and they pay attention to the ‘interpretative and constitutive power of discourses in the lives of people’ (Botha 1998:164). When we recognise how societal discourses support a problem story, we can resist and show up those discourses that want to order us about (Fillingham 1993:157). Because discourses can ‘powerfully shape a person’s choices about what life events can be storied and how they should be storied’ (Freedman & Combs 1996:43), I agree with Freedman and

Combs (1996:58) when they write the following:

We believe it is our responsibility as therapists to cultivate a growing awareness of the dominant (and potentially dominating) stories in our society and to develop ways of collaboratively examining the effects of these stories when we sense them at work in the lives and relationships of the people who consult with us.

Like Cozad Neuger (2001:129), I believe that pastoral care that intends to ‘participate in personal, familial, and cultural transformation needs to be willing to question anything that seems to be “truth” of the dominant culture’. Consequently, within a participatory approach, pastoral care is seen as a participatory process in which pastoral caregivers ‘collaborate with people in challenging oppressive discourses and negotiating ways of living in an ethical[ly] and ecological[ly] accountable way’ (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:8).

In addition, challenging and questioning societal discourses that inform the problem story in a person’s life gives him/her the reflexive position needed so that action can be taken against the problem. Therefore participatory pastoral caregivers also discover and explore alternative discourses that can assist care receivers in constructing an alternative preferred story of their lives:

Caregivers can increase agency by actively invoking alternative discourses that may lie dormant in a person’s memory, by nurturing new sources of knowledge, and by empowering care receivers to make choices for creative and life-giving discourses.

(Dunlap 1999:137)

#### **4.3.3.3 Take action against the problem**

Separating the problem from the person and challenging the oppressive discourses that keep the problem story in place becomes a ‘way of talking and thinking about the problem [that] helps people to resist and overcome blame and shame and take action against the problem’ (Roux et al 2003b:38).

In a Narrative approach, caregivers see their work as a political enterprise that frees people from oppressive cultural assumptions and empowers participants to become

active agents in charge of their own lives (Nichols & Schwartz 2005:255). Thus, externalising conversations establish a context where people experience 'themselves as separate from the problem' which helps them to realise that 'the problem no longer speaks to them of their identity or the "truth" about who they are' (Morgan 2000:24). As people therefore constantly make meaning of their lives they can be active in resisting those meanings and interpretations that are not helpful in living their preferred reality:

*Queen:* I can now see past the problem. There are no stumbling blocks anymore.  
You can disengage yourself from the problem.

*Reisgenoot:* For me it was similar to being in a room while the problem was still part of you; you keep running into the door [Afr. *Vir my was dit soos om in 'n vertrek te wees waar die probleem nog deel is van jou, dan loop jy die hele tyd in die deur vas*]. You don't know where the door is. You can only exit through the door. Now, you can move safely about the room. You can find the door. You help yourself. The alternative story we've done in the training reveals the door to you. It helped towards separating the problem from yourself. You have the power; the problem is separate from you. You don't lose courage anymore; you now know how to find your way back [Afr. *Jy het die mag, die probleem is los van jousef. Jy loop nie meer met jou neus in die grond nie, jy het nou die paadjie om jousef terug te check*].

*Benita:* I think it is taking care to a higher level of allowing the person to feel equipped to work with the problem. I don't have to solve their problem, but help find bricks to rise above the problem.

Apart from the influence of the problem on the person, the person's influence on the problem is also mapped. 'These questions help people to become aware of ways in which they [have] resisted the influence of the problem and to realise what ground they held against the problem' (Roux et al 2003b:38). This was demonstrated by one of the co-researchers:

*Nan:* The practice of externalizing, treating the problem as the problem and not the person was very helpful. The aspect of the training regarding exploring the effects of the problem and the kind of questions asked to establish landscapes of action and identity often uncover lighter moments of being

hospitalised even with very sick patients and I've often observed the cheering uplifting effect this has.

#### **4.3.3.4 Acting from skills and values**

As people recognise and understand the ways in which they have resisted the influence of the problem already, they also become aware of the many 'skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities [they have] that will assist them to reduce the influence of problems in their lives' (Morgan 2000:2). Often the process of telling stories brings back surprising stories that have been overlooked and that speak of 'forgotten competence and heroism' (Sween 1998:4). In the following vignette, Gawie, one of the co-researchers, tells how he applied these knowledges regarding the skills and competencies that people have to utilise to stand against the influence of the problem in his work as a teacher:

*Gawie:* As a sports coach I've more than done my best and my life has been enriched as a result of that. During the last few years, I felt that no one noticed or appreciated the good work anymore. Lack of acknowledgement demotivated me. My passion for sport started to diminish. I decided to coach only cricket and to withdraw myself from other sports. It is precisely during this period of withdrawal that I attended the PPC training.

The first hockey team experienced many problems. They lost every game. Internal conflict took its toll. The coaches and parents contributed to the conflict. Overall the team just could not succeed. I offered to help and was excited to take up coaching them. There was not much time for training, as the next game was imminent. Furthermore, the negative attitude of the players resulted in there never being a full team at the training sessions. I didn't actually 'coach' as much as I purely worked on the principles I had learnt during the PPC training. By means of externalising I managed to distance the individual players and the team as a whole from the problem.

I started focusing on the individual skills of every person and informed everyone about this. I immediately saw that it had a positive effect on each one. At a subsequent training session I gave every team member the opportunity to communicate to each of the other members that individual's

good qualities and skill. Showing appreciation for each other visibly boosted the process of bonding and emphasising each other's positive qualities.

Without physical practice, the team as a whole performed better and won their next two games convincingly! The following comment of a colleague made me feel very good: "Sir, I don't know what you've done in such a short time, but this is a totally different team." My satisfaction was not a result of what I had achieved, but derived from becoming aware of the skill of the team to solve its own problems.

By using a Narrative approach, Gawie and the hockey team were empowered to challenge, using their own strengths, the problem stories that constituted their stories as a hockey team and this helped them to 'change their roles' (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:10). This kind of realisation by people when they see themselves as apart from the problem story and as able to challenge the discourses that order them about through the process of externalisation and deconstruction often leads to a re-writing of people's stories.

### **4.3.4 Writing alternative stories**

#### **4.3.4.1 Alternative stories as unique accounts**

As the discussion in the previous section suggests, a thorough mapping and deconstructing of the history and contexts of the relationship between a person and the problem could help to open up space for so-called 'unique outcomes' (White & Epston 1990:55-63) to emerge. According to Morgan (2000:52), a 'unique outcome may be a plan, action, feeling, statement, quality, desire, dream, thought, belief, ability or commitment.' From the narrative told by Gawie in the previous section, we can see how an alternative story was written for the hockey team, but also for Gawie's own life.

White (2003:165) calls performances of new meaning unique outcomes that can then be plotted in an alternative story about people's lives. This alternative story can also be referred to as a 'unique account'. Questioning a person about such an account encourages the person to 'locate, generate, or resurrect alternative stories that will "make sense" of the unique outcomes' (White 2003:165). This effect is demonstrated in

the following comment by one of the co-researchers:

*Coba:* You realise that you are on holy ground if people give you their stories. It is holy territory, but it is also virgin territory, because I am journeying into areas with people who afterwards say “I have never thought of it like this, I have never experienced something like this.” The people actually look at you, but they don’t see you, they see their own solution through you. It’s as if your eyes have holes in them and it shines right through your head. And onto the wall is projected this vast truth at which they’ve arrived all by themselves. It is as though they switched on the light. They’ve always had the switch; they’ve just never used it.

Unique outcomes are incidents in the past when people had influence over the problem and experienced themselves as free of the problem. ‘These unique experiences form the building blocks for an alternative preferred story that help people to realise that they are able to propel themselves into the future’ (Roux et al 2003b:39). This effect is demonstrated by Gawie:

*Gawie:* When I had the opportunity to fill in as head master at the school for a short while, I gave expression to my creativity and tried to do things differently. Functioning at a higher level greatly stimulated me. Often I was faced with individuals or groups of learners experiencing some or other problem. I managed a part of the counselling process and, due to the limited time available, I referred them to one of the professional counsellors at the school. I found this type of work so rewarding that I started spending more and more time doing it. My first big challenge was to help an eighteen-year-old learner who suffered from depression. He had been admitted to hospital often and, apart from using anti-depressants, also underwent sleep therapy. By using the Narrative approach I could help him to focus on positive moments in his life and to write an alternative story.

Not only did Gawie enjoy the privilege of journeying with the young man in constructing an alternative story for his life, but his Narrative approach gave Gawie an opportunity to write an alternative story of his being with pupils in the school where he teaches.

#### 4.3.4.2 Re-authoring conversations

As care receivers separate themselves from the problem and the alternative preferred story becomes available, they are 'encouraged to *re-author* their own lives and *agency of self* is established' (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:10) [Kotzé & Kotzé's emphases]. As has already been discussed in Section 4.3.3.2, a re-authoring conversation co-constructs a journey of care where old and sometimes oppressive narratives are deconstructed as, together, new and alternative narratives are constructed. These re-authoring conversations then contribute to the rich descriptions of the knowledge and 'skills of living' (White 1997:135) of the care receiver.

Alternative stories that come about as a result of these unique outcomes therefore reflect 'both the richness of [the care receivers'] lives and their preferred ways of being known' (Freeman, Epston & Lobovits 1997:50). When participants therefore help to uncover or construct such alternative stories, unique outcomes serve as a way to empower the alternative story to 'become more constitutive of people's lives' (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:10). Leonie, one of the co-researchers, shared how the PPC training has empowered the alternative story of her life and how this story has now become constitutive of her life as her preferred way of being known:

*Leonie:* My life has been enriched. The alternative story is a weapon to me. I've gained more respect for the way I am and I'm more acceptable to myself. That which some people often say about me is not true, there is another truth. That is only one person's opinion. I've regained self-confidence in many areas. I'm now entitled to be me and not to comply with other people's requirements of who I am supposed to be. My world no longer falls apart when my husband and I have a disagreement.

When unique experiences or outcomes have been identified and acknowledged by the care receiver, a thorough exploration is done to determine the identities of that person apart from the influence of the problem. As discussed in Section 4.3.3.4, people have multiple skills, values, goals and knowledges that the problem-saturated story tends to make them forget. 'The more detailed the investigation, the more thickly described the subjugated action-packed identities of people become' (Roux et al 2003b:39).

Roux et al (2003b:39) cautions that, as this investigation into the alternative story

does not necessarily ensure that the new story will be able to last against the storms of future and difficult situations, the new story must grow and develop. Stories and identities are negotiated within social institutions and within communities of people.

(Roux et al 2003b:39)

In an instance supporting Roux et al's (2003b:39) statement above, Megan experienced how people are now able to see themselves differently as their stories and identities are negotiated from their own skills and competencies within social institutions and communities of people:

*Megan:* People therefore become themselves, grow, let down their defences and are honest. They can now express their thoughts, opinions and emotions, and are willing to see and explore options they would not have considered. Furthermore, people can now listen, take risks, face their fears and dream about their future. They are able to discover qualities they never saw in themselves before, like courage, determination, etc.

#### **4.3.5 The deconstruction of power relationships**

In a Narrative approach, both discourses, as discussed in Section 4.3.3.2, and power relationships are deconstructed in the care conversation. As pastoral caregivers we are therefore aware of our place in relation to those we care with as we bear in mind the delicate dynamics of power (Billman 1996:17). When we neglect to see care receivers 'as situated in [the] context of power relations, with unequal access to political and economic resources, our care is not only ineffective, but it subtly "blames the victim" for their pain rather than name the power structures that are involved' (Dunlap 1999:139). This implies that a caregiver who is attentive to these power relations 'will be a more capable caregiver and a bearer of discourse that functions to heal, and not to wound' (Dunlap 1999:146). This attitude is revealed by Benita, one of the co-researchers:



*Benita:* Through the Narrative therapy training I have become more open and expressive in equalizing power play.

Equality in a relationship of care is a very important aspect of a Narrative approach (White 1995; White & Epston 1990) that acknowledges the inequality of the power relationship within a pastoral conversation (Heitink 1998:142). Therefore deconstruction within Narrative therapy emphasizes 'a more egalitarian and open relationship between therapist and client, researcher and participants, supervisor and supervisee, and in this way deconstruct[s] the power within these relationships' (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:11). Such an open and egalitarian relationship resonates with my own values and my belief that a Christian community should be a discipleship of equals and friends where such open conversations can take place.

In conversations using a Narrative approach, therapists and caregivers deconstruct their power in their work by transgressing the 'oft-made work/life boundary distinction' (White 1997:132) in being with people. Therefore power/knowledge relations as discussed in Section 2.2.2 are 'acknowledged and deconstructed, contributing to the decentering of a meta-narrative regarding therapy and power' (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:12). A pastoral caregiver participates in a pastoral conversation in the 'spirit of the One who calls him or her into that kind of relationship....the Christ-conversation....makes clear that our position must be one of service rather than domination or social control' (Boyd 1996:222).

I firmly believe that the 'rigid dichotomy between healer and patient, the powerful and the vulnerable is transcended by the concept of the wounded healer' (Burck 1982:149; Goodliff 1998:128). This involves a situation in which pastoral caregivers can recognise their own vulnerability and potential to be wounded or their own woundedness. This kind of situation arose in the film *Chocolat*.

*Red Shoe Co-Researchers:* In the movie *Chocolat*, people became human again and no longer pretended. They discovered a new freedom and handled their problems. Vianne held onto care in her own brokenness. She did not wait until she was in a 'better' place. In society today there is a lot of emphasis on discovering yourself, a self-focus, whereas Vianne coped very well by reaching out. Sometimes one experiences a sigh of relief

when other people also hear that you are having a hard time as well. It's as if people can relax and open up in the presence of someone else who is also just a human being.

Using such an understanding of a participatory approach, care becomes a participatory consciousness in which relational selves do not come to knowledge by means of a separation into the categories of caregiver and care receiver, but by way of care and love in equality. In this regard, I believe that Sue's narrative provides an excellent example of how the deconstruction of power flows into relationships of equality with her team members at the Northfield Pastoral Care Centre:

*Sue:* I have always been in caring because I am a nurse by profession. I did a particular care and that was hospice care. So, I knew about care at one kind of level. I think the Narrative training has been quite influential in that it has done some subtle things. When I was the carer, the nurse, there was a much more unequal relationship between the patient and me. It was a much more dependent relationship. Sick people are dependent on nurses. Whilst I am not doing exactly the same kind of work now, the Narrative training has made me much more aware about the inequalities. I am striving to build up relationships with people in a much more equal manner. I think I had a bit of an understanding of it, but Narrative therapy has really developed that kind of idea of equality and power. I have become much more aware of how this inequality disempowers people.

And so in both the counselling work that I do, the training but also within the Pastoral Care Centre we have really tried to not bring in the distinctions between us and them. In the early years when we opened the Pastoral Care Centre the lady running the office asked me what we should call the people that come to see you. And I answered her: "Why don't we just call them by their names". And I think that has been the influence of Narrative therapy. The whole thing of not wanting to put people in different places – let's just sit together. I remember in the early years saying that that person happens to be sitting in that chair as the client, but next time it could be me sitting in the client chair and somebody else helping me. So, it has become much more of an equal thing. I have tried very hard with the team not to let

them believe that they are the ones who should be doing the giving. There has been a lot of receiving amongst the team.

Recently I have been struggling with what I am going to do with the rest of my life and I have really been battling. So I asked one of my team members that has been into spiritual disciplines, to listen to me because I think it is a spiritual thing. It was so helpful. I just see in other organisations, even the caring ones, the boss/head does not go to one of their workers/volunteers and tell them that they are struggling, "please help me".

I have a monthly supervision session with a minister of our church who has also done the Master's training at ITD. The whole of my counselling team and the others that I choose to invite come to my supervision session and the team then reflect upon my supervision. This is really excellent and we all love it. Obviously there has to be vulnerability in that. Some social workers have been horrified when they heard that I expose myself in this way. That has again been the influence of Narrative ideas. Yes, I do head up the Pastoral Care Centre, but I struggle along with the same stuff that my team members also struggle with. Through their participation in the reflecting team my counsellors are being supervised, because the stuff that I am struggling with, they also struggle with. In the end they are relieved, because Sue also struggles with this.

I really like to see that there is two-way traffic in the counselling, training, supervision and project management room. I am Sue and I am really doing the best I can, but I am not perfect and don't have all the answers. And because of that there is a very strong sense of community in the Pastoral Care Centre because we are not all tip-toeing because the boss has come through the door. Now I get, oh Sue, we are so glad you're back because..... They are able to come to me because of the openness.

Once somebody asked me how I could be sure what the counsellors are doing in their work with people and I said that I am not sure. The only way that I can have a level of certainty is through the relationships that I have with my team. So, if I build a relationship with them and it is on a fairly equal level and it is one of openness, conversation and communication,

then I know that if they are struggling they will come and talk to me. They know it is OK to struggle, because I tell them that it is OK to struggle.

Power/knowledge relations between caregiver and care receiver are deconstructed through participation *with* others, as discussed in Section 3.2. When we become aware of 'power issues and the effects of the use and abuse of power' on the people we serve and on their relationships, it 'forms part of deconstruction of power and culture' (Kotzé 1994:114). Deconstructing our power as participatory pastoral caregivers, as discussed in Section 2.2, enriches our co-operative walk with people because we enable all the participants in the conversations, including ourselves, to live and be in ethically accountable ways. Therefore I agree with Kotzé and Kotzé (1997:12) that there is a need for a 'constant search and attempt to construct the realities and lives we live in an ethical manner, [as] our guiding star in the process of thinking and doing therapy in a conversational way'. Consequently, I have tried to live my understanding of the need to assume an ethical responsibility for the real effects of this work, because to engage in Narrative practices is to engage in activities that are actually constitutive of life (White 1997:233).

The participants of the PPC training are introduced to the following practices that help them to deconstruct their power in the process of a conversation: accountability, a not-knowing position, practices that are formed by a principle of transparency, practices that are shaped by a commitment to the deconstruction of the modes of life and thought that are more richly described as 'taking-it-back practices' (White 1997:132). Taking-it-back practices refer to a situation in which therapists and caregivers embrace an ethical responsibility to identify the ways in which these conversations are shaping their work and lives (White 1997:132-147). This reciprocity is illustrated in comments by Megan and Lorna, two of the co-researchers:

*Megan:* Caring no longer seems so one sided and draining. I no longer feel like I need to take responsibility for finding the right way to care but that together we can find a way which will ultimately be richer. I am more open to how the caring or conversation touches or impacts me through implementing the taking-it-back-practices used by Michael White. I remain open to being

influenced in unexpected and potentially life changing ways.

*Lorna:* The client influences me for good too.

In a comment that resonates with Lorna's statement above, Harlene Anderson (1997:100) explains that in a collaborative conversation the caregiver also risks changing, as it seems illogical to be involved in a transformational process and not to be transformed. We may therefore change an aspect of our behaviour, an idea or an opinion about a problem, person or situation. Both the caregiver and the care receiver risk a transformation of the self in this collaborative endeavour (Harlene Anderson 1997:110,135).

Accountability involves 'an approach that emphasises a bottom-up accountability that is informed in collaboration with persons who consult therapists' (White 1997:204). Participatory pastoral caregivers deconstruct their power by asking the care receiver if he/she has found the conversation helpful and they are even open to hearing what people have not found helpful. In this two-way process, accountability becomes a practice that is informed by collaborating with the people we journey with.

In this section I have briefly introduced a Narrative therapy approach as an ethical approach that provides red shoes for our time so that we can tread lightly in ways that will heal and not hurt. The next section looks at how participatory pastoral caring practices can be fleshed out in the construction of participatory conversations of care.

#### **4.4 DOING CONVERSATIONS IN PARTICIPATORY PASTORAL CARE**

Valuing participation in a participatory pastoral care conversation, as discussed in Section 3.2.3, is connected with the participatory values in Narrative and collaborative therapy approaches. According to Roux et al (2003a:18), the participatory character of these therapeutic practices and approaches implies that 'meaning or understanding has to be negotiated in conversation'. The negotiation of meaning and understanding in a participatory approach to pastoral care has already been discussed in Section 3.2.6. In addition, such participatory conversations are open and spontaneous, and they are seen

as a process in which the participants (the caregiver and the care receiver) engage with transformation as their aim.

What happens within a participatory pastoral care approach to conversation is not regarded as a technique. Instead, it can be described as a form of the art of connecting and engaging in relationships. In this participatory art of connecting in conversation, room is created by inviting all the participating voices to speak through interest in and respect for what the participants want to say (Harlene Anderson 1997:49). Two of the co-researchers described this art as follows:

*Nan:* The idea of counselling has now become one of conversation and connecting.

*Desbe:* I engage in conversation in a new way and it has deepened my love and respect for people. I think I connect with people in a new way and this I think enables them to engage in conversation in a meaningful way. The transparency and honesty in conversation helps them to connect.

'The determination to create safe environments to tell and retell our most intimate stories' in these connecting conversations is therefore 'the special gift' of a participatory relationship in which 'care is the focus' (Anderson & Foley 1998:45). In addition to these different and more respectful ways of seeing people, participants of the PPC training were also challenged to engage in an approach to conversation that values participation in various ways.

#### **4.4.1 The art of transformational conversation**

I believe that within a postmodern epistemology, conversation is an ongoing process and a powerful way to construct new meaning and alternatives (Brueggemann 1993; Hoffman 1990; Kotzé 1994; Wylie 1994). In the ongoing process of such a conversation, space is provided where we can 'form and reform our life experiences and events; we create and recreate our meanings and understandings; we construct and reconstruct our realities and ourselves' (Harlene Anderson 1997:xvii). In this context, Boyd (1996:215) claims that a social constructionist view of pastoral care as conversation 'reaffirms the

inherent potential and dignity of the pastoral conversation by directing our attention to this public, linguistic co-construction of new meanings in conversation’.

I also believe that the divine and active presence of Christ participates in this pastoral conversation and co-construction of new meanings. God therefore invites us ‘into a new and renewing conversation in which we encounter a divine self-disclosure and a new relational narrative’ (Boyd 1996:221). I would argue that in this view of a pastoral conversation there is an expectation that God, through the renewing power of the Spirit, will participate in generating new meaning and alternatives by challenging the *status quo* with its insistent voice that often chants that one should just accept things because that is the way things are. Furthermore, a pastoral conversational space provides participants with opportunities to re-construct their realities, relationships and their view of themselves by speaking the unspeakable.

In this constantly evolving ‘divine-human conversation’ (Boyd 1996:222), expertise goes further than being an expert of one’s life story as described in Section 4.3.2. Expertise is also co-constructed in a conversation consisting of a multiplicity of perspectives that allows for useful re-descriptions of ourselves (Boyd 1998:314). Boyd (1998:314) explains that expertise also refers to all sorts of ‘practical competencies in lived experience’. A postmodern pastoral caregiver therefore has the ‘faith that expertise emerges spontaneously in the pastoral conversation’ (Boyd 1998:318). Engaging in a participatory pastoral care conversation works with the assumption and expectation that God, Scripture and both the caregiver and the care receiver participate with a multiplicity of perspectives, competencies and expertise to take action in a re-description of the story of self. Harlene Anderson (1997:xvii) claims that such conversational spaces help to co-construct new meanings in which there is self-agency<sup>34</sup> and a sense that we can take the necessary action to address what concerns and troubles us.

From the above arguments, it is clear that such collaborative conversation is an agent of transformation, because it has the capacity to ‘re-relate the events of our lives in [the] context of new and different meaning’ (Harlene Anderson 1997:109). Harlene Anderson

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<sup>34</sup> The word ‘self-agency’ refers to a ‘personal perception of competency for action’ (Harlene Anderson 1997:230).

(1997:233) describes the inherent quality of change in conversation or dialogue as follows:

[C]hange is the telling and retelling of familiar stories; it is the redescriptions that accrue through conversation; it is the different meanings that are conferred on past, present, and imagined future events and experiences. Change becomes developing future selves.

As mentioned in Roux et al's (2003a) outline in the introduction to this section, participatory pastoral caregivers engage in conversations with transformation as the aim. This approach contrasts with Lukens's (1987:11) description of the task of lay counsellors: 'Unless and until training programs mature and develop significantly, I do not believe that lay counselors should attempt or be expected to provide assistance toward the primary goal of change.' In both collaborative and Narrative approaches, a pastoral conversation is a co-construction with participants with the expectation of change (Nichols & Schwartz 2005:260). Chapters Six and Seven pay particular attention to the transformational character of a participatory approach to care.

The co-researchers see a participatory approach to pastoral conversation as a co-operative walk alongside people. We cannot contain such a conversation in five easy steps. What we can offer, though, is maps for the journey, as Roux et al (2003b:38) explain:

'Micro-maps' are guides to the territory of therapeutic conversations. Maps can be redesigned and are always under 'construction'.... Different maps can be used for different situations or new maps could be generated. As the territory of each and every conversation changes with each and every [person we journey with], we have to adjust our maps that guide us.

The meanings and understandings that participants construct from their life stories and the stories of others are therefore respectfully negotiated in an open conversation. It is characteristic of such open conversations that we are 'talking *with* each other, rather than *to* each other' (Harlene Anderson 1997:112) [Anderson's emphases]. In the conversational space of *talking with* each other, we also need to see conversation as the art of connecting where we acknowledge the importance of connectedness as an



attitude and a way of being present (Becvar 1997:85). Harlene Anderson (1997:112) describes such connecting conversations as a being '*in-there-together*, two-way, give-and-take exchange' [Anderson's emphasis].

If pastoral caregivers therefore facilitate total engagement with the care receiver and participate with him/her in creating a context in which he/she feels understood and respected, they will both know that there has been mutual connection at a deep level (Becvar 1997:88). In order to establish open, transformational and connecting conversations within participatory pastoral relationships, we can employ certain tools, as all artists do. As pastoral caregivers, we are '*word*' or '*conversational*' artists (Roux et al 2003b:34) [Roux et al's emphases] that employ listening, asking questions and doing language as our tools.

#### **4.4.2 The conversational art of listening**

With regard to the endeavour to connect in conversation, I share Becvar's (1997:89) view that learning to hear is an important 'acknowledgement of connectedness, which, in recursive fashion, is facilitated as a function of that acknowledgement'. In the art of listening, we are therefore in a co-constructing conversation between equals, where both the speaker and the listener are involved and affected by the connectedness in the interchange and the co-creation of meaning (Louw 2003:228).

Harlene Anderson (1997:152) defines listening as 'attending to, interacting with, responding to, and trying to learn about a [care receiver's] story and its perceived importance'. Harlene Anderson (1997:153) adds that in a collaborative approach to conversation, listening entails openness to the other person's reality, beliefs and experiences. This involves respect for, having humility toward, and believing that what the other person says is worth hearing.

After completing their PPC training, several participants described their connective listening practices as '*listening with new eyes*' (Miller-McLemore & Anderson 1995:109) [Miller-McLemore & Anderson's emphasis] in various ways:

*Karissa:* Care now seems to me like looking deep into someone's eyes and listening. Maybe hearing things you don't like or with which you don't agree, but still keeping your respect and sensitivity.

*Gawie:* I found myself to be more focused on what I was doing. My observation and listening skills were honed. I also became more aware of the different dimensions in listening. I am more sensitive to the way people experience things.

*Coba:* For me, care used to be a doing, an action. Now care has become listening. It has turned into a practice [Afr. *praktikaliteit*] in my own life. At work I now put down my pen, make eye contact, and listen, listen, listen.

*Piet:* The PPC training was just a bonus to increase your knowledge about the way to ask questions, how to listen. It also helped me more in terms of where to start when you're listening to people and how to listen to them. It's like we've been taught: the people know the answers, but you just have to lead them to those answers. They provide the answers themselves.

*Lucky:* The training has pretty much strengthened my listening skills. It has helped me to take people's problems seriously and not to interpret in the conversation.

*Van:* I have been helped to listen better.

As can be seen from the above reflections, listening with new eyes has caused these participants to 'never see the same again' (Miller-McLemore & Anderson 1995:110). Boyd (1996:222-223) calls this connective listening, '*agape-listening*' [Boyd's emphasis] because it places the pastoral conversation in the realm of 'mutual co-authoring of a new story for the one in need of healing by valuing the unique reality of the other while continually striving for a stance of openness and humility'. This agape-listening has a relational vision that is patient and kind, and not envious, boastful or rude (Boyd 1996:223).

After the PPC training the participants felt that they listened differently and heard different things when care receivers told their stories, as several of the Red Shoe Co-

Researchers (2004) said. Participants mentioned a shift away from being bulldozers [Afr. *stoomrollers*] in conversations to treading lightly where and when they listen to other people's stories. In the act of listening to others, people are more tactful and also listen for metaphors<sup>35</sup>:

*Richard*: It has helped me to listen and know that we are different. Not to always think of my opinion but to know that it is all right for other people to think differently.

*Mari*: For me, the listening part came to the fore in the PPC training. I almost cannot wait for the person to say it herself. The idea that I have to rush in quickly and also say something, and ensure that the person keeps talking on the right track isn't there anymore. I don't have to think on behalf of the person, I can enjoy listening. I don't have to question everything the person says which ties in with the uniqueness of each person.

Roux (1996:127) calls this shift an epistemological shift from giving answers to listening and looking for answers together. Several of the participants spoke of an adventurous attitude to the way they listen to people's stories. Some call this a new type of listening in which they became healers through listening.

### **4.4.3 The conversational art of asking questions**

Questions play an important role in the conversation in that they foster a sense of partnership with the people we journey with (Nichols & Schwartz 2005:260). In this partnership, the questions arise from any given moment in the conversation (Harlene Anderson 1997:54) and they are asked from a position of not-knowing (Harlene Anderson 1997:145). Questions should therefore be offered in a tentative, curious manner that does not equal vagueness, but that is open and genuinely interested in the

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<sup>35</sup> Dr Hestenes in his comments on the final draft of the dissertation rightly asked how it is possible for people to acquire the skill of listening in an 18-week part time training construction. My initial thoughts wandered to listening as a value throughout the training construction. I also believe that acquiring the skill of listening is a life-long process, maybe not something we can claim to have but something we are always moving towards. I also think that the participants feel that their listening skills have improved compared to what they were before. But these are only my initial musings and therefore invitations to further conversation.

other person and leaves room for his/her participation in responding, reconstructing or ignoring the question (Harlene Anderson 1997:151,154).

#### **4.4.3.1 Setting the stage through questions**

Questions in a participatory context are aimed at helping people to 'tell, clarify, and expand on a story; open up new avenues and explore what is known or not-known; they help a [caregiver] learn about and avoid misconceptions of the said and the not-yet-said' (Harlene Anderson 1997:145). The art and skill of questioning therefore brings out more of people's stories than they could remember before that time.

In respect of the conversational art of language, I agree with Cooperrider and Whitney's (2003:176) explanation of the role of questions in conversation:

The questions we ask set the stage for what we 'find', what we 'discover' becomes the linguistic material, the stories, out of which the future is conceived, conversed about, and constructed.

As a result, these questions help a caregiver to talk with a care receiver in a shared inquiry (Harlene Anderson 1997:145) which has no template, but which arises from an attempt to understand the 'just-said and the unsaid' (Harlene Anderson 1997:148). Therefore even 'the most innocent question evokes change – even if reactions are simply changes in awareness, dialogue, feelings of boredom, or even laughter' (Cooperrider & Whitney 2003:177). Questions do more than merely open up information; they bring about changes that create realities wherein new ways of being and living can be negotiated.

#### **4.4.3.2 How can we set the stage?**

Given the value of respect discussed in Section 4.3.1, the questions we ask and the way in which we ask questions play a significant role in helping people. They should therefore reflect openness and respect, as one co-researcher remarked:

*Karissa*: Where people ask me the right questions so that I sense respect, feel sensitivity and again respect – there I experience care.

Questions can therefore be experienced as respectful when ‘*how* we talk’ is just as important as ‘*what* we talk about’ (Roux et al 2003b:34) [Roux et al’s emphases]. In this regard the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) felt that one of the red-shoe practices of care involves the type of generative questions that one learns to ask in the PPC training because these questions are not ‘normal questions’, in that these are questions to which the questioner does not pretend or assume to know the answer and that open up opportunities for exploring areas of one’s story that have been previously closed or hidden. The intent of these questions is to learn more, to participate in the narrative as it is, and as it might be (Harlene Anderson 1997:136). As participatory pastoral caregivers do not know the answers to the questions that they are about to ask, they seek to ask questions that encourage, invite and inspire people. Harlene Anderson (1997:126) explains how she ensures that her questions are of the encouraging, inspiring and inviting kind:

I cannot know my questions ahead of time; I cannot choose words to produce a specified outcome. I want to participate in the kind of process I am describing naturally, not artificially. For I am inside, not outside, the process I am trying to create.

Being creative from the inside means that participatory pastoral caregivers do not assume, but ask questions because they have no ‘ready entrance into the experience of the other’ (Miller-McLemore & Anderson 1995:110). These kinds of question give people a sense of ‘being invited into and belonging to the conversation’ (Harlene Anderson 1997:149). A number of the co-researchers, like Lorna, spoke about this approach to questioning as creative, tolerant, and respectful questions:

*Lorna:* I have been able to ask more creative questions to enable people to move forward.

#### **4.4.3.3 Questions of discovery**

Boyd (1998:318) notes that a postmodern pastoral caregiver is an ‘imaginative question-asker’ that brings answers to meanings that might have been overlooked. Acquiring the art of questioning has freed some of the participants from the pressure of finding the

right answer as soon as possible. They now enjoy the journey of discovering the answers together with people and do not feel under pressure to have all the answers any longer:

*Nan:* It has become challenging to know that it is possible to help others to find meanings in life that might otherwise be overlooked by asking questions that bring them forth.

*Richard:* For me the biggest challenge is to apply this knowledge in my life. Currently I feel that I am not applying this knowledge a 100%. I am struggling a bit with the questions that I must ask in this Narrative work. I am still trying to learn how to do that.

Some participants acknowledge that to ask questions with the qualities mentioned in this section is not an easy task, especially when the people you sometimes ask the questions to, do not perceive these questions as 'normal', meaning questions that just need a yes or no answer. Having conversations which entail this kind of questioning and listening requires a particular approach to language, as discussed in the next section.

#### **4.4.4 Doing language**

I agree with Gergen and Gergen (2003d:158) that social construction discourse 'invites us to see language as an action in the world'. As a result, I decided to call this section *Doing language*, as here we explore the actions of language. Because the research journey and the PPC training are situated in social construction discourse, the 'importance of language' (Gergen & Gergen 2003c:61) is a given.

In a collaborative approach to caring with people, conversation is seen as a linguistic event where people are engaged in a collaborative relationship that becomes a mutual endeavour toward a possibility of new meaning (Harlene Anderson 1997:2,108). The role of a pastoral caregiver in this approach to pastoral conversations is to participate with the care receiver in a first person linguistic account of his or her relevant life events and experiences (Harlene Anderson 1997:114). Participatory pastoral caregivers therefore participate with care receivers in 'language's creative, constructive, constitutive

capacities in their role as bearers of discourse' (Dunlap 1999:135).

Participatory caregivers also understand that no 'meanings can exist without context' (McLaren 2001:106), since words mean different things at different times. When participatory pastoral caregivers participate in conversation, they know that they enter the language, context and meanings that all the participants bring to the conversation. Burr (1995:105) explains how contexts and words constantly interact with one another:

Poststructuralism points out that the meaning of signifiers (such as words) is constantly changing, is context-dependent and not fixed. Words mean different things in different circumstances, depending upon who is using them, when, on what occasion, and upon the context of the rest of their talk.

For Gergen (1994:263-264), this understanding of context lies within the realm of human interaction and human interchange:

Words (or texts) within themselves bear no meaning; they fail to communicate. They only appear to generate meaning by virtue of their place within the realm of human interaction. It is human interchange that gives language its capacity to mean, and it must stand as the critical locus of concern.

