

**NARRATIVE AND PARTICIPATORY PASTORAL CARE AND THERAPY
WITH CHILDREN AT MARY WARD CHILDREN'S HOME**

by

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FOREWORD

We are your children, we are the future and we are the leaders of tomorrow. Why is it that many of us suffer? Why are there so many children in the streets? As children what we see lacking is commitment to address problems, which affect us. For the church what is lacking is a participatory theology that takes into account our voices as children. Sr. Mercy Shumbamhini has taken this challenge and with this research has produced a helpful resource for theologians, therapists, pastors, counsellors, social workers and individuals working with children. She has been our driver who takes the passengers where they want to go. This work is not only for academic achievement but it is a gift to all people who seek to create a world fit for children.

Blessing Mutero 2008

Mary Ward Children's Home

MARY WARD PROFILE

To understand this thesis, one has to visit Mary Ward Children's Home. Dirk Kotzé, my promoter visited the home in 2004. Direct experience gives a better picture of the home and how we work in partnership with each other. Thus, to put the reader into a better picture of the home, I insert a CD below. I hope this will help the reader to understand our way of doing and being.

DECLARATION

“I declare herewith that *Narrative and participatory pastoral care and therapy with children at Mary Ward Children’s Home* is my own work and that I have indicated all sources that I have used by means of full references”

.....

MERCY SHUMBAMHINI

.....

DATE

ABSTRACT

This research is conducted within a postmodern and social construction discourse and in context of narrative and participatory pastoral care and therapy. It has been influenced by the voices of five contextual theologies: a participatory approach to practical theology, narrative, contextual, feminist and liberation theologies. The participatory action research seeks to highlight how narrative and participatory pastoral care and therapy with children at Mary Ward Children's Home, Kwekwe, Zimbabwe creates an inclusive and caring community. It argues that though residential childcare facilities/children's homes are considered the last resort in the childcare system, we are witnessing not their demise but their development due to the increased numbers of AIDS-orphans and other vulnerable children in our society.

The research aims were:

- ❖ To develop inclusive narrative and participatory pastoral care and therapy practices at the home.
- ❖ To co-create narrative and participatory pastoral care and therapy practices that respect the knowledges of the children involved.
- ❖ To develop an eco-spirituality as participatory pastoral care and therapy practice.
- ❖ To explore and co-author creative practices of doing narrative and participatory pastoral care and therapy practices which will help the participants integrate into the Home and society.

In conclusion, suggestions are made for a narrative and participatory pastoral care and therapy practice that is inclusive and caring. In terms of the experience of children living with disability and experiencing loss, as well as those children who have been abused, it is specifically described as therapeutic, empowering and life-giving. Therefore, home managers, caregivers and pastoral therapists are invited into an ethical and passionate practice of pastoral care and therapy that has the potential to transform the lives of children in a residential child care facility.

Key terms: Narrative and participatory pastoral care and therapy; Mary Ward Children's Home; Children's homes; Social construction; Postmodernism; Qualitative research; Participatory action research; Inclusive and caring community; Practical theology; Contextual theologies.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis, with boundless love and gratitude, to my parents, Susan Shumbamhini (nee Jaji – b.1940) and the late Christopher Shumbamhini (1932-2005) who dedicated their lives to serving the wounded and the marginalised people in our community. In their way of being and doing spirituality I experienced justice, compassion, care, sacrifice and service. Mum and Dad, I treasure your love for children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to a number of people who have made this thesis possible.

My first and deepest gratitude goes to God, who has been here with me long before either the conception of this thesis or the experiences that inspired it, surfaced. My God sides with the orphaned, abandoned and abused children and creates new life. I want to thank You for giving me the passion and love to care for children.

To the sisters, staff, caregivers and all the children at Mary Ward Children's Home who were co-authors in this study: Thank you for your commitment, and your generosity in allowing me to share your stories. Your contributions to this written document are highly appreciated. You have added a new dimension to my life and have encouraged me in many ways to commit myself to future counselling.

