

**WHEN NARRATIVES CREATE COMMUNITY:
STANDING WITH CHILDREN AGAINST STEALING**

by

ELIZABETH MORTEL

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SUPERVISOR: DR E KOTZÉ

JOINT SUPERVISOR: PROF J S DREYER

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Abstract

At a Muslim school a group of boys with a reputation for stealing got the opportunity to share stories with communities of concern. Honesty meetings, honesty tests, honesty certificates and honesty celebrations formed part of narrative therapy ways of working together to try and regain reputations for honesty.

As an outsider researcher/therapist I was confronted by stories of slavery, racism, unemployment, poverty, crime and violence. Through collaboration with a cultural consultant it became possible to do theology and pastoral care as a Christian in a Muslim community in a respectful and ethical way. The sharing of stories of pain and resistance contributed to the mutual care and community amongst participants from communities separated by racism and apartheid legislation as well as differences of culture and religion. Reflections on this journey mark a migration of identity for me as researcher, therapist, Christian and white South African practical theologian.

Keywords: narrative therapy; contextual theology; therapy with children who steal; community work; feminist pastoral praxis; religious pluralism; caring with Muslim people; healing in post-apartheid South-Africa; cultural consultants; participatory action research.

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CHAPTER 1

rites of passage

1.1 INSPIRATION TO THE STUDY

1.1.1 Moment of insertion

In 1999 I counselled six young people between the ages of ten and twelve who had been accused repeatedly of stealing within a variety of settings. They were all pupils of the same school and had been involved as a “gang” in all sorts of trouble since their pre-school years.

My involvement with these boys, their school, their community and the journey of our work together to find ways for them to regain reputations for honesty is one that changed my life in many ways, both as healing praxis (Ackermann 1998:83) and as research (Reinharz 1992:194). For me it marks a ‘moment of insertion [which] locates [my] pastoral response in the lived experience of individuals and communities’ (Cochrane, de Gruchy & Petersen 1991:17). I have shared the story of this work and how it has affected my life with various people in the past two years. I have had many requests from colleagues for more detailed “guidelines” about working with children who steal so that others could benefit from my experience. Although I have approached this work as participatory action research as ‘learning to do it by doing it’ (Paulo Freire in Mc Taggart 1997:5), I have never reached the stage of writing about it as research. I have nevertheless kept careful documents and notes as I went along. In choosing this as a research topic I hope to reflect on the work in a way that will inspire and teach others and myself about participating in community projects within the South African context, as well as useful ways of standing with children and their parents when criminal behaviour has become part of their everyday life.

1.1.2 A Christian psychologist

My career as a psychologist goes back more than twenty years. For the first seven years, I worked as a counsellor in schools for children with disability and for the rest of the time as a private practitioner. The private practice in Somerset West, a fast growing town in the Western Cape, did exceptionally well. I opened my rooms in a consulting block with medical

specialists at the private hospital when the hospital opened in 1989. Within four years of starting the practice I was sharing it with two more colleagues and we were extremely busy. Around us the hospital was expanding every year, more and more doctors moved in and the demand for private medical services grew steadily. The fact that Somerset West is known as the place with the highest number of millionaires per km² in South Africa made for good business for all of us.

I was working hard and enjoying my work. I received a lot of recognition as a therapist and public speaker within the white middle class part of the community. My commitment to my faith and involvement with my church and other Christian churches was something that was well known in the Western Cape. I was asked so frequently to talk at church meetings and to do training in church programmes that I used to joke about it to the ministers that, as a psychologist, I seemed to have more opportunity to “preach” than they had as ministers.

Some of this was rather ironical as I went to university with the intention to study theology. But this was during the mid 1970’s: I soon realized that the Dutch Reformed Church, of which I am a member, would not ordain women as ministers within the near future. It was only in 1990 that a decision was made to ordain women (Die Burger 18 Sept 2000). In the meantime I decided to study education and psychology, but remained an active but, like Riet Bons-Storm (1998:7) describes herself, an often ‘critical’ and ‘resistant’ member of the Dutch Reformed Church. My biggest frustration has been the way in which my church so seldom recognises laypersons as theological agents in their own right. I resonate with the picture that Bons-Storm (1998:10) paints of the way laypersons are treated within the church:

They become important sheep, but are still sheep, lacking the ability of the shepherd to know the map to reach the stable and the traffic-regulations on the road towards the developed and effective parish.

1.1.3 Fatigue and change

Reflecting back, there seem to be two important processes that impacted on my life in the nineties. The one was being invaded by a sense of the emptiness, stress and isolation involved in the responsibility of being such an expert on so many different topics. I was put on a pedestal by others and I had to come up with solutions for people’s problems. I explained to my personal therapist that it was a sense of being “hollow”, of having this exterior as the part

others could see, but experiencing an alienation from valuable parts of myself. Something felt wrong. My body told me so (Heshusius & Ballard 1996:2). I also feared that, sooner or later, I would be “caught out” for not having the answers that people expected of me. In the private practice especially, but also in the public speaking domain, I had been involved in a one-way process in which the expert knowledge and expert skills that I possessed were applied to the lives of others. Michael White (1997:130) describes the effect of this one-way account of therapy and the “hollowness” that I experienced:

It contributes to thin descriptions of our therapeutic identities and, to thin conclusion about the nature of our practice....[W]e deny ourselves the opportunity to plot the significant events of our work into the story/ –line of our lives. And we deny ourselves that which would otherwise be sustaining of us in the therapeutic endeavour. We become prone to frustration, to fatigue, and to a sense of being burdened by the work.

At the same time, dramatic changes were happening in our country which had the effect of robbing me of a lot of the “certainties” that had formed part of my everyday existence up until that point. With the dismantling of apartheid, exciting political events, such as the un-banning of the ANC as well as the release of Nelson Mandela from prison were reported in the news daily. Our country saw its first democratic election. Then came the stories told in front of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission about people’s suffering under the apartheid regime (Krog 1998; Meiring 1999). Like never before, I became aware of the oppression, the injustices, the pain, the violence, the poverty and the crime. As a direct result of the political changes, the company that my husband was working for was closed and he lost his job. Finding work, or starting a business, became extremely difficult in the light of new affirmative action legislation and economic turmoil. Around us many white people were struggling with the sudden loss of careers and businesses, a process that also involved loss of social status and financial position. Many of our colleagues left the country in order to continue their professional careers and to secure a safer and better future for their children. The world I was living in seemed to have become a very different place and I tried to make sense of it all.

1.1.4 Innocent and accountable

I was extremely disillusioned to learn to what extent the Dutch Reformed Church, with its close ties to the National party, had supported apartheid. Denise Ackermann (1996:34) aptly describes this involvement and the response that reflects my own:

Years of racist indoctrination within visible, rigid, legislated structures divided our country into 'us' (the powerful, all-knowing, morally superior and God-called minority) and 'them' (the ignorant, heathen masses). Now despair and disillusionment is found among many whites, combined with a shackling fear of the future as a minority 'white tribe'. The praxis of a new freedom is called for. A young, white Afrikaner student of theology told me two years ago in great distress: 'My parents lied to me, my school lied to me, our leaders lied to me and the church lied to me. I don't even know the truth about God.'

The injustices and the social problems that stemmed from apartheid pained me deeply. I could no longer be passive and ignore my responsibility to participate in restoring some of the injustices to which I contributed through being a member of the Church and through benefiting so much from the privileges I had taken for granted all my life. I knew that I had to *be and do church* in a different way. I resonate with the words of Denise Ackermann (1998: 91):

Despite the fact that apartheid as a system was successful in separating people, despite the fact that white South Africans were subjected to a great deal of ideological indoctrination, if we did not know it was because we chose not to know. Yes, we are born innocent and we become accountable.

As I was bombarded with news of the suffering of the majority of South Africans, I questioned the work I was doing in my practice that excluded so many people because of my fee structure and position within the privileged "professional world". In what I now understand to be my response to the acceptance of accountability, I wanted to invite "the other" - the suffering and the marginalized - into my practice, donating my time and making myself available as best I could.

1.1.5 My training and middle-class position

Yet another reality struck me. My training within the medical model, as well as the privileged and isolated life I had led as white South African, did not equip me for being effective in

helping people from different cultural and social backgrounds. Swartz and Gibson (2001:39-40) refer to the ‘mechanistic and a-contextual tradition in many psychological theories’ as well as the fact that ‘most South African psychologists were white and trained to work with middle-class patients, from similar backgrounds to their own’ became extremely limiting to the application of psychology in the broader South African context. All my “expert” knowledge and years of professional training seemed to be useless. The complexity and extent of the problems seemed totally overwhelming! Suddenly I was experiencing the despair described as being:

[A] product of living with taken-for-granted privilege and its promise – of having access to the resources, to the opportunities, and to positions in structures of power that make it possible, in at least some domains of life, for therapists to achieve sought-after ends in a specified and usually brief period of time through singular and independent action.

(White 1997:197)

This notion of effective action is associated with an ethics of control that is accountable to ‘global’ norms and ‘universal principles’ and not to feedback from the person seeking consultation. White (1997) acknowledges the work of Sharon Welch, feminist theologian, in influencing his ideas regarding the despair in the context of taken-for-granted privilege. According to Sharon Welch (1990:14), the ethics of control implies becoming easily discouraged. It is the cultural despair of the middle class, which she sees as ‘the privilege of those accustomed to power, accustomed to having a political and economical system that responds to their needs.’

1.1.6 The separation: Narrative therapy and depression

I had been exposed to Narrative Therapy in 1992 when I attended a workshop by Michael White and since then had read more. From the start, the idea appealed to me that the client is the expert on his or her own life as well as the possibility of following an alternative ethic, one which White (1997:198) refers to as an ‘ethic of collaboration’ that recasts effective action as that which is taken in partnership with others. In joining collaboratively with people in multiple actions that contribute to people’s lives, the therapist becomes de-centred in the work. The therapist becomes more accountable to the person seeking consultation ‘in developing an understanding of the task at hand, in developing a consciousness of the

contexts of persons' lives, and in developing an appreciation of what it is that constitutes the preferred real effects of the therapeutic conversation' (White 1997:199).

In 1997, when I could no longer ignore what was happening to me as my body kept telling me that something was wrong (Heshusius & Ballard 1996), I was diagnosed with depression. I started taking medication and took some time off. Twice it happened that I returned to my practice, looking forward to the consultations with clients again, but found that within the first few minutes of the first consultation nausea overtook me. I had to run to the bathroom and ask my secretary to cancel all appointments until further notice. After four months of taking leave and trying to go back, I decided to take an extended sabbatical from my practice. In my search for more appropriate ways of working I made the study of Narrative therapy a priority. I also broke all ties with my previous practice in order to reassess my own position as a therapist within the South African context.

1.1.7 The liminal phase: betwixt and between

Smith (1997:198) talks about the 'quest of being': when a person initially enters into a participatory action research process in response to an inner tension. 'The tension forms a personal motivation – a drive – that causes the person to seek out others and to look for something different.' This is the background to my decision to start my "new" practice in 1999. This time I am working from home, hoping to be able to go out into the community without the pressure of financial "over-heads" to restrict me and to dictate the kind of work I become involved in. I realised that part of the burden of my previous way of working involved the split between the personal and the professional: this might be addressed if I could be more accessible and available to my son (See Weingarten, in White & Hales 1997:xi-xiii).

At the time it was difficult to explain to people that I was hoping to work in a different way. The general response was either that of total disbelief - "you were doing so well, why do you want to change now?" - or real scepticism about my ideas to do community work. For my part I was not at all sure that this would work out, especially as I experienced the pain of loss of status of no longer being the visible and "famous" practitioner in the centre of things. At the same time, I was still very isolated from communities other than the one I was always working and mixing in. I was not at all sure that I really had anything to offer that people

from disadvantaged communities would find valuable or that this would even allow me to become involved in their communities.

Once again the work of narrative therapists provided me with a metaphor to make meaning of my experience and personal journey. In White and Epston (1990), Epston and White (1992) and White (2000), Michael White draws on the work of van Gennep and Turner to describe the three stages of the rites of passage:

First is the *separation phase*, at which a person breaks from their life as they know it. This marks the beginning of the journey. Second, there is the *liminal phase*. This is a 'betwixt and between' phase, in which one's sense of being in the world is absent, and where nothing means quite what it did before. This phase is invariably characterized by periods of disorientation and confusion, and times of significant despair. Third, there is the *reincorporation phase*. Reincorporation is achieved when a person finds that they've arrived at another place in life, where they experience a 'fit' that provides for them a sense of once again being at home with themselves and with a way of life. At this time, persons regain a sense of being knowledgeable and skilled in matters of living.

(White 2000:27)

1.1.8 Seeking a connection

With the idea of rites of passage as a map, I continued my journey into the unknown territory. In my search for the next steps I visited the local School Clinic to introduce myself to the new school psychologist and to explain about my practice, hoping for some connection with the wider community. Upon introducing myself as a private practitioner, Bridget Hamley-Wise, the school psychologist, confronted me with the statistics of the number of private practitioners in our geographical area catering for the relatively small number of paying clients as compared to the thousands of learners at the more than twenty schools for whom she had to take responsibility. Pillay and Lockhat (2001:87) confirm that an adequate number of psychologists will probably never be available to meet the needs of children in low- to middle-income countries such as South Africa. Bridget and I were instantly on the same wavelength and I sensed that I had found a guide into the unknown territory of making a small contribution to a disadvantaged community.

I explained that I was hoping to donate time to work in the previously disadvantaged community and that I was ready if she had work for me. That very afternoon she phoned to tell me about a phone-call she had received from a principal in the community (previously

described as “coloured”) who was very concerned about a group of boys who had been accused of and caught stealing on several occasions. With a pounding heart and trembling hands, I offered to join her the next morning to visit the school, ready for my crossing of ‘the great divide between the selective consulting room and the needy masses’ (Lifshitz & Oosthuizen 2001:121).