The interaction that we find in participatory conversations 'is thus to be granted the privilege of meaning by others' (Gergen 1994:265). Meanings of words are therefore not fixed, but are generated in human interchange. The participants in such collaborative conversations cannot assume that they know what the other person is saying. In such a collaborative conversation, a participatory pastoral caregiver engages in the language that the care receiver uses in his/her everyday problem descriptions and interpretations (Harlene Anderson 1997:158).

Cozad Neuger (1996b:97) describes the importance of being present and respectful with the care receivers' use of everyday language. A participatory pastoral caregiver validates the care receiver's attempts 'to find language for realities' that have sometimes been 'denied, minimized, and distorted by the dominant culture' (Cozad Neuger 1996b:97). A participatory pastoral caregiver thus 'puts self-interest and social control aside in order to become incarnated into the language-world of those who come in need

of healing' (Boyd 1996:222). Two of the co-researchers put it this way:

*Anne:* I have a much better understanding of how important language is, and my approach to being with people is a lot more respectful. I also realise the importance of checking with people about what they have said. So all in all I think that my story of care is a much improved one.

*Benita:* The training made me aware of discourses and their influences on our lives and to be aware of languaging. The training has also helped me to listen to metaphors or soft-spoken words that are language and to explore with a client options, ideas and words.

As mentioned earlier, my fellow travellers in the research journey and I believe that 'language does not simply reflect' (Graham 1998:146), but also actively shapes and therefore also even determines realities (Cozad Neuger 2001:73). This gives language a generative quality, as it gives order and meaning to our lives and our world, and in addition functions as a form of social participation. Pastoral caregivers participate with care receivers to generate new language and new interpretive lenses and thus create new realities (Cozad Neuger 2001:43). Furthermore, language can empower or disempower people and therefore we have to create space through language for possibilities to enter (Bird 2005b). Some of the co-researchers experienced this:

*Gawie:* I also became aware of the effect of words on people's lives. We can break a person down so easily by what we say and the way in which we say things to each other, even with a casual remark. It is wonderful to experience how positive comments can strengthen people and change attitudes – there where I am faced with people every day. I've had many positive encounters during my career as a teacher. During the last few years, however, negative moments and my personal perception thereof affected my life. My work environment with my colleagues was sometimes bleak, cold and clinical. Every day was a monotonous execution of procedures. The PPC training raised my awareness of the humiliating power of words that teachers use as 'experts'.

*Megan:* It has deeply challenged my thinking and influenced my behaviour in the



areas of the way language usage empowers or disempowers people.

Lastly, I also believe and assume that God, who is active in human history, is also 'active in the human language' (Boyd 1996:221) of pastoral conversations. God can therefore transform old languaging that gives people a sense of being stuck, infusing conversation with rich, new possibilities, words, metaphors and meanings in a human interchange that can only be accounted for as divine intervention in the conversational space.

The next section shows the reader my journey with postmodern Narrative therapy and collaborative therapy approaches and the implications thereof within a participatory approach to practical theology and pastoral care.

#### **4.5 THE ONLY WAY?**

My journey with the postmodern Narrative ideas began nearly five years ago, at a time when I needed somebody that could listen to me in an approach that values a non-judgemental attitude and has great respect for where people are at. Both a Narrative approach and the collaborative therapies approach of Anderson and Goolishian (1992) became vehicles for healing and liberation in an aspect of my own life story, about which I wrote in my Master's dissertation (Swart 2003). As I am intimately involved with these approaches, not only as a therapist and facilitator, but also as a mother, partner and friend, I want to remind the reader that these approaches are embedded in the lenses that have been constituted in the previous chapters. In my life, Narrative and collaborative therapy approaches are not utilised as techniques, but rather as approaches to life and being with people in every relationship in which I stand.

Participatory pastoral care shares the values of Narrative and collaborative therapy approaches, not in a prescriptive manner, but rather as approaches that currently share the guidelines and values of a participatory practical theology and pastoral care. These approaches are not employed as a one-size-fits all technique, as Held (1995) claims in her book. There are occasions in a pastoral conversation when care receivers might experience a sense of chaos; when they do not have the energy to journey on and to discover new meaning with the caregiver; when they feel a need to know what God says about different aspects and thus want pastoral caregivers to tell them what they think

and how they experience life. When people prefer and feel cared for in a more directive approach where someone knows things about them in a particular way, participatory pastoral caregivers do not abdicate by saying that they do not practise that kind of care. Sometimes people are in such desperation that they cry out for the caregiver to give them advice, right now! If a participatory pastoral caregiver disregards this cry for immediate help, the pastoral conversational space can become an unsafe and even disrespectful space that creates more trauma and discomfort for the person who is asking for care. In these instances, a participatory pastoral caregiver gives the advice that is asked for, but always in a respectful way, always asking if it was useful and helpful at all. In the end, Narrative and collaborative therapy approaches cannot be such a privileged story that the care receiver does not benefit.

There are various concerns that a postmodern Narrative and collaborative approach to therapy might not always benefit the participants. Barbara Held's (1995) book, *Back to reality: A critique of postmodern theory in psychotherapy*, is an example of such criticism. In the course of Held's (1995) extensive discussion, she does not suggest that participants were invited to voice support of her claims of when and how these approaches might not have helped.

When I think of the ethical considerations discussed in Section 1.8.3, I am confronted in respect of postmodern Narrative and collaborative therapy approaches with the question of who benefits. Knowing whether a care receiver has been 'helped or harmed' (Held 1995:242) is something we as participatory pastoral caregivers explicitly ask, and we do not assume, because the care receiver's voice and lived experiences are privileged (Doan 1998:381). We are also aware and conscious that the response of the care receiver regarding whether a pastoral conversation was helpful or not can be answered more boldly when power relations have been deconstructed in the care relationship, as described in Section 4.3.5.

Chapter Eight deals with this critical ethical question and provides an answer about when the PPC training did not benefit the participants. That chapter also proposes suggestions for action. It was important that the co-researchers participate in constructing the suggestions and were not excluded to privilege the facilitator's expert

knowledges in trying to solve whatever discomfort the participants experienced.

The conversational approaches discussed in this chapter are therefore practised against the background of the values of a participatory approach to practical theology and pastoral care. When Narrative and collaborative approaches to care are used in a conversation with a care receiver, all the approaches discussed in this research construction come to dance in the conversation: participatory practical theology, participatory pastoral care, Narrative and collaborative therapies, the care receiver's particular need for care, as well as the caregiver's own story and practices of care. Within a participatory pastoral caregiver's spiritualities, there are storehouses of practices of care that people find helpful, and which also participate with the approaches mentioned above. In doing spirituality with those in need of care, a Spirit of transformation also participates with us in a conversation that is guided by respectful practices and a participatory mode of consciousness, as described in the previous Chapter Three. In this multiplicity of conversations, voices, values and assumptions, I believe that Doan's (1998:380) fear that these practices will somehow be more privileged than others can be countered.

The approaches discussed above also answer Nichols and Schwartz's (2005:65, 260-261) concerns that caregivers might abdicate and become mere talk-show hosts or mediators whose point of view does not count. Participatory pastoral caregivers know that they can never be 'neutral' (Held 1995:242) and they are therefore invited in the PPC training construction process to share their values and beliefs so that they are aware when these values come into play as they listen and participate in people's stories.

Because both the caregiver and the care receiver have the power to participate in the praxis of care, both are determining and can collaborate in the caring journey (SteinhoffSmith 1995:151). As a result, the highly individualized view of care as discussed in Section 4.3.3.2 is broken through by the participatory collaborative journey and co-construction in these participatory pastoral conversations. So, what we do in a participatory pastoral care approach is not and can never be an untainted or pure form of either a Narrative or a collaborative therapy. It remains a co-construction as we

participate in an embodied engagement *with* people in need of care. If we prescribe that participatory pastoral caregivers engage in Narrative or collaborative therapies in every conversation, we will reify the metaphors (Doan 1998:379) and practices which have liberated so many of the participants into yet another ideology that claims to be *the only* way to listen to people. If we were to fall into that trap, Narrative and collaborative therapy approaches can become the next 'Grand Narrative' (Doan 1998) that gives care receivers and caregivers a sense of oppression when they feel deficient for not experiencing care in this one and only way.

#### **4.6 CLOSING REMARKS**

This chapter has informed the reader *how* the red shoes of participatory pastoral care can dance in Narrative and collaborative approaches in the participants' lives. The narratives shared in the chapter confirm that 'the feminist maxim that, "the personal is the political", is nowhere more true than when applied to Christian pastoral care' (Graham 1996:173). Because participants were able to speak out and tell their stories, the personal became the political for the facilitators of and participants in the PPC training.

The next chapter addresses the nature and practice of postmodern pastoral training and what that entails. The co-researchers who participated in and facilitators of the PPC training reflect on various aspects of the training process and its contents and thus set the stage for the narratives of transformation that were already told in this chapter and will be told in the chapters that follow.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **TRAINING RED SHOE CAREGIVERS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) have compared the process of their participation in the PPC training to the slow and respectful release of perfume. This slow release of perfume can never be fully encompassed, as all the participants who have completed the training over the last ten years did not get the chance to share their stories or chose not to do so. Nevertheless, the research journey participates in the documentation of the effects of the PPC training construction and therefore helps to suggest guidelines for the further development of pastoral training constructions.

As discussed in Section 4.3.5, I agree with White (1997:233) in assuming an ethical responsibility for the real effects of the work of PPC training in the constitution of their lives by the participants. The research journey takes on this ethical responsibility by creating an academic platform to give an account of what the participants found helpful and what they did not find helpful in the PPC training construction. Consequently, the focus of the study is the effects of the knowledges, paradigms and truths of the PPC training on the real lives of the participants. This travelogue of the research journey had the following questions in mind: '*Cui bono?*' (Heitink 1999a:160) – who benefited from the action of this training? In whose interests are these training action constructions and action processes?

This chapter focuses on the benefits that the participants experienced as they reflected on the training process and research journey. These reflections look at the construction of training as the participants and facilitators of the PPC training share their theological wisdom on all aspects of the training as they experienced it. The reader is again invited to share in the theological wisdom (Chopp 1995:2) of ordinary believers, as theological education is a process of 'spiritual and ecclesial formation that is focused in and through theological wisdom' (Chopp 1995:2).

In the remaining chapters of the travelogue of the research journey further reasons will

unfold for why participatory pastoral care participates in a transformation of society. The focus of this chapter is on how the PPC training journey participates in such transformation as an agent of transformation in the lives of the participants and in the societies in which they live. Adding to Chopp's (1995) view, mentioned above, I contend that both formation and transformation should be a commitment in our pastoral training constructions if we aspire to be true to both the Christian community and to education with ordinary believers (O'Brien 2001:281). As a result the reader will witness how the benefits of a participatory approach to practical theology and pastoral care, as discussed in the previous chapters, were fleshed out in the construction of training. The chapter also shows how red shoe caring was constructed by caregivers who walk the landscape of our postmodern time in a very particular way.

To begin with, I briefly look into the training of ordinary believers within the practical theological field and discuss the particular challenges present in the pastoral education field.

## **5.2 TRAINING WHILE RESPECTING UNHEARD VOICES**

Practical theology should develop an ear for unheard voices and interpret these voices as critically and constructively as the familiar voice of tradition.

(Roux et al 2003a:68)

I believe that, in order for us to develop an ear for unheard voices in practical theology, it is important to understand why the voices of ordinary believers are often silent. In this section I therefore briefly describe the history of distinctions between the laity and the clergy. Because PPC training constructions value equality, as described in Section 4.3.5, participants need to be aware of the power relations that arise from a background of distinctions between the clergy and the laity. This awareness also needs to spill over into the action of deconstructing such power relations in the training journey. The role of the facilitator in any PPC training construction is therefore of the utmost importance if we aspire in any way to construct a participatory training journey. The inequalities that arise from the modernist distinctions between the learner and the teacher reinforce the suppression of the unheard voices of the participants. These inequalities are also

explored in this chapter.

### **5.2.1 Laity and clergy**

As I discussed in Section 2.3, the subject of practical theology was originally created to train the clergy. Its point of departure was the distinction made between the clergy and the laity, a distinction which it accepted as a given. Heitink (1999a:94) explains that these distinctions between the clergy and the laity originated when the church entered a new era in 380 A.D., when Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity. At that time, the church received the status of a 'state church' which 'led to a significant increase in the tasks and responsibilities of the clergy' (Heitink 1999a:94).

Isherwood and McEwan (1993:14) argue that when the church became officially enmeshed in a political system as a state religion, 'it absorbed into its structure political concepts which ran counter to Christian ideals. In time, the religion of love and forgiveness sanctioned institutionalised racism, classism and sexism'. They add that 'classism was perpetuated by the Church with its notions of nobility, clergy and laity' (Isherwood & McEwan 1993:15). This classism implies that there are levels of knowledge/power and ministry within a faith community and therefore different levels of believers are called by names such as moderator, actuary, member of the clergy, elder, deacon and laity (Swart 2003:71).

The culture of a 'professional' Christian, in the role of a member of the clergy, functions within discourses of expert knowledge that marginalize and disqualify the local culture of the laity, and introduce a professional religious monoculture (De Jongh van Arkel 2000). This privilege and power has resulted in a situation where the clergy tell us about the laity, but 'we never expect to hear the latter talk about the former – what they have to say is already ruled irrelevant, because by definition they have no knowledge' (Fillingham 1993:18). I believe that an approach to education *for* the laity within these distinctions can be a strong instrument to maintain a culture of silence (Shaul 1993:12) where ordinary believers are taught only to listen, without contributing their knowledges.

The PPC training, with its respect for the unheard voices of the participants, challenges

the distinctions created through these alleged expert knowledges by engaging in a construction of training that recognises the local knowledges of the participants to the extent that they are also seen as theologians, as discussed in Section 5.3.

### **5.2.2 The people of God**

Given the background set out above, it comes as no surprise that the meaning of the word laity is

tainted by the contrast of clergy versus laity, which regards a nonordained status as a deficiency. In popular usage the word often has a negative undertone. The 'layperson' is the nonexpert, the one without specific training. But the Greek word *laikos* refers to membership of the people (*laos*), in biblical terms of the 'people of God.' As such, it is a title of honor.

(Heitink 1999a:307)

If the laity then refers to the membership of the people of God, equipping the laity, according to Heitink (1999a:307), has to do with the 'activities that equip Christians to perform their task in society'. For Clinebell (1984:395), the performance of a Christian's task in society is the ministry of reconciliation. He then distinguishes the task of the pastor as that of the person who should train, inspire, guide, coach, and work alongside the lay ministers as teacher of teachers and pastor of pastors (Clinebell 1984:395). Again the distinctions made with regard to who should train, inspire and coach is a one-sided affair that silences the voices of ordinary believers.

Because of the above history of distinctions between the clergy and the laity, I agree with Farley (1988:92) that the church has failed 'to take seriously the ordered learning, that is, the education, of the believer. Why is it that the vast majority of Christian believers remain largely unexposed to Christian learning?' In answer to Farley's question, PPC training presents a counter-story because it exposes participants to Christian learning, not as non-experts, but as the people of God participating in training. The PPC training does not engage with such distinctions as the clergy versus the laity, but instead challenges these distinctions through participatory practices that give a voice to the



unheard voices of some of the people of God.

The existence of the unheard voices of believers in training constructions also relates to the production of knowledge in the classroom. If we want to break the silence of ordinary believers in the classroom, we cannot use approaches to education that negate the 'pursuit of liberation' (Freire 1993:59). The next section explores why people tend to be so silent in the classroom.

### **5.2.3 Moving from clean slates to local knowledge**

Closely linked to the notion of an inexpert and untrained layperson in the church is the assumption in some approaches to theological education that students come to be trained as learners that have no knowledge. In this approach, students are mere objects of educational practice (Freire 1999:86). Knowledge therefore becomes a gift bestowed by teachers who consider themselves knowledgeable upon learners whom they believe to know nothing. The learners must then thankfully (Freire 1999:86) and patiently receive, memorise and repeat this bestowed gift of the teacher's knowledge as docile bodies. Freire (1993:53) describes this act of bestowing the gift of education as the 'banking concept of education', where people receive the world as passive entities and have to fit into it without questioning or doubting it (Freire 1999:88). In this view of education, teaching is a pure mechanical transfer of the contour of content from the teacher to passive and docile students (Freire 1994:69). Teachers in this approach present themselves as the 'necessary opposite', so that students never discover that they can also 'educate the teacher' (Freire 1993:53). Freire (1993:54) adds that these mechanical transfers minimise or 'annul the student's creative power and...stimulate their credulity' which serves the interests of the teachers in these approaches. These teachers care neither to have the world renewed nor to see it transformed.

The question then arises how the present Sunday school education approach endorses the banking concept of education and leaves us with adult members of congregations that fit into certain constructions of the church world without ever questioning that world or thinking that they can participate as equals.

As we have witnessed the participants' narratives, as shared in the previous chapters, we saw that the "modern" anthropological notion of the learner as an autonomous individual with a blank slate on which to impart knowledge no longer fits the reality of our students' (Chopp 1995:12). Farley (1988:135) expresses a similar idea to Chopp's (1995) when he claims that 'learning never begins with nothing, a blank sheet.... Rather, ordered learning appeals to and builds on already-formed understandings and interpretive responses, and rigorizes specific types of interpretation and understanding'.

When we build on and co-construct with the understandings of knowledgeable participants, these participants move from merely being in the world to being '*with* the world' (Freire 1993:56) [Freire's emphasis] and with others; and from being a 'spectator to a re-creator' (Freire 1993:56). Participation used in the PPC training context then refers to an 'exercise in voice, in having voice, in involvement, in decision making at certain levels of power' (Freire 1999:88). These already-formed understandings, responses and interpretations are regarded as local knowledges that are respected and invited to participate at all times within the construction of the PPC training.

### **5.2.3.1 Drawing truth from everywhere**

As we do not regard the participants of the PPC training constructions as coming with blank slates, we have to look at the root of the word 'educate': the Latin '*educere*, meaning "to lead out"' (Moore 1991:18). Moore (1991:18) explains that the root of the word implies

drawing out truth from within persons and from the environment. Therefore, we can speak of education as leading people into growth (self-development) by drawing out truth wherever it is to be found. For example, we reach into ourselves and draw out the truths that are there, or we reach into historical events or an ancient text and draw out the truths that are there. The accent in this definition is on leading people and drawing truth from many sources. The accent, further, is on dynamic movement. People themselves are moving, and truth is moving.

I agree with Moore's idea of drawing truth from various sources, but as I will discuss later, I also believe that truth, as she terms it, is co-constructed in the PPC group by the

knowledges that are shared and invited. This co-construction of training is indeed a dynamic movement, as she explains in the above quote, because every training construction, even though it is embedded in the same values and practices as discussed in Section 1.4.2, draws truth from all the narratives, histories and knowledges that are shared in such a group. During the 18 weeks of PPC training I often see how people move as some of the truth they hold moves, is challenged, further strengthened, and sometimes let go of.

### **5.2.3.2 Valuing participants' contributions**

But for the one who knows to be able to teach the one who knows not,...first, the one who knows must know that he or she does not know all things; second, the one who knows not must know that he or she is not ignorant of everything.

(Freire 1994:188)

If we acknowledge that the participants of the PPC training are not ignorant of everything, but come with knowledges to the training construction, their previous experiences are recognised and used, as emphasised in experience-based learning (Hakala 2001:44). The PPC training therefore acknowledges the participants' contributions in the training construction as local knowledges that are valued and accepted as the contributions of the unheard voices of ordinary believers, as I have already discussed in Section 2.5.1. In this regard, Hakala (2001:45) explains what the role of the educator should be in such constructions:

According to the constructionist view, learners always actively choose, interpret and process the information taught. They select and interpret it on the basis of their expectations and previous knowledge. Therefore, the educators representing the constructionist view of learning start from the learner's situation, previous knowledge, and way of perceiving the issue.

Roux (1996:311) found that the acknowledgement of these local knowledges of the participants in his training constructions created a safety that gave the participants self-confidence and motivated them to participate in the learning process creatively and spontaneously. In addition, as learning is a collaborative and participatory process, I

agree with Harlene Anderson (1997:249) that learning also becomes individualised and self-directed as participants begin to

experience, recognize, and value their expertise, competencies and talents. They became more thoughtful and active in delineating what they want to learn, in determining how they best learn, in requesting the [facilitator's] and fellow [participants'] participation in their learning. They develop a sense of...freedom and confidence.

If participants therefore understand themselves as the people responsible for the determination and accomplishment of the learning that they need, they also come to see that learning is an active, unique and collaborative process for each individual. The PPC training also operates on the assumption that adults are the 'subjects of their own learning' (Vella 1994:6; O'Brien 2001:286), so they are engaged in the construction of knowledge. I share Harlene Anderson's (1997:245) approach in which she as the facilitator creates a space where each participant has a voice, contributes, questions, explores, is free to be uncertain and experiments. The following narrative gives a voice to these practices:

*Megan:* Setting the non-prescriptive tone at the outset of the training created the space where participants were surprised to find that their contribution formed an integral part of the training. Creating a context of genuine respect of each participant and their contributions powerfully demonstrated the practices central to the Narrative approach. Speaking and discussing their importance would never have had the same impact. My life was enriched through the experience of being in a group where each person (race, colour, class title and qualification notwithstanding) seemed to be valued and respected, which made an enormous impact on me. For the first time, I had a sense that my contribution was valuable and that if I remained silent, as was usually my pattern in groups, this group would not be as rich an experience as it could be. This new understanding has significantly influenced my sense of belonging. Not just to the training group, but to the world I live in. I offer my contributions more readily and boldly and feel more part of groups, where before I felt an outsider or

merely an observer.

Megan's experience confirms Harlene Anderson's (1997:120) contention that being responded to by both the facilitators and group members creates a sense of belonging and being connected that is critical to dialogue and conversation.

### **5.2.3.3 Participating in enhancing and sharing skills**

Most of the participants of the PPC training constructions have been caring for people before they were trained within this approach. Some of them reflect on and sometimes feel ashamed of their former methods of care, but most of the participants feel very strongly about the fact that they have always wanted to help and care. In addition, quite a few of the participants are in the ministry and they were taught by their families how to care. For these participants, the PPC training added to their local knowledge about care as handed down by previous generations, their local faith community and/or the ministry organisations and the communities that they form part of. As participants already come to the training construction with these knowledges, Roux (2004) contends that as facilitators we merely have the privilege of participating in enhancing and sharing skills. This is borne out by Gawie's experience:

*Gawie:* I grew up in a home where I personally experienced the meaning of other people caring about you. Through the years this united us into a close family and eventually we all ended up in careers in which we could be of service to others. The seed of 'caring' had been sowed early. I easily felt sorry for someone. It gave me great satisfaction to help others and to care, which, in due course, became part of my life. It was a particular attitude towards my neighbour. Unconsciously one just started working with the Narrative principles. Advice, help and guidance [Afr. *begeleiding*] were often a shot in the dark; sometimes you hit the mark, even though you just grazed it [Afr. *skrams*!] I'm excited that these PPC training constructions are offered. It empowers you to make a difference in your environment. One can just think what an effect it could have in changing an entire society.

From the above vignette we can see that the co-construction of the PPC training gave

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participants an opportunity to tune into the skills and values of care that they had already acquired through a process of 'appreciative inquiry' (Hammond 1996) which allowed them to build on these skills and values. The tangible result of such an inquiry process is a series of statements that describe where the participants' caring practices want to be, based on the highlights of where they have been. Because the statements within an appreciative inquiry process

are grounded in real experience and history, people know how to repeat their success...the participants stir up memories of energizing moments of success creating a new energy that is positive and synergistic. Participants walk away with a sense of commitment, confidence and affirmation that they have been successful. They also know clearly how to make more moments of success. It is this energy that distinguishes the generative process that results from Appreciative Inquiry.

(Hammond 1996:7)

An appreciative inquiry also helps participants to understand their own values and priorities regarding pastoral care. It explores with the participants how they have come to these values. In this regard, Boler (1999:xviii) writes: 'Education aims in part to help us understand our values and priorities, how we have come to believe what we do, and how we can define ethical ways of living with others.' The PPC training emphasises the importance of the pastoral caregivers' theological commitments, which guide them in their care with others. The participants' faith commitments deeply shape the ways in which they listen to the care receivers and the directions they take in offering help (Cozad Neuger 2001:57).

The PPC training therefore welcomes the insight that genuine conversation between our lived experience and heritage brings. It assists the participants in opening themselves up to a deeper appreciation of the beliefs and commitments that have aided their living and their faith (O'Connell Killen & De Beer 1994:142). Karissa's story elucidates how the appreciative inquiry process helped her to nourish the caring qualities that she already used:

*Karissa:* People have always experienced a certain tranquillity with me, and that

has now been nourished sufficiently [Afr. *dit is nou genoeg water gegee*]. I feel new growth emerging and flowering. The PPC training gave it body and substance; it provided a know-how in the not-knowing of somebody's story. I don't have to know the answers – just be there!

In addition, Freire (1994:70) emphasises that starting with the knowledges and experiences of the participants does not imply that we stay only with these knowledges and experiences, but that there is also a movement beyond, as is explored in Section 5.2.3.4.

#### **5.2.3.4 Dialogue between local knowledge and postmodern pastoral care**

Even though the previous experiences and the local knowledges of the participants are important, valued, respected, acknowledged and built upon in the PPC training construction, new experiences and knowledges are also intentionally co-constructed in the training through group conversations (Hakala 2001:44). Participants are therefore invited to consider a participatory approach to pastoral care and theology. As a result, the training of participatory pastoral caregivers involves an activity where the local knowledge of the caring practices of the Christians of a particular community enter into a dialogue with a postmodern approach to pastoral care. Multiple reflexive conversations create safe spaces for participants to integrate their local knowledge with alternative knowledges co-created in the PPC training (Roux 1996:107). The connection and culmination of these two journeys helps participants to feel that they are now in some way on a journey to learn and discover, but that they are also equipped to deal with the complexities of their time.

#### **5.2.4 The facilitator**

We have already looked at the modern anthropological notion of the learner in Section 5.2.3. Bruner (2003:170) describes a Western pedagogical tradition where teaching is 'fitted into a mould in which a single, presumably omniscient teacher explicitly tells or shows, presumably unknowing learners, something they presumably know nothing about'. In contrast to this perception of education, the PPC training calls the teacher a facilitator (Hakala 2001:46). The facilitator's role is not that of a 'depositor' and

'prescriber' (Freire 1993:56) of knowledge as described in Section 5.2.3. Instead, a facilitator is a 'student among students' who undermines the 'power of oppression and serve[s] the cause of liberation' (Freire 1993:56):

The [facilitator] is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is him[-/her]self taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach[es]. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.

(Freire 1993:61)

As the facilitators and the participants become jointly responsible for learning and growing together, the constructionist view of this learning comes into play. In this view, the central role in learning is not the acquisition of information as such, but instead understanding, thinking and raising questions amounts to the most important skill of learning to learn (Hakala 2001:45). In line with a constructionist view, participatory practical theology as discussed in Section 2.5 is also a learning theology, a dynamic movement always in search of ways to live in ethically accountable ways. The participants are therefore seen as knowledgeable regarding care and theology; and the facilitator opens up the learning space for these knowledges to be released, as well as for new knowledges to be invited and constructed as everybody learns together. O'Connell Killen and De Beer (1994:141) write that the facilitator of theological reflection is seen as a 'midwife of the movement towards insight' and I would like to add that I believe that a facilitator of PPC training is also a midwife for transformation.

In the training constructions they facilitate, the facilitators of the PPC groups also employ a not-knowing position, as described in Section 4.3.2. This not-knowing position is not about knowing nothing or about withholding knowledge, but it is related to what the facilitator does with what he/she knows or thinks he/she knows (Harlene Anderson 1997:247). The facilitator does not presume to know beforehand what is important or what the goals of the participants are. Consequently, the facilitator is sensitive to and accepts what each participant contributes and wants from the PPC training construction. This construction is an active process involving connecting, interacting, negotiating, and adjusting (Harlene Anderson 1997:247).



In the PPC training, the facilitator's agenda can never be to export by rote what he/she knows. He/she does not provide a recipe for being a participatory pastoral caregiver. He/she does not tell the participants what to do or correct alleged errors. Like Paulo Freire (1998:100), I believe that PPC facilitators are 'artist[s] and politicians, but never technicians'. The facilitator's challenge is to give the participants an opportunity to join in a shared inquiry into the practices of participatory pastoral care. As in a participatory pastoral care conversation, this shared inquiry requires trust in the journey and the relationship with the facilitator, which is explored in more detail.

#### **5.2.4.1 Deconstructing power as a facilitator**

In the next two sections I give the co-researchers an opportunity to share how they experienced the deconstruction of power by the facilitators of the PPC training constructions that they participated in. Given the background of the unheard voices of the people of God, facilitators are caught up in an inseparable 'net or web of power/knowledge [and] it is not possible to act apart from this domain' (White & Epston 1990:22). The same values that were explored in Section 4.3.5 regarding the deconstruction of power relations is therefore also applicable in this section, as it is very important that the facilitators deconstruct their power (Roux 1996:201).

As it is impossible to act apart from the power/knowledge domain, as mentioned above, there seems to be an inherent tension between a postmodern facilitator and participant, as the facilitator's desire to be less hierarchical and authoritarian and the participant's expectation of hierarchy and authority may come into conflict (Harlene Anderson's 1997:247). Consequently, PPC training constructions begin with the 'solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students' (Freire 1993:53) [Freire's emphasis]. The solution of the teacher-student contradiction is also aided by the facilitators' and participants' common humanity and an adulthood that values equivalence, a transcendence of social hierarchy and reciprocity in an adult conversation (Lee & Wickert 1995:141). The next two subsections portray how the solution of this contradiction is reconciled within such an adult conversation.

*a) Sharing life, wisdom and examples*

Hestenes (2004) contends in his study that a pastoral counsellor's personal values, as portrayed in a pastoral conversation, are probably one of the greatest influences on the success and outcome of therapy. In line with Hestenes's (2004) study, I too believe that a PPC facilitator's lived values within the training construction are probably among the greatest influences that affect the outcomes of the 18-week training journey. I believe that these lived values may even determine the success of the training.

Hestenes (2004:73) argues that it has become critical for us to understand and challenge the value system of the counsellor, and in this research journey, the facilitator. This understanding and challenge is essential because these lived values can either create space for 'renewed and critical transformative praxis' or stifle participants into conforming with the *status quo*.

In a collaborative training construction, the facilitator is open to share his/her expertise, wisdom, biases, experiences and lived values, but these preferences and opinions do not come from a position of privileged knowing, of assumptions about what is best for a participant, or of assurance about how and what another person ought to learn (Harlene Anderson 1997:247-248). What the facilitator values is always submitted with humility, tentativeness, and openness to alternatives, as the facilitator also remains open to change (Harlene Anderson 1997:248). The following account of the co-researchers' experiences of their facilitators in the PPC training journeys not only reveals how the facilitators deconstructed their power within the training journey, but also reveals the values that the facilitators employed and that spoke to the participants:

*Nan:* The patience, careful sharing of examples and experiences, and the creation of a caring, non-threatening and safe environment, the encouragement to explore and question which the facilitators, Sue and Johann, provided were the elements I found so very helpful.

In the creation of this safe environment, as Nan mentions above, I believe that a facilitator cannot say one thing and do another<sup>36</sup> or 'take their own words lightly' as this 'cannot inspire trust' (Freire 1993:72). The facilitator of a PPC training journey needs to practise that which the participants are to be inducted into, and in this language plays a very important role (Astley 2002:8). Facilitators must take seriously the consequences of their actions within these training constructions by making sure that they do not claim to espouse one way of working, but behave in a way that contradicts their avowed beliefs and the values shared with the group (Brookfield 1993:30). This notion emerges clearly from the comments of some of the co-researchers:

*Reisgenoot:* The facilitator, whom I've never met before, created a safe space for me. I don't trust people easily, I bluff with no trouble. I initially found it strange that she was not willing to offer answers as right or wrong, but later I realised that she practises what she preaches. At some stage we tried to force her hand [Afr. *vir haar in 'n blik probeer druk*] by asking her what she thought, but she always redirected the question. It was after all we who had been wondering.

*Leonie:* The facilitator taught us the approach of being respectful by her example.

*Lorna:* The facilitators have been extremely experienced and wise. Both Johann Roux and Sue Skidmore have guided and modelled the art of the Narrative ideas expertly. They have at all times been available for further discussion and conversation.

It seems that the experience of trust and the trustworthiness of the facilitators played a significant role in the ability to learn with them in the training construction:

*Karissa:* The facilitator gave me the faith [Afr. *'n stuk geloof*] to trust somebody close to me. There was enough respect and sensitivity to allow me to trust

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<sup>36</sup> As Dr Hestenes in his comments on the final draft of the dissertation rightly asks, one needs to consider what happens when a facilitator makes a mistake or is totally confused with him/herself and the group. Transparency is one of the values that initially came to my mind. The facilitator can ask the following question: How is what we are conversing about helping and not helping? Some clues to resolve Dr Hestenes's question lies in the deconstruction of the facilitator's power as discussed in this section, because this value takes away the pressure of being the perfect facilitator.

her in my sacred spaces [Afr. *heilige plekkies*]. I experienced some first-wait-a-little in some of the silences. There was a Solomonic wisdom in her young body and I found it so wonderful. She handled things with wisdom and respect every time. Not in one instance didn't she help. I hope we still have many years together.

In addition, Freire (1994:80) argues that it is ethically required of facilitators to respect the participants by becoming more tolerant, open and forthright, critical, curious and humble. This is particularly important in a situation of trust:

*Mari:* It would have been scary thinking what she knows about me, if it hadn't been for her always applying the Narrative approach. Her humanness also came to the fore in the stories about her own crises. Her honesty helped. You can trust her.

It is clear from the recollections shared above, that self-disclosure and sharing by the facilitator of his/her journey facilitated a storytelling process and the creation of expanded narratives that participants experienced as useful (Becvar 1997:91). It therefore seems important that facilitators earn the right to listen to participants' stories by also being open to share their own stories. We saw how the facilitators' actions deconstructed their power and were granted symbolic significance by the participants (Brookfield 1993:27).

#### *b) Asking questions*

The facilitators of the PPC training also deconstructed their power by asking questions during the training journey which resonated with constructionist' views on training. In a constructionist approach, the role of the facilitator is to direct participants by asking questions (Hakala 2001:169). As a facilitator I thus share Vella's (1994:185) practice of not telling participants when I as facilitator can ask them questions. One co-researcher reports her experience as follows:

*Queen:* The first night, when the facilitator said that that was the most she was going to say during the training, I immediately thought: “Who’s presenting this training?” We did the talking, and now and then she would ask a question along the lines of “What does this mean for you?” or “Tell us more about this”.

Roux (1996:206) mentions that when facilitators of the PPC training constructions share new information or give an answer to a question, this information or answer is always given tentatively, as suggested by Harlene Anderson (1997:51). Facilitators therefore tentatively talk about what they wonder and believe, while keeping their comments non-evaluative. Sometimes these comments are then followed by another question. This has the following effect:

*Anne:* Our facilitators encouraged us to think deeply for ourselves. They opened up all sorts of possibilities for us in terms of caring for people.

I believe that this facilitative position keeps all the voices in motion and helps them to contribute (Harlene Anderson 1997:95) to this participatory training journey. In this section we have explored how a training construction is negotiated when participants are no longer seen as learners that come with clean slates and facilitators are no longer the only knowledgeable ones in the classroom. But how do we facilitate training constructions where everybody is a theologian?