To Dr Dirk Kotzé, my promoter, a special word of appreciation for your creative and stimulating research mentoring. I want to thank you for your lived example of doing participatory narrative ethics, therapy and research. Dirk, thank you for believing in me and for sharing ideas, joys and excitement with me.

To my joint promoter Professor Jaco Dreyer, I want to thank you for helpful suggestions and challenging comments.

Lindi-Lee, your friendliness and willingness to assist me at the ITD office meant a lot to me. I appreciate your interest in my research project.

Invaluable to me was Sr. Christopher CJ who helped me with the editing. Chris, I enjoyed your enthusiasm and encouraging sideline comments. I know you will be turning 92 this year. May our Lord bless you.

I am grateful to Blessing Mutero and Taurai Mutambi who helped me with word processing and technical assistance with the computer. I acknowledge your remarkable natural sense of timing and untiring curiosity in this project.

To my religious congregation: thank you for providing a conducive environment for this work with the marginalised children and for all the practical, financial, emotional and spiritual support throughout the project. I honour your commitment to make this a world in which love, kindness and care would have the last word.

To my family, your continued interest in my research and encouragement equipped me to become the “person I am meant to be”. To my late father, Christopher Shumbamhini and my late brother, Pascal Shumbamhini, thank you for setting high standards and principles, for teaching me never to give up, but to persevere.

I acknowledge the debt I owe to my spiritual director and dear friend, Koni Landsberg SJ, for his love, support and encouragement. His wisdom and love of children has influenced me both personally and in my work.

I am grateful to UNISA for financial assistance. Without this help it would have been very difficult to complete this research project.

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PROLOGUE

Peter (2005:140-141) visited our children's home in March 2005 and wrote the poem below. Peter (he has now changed his name to Tambudzai, his Shona name) is a Jesuit scholastic currently doing philosophical studies at Arrupe College, Harare, Zimbabwe. This is what he wrote about his experiences of Mary Ward Children's Home.

MARY WARD CHILDREN'S HOME, AMAVENI, KWEKWE

*A home where children are happy,
As it appears so it is I saw,
Those little ones a glorious sight for the Lord,
Four communities so they belong to,
Each between ten and fifteen,*

*Among them babies, pre-school, primary pupils,
Secondary too and graduates to be,
They welcome greet and smile,
A home for guests who long to see the glorious splendour of God on earth,
A retreat for me in one such place will not fail to reveal God who became
human,
Perhaps for you too if you knew,*

*The motto that governs the shared life you should hear,
The nuns promulgate it,
The nursing mothers promise to exercise it,
Children too they know it,
It is proclaimed to empower them,
I heard it said and I liked it!
"There is no caring for me without me."*

*It's not a coincidence to have that place built on a hill in Amaveni,
People should see the works of a committed Congregation,
They love it not to be praised but testimonies are personally motivated,
What a community of friends sisters in the Lord!
They are like those little sons of the Society,
Dedicated to show in their lives the life of Him who became flesh,*

*To proclaim His gospel as they live it,
Those women I thought could be asked to explain their living theology,
The freshness in it capable of inspiring life in bones of dead theology,
Patriarch theology per se the gospel has not condoned,
On that mountain they live and do participatory theology,
Children orphans widows women and the unlettered make their contribution,
They voice out their experience with God in the Church.*

*The character of this children's home lies in the heart of their theology,
Theology simple without a commentary, believed and lived,
I believe women still have a dozen of approaches to offer to our theology,
Their success with the children is embedded in the fruits of the children's
home,
A home where each one has a responsibility with his or her own life,*

*Women caring with, but mixed communities of boys and girls,
Children growing together as brothers and sisters,
Children making rules and policies that settle disputes of their home,
The gospel of Him who became a human being their only liberator,
Behind their home are two government schools where they fetch formal education,
Pre-school education nuns and other teachers impart to them in the Children's
Home,
The community around sends children to pre- school on the same hill,*

*Children yes children's home,
But go there draw wisdom of the gospel lived,
Lived gospel that needs no extravagant preaching,
Love shared a powerful sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord of the harvest,
God bless the unworthy eyes that see and what they see.*