That visit was a tiny first step into a very significant experience for me:

- It truly took me away from the comforts of my consulting room where I was in charge and people came on appointment. Here I was into a totally strange environment where I was the outsider offering help, having no clue what to expect. Like Ackermann (1998:86) warns, I was sensitive to the South African context through having been scarred by its imposed legislated separatism and I was prepared to encounter suspicion and even hostility.
- Not only was the school in the poorer predominantly “coloured” community, it was also a Muslim school. As a white, middle-class, Afrikaner woman, a member of the Dutch Reformed Church and a private practising psychologist, I have never found myself further from my “usual” client, social or faith community.
- Stealing, the problem I was being presented with represents one of the most prevalent social issues within the South African context (see Muntigh 2002). The newspapers were full of incidents of crime and around me thousands of South Africans were emigrating, as they felt unsafe and violated within our community.

1.2 NEED FOR AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In South Africa we are still grappling with the legacies of apartheid. Violence and crime has had a tremendously negative influence on all our lives. The criminal violence is described as ‘a new tyrant’ that is loose in our country (Pieterse 1998:179). Poverty, displacement and ruptured family lives are still the social reality for scores of people. At least 15 million out of our country’s population of about 40 million people are very poor – jobless and illiterate (Pieterse 1998:179). Children’s lives are put at risk with those of adults through insufficient and diminishing resources in education, social security and health (Ackermann 1998).

Pamela Couture (2000) says that she considers the care for poor children - the most vulnerable persons in society - as the central work of pastoral and congregational care. She distinguishes two overlapping categories of poverty - material poverty as well as poverty of tenuous connections. The children who were referred to me were from such “fragile” families. In this research and therapy an attempt was made to stand with these children and their caregivers in a way that seemed to strengthen the tenuous connections and to create hope for the futures of those children who were at risk of becoming part of the crime statistics of our country, just like many of their parents and family members had already become.

NICRO (See Appendix I) does crime prevention work in the communities of South Africa. It is reported that stealing is the most common offence involving a large number of young people. The NICRO programme involves older young people and achieves good results. There are quite a number of similarities with the approach followed in this research project.

The separatism that resulted from the apartheid era makes it difficult for people to step into the unknown of being with “the other”. This study speaks about such a journey (Ackermann 1998:91; Speckman & Kaufmann 2001:75). It also attempts to tell a story of collaboration and hope, both of which seem to be much needed in our overwhelmingly broken society. The study will also include stories of resilience, community and connection found and uncovered within the communities where people seem to have more than enough reason to give up hope. Some success, loving connections, care and resilience will be reported and celebrated with the people who live and work under extremely difficult and limiting circumstances.

A feminist theology of praxis, where old patterns of domination and oppression are transformed into healing praxis, is characterized by risk and requires stamina. It is an exercise in vulnerability and it happens in the face of overwhelming odds (Ackermann 1998:89). More stories of the healing and liberating effect of living this risk need to be told as this is a task that is too daunting to be taken alone. I believe that doing the work of healing from a faith community could provide the support and connection that is needed to sustain it.

1.3 RESEARCH CURIOSITY

A part of this research was done before my involvement with practical theology and pastoral therapy as fields of study. However, as a Christian, I have always regarded my work as psychologist as a ministry arising from my faith and directed towards others and the world. In this I agree with Cochrane, de Gruchy and Petersen (1991:3):

We assume that this ministry is global, that it is the work of the whole People of God, that every member of the Church has a 'priestly' and 'diaconal' vocation and responsibility whatever their specific walk of life.

As stated earlier, the work with boys at the Muslim school could be seen as a "moment of insertion" in which I have been directly confronted with the realities of the poor and marginalized:

Moments in which the pastor or Christian are 'inserted into' (directly confronted with) these realities are the basic point of departure for a holistic practical theology which refuses to reduce its concerns to the atomized individual or family.

(Cochrane et al 1991:18)

To a large degree, my research curiosity is part of a self-reflection on the journey that brought me to the work, the ideas and beliefs that guided me during the time of the project and the impact of the work on my practice as therapist and Christian and, later, as pastoral therapist.

I was guided in this work mainly by Narrative Therapy ideas, especially by the work of David Epston (1999); Seymour and Epston (1992) as well as Freeman, Epston and Lobovits (1997) regarding specific ways of working with children who steal. The other strong influence has been the work of The Family Therapy Centre, Lower Hutt, New Zealand (Waldegrave 1990). It guided me in my efforts to work accountably within a cultural, social and spiritual environment different to my own. Ideas regarding pastoral care and counselling came from liberation and contextual theology (De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio 1983; Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991; De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio 1994; Bosch 1991; Pieterse 1998) as well as feminist theology (Ackermann 1996, 1993; Ackermann & Bons-Storm 1998; Bons-Storm 1996, 1998; Isherwood & McEwan 1993; Couture 2000; Graham 1996; Welch 1990).

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

When I embarked on this research journey I had some questions regarding culturally and religiously appropriate ways of care and counselling for the young Muslim people struggling with stealing in their lives. What I had not really expected or anticipated was the effect that the following migration of identities would have on me, moving me from:

- a therapist to therapist as researcher,
- a therapist focusing on individuals, couples and family to a community worker, and
- an everyday Christian as pastoral counsellor to a professional pastoral counsellor.

The research question that focused my research was as follows:

How do I participate in pastoral care and counselling with young Muslim persons struggling with stealing in their lives?

On the research journey, more questions surfaced that helped me to reflect on my commitment and practice. I used these as further guidelines:

- What have I learnt about community work?
- What can others learn from this project in terms of counselling children who steal?
- What was the effect of this project on the participants (children, teachers, parents, family members, colleagues)?
- What have I learnt about Islam and working within the Muslim community?
- What has been the history and experiences of the Muslim people of the Strand in terms of racial, class and religious oppression and marginalization?
- On what ground can the work be considered pastoral therapy and care?
- What is the responsibility of the church to those who have been oppressed?

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to describe and discuss a way of collaborating with children who have a longstanding reputation for stealing to regain their reputations as honest people. I will reflect on the work I participated in during 1999 with six boys from a previously disadvantaged community.

As this work was a community project I will reflect on the journey involved in building connections with “the other” and breaking my own isolation. The main theme of the work will be one of creating or storying community and connections. This work speaks very strongly of collaboration and participation and serves as an example of participatory action research (Mc Taggart 1997; Zuber-Skerritt 1994).

As a student of Practical Theology, I will also reflect on how this work, the choices I made and the commitments that influenced me, fits with a liberating, contextual, pastoral praxis. I will make explicit what is implicit in my work as therapist. I also reflect on my commitment to a particular way of being in the world:

We should expect of all practical theologians that they become self-aware, of their prior commitments, on what these commitments are based, and how they affect one’s entire approach to practical theology. To make these things explicit for oneself is to become not only self-aware, but also to allow for being self-critical, and to open oneself up to questioning by others.

(Cochrane et al 1991:16)

1.6 FROM PRIEST/LEVITE TO GOOD SAMARITAN

In my reading of theology and pastoral therapy I have found myself drawn to, and deeply moved by, the writing of feminist theologians. As Neuger and Poling (1997: 25) point out: ‘women have been leaders in questioning the “truth” and claims of the culture; resisting those rules, roles, and practices that cause them harm and pain; and proposing new possibilities for a more just and liberating society.’ According to them, a feminist orientation is a ‘multicultural, multivalent analysis that includes the power dynamics around gender, class, race, sexual orientation, able-bodiedness, and age.’

Denise Ackermann (1998:79) describes her understanding of a feminist theology of praxis as critical of the current models of practical theology for ‘their inherent male-orientation and inability to deal with the reality of the lives of women, children and the poor, [and] reflects on the experience of the “others” in order to act collaboratively with them for a transformed world.’ For many years my own practise reflected this inability to ‘act collaboratively’ with ‘the others’.

As I started reflecting on my own life in relation to the work at the Muslim school, I remembered how my sister and I had to beg and plead with my mother to read us our favourite Bible story over and over again. It was the parable of 'The Good Samaritan' (Luke 10:25-37). While listening to this story, my sister and I would start sobbing so violently that our bodies would shake and my mother would have to stop in order for us to catch our breaths before she could continue. My parents told us that long afterwards the dry sobs could still be heard from our beds while we were sleeping. I cannot remember the exact words of the Children's Bible, but I do remember that my upset was for the man who was left lying half-dead by the robbers. My hopes were really raised by the two men who came along and found him, only to find that they chose to ignore him! That cruelty truly broke my heart. Against this background, the gentle care and attention of the Samaritan was almost too much to bear. Today I shed painful and guilty tears for the way in which patriarchal culture seemed to have blinded me to the person along the road, as I was so eager to get to church, to important meetings and my middle-class psychology practice.

It sounds as if Jesus had no problem with the lawyer's knowledge, but a big problem with his *practice* or *doing*. Müller (1987) points out that, while the priest and Levite did not rob the man of his clothes, money and life, they robbed him of his human dignity ("menswaardigheid"). Nielsen (in Müller: 1987) summarises his understanding of Jesus' response. It is not about definitions, rules, and prescriptions, but about situations in which a person behaves as a neighbour: someone *is* no neighbour, but can *become* one through behaving like a neighbour. Amongst the features of contextual theology is the emphasis on the deed, since 'doing is more important than knowing or speaking' (Bosch 1991:425).

Riet Bons-Storm (1996:30) quotes Moessner who chooses the Good Samaritan for her leading imagery for pastoral care. She points out that the Good Samaritan takes notice of the wounded traveller and brings him to the inn, gives money to the innkeeper and asks the innkeeper to take care of him, the victim of violence. According to this imagery, pastoral care is an act of cooperation and compassion. The Good Samaritan resumes his journey, trusting others to do their part.

The effect of apartheid on the humanity of South Africans is overwhelming and incalculable. There is a crying need to "bind up wounds" at so many levels and in so many different ways. A feminist theology of praxis may not be understood merely as an individual quest for

personal healing (Ackermann 1998:81). 'Being in relation to one's neighbour induces liberating praxis' (Ackermann 1994:203).

My painful recognition of, and awakening to, the part my church and people played in inflicting wounds through apartheid was the driving force and motivation for my involvement in the work discussed in this project. And indeed it has been my experience that my own healing is bound up with the healing of the victims. 'Healing praxis, clearly a need for victims of apartheid, also promises healing for the white community' (Ackermann 1998:83).

The commitment to do the work with the children and the people of their community was an effort to contribute to healing. In reflecting on it critically in this study, I hope to make visible the steps it required and the challenges involved (Marsha Hewitt in Ackermann 1998:84). It has indeed been my experience that it is not easy for us, for our middle class, to move from an ethics of control to an ethics of risk (Welch 1990:14).

1.7 RESEARCH APPROACH

1.7.1 Feminist participatory action research

The emphasis on research as praxis is explained by Kincheloe (1991:20) as 'using research to help participants (ourselves included) understand and change their situation.' Reinharz (1992:175) emphasises this commitment to action when she writes that 'feminist action research must be oriented to social and individual change because feminism represents a repudiation of the status quo.' Melrose (1994:52) concurs that the 'goal of critical researchers is personal or social transformation.'

1.7.2 Connection between researched and researcher

Hall (1996) points out how, in reflexive writing, the relationship between the researcher and the researched can be shown in order to show how people construct knowledge in a dynamic context. This fits with the view of feminist researchers about participatory or collaborative research:

In feminist participatory research, the distinction between the researcher(s) and those on whom the research is based disappears. To achieve an egalitarian relation, the researcher abandons control and adopts an approach of openness, reciprocity, mutual disclosure, and shared risk. Differences in social status and background give way as shared decision-making and self-disclosure develop.

(Reinharz 1992:181)

Reinharz (1992) mentions how Bronstein stressed that she wanted to learn *from*, and not just learn *about*, the people she collaborated with in her research. I would like to acknowledge the people at the Muslim school and the participants whom I interviewed for what they have taught me and for the care I received from them. I am also aware of the warning by Mc Taggart (1997:29) that knowledge produced by research *on* people rather than *by* them poses a real danger and does not reflect participatory action research. My interviews with the various Muslim people reflect my attempts to practise participation and collaboration:

We cannot know *for* people what is good for them. We also have to know *with* them. To be ethical, the participation of the people *about* or *for* whom we do research is of primary importance at all levels of research.

(Kotzé 2002:27)

1.7.3 Reflexivity in emancipatory action research

I used the guidelines of Hall (1996:30) regarding reflexivity, which is an attempt to:

1. monitor and reflect on one's doing of the research – the methods and the researcher's influence on the setting – and act responsively on these methods as the study proceeds; and
2. account for researcher constitutiveness. This process begins being self-conscious (to the extent that this is possible) about how one's doing of the research, as well what one brings to it (previous experience, knowledge, values, beliefs and *a priori* concepts), shapes the way the data is interpreted and treated. An account of researcher constitutiveness is completed when this awareness is incorporated in the research report.

I attempted a systematic reflection on the research method and practice and account for the practice according to the purpose and context of the work. I wrote myself into the story in order to look at the effect of what I brought to the work then and bring now in terms of reflection, interpretation and meaning making (Hall 1994:36). Marcus (1994:571) discusses positioning as practice in feminism, which is committed to the situatedness and partiality of all claims of knowledge. I attempted to engage the reader in my meaning making process by including, as far and as clearly as possible, the imposition of my own views and thought processes on the choices I made in the process of the work as well as on the interpretation of the findings as I understand them (Kincheloe 1991:2; Gallagher 1996:119).

1.7.4 Feedback sessions

Mc Taggart (1997:6) points out that ‘participatory action research is a collective activity.’ I had regular feedback sessions with the principal, both in the time of working with the children who had been stealing and in the period since then, where my involvement with the school has been to assist the principal with concerns for those children that he brought to my attention. In these feedback sessions I shared some of the procedure, my observations of the effects of my involvement and questions I had regarding the cultural and social influences and how to respond appropriately to these. The principal acted as a cultural advisor (Waldegrave 1990) who assisted me in taking into account the gender, cultural, social and economic context in which the participants in the therapy and research live. In order to make these feedback sessions into a reflexive research procedure, I adopted an attitude and intention of not controlling the talk, but rather allowing for shared meaning making and collaboration (Hall 1996:41). I have kept notes of these sessions as they happened during my work with the boys.