### **5.3 TRAINING WHEN EVERYBODY IS A THEOLOGIAN**

Practical theology should not be a terrain allocated only to practical theologians as academically trained theologians. Practical theology should include the unheard voices of so-called ‘non-theologians’.

(Roux et al 2003a:68)

In postmodernity, which values equality among the people of God, there seems to be a move away from the old distinctions between laity and clergy. A study (Burdsal, Newton, Burdsal & Yates 1996: 9) done among Episcopalians suggests that today ‘lay people see themselves as partners with the ordained clergy in the ministry of the church’. If ordinary believers do indeed see themselves as partners, a new kind of training needs to

be constructed where believers are also seen as partners in the training construction (Freire 1993:56). Ballard (1999:142) raises this question as follows:

Who are the theologians? Especially who are the Practical Theologians? First of all, all God's People are, or should be, theologians. We are called 'to give account of the faith' (1 Peter 3:15) and to reflect on its meaning and implications.... And it is the practical experience of the day-to-day Christian obedience that is the basis of theological reflection.

I believe that the values and practices conveyed in this chapter invite participation in a dialogue about such a training construction where all God's people are both partners and theologians (see Section 2.5.3.1) in ministry. As discussed in the previous section, these partners do not come to the training with minds like clean slates, but they are recognised as conveyers of local knowledge and a theology of practical experience from which everybody can learn. Since we invite ordinary believers to be participants in the construction of theology, these training constructions imply more than the activities that equip Christians to perform their task in society as Heitink (1999a) argues.

I believe that we can give an account of our faith as Ballard (1999) proposes in the above quote by participating with our local knowledge about care within the postmodern time in which we live. Because we see the participants of the PPC training as God's people and as theologians that are engaged in caring practices in the postmodern times, we as facilitators wonder alongside these believers, asking ourselves and them how their theology enables them 'institutionally, communally, and personally, to live more Christianly in today's world' (Ballard 1999:143).

Consequently, this training construction facilitates a conversation that seeks to hear and learn from the participants' beliefs, actions and perspectives, which may confirm, challenge, clarify and expand how the participants understand their experience (O'Connell Killen & De Beer 1994:viii). Furthermore, I believe that these training conversations form part of a transformative theological reflection that takes place from a position of exploration (O'Connell Killen & De Beer 1994:19). I have therefore seen and experienced how these pastoral training conversations with one another's local theologies may, have changed and can change (Astley 2002:66) the participants' and

my own local theology. As a result I have adopted some of the participants' views as their theology became significant for me and eventually also became mine.

Because the PPC training is based on the development of a process in which the facilitator-participant and participant-facilitator co-construct knowledges, learning grows out of the 'reciprocity of action' (Freire 1993:88). Therefore the PPC training conversations invite co-construction practices that provide ways of training *with* believers as partners and theologians in ministry, rather than the training *of* or *for* believers:

The students – no longer docile listeners – are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the [facilitator]. The [facilitator] presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own.

(Freire 1993:62)

If we embrace the shift from the training *of* the people of God to the training *with* the people of God, Hunter (2001) argues that we need to move from a therapeutic orientation in training pastoral caregivers to participation in training. The strong emphasis in the PPC training on a participatory approach to practical theology and pastoral care has already been extensively dealt with in Sections 2.5 and 3.2. I concur with Hunter (2001) when he argues that the need of the hour in pastoral care is one of participation. He says:

My thesis is that these social and cultural conditions make the 'need of the hour' one of expanding our basic understanding in pastoral care and counseling (including pastoral supervision and pastoral psychotherapy) from a primarily therapeutic orientation, which is largely what we have traditionally known, to an orientation that includes and is prepared to give equal attention to committed participation in religious or faith communities.

(Hunter 2001)

Hunter (2001) adds that 'good participation has a quality of spontaneity and openness'. In line with Hunter's views, the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) described the PPC training journey as a 'mutually beneficial, interactive journey that was exploring,

spontaneous and unforced'. According to this group, the journey also led to 'transformative change' (Red Shoe Co-Researchers 2004) that is discussed in more detail in Chapters Six and Seven.

I share Hunter's (2001) concern that we must be 'prepared to give equal attention to committed participation as the occasion requires' as an expanded view of the pastoral task that 'should be a central concern of our ministries'. If we therefore believe that all God's people are theologians, participation is not an option but an inevitable obligation; otherwise we would be fooling ourselves. In a training construction where distinctions between the clergy and the laity no longer play a visible part, the facilitators of such training constructions often find the gifts of a spontaneous and ordinary exercise of pastoral care by the participant-theologians refreshing and renewing. In addition these participant-theologians can teach the facilitator of the group as well as the reader of the research journey about caring practices in our society that can move and inform us. I believe that a new and transformative conversation is joined through such a '*collaborative knowing*' (Hoffman 1997:xv) [Hoffman's emphasis] process in pastoral education by all God's people as partners and theologians in the knowledge communities to which we are already affiliated (O'Brien 2001:287).

#### **5.4 TRAINING IN DIFFERENCE AND OTHERNESS**

Practical theology should reflect the current plurality and heterogeneous descriptions of lived experience. The presence of difference and otherness in experience should be accepted as given.

(Roux et al 2003a:67)

This section enlightens the reader about the educational themes of the PPC training, in other words those values that are conditions under which learning occurs. These themes are involved in the 'creation of physical spaces, in the way we relate to one another, in how we choose what is studied, and what is read. Education depends upon particular values and conditions' (Chopp 1995:43). The above quote by Roux et al (2003a:67) suggests that accepting difference and otherness is one of the conditions under which learning occurs within the PPC training. As a result, physical spaces are constructed for



relating to one another in otherness and difference to allow all participants to contribute that which is characteristic of them, as suggested by Harlene Anderson (1997:245).

I begin by looking at the kinds of spaces that the facilitators co-constructed with the participants, as well as the way the facilitators related to the participants in these spaces.

### **5.4.1 Sacred spaces for different stories**

Becvar (1997:55) calls the spaces she creates for therapy 'sacred spaces'. When I use the term safe space in the rest of the research text, it refers to spaces that emphasise the 'sacredness of the activity' (Becvar 1997:55) of training and in which people's lives and stories are engaged with in the greatest respect. One of the co-researchers commented as follows:

*Queen:* The fact that the facilitator asked about confidentiality regarding the stories that were shared at the end of each conversation, created a haven for one. Even though there might have been storms outside, you never had to worry about anything that had been said. Especially for us, who are living in a small town, and where there are certain people in our community who are just waiting to get their claws into you.

In addition, I believe that the sacredness of the space is also honoured when we recognise our 'mutual interdependence and connectedness' (Becvar 1997:98) as participants in the PPC training.

*Mari:* Here, where we were together, "I heard what you said", "I listened to what you said", wasn't just a cliché. When I was in the Bible study group and I cried, I always wondered what people would think of me. When I cried in our group, I felt that the group accepted it. It was OK.

### **5.4.2 Creating safe spaces**

The following question then arises: if the facilitators are creating safe spaces wherein learning can take place, what is this safety for or what is this safety generating? I believe that a safe environment helps participants to share and learn much (Hakala 2001:219). It

seems that the space of safety created in the PPC training was even safe enough to allow for challenging questions and ideas:

*Queen:* At the right time the facilitator asked a question that was so relevant, which prompted one to dig deeper than one normally would have. These questions completely cut the ground from under one's feet. When we finally arrived at the answer, I would think, "Wow!" I had not thought that this would be the route we were going to take. I saw and experienced much more along the road than I would have otherwise.

Safety as a value within the PPC training construction is therefore linked to respect for and a non-judgemental attitude towards all participants (Vella 1994:6-7). Vella (1994:72) adds that a non-judgemental attitude is not easy to implement, but considers it a very important value. I also believe facilitators should try to enact this value in the PPC training constructions. A judging attitude can easily stop the spontaneity in the group and the effect of a judging remark is immense (Vella 1994:72). This notion is expressed by one of the co-researchers as follows:

*Coba:* As the facilitator was a friend, I knew I could be myself, totally uninhibited. I was definitely stimulated to advance to the next being-level with people by being more inquisitive with questions. I was never judged, but I was forced to start questioning my own set of values. Because she is not ashamed of me, I am not ashamed of myself.

The expertise of the facilitator lies in creating space for and facilitating a learning process in which the participants' expertise is elicited. This in turn generates increased competence for each person present in his/her own way (Harlene Anderson 1997:248). According to Roux (1996:224), safe spaces create room for the boldness that allows participants to be transparent, which in its turn leads to a kind of training that is ethical. In addition, I believe that this boldness empowers the participants to venture out and gives them the courage to practise care with people (Hakala 2001:53).

### 5.4.3 Accepting diversity and otherness

There is a saying that if we cannot love, we cannot exist. If we change that saying to suggest that if we do not make space, we cannot exist, the following question arises: is participatory pastoral care training making space for difference and otherness (DTh Group 2004)? In this section I explore how the PPC training makes space, and what role the facilitators are currently playing in making space. Furthermore, in making space, are we teaching others to create space as well? Is participation in the PPC training allowing space for others to be (DTh Group 2004)? The narratives of the participants suggest that the answer to the last question is yes. In making space for the diversity and otherness of participants in the training journey, a respectful regard for the differences found in society is also encouraged. Facilitators of the PPC training constructions therefore express their respect for differences in ideas and positions as their ethical duty (Freire 1994:79,157). One co-researcher commented as follows on the effects of such a stance:

*Mari:* There is a phenomenal difference in my realm of thought. Now, after the training, I also realise that people that are different than me are also OK!

The PPC training provides a place where people meet in a common space and are impelled to confront one another in all their differences (Min 2004:2). Another co-researcher said:

*Coba:* It was pleasing to know that the others who were doing the training with me were not shocked about who I am. All of a sudden it is OK to be me. This is unconditional love. There was boldness, acceptance and fearlessness. I miss all of them.

When the participants meet in this common space, the training journey also creates a context where people have the confidence to present their constructions, even though they know that they disagree with some of the other participants (Roux 1996:176; Harlene Anderson 1997:246; Vella 1994:67). Some co-researchers said the following:

*Karissa:* Care seems to me like looking deep into someone's eyes and listening. Maybe hearing things you don't like or with which you don't agree, but still keeping your respect and sensitivity. It was enriching to hear what others

had to say and what you could have been able to or wanted to say as well. That which you would have said in a similar way was reassuring and confirming. I could view issues from different angles that haven't even occurred to me, and this was enriching. From time to time things were said that I thought could not be true, and that was challenging. I wish we could meet each other more often on a regular basis for further development and encouragement and deliberation [Afr. *kers opsteek*].

*Reisgenoot*: Sometimes you are allowed to say, "I beg to differ". It's as if people are more merciful with that. I am allowed just to be different.

*Ann*: People may differ from me, and don't have to think the way I do. If a mistake occurs, I have more understanding of its origin. I accept that not all people think or are like me.

Through these recollections we can see how an openness to the other helps us to make room for the other, and in that process expose ourselves to conversation and interaction with the other (Min 2004: 86). This acknowledgement of difference and otherness brings humility to both those participating in the PPC training and pastoral care. One co-researcher remarked:

*Lucky*: The Narrative training has changed my way of thinking. It has brought humility forward. It helps me to be nice to people even if they think differently from you. If you get used to this humility you end up being nice to everyone.

Anderson (2001:20) writes that postmodernity is felt in the '*celebration of diversity*' [Anderson's emphasis] that leads to a 'demand for tolerance'. This celebration of diversity can really take place when we not only respect differences and demand tolerance, but when we are also prepared to be influenced and changed by the other. For Min (2004:62), this respectful regard and celebration of difference means

a willingness to subject all our convictions to the challenge of others, their views, their needs, their identity; not in the sense of giving up our convictions and beliefs as condition of dialoguing with others...but in the sense of a culture of readiness to live in the tension between our own ultimate beliefs and the challenge of those

who differ, with the willingness to modify our views and behaviors if necessary, and otherwise always to take the other into consideration. As postmodernists argue we do not indeed possess God's vision of totality, and we must learn to live with the challenge of the other, sometimes in the *light* of others so that we may learn from them, often in the *shadow* of others so that we may be challenged to repentance and conversion [Min's emphases].

I share Min's (2004:70) view that we should not only recognise and appreciate difference, although its importance is not to be denied, but that we need to find ways of living *together* and also to celebrate differences. One co-researcher put it like this:

*Nan:* I am convinced that an attitude of acceptance towards those different to oneself, a respectful regard for everyone, helps to keep my dreams and hopes alive and real.

In the PPC training constructions, differences are 'valued, considered equally important, and viewed as the seeds of newness', as suggested by Harlene Anderson (1997:245). I believe that the PPC training is taking on this challenge of living together with all these differences, not only living together, but also caring together in difference through humility within the seeds of newness.

## **5.5 COMMUNITY AS A VEHICLE FOR TRAINING**

If living together in difference with humility is the challenge of the societies we live in, it calls for an approach to pastoral training that explores the possibilities presented by communities as vehicles for a new training construction. According to Roux (1996:263), the koinonial construction of the PPC training enables the participants to participate actively in their community:

### **5.5.1 Moving from individualistic to community learning**

Patton (1994:29) describes the most urgent need with regard to pastoral training as follows: 'In recent years, the pastoral care movement and clinically focused education for ministry have been criticised as being too individualistic, gender- and culture-biased, theologically naïve, and over-influenced by psychology.' In this section I want to respond

to Patton's need and offer the reader a brief look at the PPC training as a construction of training that values participation and community as a vehicle for training.

An emphasis on the individualistic nature of training is the result of a Western pedagogical tradition. According to Bruner (2003:170), it 'hardly does justice to the importance of intersubjectivity in transmitting culture'. Bruner (2003:170) also argues that one of the important gifts to this postmodern culture would be a 'reformulation of this impoverished conception'.

I believe that social constructionist ideas, which the PPC training values, provide a response to Patton's concern regarding the individualistic nature of pastoral training. In conjunction with social constructionist ideas, these training constructions 'place an emphasis on the power of relationship over individual minds, multiple words over singular realities, collaborative interdependence over individual heroism, and dialogue over monologue' (Gergen & Gergen 2003d:158).

In addition to the intersubjectivity of the PPC training construction mentioned above, Moore (1991:2) dreams about the art of teaching practised in such an organic way 'that people are connected with themselves, with one another, with social systems, with the earth, and with transcendent reality'. I share her dream that the 'art of theology...be practiced in such an organic way that theological reflection touches and connects all dimensions of life' (Moore 1991:2). The narratives of the participants conveyed in the last few chapters give wings to her dream when they speak of the various forms of connection this PPC training construction has brought to them.

### **5.5.2 Training in community**

Several of the participants found a sense of community and care in the togetherness they experienced during the training journey. This sense of Christian community also offered them companionship in the 'process of moving toward insight' described by O'Connell Killen and De Beer (1994:46). The following comments reflect participants' experiences:

*Megan:* My growing awareness of the power of community and participation influences my growing enthusiasm for groups and the power they hold for growth and change. I believe it enables and empowers people to take the responsibility for their lives and be open to finding the care that they need from many different sources. They are beginning to be nurturers of one another and finding great meaning in being givers and receivers of care. They have come looking for 'professional' carers and have begun to see the value of being in relationship with other group members where nurture is given and received.

*Etwatwa co-researcher:* I've learned a lot. Today I'm different. I know how to deal with other people. Thanks to the team. I didn't have motivation and now I have. This is my home, I have mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers and I thank you. I am using the skills you have taught me, using them at home.

*Leonie:* I've grown to love these people so much, they almost feel like family. I want to share in their joy and sorrow and make them a part of my life. I've experienced acceptance from the others, as everyone is so unique.

*Mari:* The PPC training brought warmth, love and an opportunity to belong.

*Etwatwa co-researcher:* Life is a series of losses. I have lost individuality the 'I', my profession and my family. After every loss there is more to be gained. I have gained togetherness. 'I' became 'we'. Profession became passion and family became community.

The above recollections show how the PPC training has been able to create the conditions in which to develop transformed meaning perspectives wherein these participants have moved in some ways from an individualistic care to the power found in a *community of care* (Billman 1996:10) [Billman's emphasis]. Collaborative caring and learning communities were therefore constructed that invited trust and respect in a safe atmosphere. Participants were also introduced to sources of knowledge within these communities that broadened their perspectives to enable them to move beyond the bias and prejudice they might encounter in society.

### **5.5.3 Learning as an interactive process**

Because the PPC training is a co-construction of ordinary believers in community, teaching in these constructions is not something done to the participants but is an 'interactional process that involve[s] mutual interpreting and understanding' (Harlene Anderson 1997:249). Consequently, I do not believe that I can teach participants to be participatory pastoral caregivers, but I can create a space for and foster a generative conversational process in which they can learn to be (Harlene Anderson 1997:244).

#### **5.5.3.1 Mutual learning**

In the PPC training construction, 'learning is an interactive process in which people learn from each other' (Bruner 2003:170). According to Min (2004:113), the conditions for mutual learning to occur are the following:

Encountering the religious other as other, without prejudice, and with the willingness to learn from the other...will be possible only when others perceive a minimum of justice and equality in the socially imposed conditions of life.

In this regard, the openness and non-judgemental attitude (as explained in Section 5.4) that participants experienced in the PPC training already confirmed the possibility that mutual learning was taking place. As a result of such learning, the groups that journey together in the PPC training form communities of mutual learners. In these communities of mutual learners, it is very important that safe spaces are created, as mentioned in Section 5.4.2, to provide a platform for maximum learning. I share Newbegin's (1995:10) view that we can only come to know others and, I want to add, learn from others 'in the measure in which they are willing to share. The resulting knowledge is not simply our own achievement; it is also the gift of others'.

The Warehouse 242 Staff Team (2003:248) use the metaphor of 'potluck' when they describe their postmodern community. They explain this experience of community as potluck because no one really knows what the other is going to bring to the meal, but 'because everyone is there together, everyone has brought something'. It is my experience that when a safe space is created for everyone in the group to bring



something and to participate, a sharing of the gift of mutual learning is often the result. The PPC learning journey therefore encourages participants to participate with the facilitator and group members in learning as a 'two-way enterprise' (Harlene Anderson 1997:248). Also, as we become aware of our relatedness as mutual learners, we recognise that we are also truly 'involved in one another's destinies' (Becvar 1997:98).

### **5.5.3.2 Learning by doing**

In the interactive process of the PPC training construction, the participants not only learn from one another, but also learn by doing and practising what they have learnt. Participants therefore learn social practices of care by participating in them (Hakala 2001:50; Astley 2002:8). Furthermore, these actions of doing and practising are accompanied by a built-in reflection (Vella 1994:11) that further informs the participants' doing actions. This is demonstrated by comments such as the following:

*Megan:* Learning by doing was core to the effectiveness of this training. Many powerful concepts were learned in the watching of and listening to the therapeutic conversations between the facilitator and volunteer.

*Coba:* It is as if God is in a practical manner combining the events in your life with the theory of the training. The fact that we had time to introduce our own stories at the start of the training constructions helped. It resulted in the gelling of the practicalities of life and the theory of the abstract written word. It created the desire and dream within me to spend more time to journey with people. If I consider what it has meant to me, then it is 'wow' to have the ability to journey with people. I do believe that even my stories rubbed off on other people. My cats have a way of bringing their latest catch into the house. It was lovely to be able to bring incidents from outside into the safe space and to say, "See what it looks like. Look at what I have in my mouth."

Consequently, the PPC training constructions strive toward creating a supportive environment where encouragement and reality testing can be offered to participants who are trying out these new skills.

## **5.5.4 A continuous changing journey**

### **5.5.4.1 Changing community**

In the context of the interactive process of mutual learning explained in the above section, I believe that knowledge, 'being socially arrived at, changes and renews itself each moment of interaction' (Hoffman 1992:18). Therefore no PPC community of mutual learners from a specific context can ever be constructed in precisely the same manner anywhere else, because each individual brings his/her knowledges and expertise at that moment to the group in the measure that the person experiences safety. We are never sure what we will see when we arrive to share in the potluck. But that for me is the beauty of this kind of training, that everyone comes prepared, not in the formal sense of memorising a piece of work or giving a lecture, but participants come to participate with their knowledge of care.

Being part of such a community of training takes the pressure off the trainer, and makes him/her a facilitator of the knowledge that already exists. As a result there can also be no saturation point, because every participant still learns new things every day. Experiential learning is continuous learning. In this regard I share Harlene Anderson's (1997:244) view that learning is a dynamic, continuing, daily, lifelong process. The PPC training is therefore not a how-to course with a full stop at the end; it is a journey and a process.

### **5.5.4.2 Facilitating this constant change**

In a context of constant learning and change, the facilitators have to be skilled at facilitating changes. Sue, who has been involved in training as a PPC facilitator for nearly four years, shared some of the frequent challenges she encounters due to constant change in her work:

*Sue:* In every Narrative therapy training construction we facilitate, I still learn new things and different ways. I had always thought of myself as a good trainer so I thought that I will get Johann Roux out for a couple of times and then I will be able to do it. Now I am willing to watch and learn for a lot longer. It is only after four years that I thought that I will be able to run the training because I have soaked up such a lot. Johann works very differently from

me and that has also enriched me. I am still a far way from coming to a saturation point where Narrative therapy is concerned. Maybe you will never reach a point of saturation, because these ideas constantly challenge your ideas. Last week there was a situation at Etwatwa where I felt that I was not very respectful on a whole lot of stuff. So, I've still got a long way to go to get steeped in it somehow. I don't think it is an easy concept to work with or to train. It is less concrete than some other ideas. It lends itself beautifully to working experientially. I don't think you can train it in any other way. If the fundis of this world like White and Epston have not come to a conclusion as yet of what this work is about, what hope do we have? And that I think is some of the frustration and fascination of these ideas at the same time. There is not a 'how to'. There is no full stop to this work.

I know that I am much more relaxed now than I used to be. In my counselling I am also much more relaxed in thinking 'how to' much less than I used to. I am also less concerned about that. There are values that this work is built upon. I have experienced other people's training as well and they are much more skills-focused. I come away totally dissatisfied from such training experiences. I think that Narrative ideas help you to know if you have those values and where you do not have those values. It also helps you to make them accessible and work them out in your life. It reminds me of having faith, you've got it, but then you actually need something to get your faith tested. Then how do you make that work in action? Lots of people do want to be more respectful, but Narrative therapy gives them the vehicle to learn to do that.

### **5.5.5 Helping each other to learn**

Because we see education as the drawing out of truth wherever it is to be found (Moore 1991:18), learning becomes a 'place where, among other things, learners help each other learn, each according to their abilities' (Bruner 2003:170). In the PPC training, the participants are invited and encouraged to come along with their knowledge and wisdom, because we do not see them as autonomous individuals coming with a blank slate, but as learners and participants that help each other to learn. In Section 5.2.3.2,

we saw that participants felt that the facilitators valued their contributions, and as a result, how participants also learned to value the contributions of the other participants and thus help one another to learn.

Vella (1994:20) argues that learning is enhanced by adult peers as they sometimes share experiences that allow them to challenge one another in ways that the facilitator cannot always do. As a result the participants co-create safety for one another in which they often address a fellow participant who is struggling with complex and challenging issues with 'surprising clarity, tenderness and skill' (Vella 1994:20). This is borne out by the following remarks by some of the co-researchers:

*Leonie:* The group definitely encouraged my spiritual growth.

*Etwatwa co-researcher:* You (this group) are like water. When you drink it you will not be thirsty. Misuse it and it can be gone. It has strengthened our unity. I've been affected by and taught by others' stories.

*Ann:* I learnt much from the others. Each has his/her own story, is unique and very special. We all accepted each other.

*Desbe:* In the times of sharing and listening to how others respond to challenges in their lives, it motivated, encouraged and inspired me.

Like Freire (1993:53), I believe that knowledge emerges in these PPC training communities 'through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other'.

#### **5.5.5.1 Reflection as learning**

In addition to sharing and learning from one another's local knowledge in the PPC construction of training, there is also a process of reflection at the end and beginning of each training session which constructs further learning (Roux 1996:103). These reflections become part of a generative learning process. Questions are asked at the end of a session such as the following: What have you learned today that you would like to take with you? What did the session mean to you? Some of the questions at the beginning of a session might be: What have you been thinking about since the previous

training session? Have there been any questions, things you have wondered about or stories that you want to share since our last conversation? In addition, participants are invited to share any comments, personal learning experiences or stories that they wish, as well as the meaning of the learning to them.

These reflections and reflections about reflections in action are therefore about collaborating and constructing (Harlene Anderson 1997:102). The results can be quite astonishing. What another person learns can be totally surprising (Harlene Anderson 1997:248). Roux (1996:103) mentions that these kinds of question are not used to test the participants, but to externalise the training so that a multiple reflexive conversation can be facilitated wherein the facilitator can learn more about each participant, address his/her needs, and refine the training (Harlene Anderson 1997:252). In addition, these reflections make the training an ongoing process of becoming more efficient, because multiple reflexive conversations are a way of training. The necessary adjustments can be made while the training continues, because the training is co-constructed (Roux 1996:235-236).

Apart from the reflexive conversations constructed during the training, there are also multiple conversations constructed outside the formal training journey. These conversations emerge in the relationships wherein the participants stand. They arise at times when some of the participants have conversations with each other during tea breaks. They also take the form of self-reflexive conversations (Roux 1996:136). These informal conversations also constitute the PPC training construction (Roux 1996:223). Reflexive conversations allow participants to think about, to expand, to reconsider, to understand differently, or to give up dominant caring practices that they are involved in. As a result, this reflection process forms part of a development and transformation of knowledge (Harlene Anderson 1997:252).

O'Connell Killen and De Beer (1994:67) emphasise the importance of reflection in the following way:

Articulating what we take away from reflection is crucial to growing in the life of faith. Unless we write, sculpt, or in other ways embody our insights we are likely to forget them as our habitual meaning-making process lull us back into our

familiar ways of living.

Hakala (2001:154) notes that theological reflection is closely connected to personal spiritual reflection and spiritual formation. In the PPC context of training the local knowledge and reflections of the participants are recycled actions that move about in language. Or could we perhaps say that in this regard, knowledge is actions recycled into words? In our acting together through participation, we language what we experience and then these words influence our actions again (DTh Group 2004). Thus, theological reflection brings change because it

disposes us to being transformed by God's power in God's time, and to being instruments in the kingdom. It impels us, individually and communally, to increased knowledge, greater consciousness, and critical perceptive sensibilities in relation to self, family, community and tradition.

(O'Connell Killen & De Beer 1994:144)

### **5.5.5.2 Socially produced knowledge**

An openness and a sense that you are not alone in your difficulties also fosters community and a willingness to learn from one another, as the following comments by co-researchers suggest:

*Anne:* I have become very close to a number of the participants and it is so good being with them as we speak the 'same language'.

*Benita:* An environment of care allows one to blossom, grow and glow! My journey has been challenged and enriched with the other participants to know that what I feel is also what others feel to an extent and that helped me to be more at ease once hearing their story. Doing the reflective team, in saying how the person's story influenced my life, overwhelmed me. This is different from 'normal therapy' and it made me feel very vulnerable. And I am slowly becoming at ease. This helps me with being transparent, open, learning that we all have a past that can bring us together to move and change the future.

*Coba:* Wow, you are also battling with this, let me learn from you. I hope I'll

remember what you're saying, because I want to take it with me as luggage on my journey.

*Retha:* The PPC training helped me a great deal, as I experienced that there were more people who were thinking like I do; again, it ensured that I didn't feel so lonely. It strengthened my point of view.

Because of the above-mentioned vignettes, I share De Roux's (2003:106) view that the 'knowledge produced socially, and heard and legitimized collectively, [can be] added to...people's ideological arsenal'. On numerous occasions, the participants shared how they had taken with them what was constructed collectively during the training and at the conclusion of the training they still sometimes referred to this socially produced knowledge as sustaining them through difficult times. In addition, this space where knowledge could be collectively constructed helped the participants to take responsibility for their presence in the group as sharers and not as mere spectators.

### **5.5.6 Training through conversation**

The PPC training construction uses multiple reflexive conversations as one of the vehicles for the training and therefore the values portrayed in Section 4.4 are also used in the training conversation. In this pastoral training conversation, the development and acquisition of knowledge is seen as a 'social and interactive event, a joint action that takes place through dialogue [as] the essence of the learning process' (Harlene Anderson 1997:244).

Vella (1994:3) explains the meaning of the word dialogue as follows: '*Dia* means "between"; *logos* means "word". Hence, *dia* + *logue* = the word between us'. Vella (1994:3) goes on to explain her assumption that adult learning is best achieved in a dialogue, because adults have enough life experience to be in dialogue with any facilitator and therefore learn new knowledge or attitudes best in relation to these life experiences.

Because participants' life experiences are invited into the PPC learning space, conversations are experienced as engaging, imaginative and playful when they bring the

participants' stories to life. Conversations thus become a tool of enlightenment and of empowerment and a 'source of reconstructed collective histories embedded in individual stories' (Torres 1998b:9). In this collaborative learning dialogical process, newness and change reside in the capacity of all the participants to continually tell and re-tell, write and re-write their unique narratives (Harlene Anderson 1997:246).

Chopp (1995:107) refers to conversational spaces as dialogical spaces: 'Dialogue requires real interaction among embodied persons, with openness and respect for mutual critique. In theological education this material interaction might be envisioned by the creation of dialogical spaces.' However, dialogical spaces or conversations can also be 'disruptive because they bring out some of our own contradictions as individuals' (Torres 1998b:10). To be engaged in conversations that can be disruptive, yet value openness and respect, requires participants to share experiences with humility, because men and women 'who lack humility cannot come to the people, cannot be their partners in naming the world' (Freire 1993:71). As the PPC training conversations are founded 'upon love, humility, and faith' (Freire 1993:72), I believe that these conversations create mutual trust between the participants. This opening up of space therefore results in 'increased connectedness, more sharing, greater honesty...more responsibility, more social integration, more...healing and more egalitarian human interaction' (Tomm 1991:14). A co-researcher described her experience in this regard as follows:

*Nan:* The group experience has been enriching and added value to my life and work in small groups and to get to know and understand people at a much deeper level.

In the PPC training construction it is thus important that the facilitator gives participants an opportunity to converse as 'equally important partners' (Harlene Anderson 1997:306) that do not assume that they know what the other participants are saying and that are committed to learn from one another. As equal partners in conversation, all the participants have a say in the purpose, direction and expectations of the training conversation. Hence, it is very important to courageously address and encourage the removal of whatever impedes learning in the conversation on the one hand, and nurture whatever is found useful in the conversation on the other hand (Vella 1994:18).



What informs multiple reflexive conversations in the PPC training is the premise that dialogue is generative and that transformation occurs in and through collaborative learning communities (Harlene Anderson 1997:245).

## **5.6 TRAINING AS CARE**

In addition to the dialogical conversational spaces mentioned above, I believe that the PPC training journey also provides communal spaces where healing can be experienced through the care that is constructed in community. We saw the power of community in the body of Christ as the PPC participants' lives were transformed in dynamic interaction with other group members (Cozad Neuger 2001:58). These experiences of healing and care were constructed in the forming of committed relationships and participation in the PPC training community that participants were part of:

*Megan:* My life has been enriched by a growing awareness of the importance of finding the care I need. Also a greater sense of hope in finding the care I need and a confidence to search for it before I become really desperate. A new realisation since the training is that care can come from many sources and in varied ways. The greater openness with people who were on the same training often leads to conversations where non-blaming open-ended questions allow for new kinds of interaction. A seemingly casual conversation with a 'non-professional' holds the potential of being 'therapeutically' beneficial. The atmosphere of respect that was established and negotiated created a safe context. This led to a willingness to be vulnerable and to be honest about oneself and one's needs. Being able to express my needs in this context always leads to a greater clarity on the problem and somehow support and care was communicated. I realised that there are more caring people in my world than I thought. This helped me not to feel alone and also left me with the hope that should I need care in the future there are lots of people whom I could go to and seek the help I needed. So I moved from a place of feeling alone in my neediness and sometimes hopeless and despairing about its being any different, to a place of being connected to a group of caring people and feeling lighter

and more optimistic.

By contrast, the participants in Hakala's (2001:196,217,237) study reported that the pastoral training that was conducted in their groups left them with open wounds that they had to survive with on their own. The balancing of educational and therapeutic aspects in training therefore remains a challenging ethical consideration (Hakala 2001:217). According to Hakala (2001:218), most of the pastoral training programmes she encountered encourage personal therapy and/or pastoral care to run alongside these programmes. Another consideration is for pastoral caregivers to find pastoral caregivers of their own.

In most of the training constructions that I facilitated, difficulties regarding people's life stories were incorporated into the training construction. Only because of time constraints would I invite participants to come for individual conversations if they thought it necessary. Within the PPC community of training, the participants found an openness and honesty that resulted in the creation of a caring training space:

*Reisgenoot:* I think I've learned to cry again during the PPC training. As a child you were who you were, there were no facades. As you grew up, you learnt that you're not to cry everywhere and you're not to fling your toys from the cot, all over. You don't cry, you behave yourself. I then stopped crying. Here the weeping faucets were released again, new washers were installed. Now, I cry again, but it is a pleasant crying. It brings relief and cleanses. What made it safe to cry was the fact that everybody was together. Nobody judged and everybody showed you respect. If you made a blunder, you never experienced judgement. You were accepted in love for who you were, because you had your own set of gifts. It was safe. I could leave my facades at home. The facades are now gone, I think they have been lost somewhere.

According to Pattison (2000a:143), laughter provides an experience of grace, hope and creative possibility, as well as of profound human solidarity. He believes that it should have a prominent place in pastoral care. Pattison (2000a:169) adds that where laughter enters, lives and situations can be transformed. Queen shared with us how she

experienced laughter in the training construction:

*Queen:* The confidentiality struck me. In the beginning one was a bit sceptical, and later it was easier to share. I was looking forward to the group sessions, because I could come with my problems. There was no other place in which it was so understood as in this one. It was like a safe haven where you could calm down, with news time and story time. We laughed a lot, roared with laughter, and we could laugh at and with each other. Chené's children asked what we were doing inside the room, because it didn't sound like a training course. I've often thought that if these things were to happen at school, it would be taken personally, but here we laughed with and at each other. We also cried together. I felt as if each one brought his/her dirty laundry and we were all helping to sort through it. Each one did his/her bit with the load of washing. I never felt, "Where are you coming from now?" It felt as if your contribution would mean something to someone. In the end, when we were reflecting, I often took with me things that someone else had said, because it had become a wow to me.

As a result of shared experiences and laughter, quite a few of the participants referred to the training experience as a caring safe space that sustained them. It is due to the need for an interactive caring community that the participants of the PPC training have often described their time together as a place where they can breathe more deeply, even a place and space that they can get addicted to:

*Maureen:* The main enrichment of the training has been through the people I encountered on the training. I was relatively new to Northfield at the time and a little intimidated by its size. The training brought me in touch with a group of people who challenged and encouraged me to participate in the life of Northfield. By their listening and caring they offered me a safe place to re-assess my life and plan the way forward.

Roux's (2004) proposal of caring communities is not only applicable to communities of care that already exist, but also to those that are constructed through the group processes of the PPC training. Such caring community spaces help people move away from an individualised form of pastoral care. In this regard, two of the facilitators, Johan

and Retha, shared how it helped them as facilitators to see these communities of care in action:

*Johan:* It helped me to experience how you can, through your contribution, help other people to care for each other. In other words, you are no longer alone there to do the caring. People are now starting to care for each other. It helped me to be rid of that responsibility of having to care for everybody.

*Retha:* I can identify with what Johan is saying, because caring for people can become a very lonely road. What was good for me, were those times when I could see that the group clearly noticed that there was someone who needed caring. I've told people from the beginning that they are also there to care for each other. From the beginning this was part of the promotion of this training.

In agreement with Goodliff (1998:159), I too believe that these communities of care are an 'imaginative response to the postmodern social challenges, and an opportunity to offer the base level of pastoral care more efficiently than would otherwise be possible if pastoral care were to remain the exclusive province of the professional minister or counsellor'. Not only did the PPC training environment facilitate care amongst the group members, but Retha also experienced how she was cared for as a facilitator by the participants in a reciprocal and mutual receiving and giving of care:

*Retha:* I was used to being the caregiver and what happened in the PPC training was that the participants started caring for me. Because of what they've seen and learnt, and the sensitivity they've developed, they could start distinguishing when I was not all right. And they started caring for me – which is quite something for me, to allow being cared for. Because this is not the role I'm used to. Often I've told the participants that they are gaining something from the training, but I'm gaining just as much. For me, everybody's contributions added value. The group of facilitators became a group where I belonged, people who thought alike and shared a similar passion. Its value can't be measured.

To see what was happening to the people in the PPC training made me feel that I was making a difference in people's lives after all, which I could

never have done as an individual. I've often told the participants that I was gaining more from it than they were. I enjoyed those special moments when participants were struggling to understand a concept just to experience the wow moments of understanding when something would pop out in, for example, a question. I saw the changes taking place in people's lives and I was part of it.

## **5.7 CLOSING REMARKS**

As the co-researchers introduced us to the slow and respectful release of the perfume, as the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) called the PPC training construction, they informed us about the effects of this training construction on their lives. Guidelines for the development of pastoral training constructions were therefore provided that are explored more fully in Chapter Eight. The participants also shared how they benefited from the action of training in various ways. The reader was again taught by the theological wisdom of ordinary believers as we learned how the PPC training construction, embedded in participatory pastoral care, participated in the transformation of society. Participating in this postmodern training construction resulted in red shoe caregivers that walk in ways that will heal and not hurt.

Given the narratives of the participants and facilitators voiced in this chapter, I not only think that the PPC training provides care through the training construction, but I also think that it trains people to live out an approach to care that brings about a ripple effect in the societies in which they live. In addition, we have seen how ordinary believers' views about themselves, their community and society were transformed within a postmodern pastoral training context where the participants were/are invited to be active co-journeymen whose local knowledge and culture were/are valued and respected.

The next two chapters explore how the PPC training helps 'society transform through re-action and pro-action' (Roux 2004) whilst tapping into the transformational character of theology.

## **CHAPTER SIX:**

### **NARRATIVES OF RED SHOE TRANSFORMATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the relationship between transformation and practical theology, pastoral care and the PPC training. Transformation is seen as one of the aims of participatory practical theology, so this chapter and Chapter Seven present living human documents of how transformation was made incarnate in the participants' lives. Chopp (1995:4) writes that if we can begin to name the possibilities for transformation that already exist in the daily lives of believers 'we will aid in continuing Christianity as a living presence'. This chapter shares some of the red shoe narratives of the participants who experienced transformation in a 'context of human action' (Chopp 1995:97) as a living presence.

In addition, I believe that Chapters Six and Seven answer Pattison's (2000a:253) longing for 'more brilliant, transformative performances in word and deed that will make a difference to thought and practice'. I therefore see the red shoe narratives of the participants as words and deeds that can change perceptions, transform people, society and the world, as Pattison (2000a:221) asks. Now that the journeys of the participants of the PPC training have been described and documented, the question arises what kind of transformation the PPC training and participatory care bring about.

I start this chapter by exploring transformation as the aim of practical theology. Then I give the participants an opportunity to share their narratives of transformation regarding their relationship with God and with themselves.

#### **6.2 A THEOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATION**

It seems that practical theologians illuminate the value of transformation in theology from various positions: Heitink (1999a:163) proposes that change is the 'direct object of practical theology, mediative action, and strategy for transformation'. Pieterse (1999:411) talks about the 'contextual and critical nature of practical theology with its transformative

goal of action' as a key emphasis of many practical theologians. Anderson (2001:48) writes that theology is properly conceived as 'authentic transformatory action'. In contrast to these statements that value transformation as the goal of practical theology, McLaren (2000:16-17) laments that through the ages, Christianity has lost its revolutionary character. If our faith, relationship with God and our doing of theology no longer brings transformation, the question arises what we are engaging in or with. In this regard, Pattison (2000a:249) rightly asks if practical theology is actually making a difference. As I believe that the revolutionary character of theology has the ability to make a difference in our lives and societies, the next section focuses on the transformational character of the approaches to theologies explored in Chapter Two as an answer to McLaren's and Pattison's questions.

The PPC training is embedded in the values of a participatory approach to practical theology and pastoral care, a contextual approach to practical theology, as well as a feminist theology, which all value change and transformation. Consequently, these approaches to theology can only be ethical if the outcome of the process is that which it values, namely transformation. The documentation of this research journey is therefore an exercise in accountability to see whether these approaches to doing theology, which stem from a passion for change (Ackermann 1996:45), has indeed had change and transformation as its outcomes. In my practice as a researcher, my passion for change works toward giving a voice to the participants as they speak in this chapter about how they experienced the transformation that the PPC training brought to their lives. I have also experienced empowerment through the PPC training that is discussed in more detail in Section 6.5.6. This chapter also voices the revolutionary and evolutionary side of feminist theology, as explored in Section 2.4.

The knowledges presented in this travelogue of the research journey are not mentioned as knowledge for its own sake, or only to prove that the PPC training constructions did indeed achieve transformation as an outcome. Instead, transformational knowledge is seen as part of a process, a journey and a pilgrimage that wants to make a difference to reality. I believe that to make this difference, the theology and spirituality of the participants must permeate the personal and political so that it can work for the 'transformation of ourselves and our world' (Waldron 1996:68). Pattison (2000a:231)

describes this transformational knowledge as messy, because it amounts to the so-called informal knowledge, personal knowledge and wisdom that arise from people's personal experiences of living and their conversations with experience.

The existence of movement in the narratives of the participants as presented in this chapter inevitably implies change, thereby challenging belief in the static nature of all that constitutes pathology and normality (Bird 2005a). This chapter stems from my own practice and belief that there is constant movement in theology that challenges the belief that theology is static, through the documentation of stories of movement at various levels. This movement undeniably implies theology's potential 'to change people, to deepen faith and understanding, and to heal our wounds' (Ackermann 2003:xiii).

In the research journey, the words 'change' and 'transformation' are used interchangeably, because these two words, I believe, are in constant dialogue with one another. *The Oxford School dictionary* describes the word change as follows: to 'make or become different' and the word transformation as the process of change of the 'form or appearance or character of a person or a thing'. In the new South Africa we have been engaging in a process of transformation for more than ten years, after the devastation and hurt that *apartheid* brought. In the context of our country, transformation has therefore become a political word, loaded with meaning, and it is inviting to some and repulsive to others. The research journey is therefore also situated as a document of transformation in a country engaged in a process of transformation. In Section 7.3.1, I discuss in more detail how the PPC training brought about transformation in people's views on and participation in the new South Africa.

I believe that "'transformation" is about conversion and change' (O'Brien 2001:281). The change and conversion that is needed for transformation to take place must encompass renewing our hearts, renewing our way of life, renewing our community, and renewing our bodies. These renewals all go together. For Powlison (2001:43), such comprehensive renewal is wisdom and felicity, which is the goal of God's journey with our lives. Voicing the participants' narratives therefore also speaks about conversion as a renewal and transformation of various aspects of their lives.



Brueggemann (1993:24-25) describes the process of change and transformation as follows:

[P]eople do not change, or change much, because of doctrinal argument or sheer cognitive appeal....or...moral appeal....[P]eople in fact change by the offer of new models, images and pictures of how the pieces of life fit together – models, images and pictures that characteristically have the particularity of narrative to carry them. Transformation is the slow, steady process of inviting each other into a counterstory about God, world, neighbour and self.

The previous chapter has explored and discussed this slow, steady process of inviting the participants in the PPC training into a counter-story about God, neighbour and self. These counter-stories of a transformation of the self and the participants' relationship with God are explored from Section 6.4 onwards. In the context of the background set out above, the PPC training and participatory pastoral care can be seen as agents of transformation bringing the counter-stories of the lives of ordinary believers to the fore.

### **6.3 PARTICIPATORY PASTORAL CARE AND THE PPC TRAINING AS AGENTS OF TRANSFORMATION**

As I believe that both the PPC training and a participatory approach to pastoral care were agents of transformation in the journeys of the participants, I do not discuss these elements separately in my presentation of the participants' recollections in the text. While we construct the PPC training, we live the values of an approach to participatory pastoral care, which makes the training a construction that caringly trains, as Section 5.6 shows. When I therefore identify the PPC training and participatory pastoral care as agents of transformation, I am talking about the approaches to care and training discussed through the lenses presented in Chapters Two to Five.

According to the MS Word 2003 thesaurus, the word 'agent' has many possible replacements or alternatives, such as manager, negotiator, mediator, representative, cause, means, driving force and instrument. In this travelogue of the research journey, the word agent refers to a negotiator, mediator and, I might add, co-constructor of transformation.

First, I briefly discuss the PPC training as an agent for transformation. The narratives presented in this chapter confirm that this participatory approach to education is not 'simply about correct ideas or handing down tradition or training in technical expertise; it is also about human change and transformation, growth' (Chopp 1995:13). In this regard, the PPC training responds to Freire's (1996:185) contention that education must be an 'instrument of transforming action, as a political praxis at the service of permanent human liberation'. The PPC training with its critical thinking focus is concerned with the transformation of the participants by helping them to live and work in more fulfilled ways (O'Brien 2001:289).

Although transformation is not a condition for an interactive conversational construction, it seems that transformation is one of the consequences and outcomes of the PPC training journey. According to McCarthy (2000:204-205), enabling personal and social transformation is the mark of 'authentic spirituality' and a witness that our work with participants is effective. Thus the PPC journey of training took most of the participants from being 'docile bodies' to becoming 'enlivened spirits' (White & Epston 1990:31).

Second, participatory pastoral care is also seen as an agent of transformation in the travelogue of this research journey. The transformation that the participants experienced does not offer any techniques and quick fixes, but proposes an approach to pastoral care that has become a way of being present with people in need of care. In this way of being present, participatory pastoral care is related to personal and social transformation in a particular historical context (Cochrane et al 1991:90).

Some of the participants found the metaphor of a metamorphosis helpful in conveying how their journey with this co-construction of training in pastoral care influenced them. They described the journey of the PPC training as moving them from being caterpillars to being butterflies when it comes to co-constructing care with other people. This metamorphosis affected the participants' lives in the way they saw other people, the way they cared for them and the way they were present with them. As a result, participatory pastoral care became an agent of 'inner transformation' (Goodliff 1998:209), which also spilled over into a transformation of society (Heitink 1998:191).

The stories of the participants that are shared in Chapter Six and Seven speak of current

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experiences of transformation, but sometimes the participants also envisaged transformation that is yet to come when the ripple of the personal becomes the political.

#### **6.4 TRANSFORMATION OF FAITH AS THE AIM OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY**

As discussed in Chapter Two, Roux et al (2003a:68) propose that the aim of participatory practical theology should be the continual transformation of faith in God as He/She reveals him-/herself throughout history. In line with the discussion of Brueggemann's (1993:24-25) ideas in Section 6.2, this section reveals how new images and pictures of God have invited a counter-story of God into the narratives of the participants. As was explained in Roux's (1996:199) dissertation, the PPC training creates space for every participant's theology in such a way that the reflection on these theologies opens up alternative understandings of God and ethics. The narratives of the transformation of the faith journeys of the participants are therefore religious acts which engage in a form of theological reflection aimed at thinking through the meaning of God. Astley (2002:61) calls such acts 'Ordinary theology':

Theology is thus both beliefs and believing, both thoughts and thinking, both the content of what people say about God and that talking itself (and also their talking about their God-talk), both something we 'have' and something we 'do'. In short, it is both theology and theologizing.

(Astley 2002:56)

The ordinary theology of the participants that is shared in this section encompasses all the above aspects of theologizing, which involve the person and his/her personal faith, central to his/her doing of theology (Astley 2002:55). In this regard, I think it is important to remember that there is still some reluctance among ordinary believers to speak about what they believe because of their sense that theology is a subject for alleged experts (Astley 2002:61). The reader is encouraged to treat these stories as the gifts of ordinary believers, breaking the silence.

The following section invites the reader to understand how the transformation of faith in God was negotiated through the agency of participatory pastoral care and the PPC training:

### **6.4.1 New images of the life of Jesus**

In the space created for theological reflection in the PPC training, an understanding was negotiated of the 'marginal yet transforming witness of Jesus of Nazareth, who welcomed those most despised and preached a Reign in which margins and center would be reversed' (O'Brien 2001:299). As a result, the participants frequently shared how they found a new commitment for and love towards Jesus and how that has a further impact on and transformed their lives:

*Leonie:* The salvation Jesus brought – the things Jesus came to challenge – took on new meaning for me, for instance the place Jesus allocated to women. Because Jesus has challenged these things, I also question many things. Now there is less punishment, less judgement, and more love in my relationship with God.

*Mari:* For me, the Narrative approach is so much like Jesus. Narrative is Jesus' unbelievable love and care; 'I love you just the way you are'. 'You are the only one.' Jesus makes you feel that way.

*Gerhard:* The training has made a huge difference in my relationship with God. The passion that Jesus had to come to earth to prove God's love for the people, the passion he had for people. Jesus did die for the sinners. Somebody arrives, broken, and sometimes he has made a mistake. I've learnt to trust the Lord to be careful [Afr. *om katvoet te wees*], because we are dealing with people's lives.

*Van:* What the PPC training taught me about the concept in the Bible is not to judge. It also opened a new door to me about that, because one is so inclined to judge and to say, but I know this is wrong and that is right but this is not relevant. So what if it's right or wrong. That is irrelevant. What is relevant is the example for that person. That is relevant. Your empathy and the sympathy with that person, that is relevant. Jesus didn't come to gain

status; Jesus came here to help those who cannot help themselves. He didn't regard it as a competition to establish how many people he could win over, but to demonstrate: this is what love is, this is grace, and this is what it means to forgive. In our everyday lives we have to try to apply this. The PPC training makes one more inclined to this, because you don't have to take a decision, the person with whom you're dealing has to take his own decisions. All you need to give is to ask him to verbalise his situation and to find his own alternatives to his problem.

### **6.4.2 New and deepened dimensions to spiritual life**

Throughout the narratives of the participants in this section, we see how the practice of theological reflection changed their lives. This practice helped the participants to take religious insights, which are fleeting, and move them into a conversational space where they could be interpreted. 'Theological reflection slows us down, gets us beyond our chronic human embarrassment and anxiety, and creates a climate of grace to transform us...[that] helps us to act a little differently' (O'Connell Killen & De Beer 1994:111). The practice of theological reflection invited the co-researchers to pause or reinterpret experiences in the light of their faith so that their daily lives could be lived more faithfully:

*Leonie:* On a spiritual level the PPC training meant more to me than years of attending church and Bible study, specifically due the value of non-judgement. Not to judge is to accept and love. It brought renewed depth to my being a Christian. I've learnt that you can put your being a Christian into practice, in a way that is good for you and the Lord. You don't have to be in agreement with the prescribed norms.

*Ann:* It reinforced the depth of my faith. You can only love if you don't judge. It reinforced my view on communion with the Lord, the love and non-judgemental nature of God, and how to live it more effortlessly became a part of me.

*Karissa:* It definitely brought a new and exciting dimension to my faith journey. It feels as if I have a better understanding even of God's love and compassion for people. It feels as if John 3:16 also attained a deeper

dimension. To read a book in which the name of God doesn't appear once, and to know this is what Jesus would have done. Grace also took on a richer meaning. I believe this approach has been born in heaven. Discourses on faith are now clearer to me than ever before. I believe Jesus also experiences pain concerning the pain people suffer here. Jesus tells the Pharisees that they burden people heavily and then He says that His burden is light and His yoke is soft.

*Johan:* God acquired a more social, ethical, humanitarian face in my mind. A face that can be seen when people care about each other, not only a dogmatic, scriptural God but a God brimming with compassion.

### **6.4.3 New and deepened dimensions in relationship with God**

In addition, the stories of human experience (Forrester 2000:25) that we bear witness to in this section also has to do with the activities of God (Forrester 2000:9) in the participants' lives:

*Reisgenoot:* It is OK to travel, you never have to arrive. I've felt so lost many times in my life, but other people always seemed to know, here they were now and there is where they wanted to be. And here I stand. The PPC training also helped me truly to trust God. I've been asking the Lord for a long time for such a course.

*Coba:* I just have to laugh and confirm that God definitely has the most detailed sense of humour. He has equipped me and He knows that I can. He tries me above my strength and in so doing raises my level of expertise. I know He is busy with me. It is more a case of surrender. God is able to handle what comes my way. I've got more peace and grace. I've got more grace to forgive the people that have hurt me. God is using me as a healer. I also have crucified hands and feet. The detail of his plan has become practical now. I don't believe in coincidence, and particularly after this training journey I don't believe in it at all. If I didn't have the skill, or at least tried to acquire the skill, I would not have survived the past year. God has known, and he has given me a code 10 license now. If I think of all the crises that have emerged since I started with the PPC training – I wouldn't have been

able to do it without this. God has equipped me, it is an opportunity given, but I am in training. I was already on the track, I was in training.

*Nan:* Gaining a greater understanding of myself has included an acceptance of my weaknesses, and struggles as well as strengths and has heightened my awareness of need for God and for spiritual influence in my life. The release from the desire to 'perform' created space for the appreciation of the fact that love overcomes evil and is the greatest gift we can receive and give. I would say that the respectful non-blaming attitude engendered in the training supports and confirms my belief in and relationships with God. The training certainly prepares us for ministry.

#### **6.4.4 Participating with God**

According to Viau (1999a:97), theology is a description of the way we speak about God, rather than a study of words which refer back to a mysterious object. Through the narratives presented in this section, we are invited to listen to the ways in which participants' ways of speaking about God were transformed:

*Megan:* The training transformed my relationship with God. I am able to be honest about the depth of my needs and know that God's care is inexhaustible. I am moving from the more passive position that comes from ideas of the 'all controlling God' to the ideas of being in a participatory relationship where we choose to co-operate with God or not to. This has had a significant influence. I feel more alive and motivated to participate in God's purposed ways of being. As in other relationships I find myself drawn to conversation where questions play an important role. So too with God, this relationship has become more vital and enlivening and powerful.

These participants have come to realise that there is the promise of the participating presence of God that transcends their limited efforts of care. In this regard, participatory pastoral care practices are therefore 'sustained by its participation in the healing care of God' (Miller-McLemore & Anderson 1995:111). This was expressed by Benita as follows:

*Benita:* My relationship with God has been changed and influenced in a positive manner as it shows me how God through Jesus would have done healing just by using the values, that is, with respect and regard, non-judging and accepting, not allowing the person to be the problem. It has brought me closer to God. I've just realized that it is not for me to heal others, but through me to heal/help others. It is not I but God who has helped me with the skills of Narrative therapy. It has also brought me closer to God by not feeling guilty of who and what I am but rather embraces my character in a loving way.

In Benita's story we can see how the participatory pastoral conversation motivated her to engage in what Boyd (1996:221) calls *agape*-love. This has also helped her to enter into people's lives in the spirit of the Healing Creator, which means that the process of the pastoral conversation participates in the promise of transformation.

#### **6.4.5 Challenging my own faith**

In the construction of theological reflection in the PPC training conversation, some of the values and ideas of the training as well as the religious constructions of the other participants challenged participants in various ways:

*Retha:* I've gone through and made many shifts and changes regarding my views about God. It was a huge challenge as facilitator not to impose those views on people, whilst still remaining there with them. Some of the participants who had such a simple faith made me wonder whether I don't complicate the religious life too much. It was a long time ago when I made these changes in my religious life and now I'm being confronted again with my old values. It unsettles me. For the first time in 50 years I've had to declare to myself what it means to *me* to say: God loves me. Why do I believe it? It's a weird place to be. I've got to tread carefully between my own construction of faith and that of the group.

*Sue:* I have been quite rattled by the postmodern ideas. It has made me think more closely about what God means. It has really made me think about other people's gods. So who says my God is the right god? It happens to



be the right God for me. I get this idea that at the gates of heaven, wherever that is, we will be asked what Messiah we followed and we will be welcomed in. It is only us lot here on earth that kind of gets into this 'there is only one God' thing. I guess in some Christian circles it would be seen as heresy. Yet for me there is one God, but that does not say that it has to be so for everybody else. Narrative allows you to think about lots of things.

#### **6.4.6 What in the training construction brings God closer?**

Many of the participants of the training group at Etwatwa see themselves as advocates of God's presence (Anderson 2001:219) in the situation of care. This section presents an excerpt from a conversation with these participants as they reflected on what in the training construction brought God closer for them:

*Richard:* This training has helped me to include God more in my life. Now every decision I make and every idea I have I think about God.

*Lucky:* I can also say that it has influenced my relationship with God. Before this training I did not include God so much, now when doing something I do include God.

*Welcome:* In this Christian listening I must focus on God. When someone is suffering you do not help him or her just for fun, you do it because God wants you to do it. He is pushing you to help people and He is making the miracle.

*Reginald:* This training has helped me to have a strong relationship with God because before I used to only pray when I was in trouble. After this training I realised that God is always there, looking after me. We are here because of him.

*Lucky:* After this training when I normally do things I think about God.

*Chené:* What is it about this training that makes it possible for us to see and experience God more?

*Richard:* I think it is the caring because to care for someone else is where I experience God in my life.

*Lucky:* God is always there to bring the care.

*Welcome:* We must include God in everything, we cannot see God, but we can see His work.

*Reginald:* This work is all about understanding people therefore you must include God to strengthen you. I do not think you can take care of somebody without God. We are like arrows that God is using in his army.

*Wiseman:* God helps us to choose and do the right thing.

*Lucky:* The Spirit helps us to go on.

In a comment similar to Lucky's statement above, Goodliff (1998:136) writes that 'pastoral care needs the energising power of the Holy Spirit if it is to be kept fresh and lively, and that power is appropriated through a living relationship with God'. The obedience of the Etwatwa believers in their act of serving is also set against the background of their expectation that God will 'act within the pastoral conversation' (Boyd 1996:222).

Not only do I believe that the Spirit will help us to go on, but it is also my expectation that the Spirit enters the pastoral conversation to bring about transformation, as O'Brien (2001:300) put it. Consequently, I share Clinebell's (1984:17) view that we live in a time where rich resources to cooperate with the powerful movement of the life-transforming spirit of God are present. Through participatory pastoral care, we create the space for God to move in, or perhaps we participate in such a way that the spirit of God can do the transforming work. The Etwatwa co-researchers have become more aware of God's presence and participation with them in a 'hope-filled conversation' (Boyd 1996:216) moving toward healing and wholeness.

## **6.5 TRANSFORMATION OF SELF**

The new images and pictures of God and spirituality mentioned in the previous section show the transformation of the self in the narratives presented by the participants. When we as facilitators and participants embark on a spiritual journey in the PPC training, we are invited to show

compassion, dedication, understanding, and love for ourselves. And inevitably, as we take this journey toward self-transformation we participate in the creation of a different reality, thus having a transformative influence upon all with whom we interact.

(Becvar 1997:59)

The following sections show the reader the journey towards self-transformation that created different realities in the participants' lives.

### **6.5.1 Identity transformed in dialogue**

In Chapter 5, we discussed how the PPC training is constructed through community and multiple reflexive conversations. The sections below bear witness to how the identities of the participants were 'shaped in ongoing dialogue with others' (Ackermann 2003:11). We have already explored in Section 2.2.1 how what we take to be knowledge of the world and self finds its origins in communal interchange (Gergen & Gergen 2003b:2). This implies that the participants' identities and perceptions of self were constructed and reconstructed in the multiple reflexive conversations of the training and therefore entered into what Gergen (1994) calls the relational self. Because realities are socially constructed through language and discourse, as discussed in Section 2.2.1, a social construction view of personality regards the self as 'existing not within people but between them' (Burr 1995:27). Consequently, the relationships found in the community of the PPC training constructions co-created a 'concept of self' (Gergen 1991:170) that participants could reject, accept or re-negotiate.

In this dialogical relational creation of self, transformation can be described as the 'evolution of new meaning, new narrative identity, and new self-agency' (Boyd

1996:220). If we live in and through these narrative identities that are constructed in relationships, and developed in ‘*conversation with one another...*Our “self” is always changing’ (Anderson & Goolishian 1992:28) [Anderson & Goolishian’s emphasis]. As a result, the ‘self is an ongoing autobiography; or to be more exact, it is a self-other, multifaceted biography that we constantly pen and edit’ (Harlene Anderson 1997:216). For this reason our autobiographies are never complete. ‘The temporary character of identity is also connected with the fact that while we formulate the end of the story, we ourselves shall not have the opportunity to retell the real end. Autobiography is thus never complete’ (Van Knippenberg 2001:323).

I believe that in the PPC community, the necessary safe space is created where the participants can invite one another into the risk of ‘living at the edge of [their] skin’ (Boler 1999:200), and where some, like Desbe, report that they have found the greatest hope of reinvisioning themselves.

*Desbe:* Just to know that you are accepted and loved just as you are brings the beginning of a transformation process. I began to experience the care of others loving me into life – I transformed from a fairly shy, low self-esteem, not worthy person to one who is fairly confident and still growing. One who enjoys to be challenged and responds to a challenge knowing that I am God’s channel.

*Etwatwa co-researcher:* I’m humbled by the humility found in this group. I’m taken aback by the amount of poetry. It has brought a different person out of me. I’m walking tall and speaking with confidence. It’s been a privilege to have taken part.

We are therefore the ‘narrative identities we create with each other in conversation’ (Boyd 1996:221). The following sections invite the reader to witness how these identity conclusions significantly constituted the participants’ existence (White 2004:31).

### **6.5.2 Accepting self**

Because the PPC training is a co-constructing journey in which the local knowledge, wisdom and qualities of the participants are respected and utilised, I believe that the

training fosters self-development that is suited to the potentiality and environments of the participants, as described by Moore (1991:18). Subsequently, for many of the participants, accepting, knowing, respecting and understanding themselves became a transformational force that gave wings to their dreams again:

*Benita:* I experience care through me – it's a new journey for me but I am starting to care for and love myself.

*Patricia:* I have found Narrative therapy to be just another step forward in understanding myself.

*Gerhard:* The PPC training helped me first of all to get to know myself, my own story. Why am I like this?

*Van:* I've arrived at the conclusion, and with the help of the training, that the only person I can change is me. I cannot do anything to someone, not with what I say, with what I do, I cannot touch anybody. The only person I can change is me, in other words, I can determine whether I'm now going to believe a story someone tells about me or not. It's all my choice. The stories other people write, tell or have about me – their understanding of me and my understanding of myself are not necessarily the same understanding. Sometimes I can grasp that they could think this about me, or I that I could think differently about them, but I'm the only one I can change and that simplifies everything for me. The training has taught me that we make life difficult for ourselves with all sorts of frills and little beliefs we have. In other words, we burden ourselves too much with issues and believe what other people tell us instead of saying, like in the Bible, keep what is good and reject the rest. I think this is what has a negative impact on the lives of most people. It is the story other people tell them and that they entertain and say maybe it is true.

*Coba:* I show myself more mercy and I'm less critical, though more analytical. I always thought myself to be OK and intact, but the more I journey with people the more I realise, I'm actually more broken than I ever thought I was, but it is OK to be broken. I'm not my own enemy anymore. I don't live in enemy territory anymore. Myself and I are actually in the same trench

now. For the first time in my life it's OK to say I'm tired, it's OK to say I don't want to and I'm not feeling like it. It's OK to be human. I think by acknowledging my human side in my own mind, I became more comfortable with living with myself. I have more compassion with who I am. I do have more insight.

*Sue:* I guess honesty has always been a value that I have held up dearly. Even before Narrative therapy came into my life, but this training has allowed me to be me somehow. When people do not know me that well, they would ask me if something is really as I say it is and then I tell them that I can't do bullshit. This has always been there, but Narrative has given it permission to be there or on the table. Narrative has given permission to be lots of things that I am. I don't have to be the all-knowing, the counsellor or the superhuman kind person, I can just be. And that me is the kind of caring person, but it was hidden by the whole discourse that says that when you are a counsellor you have to sit there and listen deeply and let people find their own way. Narrative doesn't say that and you don't have to do that. You can ask questions to help you understand better. This is called transparency, and this is a value that Narrative sits in. This frees me because it stops me from walking around with this burden on my shoulder that you kind of have to know all the answers. I don't have to fix it, I just have to provide the space and develop the relationship. It frees me up and I don't have to have all the answers and be the expert. It has given me a lot of freedom to be. Somehow coming home and finding a place, an OK place to be.

For Reisgenoot, the participation in the training journey not only brought acceptance of self but also helped to validate her sanity, maybe one of the greatest services (Becvar 1997:89) the PPC training can provide for participants.

*Reisgenoot:* It brought me acceptance. I thought myself a bit crazy from time to time [*Afr. my kop raas partykeer so bietjie*], because other people always knew where they were going and what they were doing. I realised it's OK, it's all right. I am the way I am. I think and wonder about things. If it works for other people to think they know where they are, then that's fine. It is also OK to be wondering about things. The training was really accepting of

myself. It's been ingrained like that since childhood: things were either white or black. At that stage it hurt me to realise everybody was like that and you alone were different. Currently you may just poke around and see what there is to do. I think, but I don't talk about it a lot, because you don't get people who think like that. The training helped me to accept myself just as I am, and with that to accept people who think differently.

### **6.5.3 Writing new stories about self**

According to Chopp (1995:42), almost every view of education includes some notion of the formation of the self. The PPC training construction therefore informs self-understanding by fostering an identity that is open to considering change 'so that the individual's identity might include the resource of being "reflective"' (Rossiter 2001:69). As a result, the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) reflected about a change that initially happened within them. For some of these co-researchers, the image of the reflection of self in the mirror has also changed through the training. The knowledge that is constructed during the training process makes you humble, because it first changes you, as the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) said. A few of the participants cannot even remember the "old me" as they call it, because the transformation was subtle and respectful (Red Shoe Co-Researchers 2004).

In the last few sessions of the PPC training we spend at least one session per person in writing and constructing the alternative story of the participants' lives. These alternative identity conclusions (White 2004:32) are derived from the conversations that are socially constructed and negotiated in the PPC communities of training. Many of the co-researchers say that this was one of the most significant moments in the discourse of training.

*Gawie:* Every night during the closing stages of the training, each one of us had the opportunity to identify certain people in our lives and indicate the skills that these people will notice in us. Later the group had the opportunity to highlight positive skills in you. I kept shying away, even staying away on the second last night, thinking that my turn would slip by unnoticed. I had thought the last night would just be a conclusion ceremony, receiving our

certificates and a social get-together. I had made a mistake. There I sat. Somewhat uncertainly, I started doing my presentation differently from the others'. When I saw that everybody was intensely interested in what I was saying, it went more smoothly. I was very surprised about what the others had to say about me. It made me feel exceptionally good about myself! Shortly hereafter I was offered the opportunity to manage another school. I immediately grabbed the opportunity and though it was demanding, I did not regret it for one moment. Every day I'm more and more aware that God equips people with gifts and skills – and me too. I'm more positive about myself and the future. My dreams of the future are not about worldly desires, financial prosperity and holding a top job, but to make a difference in people's lives there where I'm doing my work every day. This [dream] has been amplified by the following, written by staff members of the school on cards at my departure:

“Our ship was sinking and with your ‘hands-on approach’ and leadership you came and rescued us.”

“Thank you for the difference you have made to our lives.”

“There is no end to the happiness and warmth your kindness has brought to us.”

*Karissa:* Care is absolutely transforming. It was a painful experience, like detoxing. It becomes worse before it gets better...and better is significantly better. I cannot help seeing the hand of the Lord in this. When I now think of the first experience of ‘I can breathe more deeply’ it was wow! The timing of this training in my life was perfect! Then came more traumas, which brought me to stuff I didn't know how to handle. I had to transform ... It gave me self-respect and made me think, how are people allowed to handle me, how am I allowed to handle myself? How are my husband, my children, pupils at school, colleagues and friends allowed to handle me? I found writing my own alternative story very enriching. I actually realised that I saw myself as a mere speck relative to what my story actually is. To look through the pair of glasses that other people use to look at me was inspiring. I realised I wasn't attaching adequate value to myself and did not



respect myself enough. I also don't believe in myself. It's a road I'll have to walk down by myself and really believe and live the alternative story. Are all the beautiful things other people have said about me really true?

*Queen:* This journey was quite an experience for me. It's my passion to travel: faith and shepherding are my gifts of grace. When I told my friend about the PPC training, and I used the word 'journey', she immediately pointed out to me that journeying is my passion after all. At that moment these gifts and journey became real to me. 'Lord, here I am now, on this journey You've meant for me' [*Afr. Here hier is ek nou oppad met die reis wat U vir my bedoel hef!*]

*Maureen:* After the death of my husband I struggled to find a way forward and among other experiences, the training challenged me to write a new story for my own life.

*Anne:* I am able to be a more sensitive mother, a better friend and a more understanding wife.

As mentioned earlier, facilitators attend to the alternative stories of the participants with the purpose of empowering the alternative story to become constitutive of the participants' lives. In this process, participants of the PPC training are encouraged to engage in re-authoring their own lives while negotiating self-agency (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:10) that fits into their preferred life story. As a result, some of the participants have been able to recognise, acknowledge and build on their own values and identity through the PPC training journey in accordance with a 'pastoral postmodern approach to the human text which is concerned with *remembering* the details of life's stories and rituals' (Patton 1994:35) [Patton's emphasis]:

*Megan:* An added perspective the training has given me is the ability to acknowledge the strengths and qualities I possess which enable me to face the challenges in my world. These have begun to accumulate and are like faithful internal companions in my life – a supportive and encouraging voice. This voice has taken the place of a loud and persistently condemning voice – an old and damaging influence! I see myself differently – more capable, someone who has a significant contribution to

make, one who is not afraid of problems (they can be worked with and solved) and I suspect that that has a profound influence on each day I live; my relationships, my choices and my attitudes.

#### **6.5.4 Re-negotiating self**

For many of us in a highly transient society, life transforms itself almost continuously. Changing practices of work, of lifestyle, of cultural forms require us to be skilled at living with new beginnings....We must now learn a new art, the art of composing our lives anew and finding in that ongoing act of creation new forms of bonds, community and identity.

(Chopp 1995:220)

The identity of the participants of the PPC training were also shaped against the backdrop of a constantly changing society in which they acquired the art of composing their lives anew. The participants in the PPC training are therefore claiming their own identities and resisting the identities that are available through and within various prevailing discourses. 'By challenging and resisting the representations' of themselves that are on offer in prevailing discourses, participants have the chance to 'construct or claim alternative identities' (Burr 1995:92-93) for themselves:

*Queen:* The phrase saying: 'I may beg to differ' has helped me tremendously. Maybe it was about being a headmaster's wife and a teacher that only gave me room to be so and so. I punished myself in the whole process. Now I am allowed to be and feel differently. I experience that I'm now trusted at work with matters in which I've never been allowed to participate before and which I've always wanted to do. I'm wondering if the people at work now see me in a different light. New work opportunities also opened up at the school. Wow, things I've always wanted to do are now coming my way. It's as if people see something different in me. I'm now being allowed to do it.

*Etwatwa co-researcher:* It's changed my behavioural pattern. It's destined for me to be here. It's a personal discovery. I've found myself who I am really.

*Desbe:* I have a better understanding of who I am. In fact it was at the start of one of the trainings that we had to say a little about ourselves. We imagined we were sitting around a fire, telling our story. It was while telling my story that it hit me that 'I am an African child'. It was a humbling experience.