Since the research involves reflecting on a process that took place two to three years ago, the study carries the inherent problems of accounting for process in retrospect (Hall 1996:32). In order to assist me where my notes and other documents might fail me, I did more feedback sessions and interviews with the principal in order to check my understanding of procedures and outcomes with him. I have documented his reflections and include these in my reporting of the research.

1.7.5 Other reflexive procedures

- Declaration of experience and knowledge/base brought to the therapy, interpreting and reporting. In this I endeavour to be as transparent and self-reflexive as possible (Reinharz 1992:259; Hall 1996:39).
- I will also adopt a style of reporting which will interrupt and problematise the text through questions and reflections as well as incorporate the information about my experiences and knowledge base (Hall 1996:39).
- By using my rough notes and the memories that they trigger, ethnographic descriptions will be constructed and negotiated in the feedback sessions with the principal (Hall 1996:41).
- I have started a research journal about pronounced feelings I experience, deliberations with my supervisors and ideas that occur to me. This is included in my report as part of self-reflection (Hall 1996:46).

1.7.6 Validity and ethical considerations of research

According to Altheide and Johnson (1994), validity-as-reflexive-accounting places the researcher, the topic, and the sense-making process in interaction:

In keeping with the position of analytic realism, based on the view that the social world is an interpreted world, not a literal world, always under symbolic construction (even deconstruction!) the basic idea is that the focus is on the process of the ethnographic work....The ethnographic ethic calls for ethnographers to substantiate their interpretations and findings with a reflexive account of themselves and the process of their research.

(Altheide & Johnson 1994:489)

Altheide and Johnson (1994) continue by saying that the process by which the ethnography occurred must be clearly delineated, including accounts of the interactions among context, researcher, methods, setting and participants. They stress the ethical responsibility of providing the reader with an explicit statement about 'where the author is coming from.' This fits with the feminist practice of positioning most committed to the situatedness and partiality of all claims to knowledge. This ethics and practice of positioning defeats rigidities of language and opens possibilities for different sorts of identities and concepts of race,

culture and gender to emerge (Marcus 1994). Mc Taggart (1997:13) stresses that validation in participatory action research ‘is an explicit process of dialogue, it is not achieved by adherence to a fixed procedure.’

The immediate audience for research must be the research community who should also have a say in the validity of the reporting of a particular piece of research (Altheide & Johnson 1996). Permission was obtained before making observations and descriptions of other’s work. Similarly, points of view were negotiated with those concerned before being published (Winter 1994:17).

1.7.7 Interviewing in feminist research

In this trans-cultural work and research it became more and more important for me to interview various people about the cultural, racial, religious and gender aspects that informed the lives of the people I encountered in the work. I have already stated the important part Mr Fanie, the principal, played as cultural consultant. Through the working relationship we developed over the three years, trust and familiarity contributed to the kind of conversations we were able to have about his own childhood and his experiences of the forced removals and living under the apartheid government. Reinharz (1992:27) refers to the work of Segura who speaks of the advantages of familiarity in interviewing. For me, this was also the case in the interview with Ferial Johnson, my Muslim friend and colleague. Yet some of the other interviewees were strangers, like Imam Mou’tie Saban, Professor Greyling and Valdila Basedien. Quoting Ann Oakley, Reinharz (1992:28) suggests that ‘feminist interviewing involves commitment on the part of the researcher to form a relationship, and on the part of the interviewees to participate with sincerity.’

I have followed Reinharz’s (1992:33) idea that researcher self-disclosure ‘initiates true dialogue by allowing participants to become co-researchers.’ She also points out that researcher self-disclosure ‘increases the researcher’s vulnerability to criticism, both for what is revealed and for the very act of self-disclosure’ (Reinhartz 1992:34).

I did multiple interviews in that I shared transcripts and translations as well as interpretations of interviews with interviewees (Reinharz 1992:37). As Janesick (1994:213) points out, the qualitative researcher needs to interpret the beliefs and behaviours of participants. I hoped to

add to transparency and participation, but also felt it necessary to make the reporting more accurate, especially since so many interviews had to be translated from Afrikaans. As all participants who reflected on the work understand and speak English at least as a second language, they were able to check the meaning of the translations for me.

1.7.8 Memory

Mc Eachern (2001:223) writes about the ‘enormous significance of memory in South Africa today.’ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is probably the most obvious and visible manifestation of the significance of memory, publicly engaging the apartheid regime in terms of its oppressive strategies and human rights violations. The importance of these themes of remembering for the understanding of both the present and the future also emerges as a central problematic in the lives of ordinary South Africans who are striving to come to terms with what was done to them. ‘They demonstrate the profound ways in which all kinds of macro-processes take form and power in the lives of people at the most micro-levels’ (Abu-Loghod in Mc Eachern 2001: 224).

One such story of remembering is that of the Muslim community of the Strand as told in this research by Mr Fanie, the principal. Frigga Haugh (in Schratz 1996:67) argues that it is ‘important to work historically if we want to find out the social construction, the mechanisms, connections and meanings of our actions and feelings.’ This invited me to research and co-search a short history of the Muslim people of the Strand (see chapter 4). I have added the memories of Ferial Johnson and Imam Mou’tie Saban as well as some of the District Six memories particularly as Haugh warns that it is crucial to ensure that memories of everyday life should not be seen through individual perspective, but should be rendered in a form that encourages a different form of analysis.

1.7.9 Participatory consciousness

Inspired by the work of Kaethe Weingarten (1994) and other therapists (White 1997; White & Hales 1997), I no longer accept the dichotomy between the personal and the professional. In my work I thus experience another aspect of giving up ideas of the self as a fixed entity when I allow myself to enter, what Heshusius (1995:122) refers to as the ‘possibility of joining a larger selfother reality that enriches and changes the self.’ In being with the mothers of the

boys who had been stealing, the differences between them and myself were painfully obvious: me as white, middle-class and educated and they as women of colour, poor and with limited education. Yet my heart was equally touched by what we had in common. My son was then nine years old: I too cared deeply for his well-being and his future, like the mothers I met at the Muslim School. Like them, I feel implicated when he gets into trouble and I often lack the knowledge and wisdom to mother him in ways that will be beneficial to him:

It is in the space that exists between the having in common and the not having in common that the possibility for true dialogue can occur and the generative conditions for real listening, talking, and learning exists.

(Heshusius 1995:122)

This way of being with others does not allow much space for evaluative seeing. It is through being able to ask myself: “Could I imagine such a life for myself?” that I move into a state of merging, a state of consciousness which Heshusius (1994:209) refers to as ‘participatory state of consciousness’. She explains that this ‘opens up a mode of access that was not there before.’ Kotzé and Kotzé (2001:9-10) talk about ‘research as relatedness and enchantment’ and their commitment is also mine:

Research too often becomes an intellectual activity with researchers obtaining degrees on or receiving acknowledgement based on the suffering of others - with the latter most likely not to benefit from the research. We are committed....to participatory action research that will be to the advantage of the participants.

As I have indicated earlier, it is impossible to engage in a participatory process without becoming involved and being changed as researcher. Kotzé and Kotzé (2001) explain that they encourage their students to situate their research within their own lived experience. I agree with Dudley-Marling (1996:36) when he says:

Hiding the ‘I’ is a pretence, a fraud that forces me to hide my passion, to deny who I am, and to pretend that my words are separate from me. Acknowledging the ‘I’ allows me to reveal myself and my feelings.

1.8 MIGRATION OF IDENTITY FOR THE BOYS

I have indicated that my journey was very much part of what could be seen as a ‘migration of identity’ (White 2000:9). As Reinharz (1992:194) reports: ‘Many feminist researchers report being profoundly changed by what they learn about themselves. Change may involve completely reconceptualizing a phenomenon and completely revising one’s worldview.’

On their part, the boys were involved in a migration of identity from “stealers” to honest people. Ideas about identity within social constructionist views are that:

An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. Accordingly who one is, is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one’s own and others’ discursive practices, and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others’ lives. Stories are located within a number of different discourses, and thus vary dramatically in terms of the language used, the concepts, issues and moral judgements made relevant and the subject positions made available within them. In this way poststructuralism shades into narratology.

(Davies & Harre 1991:46)

An example of this process is the boys’ experience of the ‘multiplicity of selves’ (Davis & Harre 1991:47): being positioned as a stealer and then imagining what it would be like to be positioned as an honest person through storying that possibility with family and friends.

My experience in this work has been one in which:

The horizon of the help-seeker and that of the helper interact and fuse in ways that may bring about alterations in the meaning horizon of both helper and helper-seeker.

(Gerkin 1991:20)

1.9 OUTLINE OF RESEARCH REPORT

In Chapter 2 I discuss the theoretical framework that informs the research. Chapter 3 contains a description and discussion of the work I did in standing with the boys from the Muslim

School who stole. The context in which I did the research formed an important part of the research. In Chapter 4 I include the history of the Strand Muslim community and the school. Catching up on news about the boys and reflecting on the value of the work forms the contents of Chapter 5. Chapter 6 provides the opportunity to reflect on the research question that guided the work and to make an appeal to the church for more contextual pastoral counselling and care.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 DISCURSIVE POSITIONING

The attitudes with which I approach this study are based on a post-modern, narrative and social constructionist worldview, as summarised by Freedman and Combs(1996:22) in the following basic ideas:

1. Realities are socially constructed.
2. Realities are constituted through language.
3. Realities are organized and maintained through narrative.
4. There are no essential truths

These ideas have real effect in terms of how power, knowledge and truth are negotiated in the therapy and research. A not-knowing position taken by the therapist makes for conversations in which the therapeutic conversation becomes a collaborative effort of generating new meaning. It is the curiosity and the not knowing that opens space and increases the potential for the narrative development of new agency and personal freedom (Anderson & Goolishian 1992). I would like to adapt Harlene Anderson's notion of 'research and learning as part of everyday practice':

Reflection and reflections about reflection in action are about connecting, collaborating, and constructing, and in my view, signify a post-modern form of knowing.

(Anderson 1997:102)

2.2 POWER/KNOWLEDGE

Kotzé (2002:7) discusses Foucault's comments on the historical shaping of knowledge and the interplay and interfaces between knowledge and power. People end up becoming objects of bodies of knowledge and power:

Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth.

(Foucault 1980:133)

Kotzé (2002:70) points out how scientific knowledge has become an expression of the power/knowledge connection, 'since to know implies the power of subjugation and domination.' White and Epston (1990:22) point out that since 'we are all caught up in a net or web of power/knowledge, it is not possible to act apart from this domain as we are simultaneously undergoing the effects of power and exercising this power in relation to others.' It is therefore necessary constantly to critique our practices by asking each other and ourselves the following questions regarding the knowledges we participate in and that shape our lives:

Whose knowledges are these?
For whose purpose?
To whose benefit are these knowledges?
Who is silenced or marginalized by these knowledges?
Who suffers as a result of these knowledges?

(Kotzé 2002:8)

Kotzé (2002:8) shows how postmodernism challenges the practice of placing modernist positivist scientific notions - such as neutrality, objectivity, and theory-practice distinctions - in the foreground, while keeping ethical reflections and implications in the background. We are challenged to reverse positions, moving ethical concerns to the foreground:

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 very real political and ethical effects.

(Kotzé 2002:9)

2.3 ABUSE OF POWER: THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH AND APARTHEID

Allan Boesak (1983:4) writes that 'racism is a form of idolatry in which the dominant group assumes for itself a status higher than the other, and through its political, military, and

economic power seeks to play God in the lives of others.’ He points out that South Africa was not the only place in the world where oppression and exploitation was the daily bread of the poor and defenceless. But, what is unique in South Africa, is the role the churches, more specifically the white Dutch Reformed Churches, played. These churches provided the theological justification for this policy and worked out in detail the policy itself. In a 1948 issue of the *Kerkbode* (in Boesak 1983:6), official mouthpiece of the DRC, the following proud assertion is found:

As a church, we have always worked purposefully for the separation of the races. In this regard apartheid can rightfully be called a Church policy.

According to Boesak (1983:6), this policy ‘was “all-embracing, soteriologically loaded” complete with a theology to rationalize it. As such it has become a pseudo-gospel.’

2.4 LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Christianity initiated and justified systems of oppression, such as religious domination, colonialism and apartheid (Kotzé 2002:10). On the other hand Christian religious leaders have also been in the forefront of movements to resist the injustices and oppression of apartheid (Lubbe 1995:160; Kotzé 2002:10). A South African liberation theology developed during the struggle against apartheid (Pieterse 1998:178). The Kairos Document (1986:17) calls this a ‘prophetic theology’. It includes a ‘reading of the signs of the times’ and is also ‘a call to action’. By confronting the ‘evils of the time’ it takes a stand, clearly and unambiguously. While prophetic theology places a lot of emphasis on hope and is deeply spiritual, it is also thoroughly practical and pastoral:

Prophecy must name the sins of apartheid, injustices, oppression and tyranny in South Africa today as ‘an offence against God’ and the measures that must be taken to overcome these sins and the suffering they cause.

(The Kairos Document 1986:18)

Jesus stands in what Brueggemann (in Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:59) calls the ‘liberation trajectory’ of the prophetic tradition. The focus here is on God’s justice and

righteousness, a concern for the poor and the peasants and therefore a commitment to social transformation and the establishment of an egalitarian society.

Cochrane et al (1991:62) point out that race, class and sex discrimination support each other. In South African society, black women are triply oppressed in terms of sex, race and class and are the poorest, most marginalized people in society. Ackermann (1996:34) suggests that a feminist theology of praxis be understood as: 'critical, committed, constructive, collaborative and accountable reflection on the theories and praxis of struggle and hope for the mending of creation based on the stories and experiences of women/marginalized and oppressed people':

Liberating praxis is collaborative, sustained action for justice, liberation and healing, empowered by continuous struggle, hope and passion. It can emerge from those who have privilege and power as well as from the actions and knowledge of those who are marginalized and oppressed. Liberating praxis also promises liberation for the white community.