*Leonie:* I am more comfortable with growing older. I do more things for self-care. I take as much as I can from my relationship with my grandchildren and children and enjoy it fully. I also don't feel guilty about the things I grant myself. I now spend more money on my appearance and treat myself without feeling guilty. I can look at myself and care for myself with respect.

*Nan:* Being retired from employment, my workplace is now home and the training has given me much material to think through which enlivens times that otherwise might be lacking in stimulation.

Given the background of a changing society, the PPC training also provides the participants with the skill and art to compose their lives anew as new bonds of community and identity transform their lives in various ways. In the process of the PPC training, the participants learned more about themselves. They found the journey an enriching experience when it came to challenging and forming their identity.

### **6.5.5 Self and the future**

As the participants recounted their stories in the PPC training community, and as they reflected together on their meaning, they acquired the power needed to move forward (Ackermann 1996:48) as the following narratives show:

*Queen:* My participation in the training gave wings to my dreams. You realise there is no limit to what you want to achieve.

*Karissa:* The PPC training also challenged me quite seriously about what I really wanted to do with my life. Where I was almost at a standstill regarding my dreams, [*Waar ek byna op 'n stilstand van droom was*], I now realised I'm going on, until I'm 80 or more, with this way of being with people. It brought

a new, clear dream.

*Reginald:* I got to know myself better, who I am. Now I feel that I am born with a purpose, I am special. This has challenged my life.

The above narratives tell the story of imagination that 'includes the conditions of possibility for subjects to place themselves in new roles, stories, and patterns. The development of the imagination is necessary if subjects are to write their lives in new ways' (Chopp 1995:43). Consequently the participants' narratives speak of imaginative possibilities in the new roles, stories and patterns that they can now see themselves in.

### **6.5.6 I have been helped to help myself**

This section shows how the PPC training responds to O'Brien's (2001:281) belief that the goal of adult education is that of deepening and enlarging one's ability to make meaning in a complex, multifaceted world, particularly in those spheres most concerned with daily life, such as work, family and community. Not only do the PPC participants feel that they have been empowered to make meaning of their lives, but they can now also engage in what Louw (1998:37) terms 'life care': Pastoral care 'implies faith care as life care....Thus faith care obtains a cosmic, social and political dimension' [Louw's emphasis].

The participants shared how faith care also became life care so that they have a sense of empowerment when it comes to the problems they are facing. As a result, the participants now feel equipped to help themselves with the hurts and problems that they encounter:

*Megan:* I feel more empowered or enabled to live my own life, the way I look at problems, and the ability to be open to and see possibilities thus finding myself less stuck.

*Anne:* It has enabled me to come face to face with a lot of issues in my life, enabling me to look at them in a different way.

*Nan:* The training has helped to be rid of the picture of my 'self' as a rigid state concept and to become more aware of opportunities for growth than ever

before. Separating my problems from self has enabled a new confidence and belief in myself that was often missing before and somehow it's no longer a virtue to downplay the abilities I have – I can celebrate them. The encouragement received during the training to stand against the problem, to deny its attempts to take over and overwhelm one, has given me a whole new look at aging and the changes that take place. Some are inevitable but there are also all kinds of ways to contain them and to compensate. One of my hopes and dreams for the future is that I will be able to be useful, to get around and live the present moment to the full. So far it is working out well.

*Welcome:* It has challenged you to face your problems. Johann interviewed me during the training and that helped me and changed me a lot.

*Wiseman:* I was actually afraid of facing problems but after this training I feel that I am stronger than every problem I face. Usually when I came across a problem I would think that I must get someone to help me, but now that I have done the training I realise that every problem I face in my life I am capable of solving.

*Richard:* I have faced many problems, some I have overcome and others I am still struggling with. But now I have the ability to solve some of these problems.

*Coba:* I feel wiser, more equipped to deal with life.

### **6.5.7 Ready to serve**

As participants found new ways to see themselves, they were encouraged to serve others in caring practices. In this regard, we see that the process of generating knowledge had a 'mobilizing effect, reaffirming the [participants] as actors capable of transforming reality' (De Roux 2003:105). In the PPC training constructions, a pedagogical process of liberating consciousness therefore incites participants into action (Schreiter 1985:16-17). Through the transformative activity of the participatory training conversation 'an owned ministerial identity' (O'Brien 2001:290) became important for some of the participants. In addition the PPC training construction shaped the

participants' values, beliefs, and who and what they become (Boler 1999:xvii). For that reason they feel that they are able to give to others. As a result, participants now not only focus on who God is but rather who they can become because of God's love and grace (Cozad Neuger 2001:60):

*Patricia:* The PPC training increased excitement in my Pastoral counselling ministry.

*Queen:* As I'm OK with myself, my reaching out to others has improved. I now have something I can give. There is more to give. I now have the courage. My fountain of life [Afr. *lewensfontein*] is fuller.

*Leonie:* I can now be of more consequence to people and be more approachable. The PPC training taught me to listen more and be less prescriptive. It also helped me to be attentive in being more sensitive to other people and their needs.

*Mari:* It's a forever and ever journey which has happy endings. It released a challenge inside of me. I look forward to it every day; I can't wait for the Lord to send somebody across my path.

*Reisgenoot:* We're all the body of Christ. There is room for each one and it's OK for people to cope in a different way. You don't argue anymore, and you don't have to explain any longer who you are and how you see things. You can always contribute something. That's what I've believed my whole life. My dreams have been set free, although it may sound far-fetched to other people. It has its place, it can be like that. I don't believe in retirement, I believe I'll be able to care for others even more then.

*Sam:* The Narrative training has changed my mind because now I can do anything through helping and caring for people. I can now teach people what their skills can do for them.

*Lucky:* It was also my realisation that I have the ability to solve my own problems. Then I also realised that I have much that I could teach others. It has made me to think that I have the capacity to do things.

*Benita:* My views after having done the training has influenced me in the church by wanting to give back to the people who give voluntarily their services in different ministries. By having a community of care or reflective team I think this is an effective way of giving back at one time to so many people for a specific area or ministry. It's a wonderful way to express their feelings, fears, and fond memories. It allows the ministry to be transparent, open, and bring togetherness as well as a sense of belonging. I find it a healthy way of healing to a large number of people at one time. And in a big church where one could feel left out this is a way of healing the different ministries, allow them to share their stories. Our church has wanted to do a reflective team/community of care but it hasn't picked up yet. I hope to see this as part of my dream/vision with the church. It's a way the church can build up each other.

*Megan:* The sense of belonging to the world and being invited to make a contribution by means of real participation have led to a kind of awakening. From seeing my life as being acted upon by circumstances and people I now experience my life as a process of participating with, i.e. like dance partners each hearing and interpreting the music and then together finding a way of moving which expresses what each of them has heard as individuals but could never express in as beautiful a way on their own. I now find myself dreaming and wishing much more for myself. These dreams include richer and more meaningful relationships, lots of conversations with many open ended questions, many celebrations where peoples' qualities are noted and celebrated.

*Karissa:* Will I make a difference? Maybe only with a few starfish that are hurled back into the ocean, one by one...

In the sections explored above, we saw how self-making were co-constructed as a narrative art (Bruner 2004:4) in the telling of the participants' stories in the group, in their families, as well as in their societies, as is explored more fully in the Chapter Seven.

## **6.6 CLOSING REMARKS**

This chapter has named possibilities for transformation that already exist in the daily lives of ordinary believers and as a result it aided in continuing Christianity as a living presence. In addition, the chapter gave us access to the brilliant, transformative acts in word and deed that made a difference to thought and practice in the lives of the participants in the PPC training. On the basis of the narratives that they shared in this chapter, I agree with Sampson (1989:6) when he explains that in acting with society a person can potentially transform society. For most of the participants, the 'I' has become an active participant in their life's story.

In the next chapter I explore the affects of the active 'I' in society as the participants of the PPC training again tell their stories of healing and freedom. They tell of how they brought the colour back out of the drabness through their lived experiences. From my own experience with this training over the last two years, I believe that the PPC training and participatory pastoral care does indeed supply a platform from whence the transformation of participants' relationships, of the societies in which they live and of the practices they engage in can take place. The next chapter explores lived experiences of red shoe transformation.



## **CHAPTER SEVEN:**

### **RED SHOE PRACTICES OF TRANSFORMATION**

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter looks at the PPC training in relation to the kinds of transformation in participants' lives that is personal and public, interpersonal and societal in a way that acknowledges the diversity of cultural life (Banks 1999:30) in South Africa. In the actions depicted in the participants' narratives there cannot be a separation of the private from the political, as these narratives work for the transformation of their lives and the societies in which they live. Personal and public themes are therefore woven into the fabric of the participants' lives (Ackermann 2003:xvi). Together they tell 'stories that reflect the struggles of people searching for and choosing a way through real life challenges and dilemmas, not necessarily about finding the "way" (Kotzé 2002:20).

This chapter reveals a landscape and explores some contours of possibilities for a transformed society. However, it is not an attempt to blaze *the* trail to a transformed society in a new South Africa, because both the constructions of the PPC training and the travelogue of the research journey limit themselves to the communities and narratives of the 33 participants. Nevertheless, I believe that these narratives present possibilities for our work today by giving us glimpses of transformation, as well as guidelines and examples of the practices that construct these transformed societies or communities.

But who counts as society? In this study, I used the word in line with the description in the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Honderich 1995:835-836), which suggests that the diverse meanings of the word society refer to a

set of individuals and/or institutions in relations governed by practical interdependence, convention, and perhaps law – which relations may vary from the local to the international... It later came to be used more loosely to include the political and the personal... Some philosophers however...have recently reasserted conceptions of the social as the ground of moral possibility and moral

judgement.

In my research journey, I used the term society in its broadest sense, because participatory pastoral care does not only involve care with members of our own church communities, but extends to whoever needs care. Like Miller-McLemore and Anderson (1995:109), I believe that in our time and in our country, with its radical changes, 'those who engage in pastoral care not only need to sustain persons and communities through conflict and upheaval; they need to be engaged in efforts toward social transformation as well'. The rest of the chapter therefore voices the participants' engagements with social transformations as pastoral care reaches beyond the personal.

Astley (2002:149) argues that if academic theologians believe what they say about the 'relationship between theology and personal experience, they ought to take the experience of non-academic theologians more seriously'. In response to his challenge, the rest of the chapter is an invitation to take and an example of taking the experiences of ordinary believers seriously. They voice their experiences of the transformation of society and share their dreams for such transformations in society.

## **7.2 TRANSFORMATION OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALL PEOPLE**

Transformation was not only experienced in the stories of self and the participants' relationships with God. These transformations also spilled over to several of the other relations in which the participants stand. In the PPC training, the participants experienced a sense of empowerment. This 'refers to a process of relational transformation, in which [they] experience themselves and others as open, growing, and changing in and through their relationships with one another' (Heyward 1996:52). I believe that these experiences were made possible because they experienced 'God as a radically affirming and transforming power, in whose being diversity and contextual creativity are made possible' (Graham 1995:233).

Lukens (1983) found in a survey that all his respondents who had completed a two-year intensive lay training programme reported that they were using their skills in indirect ways: to improve their own relationships, and to listen more effectively in non-counselling work settings. Eighty percent of these respondents indicated that the training programme

had been significantly meaningful and useful to them in their own personal relationships and their ministry with others. 'These findings suggest some secondary benefits and uses of lay counselor training that extend beyond direct service to clients' (Lukens 1987:12). Lukens refers to these benefits as secondary, but the aim of participatory practical theology is a continual transformation, not only of faith in God as He/She reveals him-/herself throughout history, but also of the relationships in which we as believers participate. The narratives of the participants in the next section therefore bear witness to such transformations of relationships.

### **7.2.1 Relationships with those who are different**

The participants commented that they are doing conversations with people who are different from them in a new way. The PPC training challenged the participants to widen their acceptance of people whom they would not previously have included in their circle of care. Some of the participants explained that they are no longer afraid of difference. The Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) reported that PPC training challenges participants to have conversations with people with whom they would not otherwise have interacted. Min (2004:186) describes such conversations with somebody different from oneself as follows:

To dialogue is to enter into an open-ended process in which one engages differences, experiences perplexity, enrichment, and transformation through that engagement, and thereby undergoes self-transcendence toward, and solidarity with, the other. It is to suffer and enjoy all the tensions and movements inherent in the...experience of otherness, of difference and solidarity of togetherness.

Below, some co-researchers comment on how they engaged with differences and how their lives were transformed as an outcome of these experiences of otherness:

*Megan:* I find myself drawn to people and experience a need to engage more deeply and honestly with more people. There is a growing curiosity about people, which motivates me to engage with them in conversation. This is a change from the need to withdraw and 'mind my own business'. I used to be afraid of the negative influence 'different' people would have on me. I no

longer feel threatened by people who live their lives differently to me.

*Desbe:* It has grown a [willingness to] risk within me. Somehow I am not as afraid to sit and listen to any story that I might need to listen to. I am more aware of people and their struggles and I realise how every person sits beside a pool of tears.

From the above vignettes we can see that the participants described how they actively opened themselves to ‘otherness, by careful, active, and respectful listening to positions and perspectives other than [their] own, and by a sense of humility before the unfamiliar, the new, the unexpected’ (McCarthy 2000:201).

### **7.2.2 Doing relationships in new ways**

Participants reported that they are less forceful and more gracious and patient in their relationships with people. These new attitudes toward other people are inspired by a new love for people, a non-judgemental attitude and the value of seeing all people as equal. Some of the participants described how a better understanding of self has led to this new way of doing relationships. Because participants have found new and exciting ways to listen and ask questions, they experience a connection with people in fresh and stimulating ways. As a result, some of the participants feel that they want to reach out to other people without making assumptions about them. This suggests a kind of theological reflection, which forms part of the values and practices of the PPC training. The participants’ experience resonates with Pattison’s (2000b:138) comment that theological reflection ‘deepens our experience of the world and of our assumptions and so stops us from making unwarranted assumptions that...may be false’. Some of the participants comment as follows:

*Queen:* I now have different kinds of relationships. I’ve always wanted to give my opinion, but I now enjoy being able just to ask questions. Also in my relationships with people that I’m now getting to know from scratch, I enjoy not making assumptions.

*Lorna:* I do not push my opinion on anyone, but rather listen to them and allow them to discover or clarify ways of coping themselves. I want to connect

with people whenever possible. I find myself wanting to interact more with people and want to find sparkling moments in their lives. I want to ask questions to open up opportunities for them to enjoy life.

*Benita:* This training has changed and influenced my relationships with people to a fair extent. When I use Narrative ideas it gives me pleasure to see how the people respond and react to the questions by being more elaborative on the meanings and more expressive.

*Desbe:* It has sometimes been a struggle with people closer to me but for me it has allowed me to express myself differently and be more understanding and patient with others. In other words, I am now able to engage in conversation in a new way. It has deepened my love for people and helped me to see all people as equal and to see that all people need to be cared for at some point in their journey.

*Leonie:* Your attitude towards other people changes. It is easier for me with friends and strangers. Questions are easier.

*Nan:* Relationships flourish and become more vital as interests in common are discovered and personal values expressed. Conversations that are respectful and non-blaming invite a similar response, and meeting and sharing with others becomes really valuable. Relationships with people are easy and relaxed when there is no sense of superiority or inferiority and this comes with the better understanding of oneself and the disappearance of the need to perform to impress, or to pretend to be other than you really are. I found that the transparency encouraged in the training goes a long way to building trust, healthy interactions and good relationships. I know that my relationship with my maid who comes in one day per week has definitely benefited and there is still much to be accomplished.

*Van:* The PPC training helped me to listen to what is not being said, to listen to significant words, which could perhaps have a different meaning for the person. You now have to make sure that your interpretation is what the other person understands. I'm not focused on myself anymore, but rather on the people around me. My attitude has changed considerably; I don't feel I'm important anymore, or that I want to be important. I just want to be

me and carry on giving love to everyone around me, my colleagues and my family. I cannot get angry anymore.

*Reisgenoot:* Prior to the training it always seemed to me that one had to have a certain conclusion about things. You had to have an opinion about things. The PPC training freed me from this belief [Afr. *het hierdie ding vir my weggevat*], because I don't have to. The assumption was that you were certain of your feelings about a matter. You couldn't refrain from passing judgement on other people's lives. For example, people who are gay. But now the judgement has been removed. Amongst people who are unlike you, it is highly frustrating. You see how much the people's words hurt others, you see the effect. You can't leap into the situation and say whoa! Let's rather ask a question. It's almost as if you want to shield the person for whom the problem is being solved. That person might walk out of there more confused than he/she was before the conversation.

*Gawie:* I've always been an easy person to get along with. I've realised yet again how precious these people are in your life and that it is very important to nurture your relationship with them. Since I listen more intensely, I can understand people with more ease, which eliminates conflict to a large degree. You realise sooner when someone requires help and care. Like I've said before, it helped me in particular to work with people who are different from me. Nurture and care are needs and characteristics of all people.

Like Woodward and Pattison (2000b:297), I believe that practical theology is supposed to make a 'difference to people, to transform or change their lives in some way'. Not only did the PPC participants experience a difference, transformation and change in the way that they do relationships, but their partners and family relationships also benefited, as the next section shows.

### 7.2.3 Partner and family relationships

The PPC training also challenged and enriched the close relationships in which the participants stand. Participants were helped to understand and accept their partners better, to improve the way they listen to their partners, and to care with and support their partners in and through difficult times. According to Astley (2002:147), listening is a deeply affirming pastoral act that is a 'mark of *respect*' [Astley's emphasis]. The following vignettes help the reader to understand how the co-researchers became active listening participants in the 'shaping of their own lives, and the lives of others' (White 1997:226):

*Leonie:* The PPC training has done a lot for my marriage. People experience me as 'different' in difficult situations and ask me what I do to handle difficult circumstances better than in the past. It has improved my marriage. It strengthened my being present, my way of being. I've shared plenty of the training's contents with my husband and now we sometimes apply the approach together to manage problems in our marriage. My husband has made the externalisation approach his own.

*Reisgenoot:* I find the training to be rather contagious. I tell my husband everything and sometimes he reminds me of things I've told him. I also see the way he interacts with people and he applies this narrative approach.

*Retha:* My husband was very much involved in the training I facilitated, as he had to provide transport and help with the administration and other small tasks [Afr. *rompslomp*]. He was there every night and that gave us a joint concern. I've wondered if I shouldn't issue him with a certificate. It absolutely brought us closer together. I also noticed that my children were using words that were employed in the training construction. I think it is a language that is now being spoken in our home and that is filtering through to them.

*Piet:* This PPC training helped me tremendously in my personal life. When my wife's father was dying I could guide her. When her mother was ill, I could prepare her for the possibility that her mother would not recognise her when she went to see her. And when it did happen one day, I had already

started asking her the question. These little things... It took me years before she was able to talk about her brother. Today she can speak about him. We've always had a good marriage, but it has definitely improved. I wouldn't confront her just like that anymore. I would listen and not make impulsive statements. I would first try to understand where she is coming from and this avoids conflict. It is first-rate conflict evasion. Conflict can be avoided if one is prepared just to stand aside and think. That wasn't the case with me. I would have taken you on without further consideration.

*Gerhard:* The PPC training also helped me to understand why my wife is the way she is. I could understand my wife better, her story, especially, I understand more fully now. For this reason I apply the training to my marriage and remind myself constantly: 'Understand your story, understand your wife's story!'

*Van:* My wife and I have achieved much more in our marital relationship during these past five years than many people would in a lifetime, so I harbour no negativity about her passing away. We've found each other in a way that you won't believe a man and woman could find each other. We've had to resolve what love is, integrity, respect for each other, support for each other in the personal relationship with each other. I think it has strengthened tremendously. My wife and I have gone through a grieving process during the past five years. The PPC training greatly improved my understanding of my wife. I would not have been able to care for her the way I have if I didn't have a better grasp on the problems with which she were faced. She taught Mathematics on the higher grade. There was nothing wrong with her mind until the very end, but her body just gave in [Afr. *wou net nie meer nie*]. The day she died, I cried, but I didn't want a funeral. It had to be a celebration of life. During this celebration of life, I played a number of songs she had liked very much and which had been special for us. The people were offered an opportunity to remember her. To remember and point out the impact she had on their lives. It was brilliant [Afr. *skitterend*] to hear the accounts about the impact she had on people's lives. There were also stories about the influence of our marriage on the marriages of others. I then turned to the coffin, talked to her and said goodbye to her. Thereafter we drank a toast of champagne to her life – to



declare how great it was and how much we enjoyed it with her. *Life is a great adventure* was a song that played while everybody was leaving the church. On her birthday I drove down to Storms River where we used to spend our holidays. It was her wish that I scatter her ashes from the suspension bridge at Storms River; it was an extremely emotional event. The PPC training also taught me not to be afraid of the emotions you feel. One has to experience the emotions, and the experience of the emotion has to be viewed as a release. I don't regret my wife's passing away for one moment. There is no grief, there is joy. The training has helped me significantly to deal with the death of my wife.

Some of the participants' reflections also show a new depth in their relationships with their parents. They have acquired the skill to listen and ask their parents questions in innovative ways that allowed them to grow in their understanding of their parents:

*Etwatwa Co-researcher:* Narrative ideas have shown me a different life. It has also changed the life of my mother, passing on to her the good ideas on how to accept one another. You're not White but you're unfortunate to be covered by white skin. I had a pride and Narrative ideas taught me to gain dignity and that everyone has something to give. There's a lot to live for – a person is important. I've gained something from each member of the group.

*Leonie:* It brought a new depth to my relationship with my mother. When I visited her the other day, there were so many things I could have told her, but instead I only listened and asked questions. Without me giving advice, my mother reached quite a number of her own solutions. That evening when I left, my mother said that she really had a wonderful time with me. After this conversation I felt like climbing on top of the car, it was just such a wonderful experience.

*Reisgenoot:* My mother and I used to be at loggerheads all the time. Through the training I started listening to my mother, and since then, there was a connection. She will now phone me and say: "I miss you, when are you coming to visit?" I notice when she really needs someone to listen. She gives a lot, and nobody listens, because she doesn't seem to need being

listened to. I really hear her. There are still many questions to be asked in the family context and I think it can help all of us. The PPC training will trigger everything to bloom. This is happening with a purpose.

*Richard:* It has also changed the way we listen to our parents. Without this training we did not understand why our parents would shout at us. Now, there is much more understanding towards our parents.

The theme of acceptance and understanding also continually reappears in the relationships that the participants have with their children. Some talk about a new togetherness and acceptance in which the uniqueness of every child is valued and appreciated. Once more, the skills of listening and asking questions play a significant role in these parents' ways of being with their children. According to Astley (2002:147), listening is an essential skill for ministry. I might add that asking questions is equally important.

*Karissa:* I cannot escape that unbelievably deep breathing, is-this-possible feeling. In my togetherness with my children it is as if the room is breathing deeply with us. There is so much hope. When my son and I tell each other, come on, hey, let's go to bed and sleep for a change, it is an enjoyable sleep. All the senses are involved, it brings a freshness. We're together on a road to victory.

*Queen:* I battled with my children especially, because I knew exactly what my child was saying to me, I assumed I knew. Now I ask, and this is sometimes very difficult for them, because mom simply knows. The people close to me often think I'm supposed to know very well. I can now encourage my children to think differently, be different. Previously, they frequently rebelled against the concept of what they were expected to be. I've sometimes tried to keep my child in check [Afr. *in 'n kassie probeer indruk*]. My children are now allowed to be different, I accept them the way they are.

*Gerhard:* I can understand my children better, because I'm already now trying to give shape to the stories in their lives. I realise that my children still have to build the stories of their lives. I've asked myself: 'What share do I want in

the building of my children's stories?'

*Mari:* My family members have told me that I've helped them without even me being aware of that. I can now appreciate the uniqueness of my own child and it is enjoyable to take care of her needs at that moment. She is like this, it works like this for her and therefore I will act like this. She comes to me more and more, talks to me more, tells me she loves me, an extraordinary depth has been reached.

*Leonie:* I used to be much more prescriptive in the handling of my children. Now I ask two or three questions and they arrive at the answer themselves. They would often thank you, whereas you felt that you haven't done a thing.

The values that are lived and co-constructed during the PPC training journey are shared in the homes and families of the participants. Values like an acceptance of difference, asking respectful questions, facilitating conversations and respect for one another is helping to detoxify flawed relationships and to create new ways of being with one another:

*Reginald:* I made my family adopt whatever thing we are doing in the training. Now they understand that people who look the same can have different opinions. Now we can sit down and solve our problems by asking questions.

*Lucky:* When we were young, our parents had this idea that children should be seen and not heard. But the training has brought quite a change in this regard. With regard to my family relationships, it has made me teach my family to facilitate conversation. In my family we were not used to having conversations, but I can see that I have challenged this way of thinking about children. This training has also taught me to have this nice approach to other people. Now that I have this nice approach I can pass this knowledge on to my family.

*Karissa:* There is safety, respect, hope, sensitivity and faith. In my family the training was a serious challenge. It's almost like the symptoms of detoxification. This training detoxed my flawed relationships in the family. I had become entangled in the idea that things had to be laid bare to ensure

healing. I think we can now live in freedom, and without bitterness continue meaningfully and joyfully with our new, alternative stories.

*Reisgenoot:* I'm freeing myself from the responsibility I've always taken for my family members' lives, because it is their responsibility. I used to be Mrs Fixit, but a prophet is not honoured in his own town. I am not carrying their responsibility anymore.

*Anne:* My family think that I am somewhat more willing to spend time talking about issues and also more willing to listen to them, instead of trying to solve their problems for them.

*Etwatwa Co-Researcher:* I didn't know many things. I had no mercy – giving them a piece of me. But now I don't fight back – I reflect back. I've changed even at home because we respect each other. I am me because of you guys. I'm a free person like a butterfly.

*Ann:* The writing of the alternative stories in my own life meant a lot to me. We had a family gathering this weekend and told each other what we've learnt from each other, what we appreciated about each other, what we can claim for ourselves from the other person's story. It was a wonderful experience, we all felt so liberated. It contributed significantly to the strengthening of our family ties.

In summary, we can see that the PPC co-constructions were not an isolated training experience from which the close relationships of the participants did not benefit. Not only were these close relationships transformed by the influence of the participants, but these values were then re-negotiated in these relationships. I believe that the ripple effect of the transformations in these personal relationships spilled over into the societies in which these participants live and move and have their being.

#### **7.2.4 Other significant relationships**

Many of the participants have become aware that their friends come to them when they are experiencing difficulties, which has brought a new dimension to these friendships. This has led to deeper conversations, where the art of listening and asking generative

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questions again plays an important part:

*Benita:* When in a deep conversation with friends, then I tend to say, think Narrative! Ask questions open-endedly. It's not for/about me but for the client.

*Anne:* My friends say that they are able to have really deep conversations with me – many of which bring really interesting discoveries about themselves.

*Coba:* Friends are coming with problems that are more intense than what I would have been able to handle last year this time. In the past they would not even have approached me with such a problem, maybe because they knew that Mrs Fixit was going to take it over and run the show again.

*Piet:* Many of your friends will phone you just to chat a little. They realise that we don't give advice, but they can unburden themselves a bit.

Some of the work relationships in which the participants stand were also significantly transformed. A greater respect was established for the stories and dilemmas of team members and colleagues, as participants were able to learn to listen and ask questions without judging. Furthermore, some of the participants were able to construct alternative stories with their teams, make space for others' contributions, defuse explosive situations, and create a greater sense of participation with others at work:

*Gawie:* Gradually I started using the staff in my school in areas where they could apply these skills. The negative things I became aware of did not disappear, but were camouflaged by a new, positive spirit that developed. Seven months later I can look back on a motivated team of teachers that is writing an alternative story. The negative things have not disappeared, but I've deliberately not made a ceremony of it. I've also not ignored it, but gradually managed it and introduced programmes to solve it.

*Gerhard:* The PPC training taught me that the person who is experiencing a crisis does have a reason for his crisis, although it may not appear to be a crisis to you. You then have to help him to discover his own story to enable him to help himself. Ultimately, the training helps me here in my workplace, because I know the story of each one who works with me. There are

people who don't get along, because they don't know each other's stories. Therefore it is important that I, as the manager, know each one's story. I work in a very negative environment and I do all of the work, although I haven't been appointed yet. Despite the fact that I have achieved all of the key performance indicators in my job, I'm not being appointed. The training also helped me to have empathy with the employer.

*Megan:* I acknowledge and make more space for people's contributions and no longer feel that I need to dominate and be controlling. I believe this has led to a change in people's views and attitudes. This has resulted in an opening up of possibilities in the way things are done and a greater sense of participation in the process.

*Reisgenoot:* The training helped me in my relationship with colleagues who have other views, it is very liberating. Now I actually enjoy asking the black people why they do things in a certain way.

*Piet:* Many people started speaking frankly. You discovered more about people's inner being. Because you know more about the people, you know where not to take on a person, because of something that happened in his past. You know more about their background. Now, when someone complains, you have learnt to listen. Without realising it, the person works out his own salvation after a while and leaves happily. In the meantime, you haven't done anything for him. This training gave one the skills to defuse explosive situations, resulting in the people thanking you instead of complaining.

*Leonie:* Something unpleasant happened to me at work and I could handle it with self-confidence. I decided that I didn't want to be part of what was happening there. After I'd taken my decision, the actions flowed from it; I didn't lose one night's sleep about it. I now work with someone who would be considered as immoral in the eyes of society. Due to the PPC training it is currently possible for me to be with her without judging her or feeling that I have to confront her and convince her that what she is doing is wrong. I like her a lot and love her dearly; she speaks of me as her second mother.

*Benita:* The training changed and influenced my workplace in a manner that I was able to ask questions open-endedly and deal with issues. I am more

aware of all the people's issues/ideas and assemble them together more constructively. It helps me become 'unstuck' from routine and fear.

A number of the participants are teachers who work with children on a daily basis. They shared how the PPC training has increased their patience with the children as they began to employ the skills of listening and asking questions when they were with these pupils. These teachers also reported that they had the privilege of writing alternative stories with their pupils and how they practised the values of the PPC training when they were with children.

*Karissa:* I find it so rewarding and a privilege to allow AP (a pupil in Karissa's class) to develop in my school, he just flourishes. The amount of hugs I get per day is such confirmation of this blossoming. I sat down next to him and explained that every person's brain functioned differently. The rate and quality of his work has improved so much and he could achieve. I suppose I've helped to give AP the identity of 'I can'. It's given him faith in himself. I spent time with him, sat next to him, one hand on his shoulder and the other on the pen. I told him, 'Do you see, you can?' He then turned around and said: 'I want to do the same as the other children.'

*Van:* For me, the challenge that stemmed from this training was the way in which I dealt with children in particular. I used to be quite a fire and brimstone [Afr. *donner en bliksem-tipe*] type of person, and then, by the grace of God, I started acquiring patience again. What the training made me realise was that with the listening skills I've learned, and the ability to think before saying or asking something, not reacting directly on what people say or do, one gains a much better perspective on or insight into what the person is thinking or feeling at that moment. Then you can have a better understanding of the situation. It also improved my patience. My way of disciplining children also changed. I now try to teach children to accept responsibility for their actions, for what they're saying. What you see, what you hear, what you say, what you think, what you do, those five things are choices you make – nobody else can make those choices for you. The PPC training made me realise that the way I'm thinking is not necessarily the way the child is thinking, which is why he acted in the way he did. To

understand this and then make the child realise what he has done is wrong. The child is then asked what a particularly good punishment would be in the light of his misconduct, to ensure that he will be aware of it in the future. Or I ask the child how he could have acted differently in the same situation. That is a much more effective way, as the child learns to understand that perhaps he could have done it differently. Maybe he could also find alternative ways of behaving towards other people.

*Queen:* I now sometimes ask the children in my class: What does it do to you when.....? They are quite surprised by this type of question.

*Gawie:* Gradually I also discovered other 'gold' in the new school. The school choir was a huge asset. Every day their lovely songs resounded through the school. They often practised without the instructor being present! I helped a few learners who were practising for the arts festival. I didn't train them, but used them to judge and positively motivate each other. All of a sudden a spontaneous unity developed. Every day they came to fetch me to listen to them. I was astonished by their positive and constructive criticism of one another. The result was that many learners obtained an A+ mark. What I actually did was to present the PPC training in participatory pastoral care little by little in this situation.

The recollections shared by the participants in the above vignettes are a testimony to the ripple effect of a transformation that grew from a transformed relationship with the self and with God, as shared in the previous chapter. These transformations led the participants to experience a sense that they are able to live more 'Christianly' (Ballard 1999:143) in this world in all the significant relationships in which they stand.

### **7.3 TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES**

Apart from the transformation of personal narratives and interpersonal relations of which the previous section has told us, the practice of theology and training should also include a transformation of social structures (Chopp 1995:77). Hence, Chopp (1995:42) emphasises the role of education and identity in the following way: 'Almost every view of education includes some notion of the formation of the self. Greek *paideia* sought to



cultivate in a subject the wisdom and virtues necessary for the polis.' This section of the chapter therefore gives an account of how the PPC training cultivated new wisdom and virtues needed for the polis. In this regard, Cochrane et al (1991:83) argue that Christian social praxis depends on a constant transformation and enabling of those involved.

The social practices of enabling and cultivating wisdom and virtues are needed in an approach to doing theology that can 'incorporate a new vision of the social whole, and a stronger sensitivity to the painful history of past experiences' (Cochrane et al 1991:1). When Cochrane et al (1991:2) talk about social transformation in the South African context, they imply 'the reconstruction of a society built upon wholly different principles than [those] of division and domination' that we knew under the previous regime. Like Heitink (1999a:119), I believe that this focus on transformation, not only of people but also of society as a whole, 'gives a political dimension to practical theology'. The experiences of the participants are therefore 'taken up into a moral context greater than the horizons of selfhood' (Graham 1995:230).

The following section reveals some of the participants' actions of transformation as they also strove for a 'just and ethical society to live in' (Kotzé 2002:13).

### **7.3.1 Participating in the new South Africa**

Because of South Africa's 'multicultural and multireligious' (Pieterse 1999:411) nature, there is strong feeling, especially in the post-apartheid context of South Africa, 'against one way communication and authoritarian communication. The spirit of democracy, participation, and input from all on every issue [should] encompass all walks of life' (Pieterse 1999:419). Christian life in our new democracy is therefore not simply a matter of private religion and morality, but has to do with 'every aspect of our lives, including public affairs and politics' (Cochrane et al 1991:77). In the light of a spirit of democracy and participation, I believe that PPC training can participate in a transformation of the new South Africa in the way it draws contemporary political and social concerns into its learning material.

There were mixed reactions in and to these participants' new prophetic stands on issues facing them in the new South Africa. Some of the participants were confronted with these issues in their own lives, while others had to harness the reaction and sometimes resistance from people around them:

*Retha:* I'm very much aware that apartheid is not dead yet. I am also involved with street children, and there are people in my home cell that do not understand why I do what I do. I find it sad. It is after all another place in which one does have an influence. I experienced the opposite in the presentation of the PPC training though. There, the participants commented that they became increasingly 'colour blind'<sup>37</sup>. One of the women in my group said that the PPC training helped her to listen to other people and to try to understand them. The latter dismantled her ideas about other cultures. There also developed an increased sympathy and understanding – her prejudice and bias towards the other races disappeared because she was listening with a different ear. She suddenly became aware of the discourses and mentioned very specifically that this awareness has helped her a lot.

*Ann:* I've learnt again to observe where disadvantaged people come from. I now understand better why they act the way they do. I will now ask why, instead of just scolding the woman who helps me in my house.

*Anne:* I co-facilitated training run at the John Wesley Community Centre in Etwatwa which had only Black people participating and I have experienced huge racial healing in my life. I believe that the practice of clarifying language is hugely important in forming relationships in South Africa. Not assuming that you understand the language being used. We also discovered that 'giving the women in the group a voice' had a good effect on the men and women respectively.