(Ackermann 1996:34)

2.5 CONTEXTUAL PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

According to Bosch (1991:423), contextual theologies claim that they represent an epistemological break when compared with traditional theologies. He distinguishes between the two by emphasising that traditional theologies could be seen as a theology *from above* while contextual theology is a theology *from below* with a special interest in the poor and culturally marginalized. The epistemology that informs contextual theology is summarized as follows by Bosch (1991: 424):

- A suspicion that western science, philosophy and theology were designed to serve the interest of the West;
- A refusal to endorse the world as static, as something that only has to be explained, but rather as something that has to be changed;
- A commitment as the first act of theology and then specifically commitment to the poor and marginalized;
- The notion that theology can only be done *with* those who suffer;
- An emphasis on doing theology since doing is more important than knowing or speaking (hermeneutics of the deed), and

- The notion that hermeneutic circulation starts with praxis or experience, and shifts to reflection on theory with an inter-subjective relationship between the two.

2.6 RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

2.6.1 The South African context

Reflecting on the claim of past South African constitutions that this is a “Christian country”, Petersen (1994:223) points out that this is ‘contradicted not only by the travesty of Christianity which this claim implies, but by the facts of religious pluralism themselves.’ Significant minority populations of Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, Confucians and Parsees have formed part of the South African population for many years, yet religious pluralism has not had much of an impact in theological thinking until fairly recently. Kritzinger (1998) describes how the position of power which the church occupies in relation to other religions has pushed the need to attend to the smaller, insignificant minority religions off the theological agenda.

Lubbe (1995:161) explains that religious tolerance does not mean that such people are necessarily accepted or free politically in the truest sense of the word:

An example from the South African context will illustrate this point: traditionalists, black Christians, Hindus, and Muslims were tolerated in terms of their religious beliefs but found themselves, in terms of apartheid ideology, on the receiving end of discrimination and oppression. Therefore every act of political discrimination was interpreted as discrimination against their religious beliefs as well. They were indeed tolerated but not free.

The notorious apartheid ideology with its principles of separation and segregation reflects an assumption that the existence of diversity - be it religious, cultural or ethnic - will lead to conflict, tension and even violent confrontation in any given society (Lubbe 1995:162). Lubbe continues by making a distinction between religious *pluralism* and religious *plurality*. He explains that religious plurality refers to different religious traditions that are present in one society without necessarily implying the existence of any kind of relationship between them. Religious pluralism, on the other hand, implies an active engagement with the diversity, which includes reciprocity, the search for mutual understanding and a conscious encounter of

religious commitments. As Tracy (1987:90) points out: ‘ Pluralism - more accurately, a pluralistic attitude - is one possible response to the fact of religious plurality.’

Even in *The Kairos Document* (1986) which is a theological comment on the oppressive South African regime and the “State Theology” which it proclaimed as ‘not only heretical, [but] it is blasphemous’ (1986:8), there appears a footnote which reads: ‘What is said here of Christianity and the Church could be applied, “mutatis mutandis”, to other faiths and religions in South Africa; but this particular document is addressed to ‘all who bear the name Christian’ (1986:30). To this brief concession to religious plurality a Muslim theologian, Moulana Faried Esack (in Petersen, 1994:223) responds:

The Kairos theologians have not understood the universal nature of what they have produced and so they offer it only to Christians. Their inability to do so does not stem from ‘Christian humility’ or a fear that adherents of other faiths may reject it. It comes from deep-rooted Christian (European) arrogance that leads to ignorance of other faiths and indifference to the possible contribution of their adherents to the creation of a just society.

2.6.2 Nation-building in the New South Africa

Lubbe (1995:163) states very clearly that until and unless religious pluralism exists, different religions in a particular society cannot actively participate in the building of a new society, as is our challenge in a post-apartheid South Africa. ‘Without relating to each other, different religions will not be able to promote the idea of togetherness and harmony’ (Lubbe 1995:163).

For my own understanding of my personal position as well as the view of people within my church, it was very useful to look at the stages of religious pluralism as Lubbe (1995:165-166), using Lee, describes these:

- The lowest stage of religious pluralism is that in which a particular religion hates, despises, condemns or opposes other religions. In this stage contact is seen as treacherous.
- The second stage is that in which the contact with a particular religion is entered into to make converts.

- The third stage of religious pluralism is that in which a particular religion tolerates the existence of other religions. Active contact is neither encouraged nor precluded.
- The fourth stage represents a turning point in that there is positive engagement with people of other religions, but it is handicapped in that theologians and other intellectuals typically do it rather than involving the ordinary adherents of the respective traditions.
- The fifth stage is the one in which the grassroots members of the local religious groups are involved in cooperative engagement with people from different religions. These common activities are non-liturgical in nature and constitute truly holistic encounters between different religions.

I am hoping to show that the way my work and research was done reflects this fifth stage of religious pluralism.

2.6.3 Painful rites of passage

Lubbe (1995:164) explains how, as a result of the enforced separation in South Africa, ‘it was possible for people to go through life without even once having a meaningful encounter with a person from another faith.’ This has been true of my life in relation to Muslims until about four years ago. This part of the rites of passage has not been an easy one for me, particularly as I was confronted by the attitudes of the people of my church and started feeling marginalized and criticised by them.

In my journal is an entry I made about an incident that happened at our cell group. I took some tickets along that the Muslim school was selling as part of their fund-raising to expand the school building. I was hoping to sell the tickets to my friends and family members. That particular night our cell group was talking about what God expects of us in terms of how we spend our money in helping others. I expected some questions about the purpose of the fundraiser, but was met by a fierce reaction which I put into my journal:

My request was met with an incredulous and fierce: ‘ We will not support the Muslims’ cause.’ I hoped for more compassion. This reaction by the group was followed by stories from a couple in the group of how the Muslims and other “unwelcome” intruders are taking over Europe and them expressing their support for actions and movements to rid the community of unwanted elements such as gays and people of other religions!

I was so sad and upset! As we drove home, I asked Jaco (my husband) what he thought of their reaction and he said that he was not surprised. I cried and started questioning my own beliefs, by asking him whether he thought that they were right and that that was the Christian way to react. He did not think so and said that he agreed with me. I explained that I'm not betraying Christ when I love and care for Muslim people and want to help them to build a bigger school. I told him again about how I was reaching out because of my awareness of the effects of Apartheid on all people of colour and how they suffered and how I was and still am a beneficiary of that system WHICH WAS SUPPORTED BY MY CHURCH.

2.6.4 Seeking guidance

I remembered a voice from my church that sounded very different to that of the people in our cell-group. Prof Chris Greyling, an expert on the Islam, preached in our church a few years ago. I remember the sympathetic and clear way in which he spoke, his reading from the Koran and his effort to introduce the congregation to the Islamic faith. It took me a few weeks to gather the courage to try and make contact with him. How big was my surprise to discover that he now lives in Somerset West. On contacting him, I was amazed at his generosity in agreeing to give of his time to read my Research Proposal and chapter 3 of the thesis and discuss the work with me.

We had a very rich and, for me, an affirming conversation. I cannot really do justice to what I learnt in a synopsis of that conversation, but want to highlight some of the ideas that stood out for me:

- Professor Greyling reflected on the teamwork in the work with the boys (chapter 3) who stole and said that he thought that trust, participation and co-operation were crucial elements in the work of the 'healing team.'
- Professor Greyling emphasised the love and care, 'the crying with those who cry', the willingness to take risks, to walk the extra mile and to be vulnerable that was part of living the example of Christ, our role model.
- Regarding the reaction of some other Christians, he reminded me of the life of Jesus and how the Jews were upset with Jesus for speaking to the Samaritan woman, for mixing with tax collectors, sinners and prostitutes.

- Professor Greyling also pointed out that a friendship stemming from teamwork is a prerequisite for deep sharing. That provides the bridges which makes sharing of faith and prayer possible.
- Professor Greyling emphasised the importance of understanding and respecting the faith of Muslim people. He pointed out the similarities and commonalities, saying that we need to familiarize ourselves with (the) Islam if we hope to have meaningful interaction and cooperation.
- Professor Greyling referred to the Jihad (holy war) by saying that his witnessing about his faith is not a Jihad, but rather speaks of the love of Christ.

2.7 ISLAM AND MUSLIMS

2.7.1 Introduction

Maqsood (1998:8) clearly states that ‘Muslim’ does not refer to a person who happens to have been born to a Muslim family, but that being a Muslim is a matter of deep personal conviction. Muslims are people who have committed themselves to the submission to God’s will as it was expressed in the particular revelations given to the Arabian Prophet Muhammad. These revelations are now collected into a book known as the Holy Koran. ‘There is no deity except Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ From this expression of belief in the Oneness and Uniqueness of Allah and the messengership of Muhammad stem all of Islam’s concepts, attitudes, moral values and guidelines for human behaviour and relationships (Haneef 1994:3).

The Islamic concept of “prophet” is not the same as in Judaism and Christianity. ‘Rather it denotes one who is very near to Allah through the total surrender of his entire being to Him and who receives revelations from Him which constitute a source of guidance for men’ (Haneef 1994:24). According to Islam, Adam was the first prophet, Abraham, the next major prophet and, from Abraham, came a long line of prophets through his two sons Ishmael and Isaac, including Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, John the Baptist and Jesus. The Koran states, like the Bible, that Jesus was born of a virgin mother by the power of Allah. The notion of the divinity or Sonship of Jesus, the Koran asserts, is completely contrary to the true

message that Jesus brought of the Oneness and Uniqueness of Allah and his insistence that Allah alone - not himself - was to be worshipped and obeyed.

Muhammad, who is believed to be the messenger of Allah, was born nearly six hundred years after Jesus in Makkah, Arabia which was then a decadent and pagan society. Muhammad was charged with the message to warn these people. He and his small group of followers met with severe persecution and, after thirteen years of patient preaching and bearing with these trials, Allah opened the possibility to the Prophet and his followers of migrating to the city of Madinah some three hundred miles distant. In Madinah the parts of the Koran constituting legislation concerning various matters were revealed and were cast into form. Even in Madinah there was no peace for the prophet and his community and they had to resist continued threats and military expeditions by the pagans. After some nine years, the Prophet returned to Makkah as the leader and ruler of a small populace of followers. He was able to enter the Ka'aba, the sacred house of Allah's worship built in antiquity by the prophets Abraham and Ishmael, and break the idols into pieces and purify the Ka'aba for the worship of Allah. Prophet Mohammad left behind two permanent, unchangeable sources of guidance: the Holy Koran and his Sunnah – that is, his own example and practise, the details of which were collected in verbal reports known as the Habiths and were presented as the second source of guidance in Islam after the Koran.

2.7.2 The five pillars of Islam

Central to the Islamic teaching and way of life are various obligatory acts of worship (*ibadat*), which are often referred to as the 'Five pillars of Islam.' Haneef (1994) describes these as follows:

- Declaration of faith (*Shahadah*): The first act of worship is to believe with the heart and declare with the tongue that there is no deity except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.
- Prayer (*Salat*): *Salat* consists of recitation from the holy Koran and glorification of Allah accompanied by various bodily postures. The five times of worship correspond to the five periods of the day: daybreak, noon, afternoon, the close of day and night. The performance of ablution precedes the prayer.

- Fasting (*Sawn*): Islam establishes a lunar calendar. The ninth month, Ramadan, is the month in which the first revelation of the Koran came to the Holy Prophet. The fast of Ramadan has been prescribed in order to train Muslims in self-discipline and scrupulous obedience to Allah's commands. The fast of Ramadan involves total abstinence from all food, drink and marital relations throughout the daylight hours.
- Poor-Due (*Zakar*): Islam proclaims that the true Owner of everything is not man, but Allah. This act of worship is an obligatory form of giving to those in need. The word *Zakar* literally means "purification": the payment of 2½ % per year on capital or cash, which is beyond the need of the person, serves as a purification of the remaining possessions of the person and makes these legal and permissible. In turn, *zakar* also purifies the heart of the recipient from envy and hatred of others who are better off.
- Pilgrimage (*Hajj*): This pilgrimage to Makkah in Saudi Arabia constitutes a form of worship with the totality of a Muslim's being: with his body, mind and soul, with his time, possessions and the temporary sacrifice of all ordinary comforts, convenience and tokens of status which humans normally enjoy, to assume for a few days the condition of a pilgrim totally at Allah's service and disposal, his slave who seeks only His pleasure.

2.7.3 Theft in Islam

'As to the thief, male or female, cut off their hands: a punishment by way of an example' (5:41 in Maqsood 1998:273). Although the Koran lays down a severe punishment for theft, it is not true that, in Islam, as soon as a theft has been detected the guilty person gets instantly dragged off for the amputation of limbs. The circumstances are carefully examined. If it can be proven that a person stole out of dire need - because the individual or family was starving - there would be no question of losing a hand. Hands should only be amputated when a person was a persistent thief and then only to act as a deterrent. Haneef (1994:102) points out:

Respect for the property and possessions of others, as for one's own, is required. In a society in which *zakar* is in effect, and where widespread voluntary Charity is practiced, stealing due to poverty becomes unnecessary and criminal.

2.8 PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING IN MUSLIM CULTURE

2.8.1 Muslim Judicial Council

I was interested in the ways in which the Muslims do pastoral therapy and care. Mr Fanie arranged for me to meet with the head of the Social Welfare Department at the Muslim Judicial Council, Imam Abdul Mou'tie Saban, in Athlone, Cape Town. Chidester (1992) writes that the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) was formed in 1945 in the interest of Muslim unity, but also to voice a protest against oppressive laws and government policies. It is interesting to note, however, that the Muslims were not exclusive in their original statement of purpose. It was stated that the MJC was founded 'in the interest of all Non-Europeans, who should at all times, irrespective of race or creed, join forces against the oppressive forces which are endeavouring to retard their progress in all spheres in this country' (Chidester 1992:168). This fits with the ideas that minority religions are far more willing to recognise and cooperate with other religions than those who are in positions of power.

2.8.2 Meeting Imam Abdul Mou'tie Saban

Imam Saban explained to me that he had been working in the position as of head of Social Welfare at the MJC for the past twenty years. He is also a senior marriage counsellor who has his own weekly programme called *Happy Families in Happy Homes* on *Voice of the Cape*, the Muslim community Radio Station. Imam Saban is the author of books on marriage.

It is within the family that a Muslim child receives from the parents the God-fearing examples in speaking and behaviour. Imam Saban explained that the Koran says that every shepherd will be answerable for his flock: this refers to the father being responsible for the family unit. Muslim children are expected to attend Muslim school in the afternoons to learn to read the Koran and in that way, their characters are moulded and their behaviour shaped. If they do not attend, it implies a lack of discipline on the part of the parents. Parents are also responsible for teaching and guiding their children to perform their prayers from the age of seven. The steadfast performance of prayers brings the child in touch with his Creator.

Imam Saban was interested to know that I was doing a degree in theology. He spoke about his school years at the Moravian School, a Christian Mission School, which he attended because

there were no other options available then. Despite growing up in a home where his father was an Imam, he was forced to attend the Bible classes at school and turned out to become the top Bible student of his class! He firmly believes that it is important for people to know and understand other people's religions in order to promote respect and cooperation. Imam Saban finds the lack of discipline and respect in school shocking. He feels that clergy should be invited to schools at least once a week to participate in religious instruction through which children would learn to respect religious practices. He referred to a school where special facilities were made available to Muslim children for the performance of ablution before prayers in the middle of the day. It was found that, after returning from the Mosque, children learnt better and found the work easier.

Imam Saban says that he finds a tremendous lack of education in what (the) Islam requires in most of the couples attending marriage classes. To him this is the result of a society that has moved away from God. He advocates an approach that will take people back to basics of religious principles and practices. As far as I could understand from him, this implies that the strict, but simple, rules must be obeyed. For example he mentioned that the Koran does not say: 'Do not commit adultery' but it says: 'Do not go near it.' Taking it to the extreme. To illustrate, he used two examples. One was the period of waiting which is prescribed for a divorced woman: she has to wait three months after her divorce before she can marry again. The other example applied to us as we were sitting in the office together. I was aware of a big window behind me. People walking in the passage were looking in. I was curious about this, especially as this was not the way to "protect" the privacy of clients that I used in my practice. Imam Saban explained that in Islam it was not proper for a man and a woman who are not married to be in a room together on their own - there has to be a third person present. To protect male counsellors and their female clients they had the windows put in so as to provide visual access instead of the third person.

2.8.3 Caring for others

Mr Fanie (principal of the Strand Muslim School) and I had interesting discussions about what Islam teaches regarding serving and caring for others. He explained that it is the responsibility of Muslims to help those in need. Service to others is called making "ikraam" which can be done in a variety of ways. There are many stories to illustrate how people did this.

One story is about the man who carried water to the wounded on the battlefield. He hears a person, who is very seriously wounded and busy dying, calling for water. The water carrier runs to him with the water and, as he pours out the water, another person cries out for water. The person who called the man first then sends him away saying: ‘Go to that brother - he needs the water more.’ The water carrier then runs to the second person and, as he wants to give him water, the third person cries out for water. Hearing that, the second man told him to go to the third man. By the time he had reached the third man he found that he had died. He then went back to the second man to find him dead too and, on his return to the first man, he was also found dead. Even in times of need people should think of others first, that is “Ikraam Muslim.”

Mr Fanie explained more about Zakar, the poor due. He said that you don’t give it to do good, but rather that it is your responsibility to give and the right of the poor person to receive that assistance. Some communities establish a communal body called the Beitul Maal and the Zakar is deposited into a fund. The money is then used to distribute monthly food parcels and clothing to people in need. Sometimes the money is used for study bursaries. It is a way of administrating funds and ensuring that the maximum of people get the benefit from it.

I asked about what emotional and other types of support were available when people had been traumatized. Mr Fanie explained about Lila: that is, doing good to others by helping and supporting them purely for God’s sake and for no other reason. You don’t expect anything in return; you just see the need and give your support.

2.9 RACE: DIFFERENCE AND SAMENESS

2.9.1 Race cognisance

‘The very use of the term “race” raises the idea of difference, for “race” is above all a marker of difference, an axis of differentiation’ (Frankenberg 1993:138). Larson (in Bernard & Goodyear 1992:194) defined minorities in terms of power. Larson explains that a definition of majority must revolve around the ‘over-representation of white males of European descent in positions of relative power in our society.’ Although black people were the numerical majority in South Africa, they were the minorities because of their reduced status. As pointed

out earlier, the structural violence in South Africa under the previous apartheid government was the result of racism (Pieterse 1998:177).

I identified very strongly with the research reported by Frankenberg (1993) involving white American women's mode of thinking through race. She argues that three discursive repertoires – essential racism, colour and power evasion, and race cognisance – together constitute a universe of discourse on race difference and racism in the narratives of the women she interviewed. Frankenberg (1993) explains that the status of the white person was at stake in these repertoires so that one key element of colour and power evasion is the production of a white self-innocent of racism. The colour-evasion was also structured in such a way as to assert the idea of cross-racial common humanity, albeit on white-centred terms, at the same time as it averts the white gaze from the harsh realities of power imbalance. Even in a New South Africa, essential racism - the notion that race makes a difference at the level of biology and being - continues to furnish elements of white people's thinking, although the language white people use is more that of colour and power evasion. Frankenberg (1993:189) makes the point that:

because race has been made into a difference, later discursive repertoires cannot simply abolish it but must engage it. And because race difference was produced in *essentialist* rather than any other terms, it is to those essentialist terms that later critique remains accountable.

What Frankenberg (1993:157) describes as race cognizance insists on the importance of recognizing difference, but with difference understood in historical, political, social, or cultural terms rather than essential ones. In accordance with Frankenberg's ideas I accept that race makes a difference in people's lives and that racism is a significant factor in shaping contemporary South African society.

2.9.2 The myth of sameness and therapy

One of the factors that contribute to the complexity of appreciating difference and sameness is that each is a partial truth (Bernard & Goodyear 1992:195). The 'myth of sameness' is the error of most helping professionals who are convinced that their skills are generic and could be applied to individuals of varying backgrounds (Smith in Bernard & Goodyear 1992:195):

If viewed only in the context of his or her universality, a person loses his or her individuality; if viewed only in the context of individuality, the person loses a sense of connectedness with humanity; if viewed only in the context of group membership, an individual is stereotyped. The delicate task in counseling is to integrate all three views when working with clients. Although the task is important in dealing with any client, it is paramount in dealing with a client whose minority background makes the group membership dimension take on more importance.

(Larson in Bernard & Goodyear 1992:195)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, I was one of the therapists who thought that my skills could be applied universally. In working within the context and with the help of a cultural consultant in this project I attempted to attend to the differences that group membership brings. (See Chapters 3, 4 and 5.) I hoped to form some understanding for the concerns of the mothers for their children by focusing on the similarities between us, as Ferial Johnson also notes in Chapter 5 (5.3.2). The boys' connection with each other as a group was very important in the support they provided for each other; yet looking at each individual story assisted me in understanding the complexities of their individual lives, as reflected in Chapter 3 and 5.

2.9.3. Stages in the development of cross-cultural awareness

Christensen (in Bernard & Goodyear 1992:206) describes five stages that therapists will experience as they develop cross-cultural awareness:

- Stage 1: Unawareness. Serious thought has never been given to cultural, ethnic or racial difference or their meaning and influence for individuals and groups.
- Stage 2: Beginning awareness. Accompanied by uneasiness and beginning sense of cognitive dissonance.
- Stage 3: Conscious awareness. Evidence of sometimes conflicting preoccupation with cultural, ethnic, and racial differences and their possible meanings in historical and present-day context.
- Stage 4: Consolidated awareness. Characterized by involved commitment to seek positive societal change and promote intergroup understanding. Experiences differences as positive and rewarding.
- Stage 5: Transcendent awareness. Beyond limitations of societal dictates regarding appropriate and acceptable manner for relating to various cultural,

racial, and ethnic groups. Cross-cultural awareness is a way of life at this stage.

I agree with Kotzé (1994:114) that within the South African context, therapists need to identify their own position and pain regarding the use and effects of power on a socio-political level:

Acknowledging the multiplicity of ourselves moves the emphasis from visiting to constantly trying to co-create communities, and onto the multisidedness of the therapist as well. This brings forth the idea that everybody involved in the process both needs to and can give healing – in many different forms – and that our healing potential is mobilized through an encounter with our own pain and difficulty.

(Lifschitz & Oosthuizen 2001:127)

2.10 FEMINIST ETHICS AND PRAXIS

2.10.1 Communicative ethics

Communicative ethics assumes that one's own identity rests upon debates and dialogue with the other, 'resting on a strong definition of difference and alterity' (Graham 1996:154). Benhabib (in Welch 1990:127 and Graham 1996:154) refer to the 'generalized other' and the 'concrete other'. The former sees the individual as a rational being, neutral and interchangeable, so that justice rests on treating others as one would wish to be treated in return: thus morality is based on similarity and equality. There is no need to take into account the individuality and concrete identity of the other. Benhabib questions the validity of the generalized other as it ignores the differences in political power and in the definition of norms and strategies. The notion of the 'concrete other' regards everyone as specific, diverse and heterogeneous. It is about interaction, encounter and reciprocity. Communicative ethics works for Benhabib because it makes possible a procedure of interaction and dialogue 'among actual selves who are both "generalized others" considered as equal moral agents, and "concrete others," that is individuals with irreducible difference' (Benhabib in Graham 1996:155).

2.10.2 Stories

Within an ethics of risk, Welch (1990:128) states that moral reasoning cannot be carried out by any one theorist but requires dialogue with actual members of different communities. It

requires openness to others' history and the ability to learn from the critical claims that history bears. In this study, the stories of people from minority groups are used to create understanding of problems and why they are important. Ballard (1996:106) quotes bell hooks who suggests that women of color as well as other minority groups must theorize and advance their cause in their own voice if they are to overcome their domination:

I think that research as stories can be part of the complex web of experiences that will help us understand and value our differences, our common humanity, and our interdependencies. That must be a good basis, if not an impetus, for action.

(Ballard 1996:106)

2.10.3 Embodiment

I position myself with a feminist theology of praxis that accepts that all perceived reality and all knowledge is mediated through our bodies. 'The power to love one another as much as the power to injure another begins in our bodies. We are our bodies' (Ackermann 1998:87). Ackermann (1998:87) reminds us that under apartheid our bodies defined our reality with 'sickening precision.' Our bodies defined whether we were stigmatised or advantaged and, since so much damage was done to bodies under apartheid, we are compelled to reflect on the body theologically:

[E]mbodiment is more than an "issue" exciting our compassion; rather, it points to the performative, incarnational nature of all theology. Bodily praxis is the agent and the vehicle of divine reality and the faith practices of the body of Christ are 'sacraments' of suffering and redemption.

(Graham, in Ackermann 2001:21)

Reflecting on the role of the church in the struggle against HIV/AIDS in South Africa, Ackermann (2001:22) points out that the Gospel demands embodied acts of care, comfort, support and acceptance. I want to conclude with Ackermann (2001:24) when she quotes Birch and Rasmussen who say that 'in both Jewish and Christian traditions faith's truth is finally a performative one. Faith becomes real when it is embodied.'

This chapter speaks of the ideas that informed the pastoral care and counselling that I offered. Chapter 3 will describe the performance of that care and counselling in greater detail.

CHAPTER 3

WORKING WITH CHILDREN WHO STEAL

3.1 MAKING THE CONNECTION

3.1.1 So close and yet so far

Bridget accompanied me to the Muslim School that first day. We drove into an industrial area in the Strand and then I saw the Mosque with the school building on the premises. Although I have lived ten kilometers from this area for many years, this was my first visit to the school. At the time I was also doing work with children at my son's school in the neighbourhood where we live and I could not help but notice the differences. It was June and cold and wet in the Western Cape. The school grounds were muddy and full of potholes filled with water. I did not see the green sport fields that surround the schools that I am used to visiting. The building needed paint, and in the narrow passage inside, there were gas stoves with huge pots of soup on them. In a small crowded passage we were met by the friendly face of June Fairburne, the school secretary, and invited into the office of the principal, Mr Fanie. He greeted us warmly. I noticed that his office was about the size of the principal's desk at my son's school.

3.1.2 Meeting the principal and hearing about the problem

Mr Fanie told us about the problem with six boys, between the ages of ten and twelve, who had been stealing together since their crèche years as pre-schoolers. He said that they had tried everything to help the boys, but concluded: 'They are not afraid of punishment or the police. Nothing puts them off.' He explained that the boys were spending many long hours in his office almost every week and that, on some occasions he had had to accompany them to the police station to give statements. Often the principal had to talk to shop owners and other people from the community to get the boys out of trouble after incidents of stealing. He was concerned that this could be the beginning of gang activities and serious criminal careers for these boys.

3.1.3 Working with a cultural consultant

While I listened to Mr Fanie, I thought of what Bridget told me about this school: how rewarding she found it to work with Mr Fanie and his staff because of their commitment to, concern for, and involvement with the children and their whole community. I was struck by how well he seemed to know the children and their families. In my mind was also the workshop of the Just Therapy group from Lower-Hut New Zealand (Campbell et al 1999) and their insistence that you need a cultural consultant when working in a culture significantly different from your own:

Because it (Just Therapy) is about meaning, professional therapists, when working with people from cultures significantly different from their own, are required to defer to key people from those cultures. It is these people who have been tutored in the cultural meaning patterns through their life experience; this knowledge cannot be taught in an academic institution.

(Waldegrave 1990:20)

I had a sense that Mr Fanie would be just such a key person to consult with regularly regarding the cultural meaning patterns of the families with whom I would work.