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<sup>37</sup> In his comments on the final draft of the dissertation, Dr Hestenes mentioned that he is curious about how it is possible for a primarily white Afrikaans group of participants to become colour blind through their participation in the PPC training constructions. I wonder how the value of the acceptance of difference and otherness assisted the participants in this regard, even if the other is not present in the training.

*Queen:* The training allows me to handle the post-apartheid better, it's OK. It's not wrong anymore, it's OK. You may change to the benefit of our country. What has me up in arms is the experience that the Whites are being demoted. As a teacher I also often experience the young Black pupils as brutal and mocking towards Whites, an attitude that says, 'Who are you to tell me?' There are also White people that suffer and there are some of the other races that exploit this. When we have meetings, there is always a yes, but. My reaction is that we have changed after all, what more must change? I still battle with that. I no longer see colour, colour isn't an issue for me anymore, for me it is about the fact that they are not content, they still want to lure you into saying things.

*Nan:* Post- Apartheid South Africa has scary aspects. Meeting with, training with, and getting to know Black people more intimately, finding many common interests, hopes and dreams through the training has given rise to optimism and high expectations for the future of our country.

*Etwatwa Co-researcher:* The relationship with the old regime didn't give us these opportunities. Under the new government we are able to meet White people. I respect Whites because they are human beings made in the image of God. I've learned a lot about care giving.

Some of the participants believe that there is still a great deal of reconciliation work that needs to be done in our participation in a post-apartheid South Africa. Miller-McLemore and Anderson (1995:112) see reconciliation as a desire for a restoration of relationships that have been broken, but also as an 'attitude or way of living and thinking more than incidental action'.

Through the vignettes below, we can see how the PPC training has opened the eyes of the participants to the ministry of reconciliation that still needs to take place in our young democracy, and to the possibility of taking part in such a process:

*Sue:* This past year I have come under the impression of the potential of these Narrative ideas. At first I thought of it as a counselling model, but now I don't think there is anywhere at all that these ideas cannot go: business, government, schools etc. I am just beginning to see the scope of it. There

is still a lot of truth and reconciliation work to be done and to certain extent our work in Etwatwa is just that. I would like to take a week long Indaba conversations to Etwatwa where they talk about what they want for their community. We have a cross-cultural team to find out what they want. If we were to do this, we must stay in Etwatwa with the people for a week.

*Desbe:* As I have said it has deepened my passion for people and I know that I listen to their stories in a new way. My dream has been to see or be part of reconciliation and I think there is still a long way to go for true reconciliation to happen. This training, I believe, is the way to go. During one session I discovered that I am an African child and that has helped me relate to all race groups in a new way.

*Nan:* Working together for common goals and interests works towards mending the gap bringing reconciliation.

In addition, participating in the new South Africa has invited us to use the *ubuntu* way of life as a value in this participation. The basic assumption on which *ubuntu* is based can be summed up as 'people are people through other people' (Xhosa *ubuntu ungamntu ngabayne abantu*) (Mgibi 1997:2). The PPC training has therefore encouraged participants like Megan to seek out those in the rainbow nation that are different, to start to know and understand them:

*Megan:* The idea that has had the most powerful impact on my life and took root for me during the training is 'Because we are, I am'. Described as UBUNTU by some, it is a concept or rather a way of life that keeps inviting me to be part of other people's lives, especially those who are different from me. I realise that having grown up as a white South African there are parts of my being which lie dormant and unrealised as a direct consequence of our individualistic Western heritage. By purposefully seeking out contexts where the 'because we are', becomes a reality in all its rich diversity, I can look forward to fully realising the unique and diverse richness of the 'I am'. So rather than trying to recreate the life of sameness and somehow finding comfort in it, my new found curiosity draws me outwards, towards the people I don't know or understand.

The participants reported how they have become colour blind through the PPC training, which has enabled them to cope better with some scary aspects in the new South Africa. Yet again, participants recounted that they can listen with new ears of respect, which also helps them to understand those that are different to them. These transformations in the participants' lives brought racial healing for some and raised their levels of optimism about the future of our country for most. In addition, some of the participants are now able to see themselves as participants in the healing and reconciliation that still needs to take place.

### **7.3.2 Re-writing a school's story**

The vignette below recounts Gawie's participation with the staff members of a school in the new South Africa.

*Gawie:* I've been personally enriched through this training. I understand myself better. I also realise that I can make a difference to my environment. I received a call from a district manager, asking me to stand in at another school as head master. It flashed through my brain that if the PPC training could help me to change an individual's image of himself and to help a team to rewrite a 'losing story', turning it into a 'winning story', why wouldn't I be able to help a school to rewrite its story. Without really thinking about it, I agreed and started at the new school within two days. It was like being in a foreign country with totally foreign circumstances. I compare it with somebody standing at the entrance to a cave. The only way I could find out what was going on inside, was to listen to the people who informed me about their experiences. Soon it turned into a chamber of horrors! People thought me crazy and even the district officials advised me against staying. I quickly realised that if I were to listen to these people I would be lost. I started focusing again on what I had learnt through the PPC training. I introduced myself to the parents, children and staff as a gold digger in search of gold. With a positive attitude I entered the chamber of horrors. I was very much surprised about the amount of gold I found! I focused on the staff first. Every morning during the staff meeting, I spent time on positively motivating the people. I took the trouble to get to know every staff

member and to discover each one's skills. The biggest recognition I received was the message the staff wrote in the front of a book they gave me for my birthday. It says: 'Thank you for the difference you have made in our lives' and 'Our school was sinking and you came to the rescue'. What they still don't realise is that they have made the difference THEMSELVES! Unfortunately I did not make myself available for the post as head master. I returned to my previous school with huge appreciation for my Creator for having used me effectively somewhere. I've been enriched totally with a different view of people and myself! The following section in Bruce Wilkinson's book *The dream Giver for dream leaders* took on special meaning:

'The best way to develop leaders is to take people out of their safe environment and away from the people they know, and thrust them into a new arena they know little about. They should preferably be thrown into the deep end. In fact, the more demanding their challenges, the more pressure and risk they face, the more likely [it is that] a dynamic leader will emerge.'

Had it not been for the skills that the members of my group brought to my attention during the PPC training, I would never have accepted this challenge.

This section has shown the relevance of the PPC training constructions in practical theology, as it concerns itself with the 'actions, issues, and events that are of human significance in the contemporary world' (Pattison & Woodward & 2000a:7). In addition we also saw how the PPC training provided a setting in which pastoral care connected personal growth with social action (Taylor 1995:162).

#### **7.4 A TRANSFORMATION OF LIVING AND CARING PRACTICES**

Participatory practical theology is also concerned with a transformation and the improvement of current living and caring practices. In this regard, Hare-Mustin (1997:571) writes: 'A postmodern orientation reminds us that all realities are constructions, and some are more influential than others. By opening up the possibilities of alternatives, a postmodern view moves beyond existing practices to their

transformation.’ This section reveals how a new approach, image and picture of care culminated in new practices and ways of being.

According to Anderson (2001:180), one of the New Testament words used for the transformation of one’s mind is the word *metanoia*, ‘which means having a new or different mind’. O’Connell Killen and De Beer (1994:42) offer theological reflection, which is one of the practices used in the PPC training, as a practice that might bring new insights which invite transformation. The meaning that the co-researchers garnered from the theological reflections constructed in the PPC training took root and caused surprising changes. These changes show that a life of faith is rarely a matter of surface changes. These changes occurred in their perceptions and attitudes and in the way they now relate to all of life. The participants tell us about the changes that happened in particular things they now think and do (O’Connell Killen & De Beer 1994:67). This section shows some of the areas in which the participants felt that their minds have been renewed or transformed.

#### **7.4.1 Living practices**

The PPC training, as an educational process, has challenged the participants in their ways of being and living together with others (Chopp 1995:44). In this regard, most of the participants felt that they have grown to be more patient with one another and have developed a greater sensitivity in their lives and caring with other people:

*Wiseman:* But now that I have done the training it has made me to want to care for everyone.

*Coba:* I want to believe that people feel safe, that no one needs to be afraid. Acceptance and safety, opposed to icy rejection.

*Ann:* A gentleness entered my thoughts: more understanding and more acceptance of others.

*Van:* My story of caring is in reality the same, except that one learns to be increasingly patient with people. These changes have certainly taken place.

The above transformation in being and living with others resonates with Viau's (1999a:159) suggestion that thoughts are actions producing effects on our being and that, in addition, affect our future thoughts. The accounts below reveal how the PPC training influenced the participants' thoughts, and therefore their actions, both in life and in the way they care with others:

*Johan:* Through the presentation of the PPC training, you are confronted with this way of thinking in your everyday life.

*Leonie:* The alternative story was healing and liberating for me. I don't have to know everything. I strive to incorporate the entire approach to care in my life, for example, the way in which I handled the estate agent recently. I just used a different approach when talking about the occupation rent, and what would have been a potential conflict situation turned out to be totally different.

*Reisgenoot:* I also found that I enjoy the small things in life more. I've always thought that one has to complete this huge mission to qualify as a human being, but now it is OK to qualify every day with all the little things.

*Mari:* There is a phenomenal difference in my realm of thought. I can direct my thoughts to everything that is beautiful, pure, commendable, and praiseworthy.

*Queen:* The minor hitches [Afr. *klein jakkalsies*] don't annoy me anymore. It made my lifestyle more peaceful. It ensures that I don't approach situations so anxiously.

The new way of thinking informed by the theological reflection in the PPC training also called participants to a 'gracious revision of strongly held, but ultimately detrimental, beliefs and convictions' (O'Connell Killen & De Beer 1994:142):



*Lucky:* My biggest challenge was to stop interpreting things. I use to presume, but this training made me to grow and stop interpreting things. Before this training I had this idea that I thought that I could tell what people is thinking.

As a result the discipline of theological reflection practiced in the PPC training brought transformation and lead participants to become gentler and less judgemental in relating to those they know and those they do not know (O'Connell Killen & De Beer 1994:83).

*Anne:* I am a lot more questioning and a lot more understanding. I have been challenged to let go of prejudice. My life has been changed by participating in the stories of people I had not previously had the opportunity to be with.

*Nan:* My thinking has become less black and white – changed to shades that mix and blend and become more mellow and attractive.

*Megan:* I am much more inclined to challenge ideas and what people say and hold to (even if it's not out loud). I find myself questioning mainstream ideas and find myself exploring alternative ones. I would describe a growing questioning attitude that seems to be taking the place of a pious or judgmental attitude.

Participants were therefore able to let go of their pre-conceived ideas, which were replaced by an 'openness to the new and unexpected' (McCarthy 2000:200).

### **7.4.2 Caring practices**

The way participants previously thought about care as a solo endeavour has been challenged to shift to a co-constructing journey we can do with others:

*Mari:* Care reminds me of the rings of the Olympic Games. All of us together can create the whole picture by connecting like the loops. Each one is in his own place, but together we care.

*Nan:* Care has taken on community aspects leaving individual efforts behind. More and more, working together becomes important and essential. An environment of care heals and reconciles all kinds of situations for sickness to serious disagreements and conflict and truly underscores the biblical

instructions to overcome evil with good.

For some of the participants it was very difficult to allow people to care for them. Through the PPC training they have now also come to realise that they should and can invite the care of others into their lives:

*Benita:* I am learning to accept others instead of finding fault. By that I mean allowing others to care for me and not be scared of the negatives I feel.

*Queen:* You have to be prepared to consent to care. You don't have to be as strong as everybody thinks you are.

*Vusi:* I used to keep the problems to myself, but now I can talk to other people.

*Coba:* Now it is all right to say I want to be cared for. The other day my mother allowed me simply to be sad and to cry. She just had to accommodate my pain. Sometimes you can be so cruel when someone else is suffering a pain that you've already experienced. For that person it is his or her first time of putting on the T-shirt. Pain is so sacred.

In this section, the participants conveyed which of their current practices of living life and care in this world were transformed and challenged through the training constructed together as a group.

## **7.5 TRANSFORMING PRACTICES**

In a conversation I had with Retha and Johan, two of the facilitators in Gauteng, they voiced the privilege of seeing the transformation in participants' lives happening in front of their eyes:

*Retha:* In one-on-one therapy you don't always see what is happening. Sometimes you would journey with people for two or three times and thereafter they would just stay away. It makes you wonder why they stay away. In the group I could see the changes that were taking place over a long period. Every week we reflected on what happened to them during the week before, and I realised that the starting point was with me, and they

took the seed. There I could actually see what happened to people.

*Johan:* In other words, if you had not been there, the event would not have taken place.

*Retha:* You don't get that kind of value adding in a one-on-one situation, because people don't return to you when things start getting better for them.

Based on the above conversation, this section pays attention to the practices co-constructed in the training that make such transformations possible.

Firstly, the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) described the construction of the PPC training as a gentle and unforced process that had transformation as its outcome because of the values of participation and negotiation that the training process upholds. In addition, the construction of a safe environment, as discussed in Section 5.4, inspired an eagerness to learn. This eagerness can be seen clearly in Chapter Five. The hunger to learn infuses everybody present, which in turn sparks transformation at various levels:

*Megan:* I have experienced many meaningful and helpful conversations with fellow participants. The thing that I have enjoyed the most is the playful use of metaphor and its powerful and lasting potential for change and transformation. Ideas and practices that help transformation would be creating a context where each person's contribution is valued and encouraging a participatory process.

Secondly, for most of the participants, care has become a vehicle of transformation in their own lives, as well as in their relationships:

*Nan:* Care results in transformation. To feel valued and cared for draws from us the desire to be worthy and to offer something in exchange. I have experienced this with the security guards of our complex. Distant and unapproachable to begin with, they've transformed to friendliness and helpfulness simply through the offer of care, greetings, thanks and simply being treated as people and part of the establishment. This works both ways, as they respond, it becomes easier to think of ways to make their hours in the guard room more interesting and they in turn find ways to be

helpful and pleasant. Distance and unfriendliness transformed to relationship and service. The components of transforming care are genuine interest, alertness to humour and sparkling moments, acknowledgements of achievements and deterrent efforts to communicate with and understand each other.

According to Louw (1998:37), pastoral care 'when separated from the diaconic function of the church (social ministry), becomes an abstract, academic construct and loses its relevance for human existence'. Nan's story is therefore an example of this transforming care that moves beyond an abstract construction to social ministry with the people in her circle of influence.

Thirdly, several of the participants claimed that one of the components of transforming care is to be able to tell one's story in a safe space. According to Min (2004:186-187), dialogue requires a 'readiness to be transformed, even with regard to one's final claims, which in turn requires temporary suspension of such claims so as indeed to be able to listen to the other'. This need is revealed in Lorna's comment:

*Lorna:* To communicate and openly tell stories, many opportunities for healing and transformation can happen. This will also prevent people from dwelling on the difficulties of the past, looking at new and different ways of handling the present and finding ways to free themselves to face the future.

Fourthly, a Narrative approach to care as discussed in Section 4.3 is also a practice that creates opportunities for transformation:

*Maureen:* The teaching in Narrative therapy contributes hugely to transformation: listening, respect for others, not assuming, building a new story, looking for gold, looking for and remembering the shining moments, building on the positive, not seeing people as problems and I am sure many more.

*Anne:* Transformation came as a result of 'sparkling moments' after the story had been told and questions had been asked. It was so good to realise that the 'answers' or 'revelations' had come from the persons themselves and that felt right. So to come from a place of 'not knowing' to a place of 'knowing'

was a good feeling. It allowed a place to 'move forward from'.

*Benita:* The components of the transforming practices would be naming the problem, exploring the effects of the problem, evaluating the effects and justifying why. Done through externalizing the problem, tracing the history of the problem and taking apart/breaking down of discourses to enable to empower the person over the problem and move forward.

Fifthly, through this participatory Narrative approach to training, the participants became more aware of discourses that are dominant in society and where compassion is lacking. This awareness of discourses helped the participants to adopt a 'critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge' (Burr 1995:3) found in society. These discourses are 'dependent upon the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time' (Burr 1995:4). Because discourses "show up" in the things that people say' (Burr 1995:50) participants felt that they can now question, challenge and deconstruct the role of some 'discourses that ha[ve] trained persons towards certain dominant ideas and away from others' (Madigan 1998:89). Participatory practical theology cannot avoid the social context of wider public implications as 'individual healing does not happen apart from social remedies' (Miller-McLemore & Anderson 1995:108). The co-researchers' thinking about this is revealed in Karissa and Megan's comments:

*Karissa:* Now, when I hear an opinion, I first determine whether it is a discourse with which I want to go along. Therefore I now contemplate things first, instead of just taking a decision. It happens at the school especially, in my daily interaction with the children as their teacher. I feel it adds value to their togetherness with me. I approach them differently, I try to talk and handle them more respectfully. What I find very exciting is that I can see the results.

*Megan:* The Narrative training has deeply challenged my thinking and influenced my behaviour by growing an awareness of societal discourses and opened many areas of choice to either collaborate with the dominant side or stand against and challenge it by creating space for the endless possibilities of

the alternate perspectives.

Participants spoke about exploring the vehicle of discourses as something that was challenging and brought about transformation in some areas of their lives. They learnt how to challenge inapplicable dominant and cultural discourses and to either co-operate with helpful discourses or stand against oppressive ones. They also became aware of the discourses that constituted their own lives. For Estés (1992:52), like for many of the participants, asking generative questions that expose these discourses was the 'central act of transformation.... The properly shaped question always emanates from an essential curiosity about what stands behind':

*Nan:* The questions help people look at cultural and dominant discourses and to discard those which no longer apply.

*Megan:* Ideas and practices that help transformation would be checking the influence of chosen processes and practices, i.e. that they are not marginalising or disempowering members of the group or community. This would include being aware of societal discourses, which might influence individuals or groups.

*Benita:* I learned about the discourses that make one feel trapped and identifying with that.

*Reisgenoot:* There is none of these rules and regulations about this and that anymore, only discourse. What a relief the word discourse is.

*Leonie:* When you are confronted with something, you now ask: Is this a discourse? Is this true? Who says? I now turn to questions in my mind. At the present I think more than once before I speak. I am also allowed to challenge the discourses in society. The discourse I'm challenging is the macho man thing and that you're not to judge people on the external. Sometimes your own values are also challenged.

Lastly, most of the participants reported that the respectful practices constructed in the PPC training became a pathway in their being with others in the activities of their daily lives. In the participants' reflections, there seems to be a growth to more respectful

practices that brought about transformation not only in their lives, but also to most of the relationships in which they stand:

*Gerhard:* We must be able to really listen to each other and understand that each one still has a different story. Everyone then gets a glimpse of the others' stories. This will cause people to have mutual respect for one another.

*Megan:* Ideas and practices that help transformation would be negotiating respectful ways of being with one another.

I also believe that this respectful regard for the other as those with whom 'we share mutual recognition as human beings' (Townsend 2002:70) allows us to be transformed by the other, as already discussed in Section 5.4.

## **7.6 OUTCOMES OF TRANSFORMATION**

The Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) asked the following question: What do we get when we do transformation? In other words, we can ask, what the outcomes of the actions of transformation are. I agree with Pieterse (1999:422), who sees the outcomes of the actions of transformation as 'liberation, hope, justice and peace'. I want to add healing as another outcome of transformation, as Ackermann (2003:55) proposes. In my own involvement in the research journey I also found a readiness to change and the expression of our worlds and ourselves in new language to be additional outcomes of transformation. When I discuss these outcomes in the following sections, I do so because I believe that they are not only events but also states and modes of existing (Farley 1988:155) that have become a way of life for most of the participants.

### **7.6.1 Liberation**

Several of the participants reported that freedom and liberation accompanied the change they experienced. The PPC training could therefore be termed a 'liberating action' (Isherwood & McEwan 1993:82). In line with the thinking of Moore (1991:163), the PPC training also engages in

liberative education that is truly liberative because: it is aware of those realities that participants have been denied; it has open ears to those voices who wish to name their own realities; and has an open heart to receive the participants and to enter partnership with them in their struggles for liberation.

As the above narratives of the participants have already demonstrated, they experienced the PPC training as liberating, 'freeing persons and societies to live more fully' (Moore 1991:163; Clinebell 1984:28):

*Coba:* The liberation found in the alternative outcome is a miraculous liberation.

The Red Shoe Co-Researchers were astounded by the transformation that took place in the little French town, Lansquenet-sous-Tannes (as portrayed in the film *Chocolat*). In the context of participatory pastoral care training, they saw this transformation as the result of respectful participatory caring practices. It seemed that the transformation even made a difference in the way people walked, talked and went about with one another:

*Red Shoe Co-Researchers:* The people in the town started walking and being in a different manner: they laughed again, lived, saw differently, enjoyed life, they freed themselves of baggage loaded onto them by others.

*Karissa:* The training is highly beneficial, enriching, liberating and challenging. It is to see light in a very long, dark tunnel, and it's not an oncoming train! It's brought a bounce to my step. It gives one a fresh, new fragrance. It's honed all the senses, the whole lot. It is to talk to someone whose view is poles apart from your own and still be willing to listen and feel competent to listen to such a story, without judgement. I think differently. I can see bright nasturtiums [Afr. *kappertjies*] more clearly in the sunny moments. It is as if I can identify and experience such sunny moments better. I am more able to give it a name, and apply it as an aid. The training has an effect on one's senses. Formerly I just had to carry on, struggle ahead, without thinking or experiencing too much. This training abruptly brought me to a halt, because there is so much to experience – to taste, to smell, to hear, to see and to feel! I still have to practice the following: I'm not / you're not the problem; it is outside of me/you. The problem is the problem.



Like Hunter (2001), I believe that there can be liberation from oppressive ways of thinking in postmodernity as an outcome of the transformation that participants experienced:

[T]he conditions of postmodernism can be viewed positively as a liberation from narrow, oppressive cultural constrictions and pretensions – if not indeed a wonderful blessing, a positive turn of historical events. In this perspective what we celebrate is a shifting away from the dominating power and pretensions of so-called universal, objective truths and values, and with this shift, a dethroning of those social elites who principally have claimed the authority of modernity – meaning generally white, male, western human beings.

Some of the participants reported that they now live from within this new and liberating participatory approach and with values that help them to be with people in a more relaxed way:

*Sue:* I have always been around at the beginnings of things in my life and it feels like Narrative therapy is also in its infancy in this country. I don't know if it is something that fits me or I fit it? Somewhere between my own personal values there is a match. There is a lot of people that come for training that have been trained in other places that also find a match with the narrative ideas. They also experience a freedom to disagree with things and find their own path. Maybe that is where the coming home thing happens for people.

Several of the participants (Red Shoe Co-Researchers 2004) experienced the training as an uplifting journey. When the participants reflected on the training process, the following words and phrases – verbs, nouns, adjectives – spoke to them in this regard: relief, contentment, refreshing, excitement, surprising, analytical, non-judgemental, confidence, creativity, capturing, holding, respectful, growth process, a feeling of warmth, a wow experience and two-way-traffic.

*Mari:* The training was rich, warm, questioning, satisfying and listening. The result: a most enjoyable journey. Thirst has been quenched.

### **7.6.2 Healing**

A number of the participants reported that the PPC training provided communities or safe spaces as 'healing communing' (DTh Group 2004), an account that resonates with the following observation:

The teaching and the life of Jesus are in fact the best news I know of. They promise healing, freedom, food for life, and hope for the day. What I am passionate about is being healed and free. I don't mean my healing or my freedom alone. I mean both in the broadest possible sense. They go together. I know that our crying need as South Africans is to 'bind up the wounds' at every level and for all in different ways. Then healing means liberation, justice, forgiveness, and hopefully reconciliation.

(Ackermann 2003:54-55)

Spaces for healing communing were possible because, as Ackermann (2003:55) suggests, healing has to do with all that is needed for people 'to live with dignity':

*Coba:* Yes, it ends up being your own healing. By helping other people you are helping yourself. It's transforming, because you monitor your own growth and your own healing. You transform from poor me, it happened to me [Afr. *Jannie Jammergat*]. Or from the high and mighty to a real person who has empathy with the situation with which you are presented. To a sincerity that says, 'I really care about your problem, but the influence the problem has on you is of more concern. Let's stand together and face it'. The transformation is to stop at the problem that is brought to you with all desperate sincerity and not to see yourself anymore.

### **7.6.3 Hope**

As Johnella Bird (2005b) pointed out in a workshop, it is possible for hope to be in the room with us in this participatory and respectful approach to being with people. Sometimes we have to hold hope (Epston 2002) for somebody else, or let hope sit between the two of you. This is especially true when people find it difficult to hope any longer. But in this endeavour of hope, we as participatory pastoral caregivers are not

alone, because God journeys with us and brings hope to us, as the following psalm written by Weems (1995:23) beautifully portrays:

I come to you, Holy One,  
for I know  
my salvation  
is not in 'coping,'  
but is in hope,  
hope that comes  
only from you.

'Hope can facilitate a move toward empowerment. If one can imagine new possibilities, one can begin to move toward them' (Cozad Neuger 1996b:109). The PPC training engenders a culture of hope and excitement for the future that helps people to experience care in a very particular way. Hope as one of the key themes in practical theology is therefore constructed in the PPC training, as advocated by Forrester (2000:42):

*Anne:* People come to a place of better understanding and in most cases experience a feeling of excitement for the future. I feel that they feel particularly loved and accepted, which builds self-esteem and confidence.

A number of the participants experienced hope as an outcome of the transformation in their lives and consequently expressed a 'passion for the impossible' (Søren Kierkegaard quoted by Ackermann 2003:81). Hope as a passion for the impossible became incarnate in the following ways: participants can now take the renewed hope for their own lives and share it with others; they can hope that our country can become a model for the world; with the burden of guilt and problems lifted from their shoulders, the realm of the impossible has become accessible again; there is a renewed hope that their actions can influence people in conversation; as well as a renewed hope that people will also 'pay forward' the healing and hope that they have received from others. All these expressions of hope are born in the realm of the impossible, but they grow up with the hope that God, who can do the impossible, will participate in these impossibilities with hope. There is a commitment on the part of participatory pastoral caregivers to see the image of God in the people with whom they journey and to see God's active presence in the midst of every relationship. This 'commitment of openness to the power of God's

love and possibility' in caring with people guides the journey in every moment (Cozad Neuger 1996b:91).

The hope that the participants now engage in something that they are actively and passionately involved in, trying to bring about that for which they hope. This implies a hands-on doing of hope. Therefore I agree with Weingarten (2000:402) that hope 'is something we do with others'. Some of the co-researchers commented as follows:

*Benita:* I would say I transformed from a level of little hope to a level of wanting to even give hope to others, but I still need to work on my hope to know it, believe it and claim it.

*Karissa:* It works both ways. On the one hand it gave me hope, and on the other I ask: 'Can this also really turn out well?' I want to believe that our country can eventually become a type of model for the world. Mandela catches the eye in this regard. I'm also training a number of learners who will make a difference.

Various participants, among them the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004), felt that hope is part of the PPC journey, because now they can question and challenge taken-for-granted ideas and ask about the so-called static nature of things:

*Benita:* My attitude and way of thinking has been influenced in a positive manner. The training has given me hope by taking the burden of guilt off me. As the problem is the problem, it empowers me while building up my self-esteem. I tend to almost find reasons/problems to make me feel guilty. This makes me feel I am the problem, but through Narrative I've come to learn to change my way of thinking.

In the film *Chocolat*, Vianne's ways of being were able to foster hope in the people with whom she shared her life. By creating a safe haven of reliability and by respectfully being together with people where they are the experts in their own lives, hope can be restored. Within this safe haven, people can discover their own alternative story and emphasise that by which they prefer to live.

The rewriting of the participants' own stories gave them hope to journey with people in the re-writing of their narratives. It is a privilege for the participants to be able to write alternative stories of hope with other people and to pan for gold with them, as Wylie (1994) puts it.

*Lorna:* I use the word 'hope' constantly in my spoken and written communication and I am hopeful about influencing people in the future through conversations and good questions.

*Retha:* When I think of my dreams for the future, I think of [the film] *Pay it forward*. Trying to make a difference on a one to one basis feels like an impossible process, but to do it in the lives of a group, who then do it in others' lives, starts to make the dream possible.

*Benita:* The training gives me a sense of hope and encouragement. My dreams for the future are that wherever I go or whatever I do I want to be like Jesus living through Narrative skills giving people hope.

The training also gave some of the participants a sense of hope that they too will find such respectful care. Perhaps we give what we most want?

#### **7.6.4 Justice**

Feminist theology, which is praxis-based, is a theology on a journey, because 'the goals of liberation and justice are expressed in the very act of doing theology' (Ackermann 2003:36). This act of doing theology based on a will to justice and liberation thus implies a critique of all forms of injustice and oppression (Min 2004:60):

*Wiseman:* At times I used to be passive if something happened that I didn't like. But because of the training I have learned that when I feel that something is wrong for me to do I should be able to say it. Now it has helped me to voice my views and therefore it has helped me in my interaction with people.

*Etwatwa Co-researcher:* You've empowered us, started a vibrant movement.

Participants are therefore empowered to move forward and take the lead in the 'praxis of justice, liberation and healing' (Ackermann 1996:49) for a transformation of the world through participatory pastoral care.

### **7.6.5 Peace**

The following vignette is an excerpt from a conversation I had with the Etwatwa co-researchers on their dreams for a world and a South Africa transformed through participatory pastoral care and training:

*Chené:* If we could dream about transformation, I wonder how the world will be different if people could be respectful of one another's differences. Where will that take us in the South Africa that we are living in?

*Lucky:* I think it will put us at peace. It can make us to accommodate and understand each other. Therefore I think that we will not come into situations where we are angry with one another.

*Chené:* If you could dream, how would our society be different if we continue being respectful of differences in the relationships in which we stand?

*Wiseman:* We will be a united nation where we understand one another.

*Sue:* I just wonder what kind of world it would be?

*Wiseman:* A perfect and peaceful world.

### **7.6.6 New language**

Another outcome of transformation in the participants' lives was the creation of a new language in which to express changes. In this regard, one of the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004) recommended that a new language be created to voice what has happened to her through her participation in this construction of training. Most of the participants found it difficult to put into language what they know because they have a limited language to express or articulate this 'exciting, unmapped world on the other side

of all [they] know so far' (McLaren 2000:8).

Weingarten (2001:114) writes that without 'language, experience dissolves. Without language, experience cannot be shared and community cannot be formed'. I believe that the research journey is an attempt to negotiate our constructions of experiences at least through the participants' narratives.

### **7.6.7 Readiness to change**

Goodliff (1998:7) writes that one of the signs of postmodernity is 'rapid change'. Chopp (1995:22) describes the times that we are living in as pervaded by 'rapid change and continual crises'. She therefore proposes that we have to 'compose our lives anew [and] that the very art of composing, the ongoingness of creation, is itself going to be a central theme in our lives' (Chopp 1995:22). Given all of these challenges, the skill of re-negotiating our lives on a continuous basis has become a skill that people have to acquire. It was therefore encouraging that one outcome of the transformation that the participants experienced was a readiness to change. The following statement is helpful in this regard:

The *readiness* to change[,] however, is also all that is required as a condition, not actual change.... Whether and how one will be changed can only be determined as a *result* of actual dialogue, not as a *condition* of dialogue.

(Min 2004:187) [Min's emphases]

Chapters Six and Seven gave an account of the challenges for change that the participants experienced, as well as the levels of change and transformation that was negotiated in their lives:

*Van:* I believe that the PPC training should be compulsory for people who are involved in training of one kind or another, in managerial posts and leadership positions, politicians, church leaders, all need to be exposed to this training. If we cannot meet each other half way despite our differences, it will never work. This training also helps one to shake off one's fear of change. You can maintain your moral values and norms, all you have to

realise is that other people think and speak differently. Then the judgemental thoughts will disappear.

The outcomes of the transformation that the participants of the PPC training experienced remind me of the six pillars at the *apartheid* museum in Johannesburg, which have the following words written on them: democracy, diversity, respect, freedom, responsibility and reconciliation. In this sense, the PPC training is also joining the transformation of our country via a participatory practical theology and pastoral care, as the values inscribed on these pillars become part of the participants' lives and journeys.

### **7.7 CLOSING REMARKS**

Given the above reflections on the transformation narratives at various levels of the co-researchers' lives, my hope for the future is fed by the realisation that this research journey might play a part in helping to bring about transformed societies of care, participation and responsibility in a Post-Apartheid South Africa (Cochrane et al 1991:65). Out of the experiences of the participants and critical questioning, clues for red shoe transformation practices emerged that can now be translated 'into actions on behalf of healing and freedom' (Ackermann 2003:xvi).

In the next chapter I reflect on possible contributions made by the research journey to the field of practical theology and pastoral care.



## **CHAPTER EIGHT:**

### **TAKING RED SHOES TO THE WORLD**

#### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this final chapter, the various voices in this travelogue of the research journey comment on the red shoes of this research journey. First, I reflect on the research process and what I have learnt as a researcher, facilitator and therapist. The Red Shoe Co-Researchers are then given an opportunity to reflect on how they experienced the research journey. The co-researchers voice their suggestions and recommendations for action pertaining to the PPC training. In addition, the possible contributions that the research journey can make to the practical theological and pastoral field are also included in this chapter. Lastly, the chapter reflects on further possibilities for exploration that the research journey has opened up, as well as my own reflections on and dreams after this journey.

#### **8.2 MY REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH**

In the following sections I deconstruct my own voice, located as it is in a 'particular class and ethnic cultural, temporal, historical, geographical' space in what Jones (1990:8) calls self-reflexivity. I not only reflect on, but engage in an immediate critical consciousness of, what I was doing, thinking and writing (Appignanesi & Garrat 2003:73). In this self-reflexive account, I speak about what I decided to include and omit, and my reasons for doing that. The following questions guided me throughout the journey and documenting the research text: What is it that I am missing now? What will I have missed in 20 years (Bird 2005b)? *'Whose knowledges are these? For whose purposes [are these knowledges constructed]? To whose benefit are these knowledges? Who is silenced or marginalised by these knowledges? Who suffers as a result of these knowledges?'* (Kotzé 2002:8) [Kotzé's emphasis].

This section has not been co-authored by the participants, because it looks at my own actions and re-actions in the research journey. In line with the postmodern epistemology in which the research is situated, local communities construct their own truths and

therefore the truths that I share with regard to my learning in this research journey involve local knowledge and may not be applicable to all situations.

### **8.2.1 Reflections on my own reflexivity**

I have limited the focus of my research journey to the PPC training and reflections on this pastoral training construction in particular. I assumed that I would find at least a few other postmodern pastoral training journeys to converse with. After several trials and conversations with the subject librarian at Unisa, I realised that this research journey had to be constructed in a different way from the way that I had envisaged. As a result, I greatly relied on the participants and what they brought to the research. On the positive side, I believe that this dilemma encouraged and enhanced the participatory nature of the research document as the co-researchers' recollections were woven into the section titles, the chapter titles and the themes presented in the text. Overall, documenting this research journey was much more challenging than I initially thought it would be.

When I read the study by Hakala (2001:11) regarding the influence of a pastoral training programme for pastors and chaplains in Finland, I learnt that she had interviews with the participants before and after they had completed the course. When I now reflect on the research process, I must admit that perhaps such a process would have elucidated the research journey even more. If I had had interviews with the participants before they started the PPC training, the areas in which this training construction influenced and transformed the participants' lives might have become even more apparent, as some of the co-researchers could not remember what their practices and lives used to be like before the PPC training. In Roux's (1996) dissertation, he also invited the people that had benefited from the caring constructions of the pastoral caregivers of his research journey to participate in the research. In hindsight, I could have had conversations with the family members, friends or work colleagues of the participants that might also have added to the richness of the text and the narratives of transformation.