3.1.4 Positioning myself

I brought with me seven years of experience of working in schools with children who had special educational needs. This helped me to understand a little about how schools and Education Departments work. I was very aware of my position as a guest and an outsider. I knew that Mr Fanie, as the principal, would be the person to whom I would be accountable in being and working in the school. I wanted to be as transparent as possible about my position. I explained that I regarded this as an opportunity to serve the community and that I also hoped to develop skills and to learn about and from the people with whom I consulted. I also wanted to make sure that my involvement would not cause problems with the Education Department. We discussed this and it was decided that Bridget would make enquiries in this regard and inform us about the procedures to follow. I undertook to keep her and Mr Fanie informed about the progress of the work.

3.1.5 Finding a space to work

Once again I was a bit surprised to find a school that had no extra offices or classrooms to offer for the work, as Mr Fanie and Bridget spoke about it. There was no space where I could meet with the boys. It was decided that the Iqra Hall, a Muslim community hall which was situated a block from the school, would have to do. We decided that I would meet the boys and their parents the following week to explain my involvement to them and to find out whether they would be willing to work with me. Mr Fanie undertook to contact everyone concerned in order to inform them of the meeting.

3.2 GETTING STARTED

3.2.1 Performance anxiety gives me a hard time

In my own eyes, I was a complete novice at doing what I was required to do: work in a different culture and practise the application of narrative therapy ideas. I was, however, aware of the expectations that come with my professional status as psychologist and that this was the reason why I was asked to help in the first place. I was extremely excited about the opportunity to try, but my mind was a complete blank as to how to tackle this.

I searched frantically through all the Narrative Therapy literature I had and I stumbled upon a chapter by Seymour and Epston (1992), reporting their work with 45 children who had been stealing. They described ways of focusing on reputation rather than investigating the ‘truth’. I also bought into the idea that the task at hand was to regrade a child from ‘stealer’ to ‘honest person with a good reputation’:

By placing the advice for management of stealing incidents in a context of opportunity for the child to regain an ‘honest’ reputation, children, along with their parents, are offered a therapy of empowerment and dignity.

(Seymour & Epston 1992:203)

I now had ideas about working with choices about a “criminal career” or an “honesty career”, but was not at all sure about the steps to take so went into my first meeting just to meet the boys and their parents.

3.2.2 First meeting: Passing the buck

I arrived at the school that morning for our first meeting and was taken to the Iqra Hall, a big space with chairs piled up around the walls and a stage in the front. We made a big circle for the six boys and four of their mothers who came in response to Mr Fanie's notice to them. As I looked around the circle, I was struck by the state of the clothes of some of the boys. They were torn, either too big or too small, and often not in the colours of the official school uniform at all. The boys sat with bowed heads, waiting for the adults to speak. This behaviour corresponded with the observation by Seymour and Epston (1989:196) that: 'Children who steal are used to adults interrogating them about their behaviour and its motivation and have often learned a manner of response that is passive and avoidant.'

Some mothers had babies and toddlers with them and looked tired and troubled. As we sat in the circle I tried to find out their understanding of why the principal had referred them to speak to me. It turned out to be a confusing, passing-the-buck activity of: "It wasn't me, it was him." Even the mothers spoke very little about their own children, but expressed grave concern about the bad influence which the wrong friends were having on their children. I heard detailed stories of each child's innocence. Sometimes I had to smile at how they described standing in a spot where a theft or burglary had taken place and claiming to have had no involvement whatsoever: 'Wat ek daar staan, sien ek net die manne klim deur die venster met die goed. Wassie ekkie, was so-en-so.' (I just stood there and then I saw another boy climbing through the window with the stolen goods. Wasn't me, it was so-and-so.) Judging by what I heard that day, the principal had obviously sent me all the good guys by mistake! I realised that speaking in the presence of others made it very difficult for the mothers to voice their concerns. Instead, they became defensive and blaming of others. I asked if they would be interested in meeting me alone with their children at some other time: they were willing to do that. I needed to speak to each family separately and scheduled times to meet with them accordingly.

3.2.3 Tension between thinking of a gang of boys or of individual boys

On reflecting on this first meeting with a group of parents and children who had been referred because of problematic behaviour that often occurred in a group context, I was reminded of the conflict I had experienced then: was this a problem that belonged to different individual

boys and their families or to a gang of boys and their families? On the one hand, they were referred as a group. I think that was what motivated us to arrange that first meeting as a group meeting. Discussing the outcome of that meeting with Mr Fanie, we both realized that it was rather insensitive to expect disclosure of stealing behaviour in front of others. Mr Fanie said that he could understand that parents would find it very difficult to speak about this kind of behaviour in the presence of others.

Another challenge I experienced was the conclusion held by many of the parents that their child was under the “bad influence of wrong friends” and that, if the friendships could be split up, the bad behaviour would stop. If I went along with this idea, it would mean speaking to these boys about the bad influence of others and setting up ways to get them to make new friends. Apart from it being fairly unrealistic to expect them to stop mixing in such a small school and close-knit community, my sense was that I would then be caught up in discussions about who the real bad boys were, while shifting the responsibility away from the boy sitting with me at that particular time.

In my discussions with David Epston later, he expressed the hope that the “gang” would act as a strength in supporting the boys to change their reputations. As will be seen later on, this turned out to be the case for the four boys who were in the same class.

3.2.4 The “language of the oppressor”, a strong connection

The majority of the so-called coloured people in the Western Cape speak Afrikaans in a very rich colloquial way unique to them. I grew up on a farm in the Western Cape and, for many years as a child, my friends and playmates were the “coloured” children of the laborers on the farm. I love their way of speaking and missed it terribly at times when I lived in other parts of the country. For many South Africans, Afrikaans is the language of the oppressor. Yet, for me at that time, it seemed like a powerful shared bond with a place of beauty and it provided me with at least one tool we could use with ease and comfort in our conversations. It gave me great joy to listen to the boys and their mothers speak in this wonderful way.

3.2.5 Permission from educational authorities

I worked closely with Mr Fanie, keeping him up-to-date about plans and actions. If he was not available for me to speak to after meetings, I phoned or left notes and letters for him. I also regularly faxed Bridget Hamley-Wise at the school clinic updates on the process. Mr Fanie informed me that the Education Department requested a letter from me stating my intent and the work I planned on doing at the school. I was happy to position myself clearly. The Education Department sent some documents with guidelines for outside practitioners doing sessions in schools.

3.3 GETTING TO KNOW THE BOYS AND THEIR PARENTS

After the session with all the boys and four of their mothers, I felt that I needed to get to know the circumstances of each boy and his family a bit better. I was also interested in getting to know the children apart from the problem (Freeman et al 1997). In the sessions that followed, I asked questions about the “bad name for stealing.” They shared about their lives in a more open and trusting way. Seeing and hearing about the challenges these families were facing filled me with sadness and fear for the future of the children. In an attempt to do justice to their struggle, I briefly share some of their individual stories.

3.3.1 Dyllan and Joan

I met Dyllan for the first time in the big group where he was the most outspoken of the boys. He appeared to be a leader, looked me in the eye and did not seem to be intimidated by the presence of the adults. This time I met him with Joan, his foster mother. Joan is Dyllan’s biological mother’s sister. She is a single mother with one son of her own. Her son, Paul, is twenty-one years old and Joan is very proud of him. Paul passed matric with a university exemption at the age of seventeen and has managed to buy his own car. Joan has worked as a housekeeper for the same employer for the past twenty years. She seemed very well groomed, walked proudly and spoke quietly but confidently. Dyllan and his brother, who was eight at the time, have lived with their aunt and cousin since their stepfather murdered their mother two years previously. Dyllan’s own father has been in jail since shortly after his birth. Joan

explained that her two nephews have been exposed to a lot of violence and alcohol abuse in their mother's home.

Joan said that she experienced disciplinary problems with Dyllan at home as he is inclined to 'back chat' and fight with his brother. Following narrative practices in getting to the alternative story, I asked her about qualities that she appreciated about Dyllan. Joan spoke about how helpful he is around the house, saying that he was very skilled with making his own bed, washing the dishes and cleaning. She also told me how Dyllan had brought her some flowers that he had picked in the veld on Mothers' Day. Joan said that Dyllan does well at school and that he 'brings home a lovely school report.' She said that he plays the recorder at Sunday school. They are a Christian family and church and Sunday school attendance is an important part of their lives. It also transpired that Dyllan and his brother enjoy the regular outings organized by the Welfare agency that supervises their foster care.

Dyllan told me about his love for rugby and soccer. He said that a photo of him running at an athletics meeting had appeared in a community newspaper, *The Helderberg*. That was a big thrill and Joan said that they had sent a copy of that photo to his cousin who was working as an au pair in Switzerland.

We spoke about Dyllan's reputation for stealing and Joan said that Dyllan's mother would have 'wanted Dyllan to walk the right path with his life.' I asked Dyllan whether he thought his cousin, Paul, would be interested in supporting him in standing against trouble and stealing and he said he thought Paul would. I then took out a writing pad and wrote the following letter to Paul. As I wrote, I kept checking before writing the next words and I could see that Dyllan was happy about the letter. Joan agreed to give it to Paul:

Dear Paul

I have spoken to your mother, Joan, and cousin, Dyllan. Your mother told me how Dyllan helps her with the household tasks. Your mother also said that Dyllan is a good rugby player and that he even had his photo in the newspaper. I was also pleased to hear that Dyllan brings home such good school reports.

We wondered if you would be interested in supporting Dyllan in his effort to take a stand against trouble such as stealing, disobedience and bad friends? Your mother told

me that she is so proud of you as you were hardworking, obedient and honest when you were Dyllan's age.

We will keep you informed about Dyllan's progress.

Regards

Elize Morkel

Although I felt sad about the violence and tragedy that was part of Dyllan's past, I was impressed with the caring and supportive environment which Joan seemed to provide for him and his brother. They also spoke about the winter holidays the next week and the planned visit to their aunts and cousins. We agreed that I would contact them again after the holidays.

3.3.2 Yusuf and Rashieda

Yusuf is a tall, handsome Muslim boy with the big sad brown eyes of a doe and a smooth skin. His mother, Rashieda, seemed to welcome the opportunity to speak to me as she was burdened by many worries about her family. It was obvious that Yusuf and Rashieda were very sad about the death of Yusuf's father the previous year. He died of lung cancer. Rashieda explained that her late husband had spent fifteen years in jail during which his health had suffered. She said that he was a very committed Muslim who read the Koran and prayed regularly in jail. She knows that his smoking and dagga habits were not good for his lungs and expressed concern that Yusuf would get involved with dagga and cigarettes. Yusuf has two sisters of nineteen and seventeen respectively. Yusuf is Rashieda's only son, has his late father's name and she felt very protective of him.

Rashieda was very troubled by her eldest daughter's marriage to a gangster. She explained that her elder daughter fell pregnant in Grade 7 and married against her mother's wishes. Her son-in-law had been in jail for murder, but was released. Her daughter works at the Quick Spar and lives with her husband and three-year-old daughter in Rashieda's home. Her son-in-law sets a bad example with his violent behaviour and her daughter abuses alcohol over weekends. Her other daughter was also at home, having left school in Grade 9. She cannot find work. The family was struggling financially, but received help from the Muslim Council in the form of food parcels.

Rashieda very openly expressed her concern for the trouble that Yusuf has become involved in. She felt that it was mainly since her husband's death that Yusuf has been involved with 'bad friends' and 'taking things'. My impression was that she was particularly worried about one of the friends, Alie, and his influence on Yusuf. She said that Alie's mother is inclined to 'cover up' his trouble, but that Alie has a brother who was also in a reformatory. When I asked about the reputation for stealing, Rashieda said that her late husband had set a good example by clearing his name before he died. Yusuf seemed to agree that he would want to try to do that.

Through all the stories of pain and hardship, I managed to ask a few questions about Yusuf. I gathered that Yusuf enjoys playing TV-games at a neighbour's house. He has to pay 50c to play there, but Rashieda felt it was better to spend the money like that rather than 'having him on the street.' He was not allowed to play rugby as his mother did not want him to get hurt, but Yusuf enjoyed watching rugby matches on a Sunday.

Our conversation took an unexpected turn when Rashieda asked me about my surname: 'Who is your husband?' This is a common question as the land in Strand and Somerset West belonged to the Morkel family and their descendants still live in the area. People normally think that I might be married to one of the medical doctors from that family. I am very used to saying that my husband's family is not closely related to the local Morkels and that would end the conversation. Yet, this time Rashieda persisted by saying: 'My late husband worked as a painter for Terry Morkel, the attorney.' I nearly fell off my chair, as Terry is Jaco's only cousin working in the area! Rashieda was very excited to learn this and told me how well Terry treated the late Yusuf. From this very unexpected source emerged a strong connection filled with goodwill.

3.3.3 Marshall and Ann

Ann did not come to the session. I only got to know her after the school holidays. Mr Fanie informed me that Marshall is the eldest of four children, of whom the youngest is a baby. His father has cancer and receives a disability grant. His mother is unemployed. Both parents abuse alcohol and the children often don't have food or adequate adult supervision and care.

3.3.4 Alie and Fatima

Fatima struck me as a strong woman who spoke confidently and in no uncertain terms. Alie appeared rather timid and withdrawn next to his mother. Alie is the second child in a family with four children. Fatima told me that she and the children moved back to the Strand from Benoni where they had lived for ten years. Her husband lost his job and he joined them in the Strand. He was working as a golf caddy at that stage. Fatima said that he was a keen golfer and earned well in that job.

Fatima expressed grave concern about Alie's learning problems. She explained that he had serious problems with reading and that his speech was also problematic. He had repeated Grade 1 and had struggled with schoolwork ever since. She then said that he did very well in Maths and in the Muslim classes, but, in the same breath, told me that his Muslim teacher complains about his hyperactive behavior in class. I found this account of Alie a bit confusing.

Regarding Alie's reputation for stealing, Fatima explained that he was the innocent bystander in three serious incidents of stealing. She also named various children who were having a "bad influence" on Alie by bribing him to do wrong things for them. She said that Mr Adams has put him into the rugby team to keep him out of trouble. Alie told me that he liked rugby. They then told me about the rugby tour to New Zealand and how much Alie wanted to go. Fatima spoke very proudly of how hard the children and their parents are working to collect money and sponsorships for the tour. Then she said: 'Where Muslims work for something they are able to really work together well.' She told me that she came from a Christian family, but converted to Islam when she married her husband. She is a very proud and committed Muslim.

Alie was very quiet throughout the conversation. His mother was inclined to speak on his behalf or urge him to answer in an authoritarian way when I tried to include him in the conversation.

3.3.5 Achmat and Nadeema

Nadeema spoke frankly about the troubles in their life as she saw them. She explained that Achmat is her second eldest child. She and her eldest son, who is from another relationship, were working at a garage to support the family. Her husband who had been retrenched from a job that he had had for twenty years, had been unemployed for a while. At that time he was serving a prison sentence for failing to pay maintenance for an illegitimate child. Nadeema explained that she was working shifts and that the children were often unsupervised at home.

Although she said that Achmat had never taken anything at home, she knew about his reputation for stealing and expressed concern about it. She complained about teasing and fighting at home amongst the children. I asked about discipline. Achmat said that his mother was too strict and her punishment too severe. She hits him with a belt all over his body. They both agreed that all the beating doesn't really help.

They told me that Achmat had managed to stop wetting the bed with the help of a Muslim psychologist to whom Mr Fanie had referred them at Nadeema's request. That was a big achievement for Achmat and he was proud of his accomplishment. He also told me about his rugby and that Mr Adams was his trainer. He said that his photo was in the *District Mail*, a community newspaper.

3.3.6 Anthony, Linda and Karl

Anthony, looking very shabby in very odd clothes compared to the other pupils, arrived with both his parents and five-year-old twin sisters. His father was very articulate. He said that he had his matric and had worked as a storeman and salesman at Timber City, but that he was retrenched and was not working at the time. Linda had a char job for one day a week and they struggled a lot with money. Her mother helped them financially. They said that both of them abused alcohol and that it caused problems in their home.

They expressed their concern about Anthony's behaviour by saying that they had been called in by a social worker about the stealing. They said that they lived far from the school and that Anthony arrived late for school. He never came home directly after school, but got up to mischief. They have considered 'sending him away' because of all his problem behaviour.

They told me that Anthony was born with half an oesophagus and that he has problems with swallowing his food and keeping it in. He has had many operations since birth. He also has speech problems and struggles with quite a severe stutter. Karl said that he thought Anthony was a bright boy, good in Maths and very good with drawings. Anthony also enjoyed playing cricket.

3.4 CONSULTING THE EXPERTS

3.4.1 Understanding Muslim culture and stealing

I was troubled by the poverty of most of the families I met. I was even wondering whether it was fair to expect children to stop stealing if that was sometimes their only way to get food. I also wondered how Islam regarded stealing. Mr Fanie explained that in some countries with Islamic laws serious and repetitive incidents of stealing leads to severe punishment: a person's hand gets chopped off. He illustrated the importance of honesty within Muslim culture with the following story:

A person worked for a certain farmer, but only worked for a day and a half and then disappeared. The farmer was so honest that he kept that person's pay. Many years later that man found himself in trouble and approached the farmer asking whether he remembered him and that he owed him the payment for that day and a half. The man said that he would not hold it against the farmer if he had forgotten. To his surprise the farmer said that he remembered him and then he pointed to a piece of land with cattle on it saying: 'That land and the cattle on it belongs to you.' The man responded with disbelief: 'Don't play the fool with me, it is impossible, I worked for one and a half days only.' The farmer replied: 'That is your *gak*, the money I kept for you. I decided to invest it for you and that is how it grew into that piece of land with the cattle.' This story illustrates how people cannot take that which belongs to someone else.

3.4.2 David Epston visits from New Zealand

After my meetings with the boys and some of their parents during which I got to know more about their lives, I was hugely relieved to know that the winter school holidays would give me a bit of a break and time to think of plans of action. I was also hoping to speak to David Epston who was visiting South Africa for the first time and would be presenting a workshop

scheduled to be held in Cape Town. I attended the workshop and had informal discussions with him in which I told him about the work at the Muslim School. David was very excited and immediately offered to consult with me. He also told me that it seemed like a coincidence that I should be interested in this work in particular as he had recently decided to “re-visit” his own work with stealers which was done a number of years ago. He intended sharing these ideas with other therapists through his teaching and writing. Our informal sharing led to a consultation with me in the Cape Town workshop. He gave a detailed account of the ideas and practices involved in his work with boys who got into trouble for stealing.

3.4.3 Labeling stealing and stealer

David Epston (1999) explained the importance of labeling stealing and stealer:

‘One of the things that this work does, is label stealing and stealer. This is hard for a lot of psychologists to do, but I can assure you if you don't, there are some people who will - the police. I think it a lot better if we do. We could be involved in restorative justice, which I will be speaking about, which is a lot more generous in renewing and reviving of people's reputations than police practice. I'm not against police practice in doing something about it. But I'm not sure about anybody coming out of jail feeling necessarily a better person for it.’

3.4.4 Ruling out investigation and joining with clients

I told David how I struggled in the first consultation with people feeling implicated and having to cover up. I said that it was awkward for me to establish a connection as the principal had asked me to see the boys and their families: they did not request it. David responded: ‘I need to say all clients under these circumstances are mandated. I have never met a kid come to me saying: “David, can you help me, I'm a thief.” I had never had that happen. They all got dragged there.’ He emphasized the importance of positioning yourself as therapist to the clients and the problem.

He agreed with me that discussions of “did you do it, did you not? I can prove you did all this” are exceedingly unproductive discussions. But then he continued: ‘I have never found trouble collecting up support for redemption of reputation.’ It's not about whether they are guilty or not. It is not about externalising “stealing”. According to David the externalisation: ‘Have you found that you have got a reputation for stealing?’ has been the most joining

question to ask children in these circumstances. That rules out the investigative side that is probably pretty well completed by that time.

David continued by explaining that when you say to a mother: ‘Is it O.K. for me to stand with your son and your family? Can I stand with your son to redeem his reputation, if he chooses to, so that he becomes known as an honest person, a boy you could be proud of, a boy everybody cares about and can be proud of? Can I stand on your side to redeem your family’s name as an honest family who raises honest children?’ He concluded that, with these questions, the therapist can position him or herself in a way that would not produce a cover-up.

3.4.5 My struggle with self-doubt

David explained the plans of action in great detail and I was left with a well-studied transcript of our audiotaped interview. However, self-doubt had a great time spoiling things for me by reminding me that I was not David Epston and that these were his ideas, developed over time. Would I be able to do justice to them? He was bold, creative and experienced and had credibility in the community where he worked. In contrast, I’m a novice to this kind of work and a total stranger in a community of people who have a lot of reason to distrust me and I desperately wanted to prove myself. Besides, David seemed to refer to children from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. I was painfully aware of how poverty and crime was firmly entrenched in the community where I was trying to work. What if stealing was the only way for a child to find a meal? What effect does it have on children when their fathers and other family members have been participating in criminal acts?

It just seemed so risky to try these ‘weird’ ideas which David suggested. Would I be able to explain adequately this way of working? Would people really be interested in participating? How would everybody react to the exposure of speaking so openly about behaviour that is often referred to in euphemisms especially when children are involved? Added pressure came from the fact that, through the workshop, David Epston and a large group of my colleagues knew my work – I knew I would feel terribly foolish if this failed!

A student who attended David Epston’s workshop was applying the ideas with a young boy she was seeing and her enthusiastic sharing of her work really helped me. I went back to the

principal and struggled through an explanation of David's visit and work. David's recommendation that we should involve a community of concern to assist each boy in getting back their reputations for honesty was accepted by Mr Fanie without any resistance. More appointments for the boys and their parents were scheduled.

3.5 THE WORK WITH THE BOYS

3.5.1 Preparation for honesty meetings

This round of meetings was intended to prepare the boys and their parents for honesty tests. In our conversation, David had explained some dilemmas in working with children who steal. Studies that he had surveyed had showed that children get apprehended only one out of every ten times it happens, mainly because not too many people suspect that they can operate more widely. Another dilemma is: 'How can you ever know a person isn't stealing? Not stealing is doing what? Doing nothing. It doesn't show. Do you agree? Say you had a reputation for stealing but your family is keeping wallets in their pockets and all their money there, but how can they really be sure? The person could say, "I'm not stealing," but they probably have heard that one before, right? How can a young person prove to those he faced up to that he desires a new standing in his community? How do we actually prove it? This is how I came up with the idea of an honesty test.' David explained the honesty tests in detail. I will discuss this later.

Following the guidelines David Epston gave the conversations had the following focus:

- Questions about the **effect which the reputation for stealing** had on the lives of the children and their families. Here are some examples:

What do people believe it is that you steal?

What have you been accused of?

Are you worried that your son is hitting a criminal career?

What do people think of you as parents when your son has this name for being a thief?

Do you find that your bad name makes people keep their distance from you?

Are people watching over you all the time?

Has this bad name resulted in your being accused of things you are innocent of?

- List of **people who care** whether the boy has a reputation for being a thief or for being an honest person. Make this list as long as possible.
Who cares whether you have a bad name for stealing or a good name for honesty?
- List of **victims**.
Do you think the shopkeeper that you have stolen from would be interested in seeing you change your reputation to that of an honest person?
Do you want to make it up to those that you have stolen from?
- **Critical question**.
Do you want a name for honesty or a name for being a thief?
- Introduce the idea of a **test**. This involves telling the boy and his parents that you have a way in which he would be able to prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that he is honest. As this involves a test, you therefore cannot disclose what it is.
- **Invitations to the Honesty Meeting**. The boy then helps to write letters to the people who would be interested in seeing him get his name back for being an honest person and inviting them to a special meeting where he would publicly declare his intent and the honesty testing would be discussed.

David Epston explained that he preferred community ways of working but that it is sometimes hard work to inform all the people involved and to get a big enough place to meet. In our case, it was much easier because all the boys were in the same school and from the same community and we had the community hall to use.

3.5.1.1 Dyllan and Joan

Dyllan and Joan spoke openly about the incidents where Dyllan was involved in stealing. The impact of this bad name for stealing was of concern to both. Dyllan said that he realized that all the trouble has had a bad effect on his schoolwork. He expressed enthusiasm for the plan to be tested. They named a few people like Paul his cousin, Mr Adams his class teacher, Jackie his Sunday school teacher, his aunt and Joan who would be interested in seeing him get back his good name for honesty. We wrote some letters together, regarding his Honesty meeting which Dyllan signed and Joan and Dyllan would deliver and post.

3.5.1.2 Yusuf and Rashieda

Yusuf and Rashieda were very open about five incidents of stealing that had been reported. They also reported that Yusuf had gone back to Islam classes since the last time we spoke and that they felt that this was a step in the right direction for Yusuf and Alie who had joined him. Rashieda cried when I asked her about her fears for his future. She said that she feared a criminal future involving jail. She also said: 'When he behaves like this it appears to others that I am a bad mother.' Yusuf had a list of nine people, including the principal; Mr. Adams (class teacher); his sister; Rashieda's cousin; his late father's sister; a class mate from whom they took a watch; another class mate from whom money was stolen; and another teacher. Again letters were written to invite them to his Honesty meeting. I was also able to report back to them that I had spoken to Terry Morkel in the meantime and that he spoke with fondness about the late Yusuf who had painted his house. He said that Yusuf was very fond of and proud of his only son, whom he often mentioned. Terry was very interested in Yusuf's decision to live an honest life and very supportive of the idea that children could change their criminal ways. He spoke about the sadness of seeing young people at the court where he works and said that, even if one boy in the Strand gives up stealing, it would be a wonderful achievement towards a better and safer society. I could see that Yusuf and Rashieda were very encouraged by those words.

3.5.1.3 Marshall and Ann

Marshall's mother, Ann, came with him this time. She also had her baby with her. They named the same incidents that Yusuf did: the groceries that were stolen from a truck; the shoplifting in Clicks which had resulted in being taken to the police station by Mr Fanie and Mr Arnold, the deputy principal; taking the money which children had collected for the Cancer Association as part of the Toktokkie Project; money and chips stolen from friends in class; and money which disappeared in the family. Ann said that the family was struggling with her husband's cancer and the pain he suffers. Marshall is the eldest of four children, his brother was ten, his sister four and the baby was a few months old then. Ann said that she needed to be able to rely on Marshall to run errands and go to the shops for the family, but that as she could not trust him with money, this made life even more difficult for them. On Marshall's list of concerned people were Mr Fanie, Mr Arnold, Mr Adams (class teacher),

two classmates, and two aunts as well as his mother. As Marshall expressed a wish to change his name for stealing to one of honest person, the letters were written.

3.5.1.4 Alie and Fatima

Fatima said that having the name of “thief” caused endless problems for Alie: people called him “thief” and blamed him even when he was innocent. Someone even asked: ‘Have you come to steal?’ when Alie walked passed. The family was very worried about a criminal career for Alie. Although Fatima told stories of how trustworthy Alie was and that for example Mr Adams used Alie to help with the selling of refreshments at the club rugby, stories emerged about the stealing of groceries; stealing the money from the collection tin for the blind; stealing a watch from a class mate; and an incident of shoplifting at a Seven Eleven. Although they spoke about these incidents, they spoke in ways that diminished Alie’s responsibility. At times Fatima related how her husband would punish their children by giving them hidings: ’n “duiwelse” pak’ (a devil of a hiding). Alie’s list of people for the honesty meeting included Mr Adams (class teacher), the principal, a classmate, another teacher, his mother and father. We then wrote the invitations.

3.5.1.5 Achmat, Nadeema and Ismael

Both parents came to the session. We managed to talk with them about Achmat’s bad name for stealing as well as about many incidents that had happened which had troubled them. Ismael told Achmat what a bad place the prison is and how powerless one feels there. He spoke about his recent experience in jail and the gang activities he had witnessed. He also reminded Achmat about his friend who had committed suicide in prison. Achmat’s parents expressed concern about truancy and said that Achmat was jeopardizing his school career.