In addition, it might have been interesting and, I must add, ethical, also to hear the voices of those who did not benefit from the PPC training as a way of enriching the ethical nature of the research journey. I agree with Dr Hestenes's comment on the final

draft of the dissertation that there is some predictability to research results in which one is led to expect that those who benefited will report favourably about the process.

While I was documenting the research journey it remained important for me to keep on participating as a facilitator in the construction of PPC training journeys. This helped me to stay connected to the work, so that it did not become a mere object of my reflection. I also came under the strong impression of how these PPC training groups had become knowledge communities, which in turn informed my work as a pastoral therapist, facilitator and researcher. The continuing transformational journeys of these groups kept me on track, as I could not deny what I have seen and heard.

Although it was one of my aims in co-constructing and documenting the research journey to use language that does not exclude the participants or further emphasise their contributions as an other, I know that I did not always succeed. I tried to explain difficult words in the text or in footnotes where possible to include the participants in most of the conversation in the research journey. It was a difficult dance combining the tricky steps of acquiring a doctoral degree with the glowing steps taken by the red shoes of the participants, combining their voices with an academic discourse to make up a danceable tune. I still reflect on how I could have written this document in a more readable style, without the constraint of making it 'sound scholarly and complex' (Jones 1990:20).

As I am a member of a Dutch Reformed congregation in a rural town I know that I sometimes asked questions from an ecclesiastical stance that are limited by my own understanding and context. In this regard, my own yearning to understand and make sense of my position and questions in the faith community of which I form part propelled me to explore in ways that would help me understand.

Because I value seeing all believers as equal, I did not find it hard to be open and learn and even connect in a participatory consciousness with the co-researchers of the research journey. Constructing the research journey with ordinary believers in the training, research and writing was a dream come true and a life changing experience. I have documented this text with the full understanding that I too was constructing reality and morality. I know that my comments are only entries into what I perceive as a vital conversation. For this reason, these comments do not function as 'fixed truths, but as

invitations to new and ever-evolving dialogues and practices' (Gergen & Gergen 2003f:228).

As a result I am quite aware that like some constructionist writings, the documentation of the research journey is 'passionate, oppositional and idealistic' (Gergen & Gergen 2003f:228). I acknowledge and recognise that it was impossible for me to be neutral or non-partisan in these accounts of the world that I am involved in, but I did my best to pursue a vision of the good (Gergen & Gergen 2003f:228). Consequently, as a researcher who is also a 'fully engaged participant' (Dreyer 1998:5), I know that I might have conveyed too little of the downswings and embarrassments in the lives of the participants of the PPC training, especially given my own experience of the training as facilitator. As I approached the task of this research journey with enthusiasm and hope, I know that my passion might sometimes inadvertently have conveyed a tenacious certainty. In my enthusiasm to put forward narratives of change and transformation in this research journey, I did not wish to be disrespectful of any achievements of the past. I know that the 'doubleness' (Gergen 2001:7) of my position could not always be sustained, and if I lost my balance at times, I hope that the reader's patience and tolerance will be forthcoming.

### **8.2.2 The influence of the research process on my practice as a pastoral therapist and facilitator**

The doing, action and being of pastoral therapy is one of life's great privileges. It has given me a profound experience of the ordinary and extraordinary. I value beyond measure the blessing and inspiration I have received from others whilst journeying with them. As a result, the travelogue of the research journey can be viewed through the lens of my own ordinary and extraordinary experiences of care while sharing in the privilege of standing with people on their holy ground in our journeys together. In the journeys I undertake with people, the alternative accounts of their lives and identities are powerfully authenticated and people reclaim areas in a refashioning of their lives from which I derive immense inspiration, as White (1995:86) says he does. This inspiration then feeds back into my own life as a pastoral therapist and the subsequent journeys I

undertake.

Avoiding control over others and developing a sense of connectedness with the co-researchers was a top priority in my being with them. I found that my thirst to learn from and discover with these co-researchers helped me to avoid the urge to control them and also helped me to experience a connectedness and solidarity that I have taken with me from our conversations. In addition, seeing the participants of the PPC training starting to care for one another respectfully has given me an experience of connectedness to a team and a community of caregivers in a very exciting way.

The research journey has again reminded me of the importance of creating a safe and trustworthy environment for people to speak and to practise their spirituality. This has culminated in an embodied awareness of and engagement with people's experiences in the caring journeys I undertake with them. I am thinking and constantly reflecting on new ways of co-creating inviting safe spaces with participants where we can 'experience, reflect, struggle and emerge' (Bonnor 2004a:150) from. These safe spaces are important, as like Cozad Neuger (2001:49), I believe that these conditions of safety contribute to a construction of transformation and change. It was fascinating to see the liberation that these co-constructing journeys can bring for participants who strongly put across their ideas in a safe space and then have the freedom to change their minds again without any shame. As a result, I believe that such respectful safe spaces foster a commitment which leads to the empowerment of every participant to find his/her own truth, as also described by Lester (2000:156). Because taken-for-granted ideas in societies are often challenged within this participatory approach, providing a safe place and space where new ideas can be explored is of the utmost importance (Cozad Neuger 2001:235).

I have seen and witnessed how participatory pastoral care transformed people's lives in front of my eyes and I consider it to be a very powerful approach in the brokenness of our world. This approach therefore taps into feminist and womanist commitments to the transformation of all 'lives, relationships, systems, and cultures so that they are inclusive, life affirming, and just' (Cozad Neuger 2001:3). I experience this approach as not merely enabling me to offer support and to listen, but an approach that people see as something

from which they benefit and that helps them.

I am continuously surprised at how strongly these participants experience the PPC training co-constructions as an energising and a life-transforming journey within a participatory approach that brings hope and liberation in quite unexpected ways. I am currently busy with my third group of Level One participants and it is an enriching experience to see a training construction that is not a fixed entity and how a local faith community co-constructs the meaning of pastoral training.

Furthermore, I have discovered the risk of assuming that a participatory approach to pastoral care can be squeezed into a how-to-course with five easy steps. The moment people fall into the trap of practising this approach in a so-called correct way, caregivers become too scared to care and that freezes them and does not free them to care. This aspect is discussed in more detail in Section 8.4.2.

Because this research story takes place in the context of my own larger life story as a therapist and facilitator, as a researcher I have observed myself in participation with the participants, as described by Clandinin and Connelly (1994:414). As I am still constantly reflecting on the research journey and its influence on my life, it is even possible that I am a participant 'and that the study in question is an autobiographical one' (Clandinin & Connelly 1994:414). Given all the above reflections, I am filled with an excited wonder at 'what I am becoming that I have not yet been' (Harlene Anderson 1997:265).

In the next section, I again give the co-researchers an opportunity to reflect on how their participation in the research journey has influenced their lives.

### **8.3 REFLECTIONS BY THE CO-RESEARCHERS**

It is very important to reflect after the research journey is done because the reflecting process never ends, even after the dissertation is written up. In line with the values of participatory ethics described in Section 1.8.3, it was important to ask the participants to reflect on how they benefited from their participation in the research journey. Flowing from my epistemological position, as stated in Chapter Two, I had to ask the co-researchers how our co-constructions of the research journey have influenced their lives

in order to be ethically accountable to them. This ethical position has influenced the questions that were asked and the interpretations that were brought to them, as Denzin and Lincoln (1994b:13) suggest.

As already discussed in Section 5.2.4.1, I know that I am caught up in an inseparable 'net or web of power/knowledge' and that it is not possible for me to 'act apart from this domain' (White & Epston 1990:22). Within this acknowledgement of the variety of power systems that organise our church culture into systems of dominance and subordination (Cozad Neuger 2001:7), I chose to include the participants' voices in this last chapter to deconstruct my own power and to communicate in a concrete manner the social constructedness of this research document.

In the headings in this section, I show the reader the questions I asked in the multiple reflexive conversations that were constructed with the Red Shoe Co-Researchers (2004). This collaboration resonates with the values of feminist research in which 'an openness to the potentials of participants to offer ideas...give[s] reactions and evaluations to the researcher [that] are solicited and appreciated' (Gergen 2001:5). In this regard, Sears (1992:155) writes that 'at best qualitative inquiry enables us to come to know and honor the meanings constructed by others'. Again the co-researchers reveal how they have benefited from their participation in the research journey. In giving the participants space and a voice on these pages I honour the meanings they have constructed.

### **8.3.1 What did it mean to you to take part in the research journey?**

As I served the Red Shoe Co-researchers (2004) by inviting them to participate in the research journey, I also served the faith community in which I participate. I therefore agree with Clandinin and Connelly (1994:425) when they say: 'Just as serving the self serves the community, so too serving the community in research texts also serves the self.' By asking the above question I wanted to assess whether the Red Shoe Co-Researchers' participation in the research journey also served them as much as it enriched my life. The co-researchers reported that the research journey had served

them in the following areas: their already attained knowledge of the PPC training was deepened; it was an opportunity to grow further with others; and for some participants it created further transformation:

*Ann:* The research journey has intensified what we have learnt in the PPC training.

*Karissa:* It was/is a privilege! It laid a bigger and firmer foundation. The conversing and reflecting were again an emphasis [Afr. *inskerping*] and confirmation of what we've learnt.

*Reisgenoot:* The research journey confirmed the work of the first level of training and prompted me to think harder about applying it in my life. It brought issues to the surface, such as fear, which I haven't thought of before. It is OK for me not to be prepared in situations of care anymore and to enjoy the journey of exploration, where things evolve as we go along.

*Coba:* The research brought more structure to the process. During the last six weeks we've revisited many of the important truths and summarised it. The nature of the research has helped to emphasise things more.

In line with Harlene Anderson's (1997:254) findings, the collaborative conversational process of the PPC training and the research journey created a thirst for more opportunities to construct learning in community, as the following comments by the co-researchers reveal:

*Karissa:* It was also an opportunity for further growth together with fellow travellers.

*Reisgenoot:* The research journey was an experience for me because I found that some of the things that set me thinking also made the others wonder. It was also a place of safety where it felt as if we were speaking the same language.

*Leonie:* The whole process was an experience I would not trade for anything.



Karissa's comment below shows how the research journey helped her, as her life was also transformed in her telling (Anderson & Foley 1998:7), as already discussed in Section 4.2:

*Karissa:* My participation in the research journey has helped [me] to transform even more and confirmed the alternative story.

*Leonie:* Many of the conversations have been continued with members of the research sessions and others. What I find very special are the conversations with the facilitator about situations in my own life.

### **8.3.2 A vignette of a conversation about the research**

In this section I include a vignette of the conversation we had while reflecting on the influence of the research journey on our lives. As conversations were also used as one of the methods to co-construct the recollections of the research journey, I include the following quote by Clandinin and Connelly (1994:422) to elucidate the values that were embedded in these conversations:

[C]onversations are marked by equality among participants and by flexibility to allow group participants to establish the form and topics important to their inquiry. Conversations entail listening. The listener's response may constitute a probe into experience that takes the representation of experience far beyond what is possible in an interview. Indeed, there is probing in conversation, in-depth probing, but it is done in a situation of mutual trust, listening, and caring for the experience described by the other. Once again, we see the centrality of relationship among researchers and participants.

Including the vignette of the conversation below therefore gives the reader a glimpse into the relationship we as co-researchers had, which included flexibility and mutual trust. This vignette also serves to illuminate 'the feminist ethic of commitment and egalitarianism' (Reinharz 1992:27) as already discussed in Section 1.7.1. The participants were free to ask me any questions regarding the research process and my way of working:

*Reisgenoot:* Did you have any idea of all the things you would discover during the course of the research project?

*Coba:* Has the clipboard been here since the beginning? It was an incredible tool.

*Ann:* Where did you find all these questions?

*Chené:* During one of our DTh classes, the group jointly reflected on my research and I obtained some of the questions through that process. Several of the reflecting questions I gathered from my promoter's doctoral dissertation.

*Coba:* This was a very unthreatening process. Nothing is ever wrong. You'll never write me off.

*Karissa:* We feel safe.

*Leonie:* Has the process followed a pre-planned course? I think our group often put a spanner in the works with the extensive talking and digression.

*Chené:* Do you think this is of importance in a research process?

*Ann:* Otherwise we can't really talk.

*Karissa:* Also, we don't discuss all of the detail of our lives here, which happens one-on-one. We are however a little more careful here, as you don't have a relationship with everyone. Especially due to the two groups from the Level One training, coming together as a research group.

*Queen:* In the beginning there was some discomfort and I wondered whether this would work. Initially it was like two poles. Chené, were you ever uncertain? It never seemed as if one would be saying anything that was not right.

*Chené:* For me it was the art of obtaining recollections for my research from which you could also benefit. When does the research journey have the researcher as focus? When does the research become a hasty venture that just needs to be finished as soon as possible? I've been wondering a great deal about these questions. I've also asked myself, when does it become only my questions? That was the strain I've experienced the

whole time.

*Coba:* Have you ever reached a deadlock, from where you really did not know how to progress?

*Chené:* We've experienced that in the group tonight. There was this silence and then one wondered about the question or the place of the question. Yes, there were definitely also times like that.

*Leonie:* In a modernistic research process, it will surely be important to think and plan beforehand, and maybe even draw up a list of questions. I've definitely benefited from your way of formulating questions.

In his final remarks on the draft copy of my dissertation, my joint promoter, Dr Hestenes, asked the following question: 'Heshusius stresses the notion of overcoming objectivity and subjectivity with the concept of "self-other" or by extension a concept of "solidarity" as discussed in Section 3.2.3. Despite your stress on collaborative reality and research, is there not a clear and ever present danger that you may overwhelm people with your passion for solidarity and participatory consciousness?'

In answering the above question, I must explain that I believe that people are invited into these self-other collaborative spaces and can never be forced to participate in this manner. I further believe that the participants in the above vignette shared with us some of the values necessary for this collaborative research endeavour to be able to construct this self-other kinship. Again there are murmurs of an unthreatening safe space, trust, non-judgemental attitude and the freedom of voice. I want to argue that there seems to be a danger when the values mentioned in the last sentence are not present. I believe that the freedom to enter into this self-other kinship needs the mentioned values to be as a prerequisite to help create spaces for solidarity and a participatory mode of consciousness. Maybe people will feel overwhelmed by the passion for solidarity and participatory consciousness if these values did not invite them to participate in a respectful manner.

### **8.3.3 How did it help to watch the film *Chocolat* together?**

Flowing from the co-researchers' reactions and level of participation after we had watched the *Chocolat* film, I was curious, and did not to assume, but explored with the participants, how watching and discussing the film together helped them to engage in the way that they did:

*Ann:* We've seen physical examples of care.

*Karissa:* It was very informative and satisfying doing it through the pair of *Chocolat* glasses. Words have become pictures, especially because it is Narrative therapy – these are our stories, after all.

*Queen:* Everyone saw something else, which the other ones did not see. If people come to all of us, everyone will find something else.

*Leonie:* I'm crazy about the movie thing. When I am watching movies now, I search for more in the movie. This training is habit-forming and addictive.

*Coba:* I've noticed consciously how many red shoe people there really are. How many non-conformists there really are. This was valuable to me, because it is in fact these non-conformists who give sensitively on those levels that are not reached by general structures such as a church, for they don't see the wounds. These non-conformists are so sensitive, so bold and so reckless and they go in and care on a level where the overarching organisation [Afr. *breë oorkoepeling*] is unable to care. There are many red shoe people who care in their own way. Seeing Vianne's care was almost a confirmation that it is OK to care in a freaky way. Since care always used to be structured, there were people who never asked, because they had preconceived ideas about the face of care. When one practises care on this one-on-one level, people are surprised. Maybe they will ask for care more easily if they know it will be personalised. In this approach there are no templates that are forced onto a group or an individual in terms of care.

From the above reflections we can see how this film became a text in a multiplicity of texts that participated, voiced and painted diverse expressions of care in which the

participants found words and pictures to converse with. The multi-perspective nature of film (Doehring & Fontenot 2001:13) helped the participants to become attuned to the multiple meanings and challenges of care and I believe the use of film is therefore a valuable instrument in both training and research constructions.

### **8.3.4 What alternatives came to life through your participation in the research journey?**

Asking the above question in a collaborative research journey is very important, because none of us can be the same after journeying together in such a research project, as Clandinin and Connelly (1994:418) point out:

It is clear, however, that when we come together in research projects, all of us begin to live and tell a new story of our collaborative work together.... These new collaborative stories being lived and told as we work together in a research study also influence our other stories.

The reflections below show how the research journey and being with the co-researchers again encouraged a re-authoring of the participants' lives and re-connected them with their alternative stories. 'Who benefits?' is therefore also an important question to ask when it comes to the research journey, because in being accountable for my work as researcher, I have to ask the co-researchers how the research journey has influenced their stories:

*Queen:* I think we had great alternative stories here. Our most important reason for being here was to help you with your research, and that in itself was an alternative story. It was satisfying to see that.

*Leonie:* Care took on a new meaning for me, not just in giving care, but also receiving care. I've also learnt about self-care. It was enjoyable to read each one. You read more than what you see, as you know the people's stories. The red shoe conversation made me see the alternative story in practice. I also look for alternatives in my own everyday behaviour and in that of other people.

*Coba:* Our vision is to take this approach and duplicate it in society. It will be interesting to care in a society that is moving constantly.

*Karissa:* I learnt that it is not necessary to fix or to unravel everything from the past before you can carry on meaningfully and happily. That was an alternative story for me. It is a very important alternative story, which I'm actually still working on, because I haven't finished it yet. The caregiver's life is OK, even though it is still tainted with certain wounds. Something unpleasant happened in our family recently, and if I still were to have had the above perspective, I would have been angry and bitter to this day. It's just unbelievable to see how this approach to care gradually develops without having to disentangle things. It's not all right yet, but it is getting there.

*Reisgenoot:* I learnt that it is OK to be like me. People differ and experience things differently – that too is OK. People are enriched through conversations, rather than judging and thereby probably creating a feeling of inadequacy.

I believe that including the reflections of the co-researchers' participation in the research text also reveals how the text was 'collaboratively constructed with the researchers' (Clandinin & Connelly 1994:419), which further discloses how it is representative of the research. As a result, these reflections are 'a mutually constructed narrative that offered a way of giving an account of our work together' (Clandinin & Connelly 1991:269). The meanings that were co-created and experienced by the Red Shoe Co-Researchers in conversation with each other were therefore shared in this section. I believe that the insight from our reflections on the research also leads to new action, which will in turn move us into new experiences for reflection (O'Connell Killen & De Beer 1994:68). The next section addresses these suggestions for further action, flowing from our reflections on the PPC training.

## **8.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION**

Heitink (1999a:172) writes: 'Practical-theological research is primarily understood as praxis-based research, with the intent of arriving at suggestions for further action.' This section initially presents the dilemmas that we faced, followed by further suggestions for actions flowing from the research journey and narratives of the participants. Given the contextual lens of this research journey, the strength of this approach lies in beginning with the questions that people themselves have (Schreier 1985:130). For this reason, I am committed to giving attention to the improvement of the current practices that some of the PPC participants did not find helpful. In that sense, the research journey will be ethically accountable to the co-researchers, as explained in Section 1.8.3.

In addition, the invitation to inquiry and the call to action emphasise the collective witnessing of the Red Shoe Co-Researchers, as opposed to individualised self-reflection. In the collective witnessing presented in the next section, all the co-researchers enter into a collectivised engagement, in which they also learn to see differently (Boler 1999:176). What we know as co-researchers is therefore a consequence of our participation in action and an invitation for further action (Bidwell 2004:65). The reflections and suggestions for further action regarding the research journey and PPC training are thus an exercise in accountability because they are inter-subjectively co-constructed within multiple reflexive conversations.

Consequently, I assess the trustworthiness of my interpretations to the degree that the research journey moved those it journeyed with to 'understand the world and the way it is shaped in order for them to transform it' (Kincheloe & McLaren 1994:151-152). The next section reveals the reality-altering impact of the research journey, as well as the ways in which self-understanding and self-direction were gained. In line with critical research, this research journey did not only describe the reality of the co-researchers as participants of the PPC training construction. Instead, through their inclusion, also at the end of this research document, I hope that the participants' realities were also changed (Kincheloe & McLaren 1994:147) in ways that were helpful to them.

## **8.4.1 PPC training actions**

### **8.4.1.1 Dilemmas that emerged as a result of the PPC training**

The Swahili proverb, 'by losing the way one learns the way' [Swahili *Kupotea njia ndiko kujua njia*] (Vella 1994:64) is appropriate in this section, as we will assess what we have learned about the way while we sometimes lost the way as facilitators and participants. The questions explored in this section emerged from the complex and messy journey of experience not merely as intellectual exercises but as struggles of the self; as participants experienced them in their bodies, hearts and minds (Billman 1996:11). In line with a suggestion by Schaafsma (1995:171), this section explores whose interests were served by the change or transformation that arose from the PPC training constructions. The dilemmas that are mentioned below were also described in Roux's (1996:318) dissertation. It therefore seems that after ten years of practising this approach, these dilemmas still need attention and conversation.

- a) *In what ways did the re-writing of participants' stories bring discomfort to their relationships?*

Although the participants benefited from the PPC training in various ways, it seems that the transformation of their lives presented challenges in some of the close relationships with their family and friends. Engaging in participatory pastoral care conversations and training is a risky business, because lives, relationships and contexts change because of it. As a result 'coming to and believing in a new kind of clarity may be frightening' (Cozad Neuger 2001:137) to all who witness and participate. In this regard, Gerkin (1997:102) notes that transformation invites resistance from established patterns that seek continuity with the past. While the participants benefited, it appears that some people who might have also benefited were either suspicious or critical of the changes that had come about. The process of 'constructing and negotiating our own identities' is therefore often conflict-ridden 'as we struggle to claim or resist the images available to us through discourse' (Burr 1995:76):



*Karissa:* When issues are unresolved and the caregiver's story is being rewritten, it can cause discomfort, as the family might not want things to change. It is perhaps unexpected and totally outside their framework or perspective. Actually, as a result they too have to change their views and stories. (Maybe this was not their choice, unlike in the case of the caregiver.)

*b) When close relationships suspect the participatory approach*

People in close relationships were sometimes very critical and suspicious of the participants' actions when they knew that the participants were involved in a pastoral training construction:

*Mari:* In my experience it was difficult at home with my family. It's as if they jumped on me when I said something. They knew I was doing the training and it was as if they watched me hawk-eyed. But what I have realised is that I would rather keep quiet now, it's not necessary to explode anymore and say too much. It's difficult sometimes. It's as if I can be of more help to strangers, people I don't live with intimately.

*Queen:* People who know you've done the training are almost suspicious about this. They are used to the way you act and are sometimes wary that you might be applying aspects of the training on them. They're also uncomfortable, especially your old friends. I sometimes wonder which me suits them best, do they prefer the old you or the new one. You now have a different point of departure and you're partly in the dark about their experience of it.

*Reisgenoot:* In my family and home I feel I'm not being recognised. I've always been Mrs Fixit, maybe they want Mrs Fixit and now they are confused, because at this point I'm asking questions. One's approach to people has changed. It results in discomfort as, for some reason or other, they think that you have a hidden motive which will lead to the exposure of things they don't want to be revealed – through ignorance in pastoral care and also maybe through what they perceive as psychology.

*Leonie:* Reisgenoot's answer is very close to mine. Family or people close to you may think that you now want to change them or that you are able to see

inside their soul. The fact that the caregiver is starting to view things differently can be threatening. Sometimes, when people know I've done the training, they don't understand that you don't know it all, because you are supposed to know. Because you don't know all the answers, you can rather say that you don't know, 'tell me' – that can be more reassuring.

On the basis of the participants' reflections I agree with Dr Hestenes's comment on the final draft of the dissertation that one of the questions which still remain to be answered is how to deal with resistance to the advocacy of this participatory pastoral care approach and the transforming effects it has among families, groups, church and societies. This aspect definitely needs more exploration. When I reflect on my own situation within the groups I facilitated, we often conversed about the resistance experienced and then the local knowledge and wisdom of the participants always found new, creative and innovative ways of being present with this resistance in their specific contexts.

c) *When the PPC training is too difficult to apply inside close relationships*

Some participants commented on such situations:

*Gawie:* With two teenagers in the house, conflict and fighting are part of our daily lives. It's much easier working with other people. When these things come closer to home, this Level One training probably might not be enough.

*Ann:* It is more difficult with someone close to you.

d) *Challenges within training*

Several challenges arose within the training:

*Benita:* The facilitators helped me understand how to ask questions, how the process worked. But I would need more practice to understand. I do find it challenging in a very unstructured environment or experienced learning.

Although these dialogical spaces were enriching for most of the participants, Benita found the training space too unstructured and Piet experienced the space as frustrating when he felt that other participants were giving too much detail and did not come to the

point when they shared their stories:

*Piet.* The training in the group was enriching, because you hear other people's opinion on a matter in relation to your own view. Your view expands. Sometimes it also irritated me, because you could clearly hear how people strayed from what they really had to do and then you've wasted half an hour or three-quarters of an hour listening to this person going into detail about something. They didn't get to the point and didn't do what they had to do. Rather give me the job to do, I don't like shilly-shallying [Afr. *poer-poer*].

In his dissertation, Roux (1996:213) argued that the value of a social constructionist way of training is that it allows the freedom to dwell in different places without the fear of feeling that the process is not heading in the direction determined by a pre-established agenda. Vella (1994:75) makes a similar point, writing that an immediate response to questions being asked is part of being accountable to the participants in adult learning processes because waiting to deal with it later risks losing the learning moment. Participants are therefore invited to interrupt by asking questions to address burning issues. Given this social constructivist value, I wondered how we can stay respectful to participants like Benita and Piet while enjoying the freedom to dwell in different places. What is the responsibility of the facilitator in this regard?

I believe that it is the facilitator's responsibility continuously to invite the participants to participate through the practices of questions and reflection. If the ethical question, 'Who benefits?' is constantly in our minds, in our group co-constructions the question might change to: How can everybody benefit from our participation with one another? If dwelling freely becomes the next great truth, as I discuss in more detail in Section 8.4.2, whom will we exclude and who will benefit? These are only some of my initial reflections regarding this matter, as I invite others to come to participate and to enrich this conversation.

### 8.4.1.2 Suggestions for action

Within a participatory approach to practical theology, as described in Section 2.5, and to pastoral care, as discussed in Section 3.2, it is appropriate to let the co-researchers make their own recommendations and suggestions regarding the actions that they see fit to deal with the dilemmas and/or resistance presented in the previous section. In dealing with discomfort/resistance, some of the participants felt that time will help people to see that this is not a judgemental approach; others felt that family members and friends should be included in the training in creative ways from the start; some felt that people cannot be forced to accept this approach; and lastly one of the participants suggested that a follow-up or forum be created for continuing conversations regarding this kind of care.

a) *How can we deal with the discomfort in another way?*

*Queen:* I think people just have to get used to the new way of doing and being. It is also a wow for them. I find it as a lack though that when I go home there is nobody with whom I can share these things.

*Reisgenoot:* I think it will be accepted in time. In time family members will see that it is not an analysing or a judgemental approach. Talking to and discussing it with fellow training members can make it feel better and maybe one will find ways in which to overcome the unease.

b) *How can we include our families from the start?*

*Karissa:* It's difficult!? Maybe assignments pertaining specifically to the family/marriage relationship and growth can be included in the Level One training. Issues such as the Modernistic and Postmodernistic approach can possibly be discussed as an assignment. Discourses will also be a good topic for discussion. Maybe a short introduction can be presented. A written explanation could do the job. It might just work to involve family members in a session with a specific programme. If the family were to be involved, I would think [we need] an introduction, a session or two where it seems sensible and then maybe a concluding question? I don't know, I'm just wondering. I would think that such participation might perhaps keep the

entire family interested in the transformation process and let them grow together to an extent.

*Leonie:* We can include families by communicating continuously with the family about the training and even by sharing some of the processes with the family. It might even be fun. This should be done in the beginning of the training and throughout. I've experienced stages where I had come up against inaccessibility in terms of my sharing of the training with my family, in this regard I continued later, when I was allowed in again. The inputs, criticism and experience of the family members could be communicated to the training group; an alternative story could be created during the training and could in turn have a positive effect on the approach towards the family members. This should sharpen the family members' insight and expand their lives.

*Reisgenoot:* One can share and live the process. Maybe if family members are included throughout the training process they will then know where you're coming from and participate in the process of growth. Since it is a process, the experience of family members can provide more information about their experience. If family members are included from the start, the 'same language' can as a result also be spoken within the family, enabling the process to unfold more extensively even to those outside these close bonds.

c) *Do we need to fix this discomfort?*

*Karissa:* It is also a good question! Does it necessarily have to be overcome, or does it have to be a natural growth process?

*Reisgenoot:* I'm not so sure, certainly it is a person's choice how he/she approaches matters, but one can give exposure and offer it that way – one just has to remember that it's the person's choice and not be disappointed if he/she rejects it.

*Leonie:* It will be to the caregiver's benefit if the discomfort can be overcome.

d) *Having more conversations and further training will help*

*Mari:* A while back I also said it is more difficult with family, but I think at that stage there was also some anxiety around the questions, etc. And, as we've said here, it becomes increasingly easier, and you listen and a conversation ensues. I've become more relaxed.

*Gawie:* To complete the training does not mean that it's something that has been concluded. The experience I've gained in practice emphasised anew that there are wonderful stories that I want to share with someone, and without forfeiting confidentiality, ask for the opinion and advice of others. Therefore I strongly recommend that a discussion forum be created for this purpose. It is heartening that follow-up training opportunities exist.

From the suggestions, questions and comments mentioned above, it is clear that constructing conversations with and about this resistance/discomfort is a very important theme in the training of participatory pastoral caregivers.

### **8.4.2 The next great truth**

Like Harlene Anderson (1997:264), I believe that postmodern thinking poses the same risks as any other product of discourse, history, or culture to let us stumble back into empiricism, as it encourages and promotes certain thoughts and actions and prohibits others. In this regard, Gergen (1991:212) writes that each paradigm operates simultaneously as a 'productive and repressive force'. In the groups I facilitated it was sometimes very challenging to respond appropriately when the contents and co-constructions brought to life by the PPC training were seized as the next great truth. On these occasions, disapproval was voiced against other approaches to therapy and participants viewed these approaches with disdain or judged them harshly. In addition, a clicking tongue sometimes indicated participants' disapproval of a friend or partner's actions and re-actions when such actions were judged to be modernistic. Furthermore, the subtle reification of this way of being with people can also become a habit when participants refer to the participatory and Narrative approaches as a little bit better and truer than other approaches (Doan 1998:382).

It appears that as humans we are often on a quest for some kind of truth that will set us free, but when we take that truth and judge others by it, we become people that no longer carry liberation and transformation, but rather enforce judgement and condemnation. We must therefore constantly remain attentive to the possibility that even a postmodern social construction discourse in the pastoral caregivers' training can become an ideology. Through this possible ideology we can again come to classify and judge other training or therapy constructions as we reify this paradigm or way of being into the next great truth that will set everybody in every culture, context and time free forever. Fenn (2001b:xx) claims that at 'any point it is safe to say that the past is present in the very acts by which those in the present are seeking to separate the present from the past'.

### **8.4.3 Suggestions for a new kind of seminary**

The experiences of the participants and facilitators presented in Chapter Five are full of suggestions and possibilities for training actions in what McLaren (2001:162-163) calls a new kind of seminary. He proposes that this seminary could consist of 'experience, exposure, practice, reflection, dialogue, mentoring, serving, friendship, adventures, co-learning, co-teaching, tears (no doubt), and laughter' (McLaren 2001:162). These are all experiences of which both the facilitators and the participants of the PPC training speak freely. McLaren (2001:162-163) dreams of a new kind of seminary which can act as a 'lifelong learning community'. This dream links up with Paulo Freire's (1998:94) explanation that knowledge is always "becoming" and never "is". I think this is an area that the facilitators and participants need to explore even further, as the suggestions in the previous sections call for the space for and construction of such an ongoing learning community.

For some of the participants, the caring space and the learning community that the PPC training provided posed a problem, especially when the 18 weeks of learning have come to an end. If this collaborative learning and engaging space fosters even more learning and engagement (Bonnor 2004b:170), the following questions arise: How do we substitute this place of community and mutual learning? How can we remain ethically

accountable in this regard? These are also questions that I struggle with.

One of the training groups that I facilitated suggested that they care with people in our congregation as a group on a weekly basis. They would benefit because they can still enjoy the community constructed by the group and continue learning even as they care with those in need. In addition, such communities of learning could also support one another in the new choices they have made, which assists the ongoing process of transformation (Cozad Neuger 2001:179). A network of mutuality where participants engage in a common struggle for personal and communal transformation and liberation provides space for liberation, encouragement, support and challenges (Cozad Neuger 2001:235). For these participants, a life-long seminary where they can experience, practise, reflect, enter into dialogue, serve one another as friends, co-learn and co-teach will continue. As this is only small beginnings of co-constructing life-long communities of learning, I would like to invite others to participate in this conversation so that more possibilities can emerge.

## **8.5 THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS RESEARCH JOURNEY TO THE PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL FIELD**

I believe that this collaborative work with the co-researchers has made a contribution to the field of practical theology on various levels.

### **8.5.1 Looking back at the journey**

In this research journey, there was no proposition to prove or to maintain, but there were narratives to proclaim (Louw 2003:416) in answer to the re-search curiosity, as discussed in Section 1.5. The narratives of change and transformation therefore carried with them a potential for learning, as the learning situation could not be predicted or controlled, a situation similar to that described by Schaafsma (1995:171):



### **8.5.1.1 How has the PPC training influenced and transformed the facilitators' and participants' lives?**

As transformation was the aim of using this participatory approach to practical theology, the PPC training and the participatory approach to pastoral care served as agents for the transformation that took place in the participants' lives. The transformation experienced in the private everyday sphere had radical implications for the participants and for their world. We saw how these transformations could become more than a merely personal experience (Cozad Neuger 2001:136), but permeated every sphere of the co-researchers' lives. The co-researchers identified various practices within the PPC training and participatory approach to pastoral care that facilitated this transformation process: respect, participation, collaboration, reflection, and accepting difference and otherness.

In this PPC construction of *training with* participants, both the facilitator and the group members played an important role in the transformation process. Acknowledging the participants' own pastoral care practices, local knowledges and theology as well as meeting the participants where they are at allowed space for some of the co-researchers to engage with their own personal questions, which in turn led to transformation.

Apart from the practices applied in the PPC training construction, the facilitators played an important part in the transformation process by deconstructing their power, acknowledging each group participant, acknowledging the contributions made by the participants, facilitating a process wherein participants experience the participatory care as they are learning about it, showing a respectful regard for the participants, and creating community and a safe space in the training constructions.

In addition, the group members of each construction also became agents of transformation by co-creating safe spaces for healing and community, helping each other to learn, as well as caring with one another.

These experiences of transformation had various outcomes in the participants' lives: liberation, healing, hope, justice, peace, new language and a readiness to change.

### **8.5.1.2 How has the influence and transformation brought about by the PPC training influenced the societies in which the participants live or have lived over the past ten years?**

The PPC training, as part of a participatory action process already discussed in Section 1.4.1, 'has improved the lives of those that have participated', as McTaggart (1997b:26) put it, in diverse ways. As this travelogue of the research journey has shown, it brought about a transformation in people's lives and their relationships with themselves, God, other people and the societies in which they live.

In respect of their relationships with God, participants experienced transformation in new images of the life of Jesus, as well as new and deepened dimensions of spiritual life and their relationship with God. We consequently saw how the way God is named, imagined and conceptualised significantly affects how we understand ourselves, how we understand our purpose and how we participate with our social and familiar relationships (Cozad Neuger 2001:12). We not only saw how the participants re-imagined God and Jesus, but how these re-imaginings influenced the co-researchers' relationships in the societies in which they live.

In their relationships with themselves, the participants experienced transformation in various ways: accepting the self, writing new and alternative stories about the self, thinking in new ways about the self and the future as well as experiencing a self that is ready to serve. We therefore witnessed how selfhood (Bruner 2004:13) was created, re-created and transformed as an outcome of our relational telling as groups.

The participants reported transformation on all levels of their interpersonal relationships with their partners, family, friendships, work colleagues and the pupils they interact with at the schools where some of them teach.

In their relationship with society, the participants reported that their dreams for their society and their interaction with society has been transformed. In this regard, their narratives voiced how they perceive their participation in a new South Africa. We also heard a story about the transformation of a school.

This training construction brought about a transformation in the participants' way of thinking. This change spilled over into their practices and being with others. It changed their respectful regard for others. It helped them to engage in conversations in a new way, to accept difference and otherness, to connect with people in new ways and to focus on people's needs. It invited the care of others into their lives and supported them in understanding and employing the deconstruction of discourses.

Because the facilitators familiarise themselves with the contexts of the participants, the interaction between the training conversations and the daily lives of the participants empowered the participants to apply the values and knowledges they construct in the training to and in any situation. Their societies were therefore influenced in what might seem like small and insignificant interactions, but I believe that these small interactions can turn the tide in our country and bring healing and reconciliation.

My experience resonates with that of Louw (2003:417), who describes how the research construction developed its own energy and direction, resulting in new questions and explorations. The following sections share what contributions the research journey can make and is making with the different journeys that were undertaken.

### **8.5.2 Giving voice to ordinary believers**

The first contribution made by this focused study is that it allowed the participants and facilitators of the PPC training to speak and seize the research journey as their pulpit (Morey 1991:338). In contrast to the silence of pastoral care trainees' voices in some other research journeys, this journey has given 'speech to the speechless' (Isherwood & McEwan 1993:91), has empowered the powerless and invited outsiders to participate. The research document begs to differ because it resists the silence of the ordinary believers' voices that are often constituted as the other by classes in the church's hierarchy and in the practical theological field. In resisting this silence, I agree with Cozad Neuger (2001:68) that having a voice is not just a matter of being able to tell one's story, but it is also about the empowerment of 'hearing oneself speak and learning to believe in the truth of that long-denied voice, language and narrative'.

The research journey contributes to the practical theological research field because I have invited the participants' voices to speak prominently in the research text. The purpose of gaining a voice is not to drown out other voices in the community, but to

enable all to be co-authors and co-creators with each other and with God. We are not only carriers of our own stories, we are part of each other's stories within an ultimate story of God's ongoing narrative of creation.

(Cozad Neuger 2001:92)

This participation in voice by the co-researchers was made possible by the lens of participatory practical theology, situated in a postmodern paradigm. This paradigm enabled readings and lenses of understanding that invited and included the co-researchers to contribute collectively through their narratives. Because a participatory postmodern lens was used, a cornucopia of these believers' forgotten, marginalized, and sometimes-repressed realities of otherness found a voice.

In this way, the research journey asserts and further extends Couture's (2003:100) musings about what happens when the authority of grand narratives converse with and enters into a new relationship with the authority of the local and contextual knowledges of co-researchers, as discussed in Sections 2.4.2 and 2.5.1. I believe that this research document demonstrates Couture's (2003:100) contention that 'at the very least, a new relationship' between the grand narratives and the local knowledges of ordinary believers 'is working its way forward'. In addition, the local and contextual contributions of the participants were made possible because their experiences were honoured, validated and legitimised as contributions within this participatory approach to practical theology, where their knowledge is indeed knowledge worth attending and listening to.

Furthermore, participatory practical theology's orientation regarding liberation values and perspectives acknowledged the lived reality (Cozad Neuger 2001:9) of the human experience of the co-researchers. In this journey of speech after silence, the reader was granted access to personal moments of transformation, change and sometimes discomfort woven into the real tales of real participants in real situations, as suggested by Eisner (1996:x).

I believe that ordinary believers' naming of self, their context and their theology is needed for the sake of the full participation of humanity in an ongoing co-creative process with God. Helping these believers, as individuals that have been 'denied the right to voice and language', to name the realities of their human experience in their 'mother tongue' (Cozad Neuger 1996b:98) is an important dimension of participatory practical theology. As these believers take on the 'vocation of naming themselves...their contexts, and God, they are [thus] creating revolutionary change' (Cozad Neuger 1996b:98) and transformation. This transforming process not only empowers ordinary believers toward 'self-, other-, and God-knowledge', but I believe that this research journey also created 'a new language' that could be passed on for the 'ongoing transformation of creation' (Cozad Neuger 1996b:99).

The collective nature of life was therefore both the starting point and the focus of this research journey where we saw and heard how the narratives of the co-researchers formed threads in the web of life that exist in the present and the future (Heshusius & Ballard 1996b:174). The research journey also responds to Fiorenza's (1996:326) concern that theology is sometimes divorced from life. As a result, the research journey is presented as a service to the Christian and pastoral tradition because it gives a face to the 'generalised other' (Kotzé 2002:16) as the participants portrayed the messiness and complexity of their lives through their stories (Kotzé 2005). These narratives, which were once alive, breathing conversation in the form of shared storied experiences, are now memories of the participants' experiences and my interpretations on paper. All these voices spoke to a journey and a relationship characterised by connecting, collaborating and constructing (Harlene Anderson 1997:165).

Within the PPC training construction, the participants as pastoral caregivers were invited to articulate their theological commitments. Based on the theological commitments that we have heard about throughout the research journey, practical theologians are now invited to take the ordinary theology of believers seriously, so that it can help in overcoming the sometimes great gulf between the clergy and the laity, and between academic theologians and the laity (Astley 2002:64; Farley 1996:31). As a result I see the ethnographic writing that is voiced in this research construction not only as representation, but as '*communication*' (Bochner & Ellis 1996:19) [Bochner & Ellis's

emphasis] aimed at the church, therapists, religious communities, spiritual leaders and teachers in theological education.

One of the contributions the research journey makes is to articulate the needs, moments and memoirs of ordinary believers trained as pastoral caregivers. Astley (2002:146) claims that the church, and I might add academia, needs to know '*far more* than on the whole it currently does about the beliefs of those adults to whom it ministers' [Astley's emphasis] and about which it speaks. Astley (2002:149) adds that academic theologians should be 'more curious about what ordinary believers have come up with' and be willing to look and see whether there is some '*theological wisdom*' amongst them [Astley's emphasis]. Marshall (1995:170) believes that congregations have much to teach 'professional pastoral caregivers about the natural ways they have learned to care for one another'. I believe that churches where ordinary believers have not gained a voice should take on the challenge to engage their members as theologians and provide opportunities for them to write, speak and participate.

Although De Jongh van Arkel (2001:58) claims that the idea of change and transformation is central in the practical theological field, the voices of those that are changed and transformed by these different approaches are seldom heard. Therefore this research journey provides insights into what practices these participants and facilitators regard as contributions in the transformation of society. The practices that have been suggested in this dissertation have been assessed and considered by the co-researchers who have participated in this research journey. Like Cozad Neuger (2001:239), I trust that if we allow these counter stories of resistance and new narratives of hope and transformation to surface in the context of the church and the practical theological world, it will help us to embrace the deepest truths of our faith and transform the world.

The tales of the co-researchers spoke of their participation in the PPC training conversation by reflecting, evaluating, re-constructing and co-constructing those experiences. This research journey has storied the effects that contextual and participatory practical theological and participatory pastoral care approaches can have on the participants and facilitators in the PPC training, as well as on everybody with

whom they interact. In this regard, the travelogue of the research journey responds to Pittman et al's (1996b:33) proposal that Christian theology as a contextual activity requires us to discern and articulate our faith within ever-changing historical circumstances. Not only has the research journey articulated the faith of believers within our postmodern time, but it has also revealed the authenticity, credibility and relevance of our Christian expressions through participatory practical theology within the faith community, as well as the larger human community.

### **8.5.3 The construction of participatory pastoral training**

This research journey was an exposition of my own current work and thinking and that of other facilitators of the PPC training journeys and of the ideas that guide and arise from our practice of training participatory pastoral caregivers. It represents a journey, a work in continual process and transformation, a search for more effective ways to understand, meet, and be helpful in the training of participatory pastoral caregivers. The research journey is therefore an account of the way in which we as facilitators conceptualise and participate in training constructions and conversations and of how transformation evolves from within these collaborative spaces.

The research journey has also shown some of the benefits of a participatory pastoral training construction within a postmodern epistemology as a transformative process co-constructed by the facilitator and the participants. The actualisation of the PPC training constructions varies from one context to another because each context has unique purposes and demands.

This research journey suggests an answer to Couture's (1995:13) demand for experiments in care that are 'creative and diverse in response to the challenges of class, gender, race, sexual orientation, ecclesiologies, and other issues'. Each encounter is therefore conceptualised as a linguistic co-construction in which participants with different types of expertise interact whilst mutually exploring and addressing participatory pastoral care. These ideas are in line with Freire's (1993:105) view of an education that dialogically searches with people in constructing training:

Because this view of education starts with the conviction that it cannot present its own program but must search for this program dialogically with the people, it serves to introduce the pedagogy of the oppressed, in the elaboration of which the oppressed must participate.

As the research journey was conducted against the backdrop of postmodernity, another contribution that this journey makes is to help the reader understand how the PPC training provided the participants with practices that can assist them in their ability to cope and care with people in our postmodern world. According to Schneider (1995:209), there is a crisis in pastoral care because of the 'shared recognition that the old model is no longer adequate'. My effort was therefore to extend, to make a contribution, and to add another voice in advancing an alternative view to the emerging postmodern challenge within a practical theological discourse that represented an approach, not a model. Hence, the research journey joins the discourse concerning the training of ordinary believers within a postmodern paradigm as it considers new, critical and creative ways of teaching and learning pastoral care (DeLong 2002:51).

The travelogue of the research journey has presented a narrative of how people trained in this new paradigm through the PPC training see care and the transformation of society. Furthermore, the experiences of the participants of the PPC training gave us descriptions and guidelines with regard to the type of training they need for our time. These narratives and practices of the PPC training construction are 'one view – one voice – to take into consideration' (Harlene Anderson 1997:xviii).

#### **8.5.4 Accountability for our training**

Pastoral courses or training programmes have a pervasive impact on participants, facilitators and congregational life. Often training programmes are dumped on congregational members, but their impact is never re-visited or assessed. Pattison and Woodward (2000b:305-306) explain that many people remain resistant to evaluation in pastoral care because they do not know how to start. I believe that there is the same kind of resistance to the evaluation of pastoral training programmes, as some might see such evaluation as a self-indulgent waste of time that distracts people from doing the



real work. Some talk about a mystical and intangible quality in pastoral care training journeys that eludes evaluation.

The research journey contributes to knowledges regarding the impacts and the effects of the training on those attending the PPC training. This research construction offers the practical theological and pastoral field diverse narratives voiced by the participants and facilitators of the PPC training. These narratives are a goldmine of valuable information for reflecting on the development of training constructions, the ethical implications of this particular training and the effect of training in general.

The chorus of the voices of ordinary believers informed us regarding their experiences of the PPC training construction as a less hierarchical, more egalitarian and mutually rewarding endeavour. In Chapters Six and Seven, the stories were told of how the participants, community, faith community and society benefited from the PPC training. Within this training construction we saw how participants dealt creatively and critically with the meanings they made of the realities of their daily lives and as a result participated in the transformation of their worlds. In this regard, the PPC training responds to Poling's (2004:182) call that the 'goal of care' – and I want to add pastoral training – should be to transform persons and their communities. Imbeli and Groome (1992:134) also regard the explicit concern of practical theology to be the 'formation of a community for transformation'.

We have also seen how these training constructions resulted in tension and conflict in some of the participants' immediate relationships. As a result, the pastoral and practical theological field could benefit significantly from the research project and the information supplied by the believers who live with the outcomes of the PPC training.

I believe that training members of congregations in the pastoral field was challenged by the dissertation in various ways: knowledges of care found creative expression through the training. We heard stories of a very particular and specific kind of care that was contextualised. Throughout this dissertation, we heard how family, friends and congregations eventually benefited and in some instances were challenged by the PPC training.

Nearly all the participants felt that their skills and knowledges regarding pastoral care have improved and that the ways in which they care have changed. From the participants' narratives we can therefore conclude that the PPC training has provided adequate tools (Cochrane et al 1999:103) from which they benefited. In addition, I believe that this research journey answers Moore's (1998:241) call for more than ideas and techniques. She demands a 'largesse of wisdom that can provide practical guidance for action' (Moore 1998:241) in practical theology. In this regard the academic field is able to make informed decisions and gain a clearer idea of the needs of congregations on the basis of the co-researchers's comments on what is helpful and what is a hindrance in this endeavour.

The participants also taught us as trainers and practical theologians how we have to continue to learn and be pro-active and accountable (Pattison & Woodward 2000b:297-299) for our work. Within a postmodern paradigm, the social realities of training participatory pastoral caregivers may not be "essentially true," but that doesn't stop them from having real effects' (Freedman & Combs 1996:36) in the participants' lives. According to Kotzé (2002:19), all 'ethics- systems of ethics or ideas of what is ethical – are situated within culturally shaped contexts'. Like De Jongh van Arkel (2001:54), I am conscious that the change and transformation apparent in the participants' lives has ethical implications. In the research journey I 'opened up ethics to a process of participation by all who are affected or who have an interest' (Kotzé 2002:19) in the PPC training choices that I made. In line with my personal ethics, I have included an acknowledgement of and taken responsibility for (Pattison & Woodward 2000b:305) the real effects of our work in the lives and relationships of persons who are giving of themselves in the training constructions that we facilitate. I therefore believe that this research journey helps to anticipate the future needs, objectives, direction and purposes (Pattison & Woodward 2000b:305) of the training of pastoral caregivers who ask for increased co-operation between those that train, the people that develop training programmes and those that want to benefit from these programmes.

### **8.5.5 Equipping believers for a new South Africa**

Because the practical theological experience in South Africa is 'highly differentiated as a result of the variety of cultural, ethnic and social contexts' (Cochrane et al 1991:1), I believe that the exploration of the PPC training set out in this travelogue of the research journey presented values in both training and care that could offer our context reasons for new hope. This hope was shared as we saw how the participatory praxis of theology lifted the unheard voices of ordinary believers, as well as their new and emancipatory narratives to transform the social realities of their communities. The co-researchers as ordinary believers respond to Pieterse's (1998:164) call for practical theologians to be participants in the rebuilding of South African society.

This research journey also responds to Hestenes's (2004:73) call for pastoral counsellors to develop 'a greater social consciousness as well as higher post-conventional justice levels through...educational and experiential interventions'. The training and research journey opens up possible answers to Graham's (1995:234) hope for paradigms of 'caregiving which promote relational humanness and social justice in the midst of the complexities and particularities of today's contentious, pluralistic, and promising world'. The PPC training also responds to Hestenes's (2004:73) call for pastoral counsellors to 'become better educated in dealing with moral and values issues in pastoral counselling' as portrayed through the postmodern Narrative therapy and the collaborative therapy approaches presented in this research journey.

The PPC training provides a construction of care and training that is alert to the 'signs of the times; that attempt[s] to help to understand and interpret these times; and that promote[s] a sense of mission and ministry capable of confronting the forces of these times' (Cochrane et al 1991:105). This research document educates us regarding the opportunities that this postmodern vision of the world affords us in the practice of pastoral care and education (DeVelder 2000:139). In this travelogue of the research journey we see the importance of how we offer care in this postmodern world and therefore the research journey provides guidelines for ways of caring that are sensitive to the culture and the 'truthfulness of the Christian hope' (Goodliff 1998:246).

The narratives of transformation also reveal how the respectful learning that was constructed during the training process empowered the participants to make a difference in the societies in which they live. The participants applied the participatory approach to care that was lived and taught in the classroom creatively to most situations that they came across in their daily lives. Cochrane et al (1991:102) propose that this is a meaningful way to construct training.

The reconstruction of a new South Africa out of the hurts and damage done under the previous regime is a significant task that theological training has to take up as a challenge. These historical circumstances still produce and re-produce hurt and damage in the daily lives of people in South Africa. I therefore agree with Cochrane et al (1991:102) who point out the 'desperate need for liturgical tools, pastoral skills and theological reflection capable of meeting a socialized, politicized reality'. They believe that seminaries should offer appropriate training within this new paradigm. The PPC training has been shown to make a meaningful contribution in providing such skills:

*Gawie:* Today we find ourselves in a society where there are many counsellors, psychologists, ministers, teachers and other experts that can help people with their problems. Our bookshelves are stacked with publications offering quick fixes for almost any kind of problem. The message is that there is a group of experts who personally or by way of a book has all the answers to all the questions. As long as you follow the steps as prescribed, all your problems will disappear. The reality is that the complex society in South Africa and the rest of the world consists of millions of unique individuals. Each one is an expert on his personal experience. No other person better understands the intensity of his experience than himself. When a traumatic event, a negative comment of another person, rejection or any negative event leads to changes in behaviour and personality disorders, we are left with a community riddled with problems. I believe God equips people with specific skills, also in terms of participatory pastoral care. These experts are distributed all over the world. By means of these training constructions many more 'ordinary' people are empowered to make a difference in their immediate work environment. In this way the entire society is gradually changed, which reassures me that God is in control and that He equips

ordinary people with skills to expand His Kingdom on earth.

Like Gergen (2001:7), I see my work in this research journey as 'an offering to begin a conversation' on some level, and on another level as a means to extend or expand an existing conversation regarding participatory pastoral care and the transformation of society. My hope is that the reader has experienced a sense of fascination, enjoyment, and refreshment from this co-constructed journey that will lead to a creative and critical burst from which I in turn will benefit.

## **8.6 FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPLORATIONS**

I agree with the DeVelder (2000:139) that we have to take seriously the changes in our world and therefore view our work through the 'lens of a new pastoral paradigm'. I have opened up only one window to the understanding of such a new postmodern pastoral training construction and the transformation it brought to the societies it permeates. The question remains what needs to be studied now.

I believe that a further study needs to give attention to the processes of supervision, evaluation, confirmation and implementation co-constructed in the diverse contexts of training currently practised. Although Chapter Four of Roux's (1996:202-253) dissertation gave some attention to these aspects, I believe that these facets need to be dealt with more extensively.

An interesting study would also be to research what goes on in terms of pastoral training constructions in the Christian tradition in South Africa. Is the practice of equipping pastoral caregivers alive and well and, if so, where does it occur? Are the saints being equipped so that the Body of Christ might grow and mature through training constructions? What are the divisions between lay counselling, pastoral counselling and professional counselling in South Africa? What are the trained counsellors doing with the training? What are the responsibilities of mental health professionals toward pastoral caregivers and the church in South Africa?

In South Africa we have recently celebrated our ten years of democracy. We continuously hear the word participation. A further study can also engage with the

following questions: What role can the PPC training play in the training of caregivers in the so-called secular settings that are not necessarily linked to a church? How can the PPC training, which values participation, form part of training programmes or constructions for care in and outside the church?

## **8.7 IMAGINE**

In this section, I would like to follow up on Veling's (1998:210) suggestion that practical theology should be 'given over to a passion for what could yet be, what is still in-the-making, in process, not yet, still coming'.

As we live in a new South Africa that values participation of and with all, I wonder what would happen if ordinary believers were also allowed to participate through sharing their own local knowledge and expertise with regard to the caring practices in which they participate and to which they bear witness.

Imagine a time when practical theologians at seminaries and universities will take off their shoes of privilege and 'barefootly' (Kotzé 2005) walk among the people by attending and organising story-telling sessions. Imagine how in these story-telling sessions, ordinary believers can inform academia about the kind of care that is helping the people that they are caring with. (Perhaps there would be no more distinctions when it comes to the clergy and laity...). Imagine if these practical theologians not only invite individual participants to the story-telling sessions, but whole therapeutic communities. Imagine theologians willing to listen (Astley 2002:146) and be open to being challenged and changed by the theologies and practices of these ordinary believers (Kotzé 2005).

Imagine how these practical theologians can act as scribes, writing down the stories of these communities. Possibly these writings would tell the stories of the practices of a kind of care that not only transforms congregational life, but in big and small ways cause the transformation of a post-Apartheid society in South Africa.

Imagine if the health and education ministers of our young democratic government would also come and listen to these story-telling sessions because the kind of caregiver that is trained in these settings is really helping to transform, bring healing and

reconciliation to our rainbow nation.

Imagine how these stories of transforming care can also shape our economy, as one co-researcher muses:

*Gerhard:* People will be able to live in more harmony with one another. They will have a better understanding of the others' circumstances. I think the economy will boom, because everybody will understand each other's needs and understand that people's needs differ due to their (different) stories.

Imagine....

## **8.8 CLOSING REMARKS**

Wilfred Draft (2001) uses the compelling image of the sea to explain how the white caps in the ocean represent leaders of an organisation. He goes on to explain that in the end the deep blue sea of members of an organisation determines the direction and capabilities of the ocean. We as leaders and theologians might represent the white caps of the ocean, but it is the deep blue sea of faithful ordinary believers, the sea of souls (Card 2002), which determines the direction and capabilities of the church in our uncertain postmodern future. The recent tsunami tragedy is an example of the magnitude and devastation this deep blue ocean can bring to a sea of souls in desperate need of care in this traumatic event. What a wonderful opportunity we as practical theologians have to participate with God and ordinary believers to turn the tide around and witness how the deep blue sea can bring healing and hope in its daily tidal rhythm.

In our multicultural and multireligious country, South Africa, this research document comes to take its stand as a book of hope with stories of hope that address the sea of souls saturated with pain and ache. Participatory pastoral caregivers want to participate in transformation and care with those whose hurt is left unfinished. They want to care in ways that are respectful of the diversity of the colourful clothes of all who walk our beautiful land.

I believe that as the ripples of the ordinary theology of caring believers spread, they can and will change the entire surface of the ocean while changing as they move and continue to move (Astley 2002:86-87). In addition, I believe that it is very important for practical theologians to keep in touch with the movement of the ocean as it continuously moves, changes and transforms (Pattison 2000a:228-229). I agree with McLaren (2000:203) when he says: 'The fact is, we will never finish the transformation process we are considering. We will never get it all right and be able to relax in an eternal status quo – not in this life.' Although we might not finish the transformation process we are considering, I believe that when we participate with God in these transformations, we are also transformed.

In the research journey I have learned, come to know and conveyed that which I have learned, and, as a result, this journey is teaching me and others. I hope that this document provokes dialogue and reflections, and has stimulated you to think again about your own pastoral care practices and your role in the transformation of society. Accompanying this dissertation is the hope that the insights documented in the text will grow into many red shoe conversations, according to what is helpful in each conversation. Conversations are never finished; each conversation becomes a springboard for future ones (Harlene Anderson 1997:189). I therefore look forward to the continuous influence the research journey will have on my own life story and the stories of the participants who journeyed with me.

These red shoes are made for walking....



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## **ADDENDUM ONE**

As many of the co-researchers also care with people at the Northfield Pastoral Care Centre, I want to refer briefly to this centre and the role it plays both in the participants' lives and in the church's ministry. The story of this centre invites us to consider what can happen when a church community is transformed through egalitarian caring practices so that a whole society benefits. The following letter from the Centre explains what the Centre is all about:

Northfield Methodist Church has a growing congregation of approximately 5,000 people. In the late 1990's the ministers became overburdened with meeting all the pastoral needs of the congregation and the community which the Church serves. At the same time, the leadership of the Church began to make a paradigm shift from a shepherd-sheep model of care to a model of 'every member in ministry'. This new model made room to acknowledge the gifts, talents and skills of the members of the congregation and to use them for the benefit of all. Since the inception of the Centre, 14 ministries have been woven into a community of pastoral care and concern through which Northfield Church can minister to the community. Some of the pastoral ministries were already functioning prior to the inception of the Centre, such as baptism preparation, marriage preparation, bereavement care-giving and hospital visits. Other ministries have been developed as needs were voiced and a co-ordinator for that ministry has emerged. All people who express a desire to volunteer for pastoral care are carefully selected through a series of discerning conversations and appropriate training before starting to care for the souls of the needy. In the Pastoral Care Centre we have tried to establish a place of welcome and care, where all who enter, whether caregiver or care-receiver, can experience a sense of love and acceptance.

The Centre itself has provided a base for the pastoral carers from which or in which they offer their care. This has developed a sense of community and a sense of belonging amongst the caregivers where gradually they all come to know each other. There are more than 120 people offering themselves in ministry at this present time. During any one month, our pastoral caregivers touch the lives of more than 1,000 people through the ministries they are

involved in. Of the 1,000, it is estimated that between 60% and 70% are people outside our membership and the vast majority are people who are not regularly involved in any church or church life. Our caregivers themselves are all fully committed to the broader life of Northfield and are thus able to invite and encourage people to join cells, become members and ultimately encourage people to offer themselves in ministry as healing takes place. It is estimated that 60% of our caregivers are wounded healers, having themselves received pastoral care on some previous occasion, and now wish to reach out to others. The remaining 40% offer themselves in ministry from a growing servant heart experience as they reach out to others.

It is vital that caregivers are themselves cared for. All caregivers are part of a team. These teams meet together regularly to support, encourage and care for each other. For those teams involved in therapy, supervision is a requirement of being in ministry. Ongoing training in listening skills, pastoral care, and pastoral Narrative therapy is a necessity for those who offer care, in order that they are fed and nurtured in the work they do. Our aim in the Pastoral Care Centre is to offer Christ-centred caring to guide people to wholeness through the care that we offer. Our intention is to listen respectfully to people's stories, helping them to make meaning of their lives and so move forward to a future of healing and hope.

June 2002

As head of the Pastoral Care Centre, Sue Skidmore tells us more about the training presented at Northfield:

*Sue:* We call the training that we facilitate at the Northfield Pastoral Care Centre: An introduction into Narrative ideas. We decided to start with the training to give our counsellors here at our Centre some skills around Narrative ideas because we had already agreed that it would be the common model with which we will work. This has grown and we have trained psychologists, life-liners, hospice people, members of the congregation, people off the streets and lots of different people. We have come to realise that this training is more a life skills thing with people who happen to do counselling. It is a broader thing, but that has just been my own learning about working with Narrative ideas. I think the Narrative training adds some of those values of

respect which are really very strong, and just an understanding that happens more here in the Pastoral Care Centre.

The story of the Northfield Pastoral Care Centre is living testimony to what happens when ministers acknowledge the ministry of ordinary believers who also care and to how this can help them not to become overburdened trying to meet all the pastoral needs of the congregation and the community which the church serves. In my conversation with Sue at the Northfield Pastoral Care Centre, I asked her the following question:

*Chené:* How has this community that has been constructed here at the Centre been part of the transformation of your congregation's way of being and doing church?

*Sue:* We have trained a number of people in leadership positions, for example, all our cell pastors have done the training with us. Even though it is not compulsory, these cell pastors are encouraged to come for the training. We have agreed among the pastors that the counselling have Narrative ideas as its base. I think it fits so well with the idea of storytelling, the parables in the Bible. I just think Jesus was the first Narrative therapist. He is so good at storytelling and his use of metaphors was supreme. I think that this training has also influenced a lot of the other trainings that we have run. I think it has spread its tentacles through the influences of some of the skills and sets of values. We have trained about a hundred people at the Centre and the 23 workers at Etwatwa as well. We also invited the Etwatwa group to come and meet the Northfield group, which was quite interesting.

This care centre stands as a witness to the transformation of their surrounding society through participatory pastoral care and the equipping of ordinary believers to share in ministry.

## **ADDENDUM TWO**

### **Participatory Pastoral Care and the Transformation of Society**

#### **Information sheet for facilitators/participants**

Thank you for indicating that you would like to be part of this research project concerning the narratives of facilitators/participants in a participatory pastoral caregiver's training group. The terminology and purposes will be negotiated throughout the process. Please read this information sheet carefully before finalising your decision to participate. If you decide to participate, I thank you. If you decide not to take part, it will not be to your disadvantage.

#### **The aim of this project**

Currently, I am in the process of completing my Doctoral studies in Practical Theology (with specialisation in Pastoral Therapy) at the University of South Africa. I have been a facilitator of this Participatory Pastoral Care course for the last eight months after I approached Dr Johann Roux to be part of this vision and training. Various narratives will be collected to support this study. I have completed interviews with previous participants of this course (some having completed the course nearly ten years ago, others as recently as six months ago.) Dr Johann Roux also promised to facilitate a session (as part of the current DTh Group) with the Etwatwa participants. The preliminary aims of our journey are to

- examine the various meanings that we as participants attribute to our experience in our societies and to consider our own interpretations, specific memories, significant moments, markers and milestones;
- become aware of how this *being with* influences and affects the relationships in which we stand as facilitators/participants in a pastoral caregiver's course;
- re-tell our preferred stories of care and transformation in the societies of which we are part;
- invite facilitators/participants in a pastoral caregiver's course to describe their experiences in a new language and by so doing bring forth new worlds of possibility; and
- constitute a community of care and concern in which we as facilitators/participants in a

pastoral caregiver's course could experience care and hope in a non-patronizing way.

### **Participants needed for the study**

Both facilitators and previous participants in the Participatory Pastoral Care course are invited to take part in this research journey.

Facilitators who have coordinated Level One training of the Participatory Pastoral Caregivers Development program are invited to share their experiences of being facilitators in the societies of which they are part.

People who have participated in and have completed the Level One training programme will also be invited to share their journeys.

Both facilitators and participants will receive a set of questions that will address their particular level of interaction with this course.

### **What will be required of participants?**

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to give consent for the information obtained during the e-mail conversations to be used in the research project.

Dr Johann Roux will hand out questions to you at your meeting on 7 October 2004. You will be required to answer these via e-mail. Following on from your answers, further questions may arise.

Both the consent form and your answers to the questions must reach me by 31 October 2004.

If you have contributed to the study, you will be asked to review the summary of your answers and comment on, or change anything I will include in the research journey related to you or your family.

### **Non-compulsory participation**

You may withdraw from the research project at any time if participating no longer suits you.

### **Confidentiality**

The information obtained during the e-mail conversations will be discussed with my supervisor, and will be used in the project. Your comments, corrections and/or feedback will be included in



the final report.

The information collected during the project will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet, and destroyed after the conclusion of the project.

**Results of the study**

Results of the project may be published. At your request, details will be altered to ensure your anonymity. You will also have the choice of using your own name or a pseudonym.

You are also most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project.

**Questions of participants**

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact me:

**Chené Swart**: Telephone 013- 751 3488 or Cell phone 083 467 1891

Or my supervisor, Dr **Johann Roux** at 016-932 3358

Greetings

Chené Swart

## **ADDENDUM THREE**

### **Participatory Pastoral Care and the Transformation of Society**

#### **Consent Form for Participants**

I have read the Information Sheet concerning the project and understand its purpose. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

**I know that:**

My participation in the project is entirely voluntary.

I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.

I am aware of what will happen to my personal information (including tape recordings) at the conclusion of the project, that the data will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but that any raw data on which the project depends will be retained for three years.

I will receive no payment or compensation for participating in the study.

A copy of the final research document will be retained by the University of South Africa and by the Institute for Therapeutic Development.

All personal information supplied by me will remain confidential and anonymous throughout the project.

I am aware that Chené's supervisor will read the material.

I am willing to participate in this research project.

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(Signature of participant)

Date

## **ADDENDUM FOUR**

### **Participatory Pastoral Care and the Transformation of Society**

#### **Research questions for facilitators**

1. How has facilitating the Participatory Pastoral Care training influenced your story of care towards other people?
2. How has facilitating this training challenged your life?
3. How has facilitating this training enriched and added value to your life?
4. Has your daily life been affected in any way by facilitating this training?
5. Has your relationship with yourself been affected by facilitating this training?
6. Have your dreams for the future been influenced by facilitating this training?
7. Has your attitude and way of thinking been affected in any way by facilitating this training?
8. What change has facilitating this training brought about in your relationships with people (family, friends, colleagues and people who approach life differently to the way you do)?
9. What differences have facilitating this training made in your relationship with God?
10. What differences have facilitating this training made in your workplace?
11. What differences have facilitating this training made to your views of being and doing church?
12. What differences have facilitating this training made to your life in the Post-Apartheid era in South Africa?
13. How has your journey with the participants in this training challenged and

enriched your life?

14. How do you see care?

15. Where do you experience care?

16. In facilitating this training, did you experience that care can result in transformation? How did you experience this transformation? Where did you transform from? What did you transform to?

17. Which ideas and concepts in our society would help this transformation and which ideas would hinder it?

18. What are the main components of these transforming practices of care?

19. What is what you are doing in terms of care doing?

20. How is this participatory pastoral care training helping you?

21. How is this participatory pastoral care training influencing the people you journey with?

22. What are the things that happen in an environment of care?

23. How have the contributions of the participants in this training helped you or not helped you?

24. Which important question do you think should still be asked?

## **ADDENDUM FIVE**

### **Participatory Pastoral Care and the Transformation of Society**

#### **Research questions for participants**

1. How would you refer to your story of care before you participated in this training?
2. How would you refer to your story of care after participating in this training?
3. How has participating in this training challenged your life?
4. How has participating in this training enriched and added value to your life?
5. Has your daily life been affected in any way by your participation in this training?
6. Has your relationship with yourself been affected by your participation in this training?
7. Have your dreams for the future been influenced by your participation in this training?
8. Has your attitude and way of thinking been affected in any way by your participation in this training?
9. What change has your participation in this training brought about in your relationships with people (family, friends, colleagues and people who approach life differently to the way you do)?
10. What differences have participating in this training made in your relationship with God?
11. What differences have participating in this training made in your workplace?
12. What differences have your participation in this training made to your views of being and doing church?
13. What differences have your participation in this training made to your life in the

Post-Apartheid era in South Africa?

14. How has your journey with the other participants in this training challenged and enriched your life?
15. How do you see care?
16. Where do you experience care?
17. Do you experience that care can result in transformation? How did you experience this transformation? Where did you transform from? What did you transform to?
18. Which ideas and concepts in our society would help this transformation and which ideas would hinder it?
19. What are the components of these transforming practices of care?
20. What is what you are doing in terms of care doing?
21. How is this participatory pastoral care training journey helping you?
22. How is this participatory pastoral care training influencing the people you journey with?
23. What are the things that happen in an environment of care?
24. How has the facilitator of this training helped you or not helped you?
25. Which important question do you think should still be asked?

## **ADDENDUM SIX**

### **Participatory Pastoral Care and the Transformation of Society**

#### **Questions asked regarding the film *Chocolat***

1. How would you describe the story of care towards others in this film?
2. How did Vianne's care and being with people challenge and enrich the community?
3. What difference did Vianne's care and being with people make in their experience of their dreams for the future?
4. What difference did Vianne's care and being with people make in the way they thought about life and other people?
5. What difference did Vianne's care and being with people make in the way they thought about their relationship with God?
6. What value did Vianne's care and being with people add to their lives?
7. Explain how Vianne sees care.
8. In what ways did this film connect with the caring practices that are already present in your life?
9. In the light of the film *Chocolat*, how did you experience care to be transformative?
10. From where did the people transform?
11. What ideas in our society would have made the above-mentioned transformation possible and what ideas would constrict such transformation?
12. How is what Vianne is busy doing, in terms of care, affecting her community? What can we learn from this?

13. What similarities and differences are there between Vianne's care-journey and the participatory pastoral care-journey?
14. How did this journey of care help other people?
15. What happened in this space of care?
16. What formed part of these transformative practices of care?
17. What is the influence of Vianne's different way of being on her life, her relationship with herself, her relationship with her daughter, her relationship with her work, etc?
18. What do you think is an important question to ask?



25.