It was clear, however, that this family was experiencing serious problems with Ismael who was unemployed and struggling to find employment. Nadeema had to work long hours at the petrol station. I felt that the family was so disrupted that I did not think it would be possible to involve them in honesty testing. I mentioned that some of the boys were participating in honesty testing, but suggested that I help them as a family until they felt ready to help Achmat in that way.

When Nadeema left to go to work, I sent Achmat back to school as I sensed that Ismael had more to say. He spoke of his concern for the children and then told me that Nadeema had started an affair with the father of her first child while he, Ismael, was in jail. She wanted a divorce and was spending a lot of time away from home. Ismael felt that the children were very confused at that stage. Ismael told me that the family was also seeing Mrs Galant, social worker, to help them with their problems. I offered to speak to them again and that we would attend to Achmat's problems as best we could.

3.5.1.6 Anthony and Karl

Anthony and his father came to the session together. Karl told me that his wife now worked as a char every day and that they were trying to give Anthony some pocket money for sweets. When we spoke about Anthony's reputation for stealing an interesting story emerged. Karl told me that Lynneath's family used Anthony to assist them with their criminal activities. They send him into shops and homes to do part of the work for them.

Although they are a Christian family, Karl told me that they did not attend church as a family. Anthony attended Sunday school with the neighbour. Even though the one parent accused the other of alcohol abuse, I got the impression that they both abused alcohol and that the weekends were pretty much a drinking time for them. We managed to get a few names of people who would be interested in seeing Anthony get his name for honesty back. We wrote some invitations to them, although they were mainly people from the school. My sense was of a father and mother who were not very keen to involve family members, but who wanted to appear co-operative at all times.

3.5.2 Example of invitation to honesty meeting

In this work many letters were written to invite people to meetings, to report on progress or to congratulate the children on their progress. I took carbon paper with me, as we did not have Photostat facilities at the hall where we met. The invitations to the Honesty Meetings were co-created with the boys. I helped to formulate, write, read and check the letters with the boys and then they would sign them. Here is an example of such a letter:

Dear Auntie Sarah

Unfortunately I have got a bad name for stealing, because I have taken things that did not belong to me. I don't like this bad name. It makes my mother unhappy and gets me into a lot of trouble. My mother worries that I might land up in court and jail one day. She wants to be proud of me when I grow up. She would like me to be honest and trustworthy.

Elize Morkel told me about her plan to help me to get my good name for honesty back. She needs people who care about me to help with honesty tests. You are invited to a meeting on 20 July 1999 at the Community Hall in Gordon Road.

I would appreciate it if you could come.

Your nephew
Yusuf

3.5.3 Some reflections

Lists of victims emerged during these five sessions which showed great overlaps, thereby confirming that the boys did a lot of the stealing together. They stole from family members, classmates, neighbours, shops, schools and welfare organizations, such as the Society for the Blind and the Cancer Association. I also learned that Dyllan, Yusuf, Marshall and Alie were in the same class and that their teacher, Mr Adams, was also the rugby and cricket coach. All the boys from his class put Mr Adams' name on their list as a person who would want to see them change their reputations. I got the impression that he was a very caring person and was liked by the boys.

3.5.4 Religious plurality within the school

I was working with three families who were Muslim and three Christian families. When I asked Mr Fanie about the religious plurality in the school, he explained that although the school was started for Muslim children, no pupils who applied were turned away. He shared with me the history of the school. I find that it is well explained as documented in Strand Moslem Primary School 2000:

The school was started in 1928 by a group of Muslim women, who saw the dire need for an institution, which would have Islam as its foundation. This was a direct result of the government's Calvinistic practice of enforcing

Christian National Education as a policy in all government schools. Muslim pupils were coerced into receiving religious studies solely on Christianity, and were also expected to attend assemblies conducted in the same religion. The community, which has a proud track record of resisting forced alien practices by authorities for over 300 years, once again rallied to the idea of establishing it's own institution. This would enable and ensure that the community's children would be instructed in a doctrine of it's own choice.

The school did not fulfill the role of an education institution solely, nor was it a symbol of defiance, but played out its role as a center of excellence, a focal point for cultural and social activities and a catalyst for community pride and hegemony. It was also a vehicle through which the Muslim community of the Strand voiced their utter repugnance against the system of discrimination, social injustice and religious intolerance.

At that time there were sixty pupils from Christian homes, making up ten percent of number of pupils of the school. No child was forced to attend religious instruction: they could carry on with other work during those times. There is a special class where the Christian children are supervised while the Muslim children go to the Mosque.

3.5.5 The honesty meetings

There were five honesty meetings scheduled. Achmat was excluded in order to assist with family problems, and I was very nervous as I was struggling to imagine whether we would get the people there. Many times in the past people had not come for appointments. By then, I had developed a habit of taking a blanket and some work along when I worked at the Iqra Hall, because I often had to kill time waiting for people who would arrive late or not at all. I also had ways of getting people to wait outside in the sun, as often everybody would arrive at the same time. I relied heavily on Mr Fanie to arrange appointments and to notify and remind parents. Sometimes he would get into his car to fetch the parents from their homes. I was having serious doubts that we would manage to get meetings going involving a whole group of people. But, before I continue with what took place, I will discuss the ideas David Epston left me with regarding the meetings.

Guidelines given by David Epston that informed the way we worked in the Honesty Meetings:

- **Honesty testing** was the central idea to be explained and worked with. David Epston explained that the tests organize a situation in which young people believe that they

are being watched from morning to night. The fact that they are under surveillance like this makes for a kind of a conscience. Although this testing had been mentioned to the family in the previous meeting and in the invitation to the honesty meeting, everybody was kept in suspense about the details. David said that he would quote some statistics about previous success, but would also say that not everybody chooses honesty: this really is the choice of each person. He would also warn them to think about this commitment carefully as the testing will not be easy - they would be watched all the time. It will put the boy 'under honesty pressure in a big way.'

- **Protocol followed at the meetings** was quite simple. People normally arrive not having much of an idea about what to expect and they would look at the therapist to guide them. David said that he would have seated everyone around him in a circle. He would sit in the middle with the particular young person next to him while they both faced the people in the circle. He would then go around the circle and interview everyone in the circle. He would say things like: 'What have you thought about your son getting a reputation for stealing? What has it meant to you?' Next question: 'What would it mean to you if he redeemed his reputation and brought honour back into your family rather than dishonour?' This young person sees this - he is looking right into the eyes and face of the dilemma. All around the room, people – father, grandmother, aunt, mother, sister - are facing the dilemma with him.
- The young person is asked to say why he wants his reputation for honesty back. In this way he speaks in the way of **redemption** rather than in a way of confession. David said that he would remind the young person of the gains he had won through his stealing behaviour in order to get him to truly advocate for himself why he wants his good name back. David had witnessed this to be a very moving experience for these young people. According to David, he regards the signs of distress as important as this usually signifies that these young people realize that there is something else possible for them.
- Performance of **consent to be tested is ritualized**. The young person is asked to consider the test carefully, again being reminded that it will not be easy and that there are many gains to be had in a life of stealing. David might take the person aside and talk with him seriously and then come back to inform the group what he had decided. He then asks the young person to formally instruct him (David) to test him. They shake hands and the group responds with words of encouragement.

- **Opportunity for restorative justice** is given by asking victims if they have anything that the young person can do to show that they want to make it up to those from whom they have stolen. David warns that people might be very generous by saying that this is not necessary. In this case, he would then insist that they had suffered big losses and discomfort as a result of the stealing and that this should be made up to them somehow. He suggests that young people can be given tasks or chores to help with on a regular basis for a certain period of time.
- **Instructions about honesty testing** are then given to the group, while the young person is sent outside, as the nature of the test has to be kept secret from him. The test works by using ‘traps’ that are set for the person by leaving things lying around for him to steal. However you do need to think of safety measures so that he doesn’t get accused for someone else’s stealing. For instance, you need to be quite certain about how much money you have left lying around as a ‘trap’. Then, if it is still there after he has been in the area, you will know for sure that he has passed the test. When a person has passed the test, you inform him immediately and say: ‘Congratulations, you have been tested and you have passed.’
- **Sharing the news.** After a test you contact the people who were part of the honesty meeting and inform them of the success. You also encourage them to congratulate the young person on what he has achieved. According to David, in this way you reconnect the young person to his community. David suggested that ten tests are usually a good number.
- The **time span** for the tests needs to be negotiated with the people involved. Normally three to six months is regarded as adequate. Since young people develop the reputation for stealing over quite a long period of time, it is not realistic to make it any shorter. David uses the example of giving up smoking: many people give up and then go back to it after two weeks.

3.5.6 Matching these ways of working with Muslim culture

Before undertaking the work I discussed the process with Mr Fanie. I wondered how these ideas fitted with Islamic practices. Mr Fanie seemed happy that it was appropriate. I was very encouraged when he referred a family member who had had trouble with stealing: his family then participated in an Honesty meeting with me. We spoke about it again recently and he

told me about the practice of **toubat** which Muslims practice daily. He explained that you have to get the forgiveness of the person you have wronged first and only then can you ask God for forgiveness. When you have sinned there are three steps that are needed: you have to admit that you have done wrong; then you have to confess to the person you have wronged and get his or her forgiveness; and then you have to do a good deed to show that you will not do that bad thing again. He told me a story to illustrate this:

This is a true story of a person who was walking somewhere in Iraq or Iran. He had been walking for days and was starving. He got to a river where he saw an apple floating down the river. Without hesitation he took it and ate it. Then he started wondering who it belonged to and decided to walk upstream to see if he could find the apple orchard. He found the apple orchard and met the farmer and confessed to him: 'I found one of your apples in the river and, as I was very hungry after a journey of several days, I ate the apple. Please forgive me; I know that apple did not belong to me. If you cannot find it in your heart to forgive me I am prepared to accept any punishment you decide on.' The farmer replied: 'You must work for me on the farm for eight years without payment. I will give you a place to live as well as food. After eight years you must marry my daughter. She is blind and cannot see, she is deaf and cannot hear, she is cripple and cannot walk.' The man said that if that is what the farmer required, he would do that. He worked for eight years and, when the time came, he was brought to the farmer's daughter's room where he found a beautiful girl and the farmer said: 'Now you have to marry her.' The man expressed his confusion: 'But I don't understand, you said that she was blind and cannot see, she was deaf and cannot hear and she was cripple and cannot walk, I don't understand.' The farmer replied: 'What I meant was that she is blind - she has never seen bad things; she is deaf - .she has never heard anything bad or evil; and she is cripple and has never walked in the direction of evil.' He married her and was made a saint later in his life.

The story illustrates the extent to which restorative justice is honored in Islam, making the work as proposed by David Epston a very good fit within this context.

3.5.7 The honesty meetings of Dyllan, Yusuf, Marshall, Alie and Anthony

I was very relieved that we managed to have a group of people at each of the boy's meetings. The staff from the school made a tremendous contribution to the meetings. Poor Mr Adams attended the four meetings of his pupils and he came through like a star. Mr Fanie also did his fair share by attending when he could or sending Mr Arnold, the deputy principal, in his place.

At each Honesty Meeting, I sat with the particular boy sitting next to me while facing a circle of family members, the principal, teachers and people who were invited. I interviewed each person in the circle about the effect that the stealing had had on them. Aunts and uncles expressed concerns for the future of the boys and reminded them of the hardships their families had had to endure as a result of the criminal careers of other family members in the past.

It is very important to note how the spirit of these meetings was different from the very first meeting I had had with the group of boys and their mothers. At that stage people had felt split and exposed through their loyalty to their families in the face of the accusations that had brought them together. Whereas now, in contrast, we had people meeting almost like a family and standing together in their concern and care for the boys, united by the hope of supporting each boy in his endeavor to win back his good name. Although each boy had to face a group of people expressing concern, it was not experienced as humiliating, but as loving and supportive.

Dyllan's aunt told him that his mother would have been proud of his excellent scholastic ability and the way he helped her with household chores. His aunt said that his mother was murdered because of alcohol abuse and mixing with criminals. She felt convinced that that was not the lifestyle **Dyllan's** mother would want for him.

I was also able to evoke the memories of the deceased parents by asking family members what they thought these parents would have said had they been there that day. **Yusuf**, his mother and aunts cried as his aunts reminded him of his father's suffering in prison. They spoke about how his health had deteriorated, eventually leading to his death. **Yusuf's** aunts were again able to speak on behalf of their late brother, reminding **Yusuf** of his father's special love and the hopes he carried for **Yusuf's** future. There was much remorse, and many tears were shed as genuine concern for the boys was expressed.

Mr. Adams expressed sincere compassion with **Marshell**. He shared some of his own life story of being raised in that same community and struggling with poverty and limiting life circumstances. He challenged **Marshell** by saying: 'I know that it takes guts to rise above such circumstances, I know you can do it.'

Alie's father, who works as a caddy to golfers, said that he had hopes of his son becoming a golfer one day. Mr. Adams reminded Alie that he is a good rugby player who stood a chance of going to New Zealand with the school team.

Anthony's meeting was not large. Anthony's father came, together with his teacher, Mrs Baderoen, as well as Mr Fanie. Karl spoke about how, as parents, they were trying hard to help and improve circumstances at home. He had got a job two days a week, the twins were at the crèche and he supervised the children in the afternoon. He encouraged Anthony and promised to get his aunt, who lives in Paarl and also works with children, to speak to Anthony and to encourage him.

After everyone had had the opportunity to speak in each session, I asked the meeting what they would judge to be a fair time to give the boys to prove their innocence. There was about four months left until the end of the school year and it was generally felt that this would be a fair "test period." I then turned to the boy next to me, took his hand and asked him whether he would give his permission to be tested for a period of four months to see if he could get his name for honesty back. This was a very serious moment and I urged each one to think carefully, as the test would be very difficult. They had to shake my hand to indicate their consent.

Victims were asked if there was anything that the boy could do to pay back what he had taken from them for example, to help with chores in the house or garden. A moving response came from a girl in Alie's class, who said that she was afraid of him and his friends. She added that she doesn't expect anything from Alie in return for the watch that was stolen from her, but she said that 'he must stop stealing, swearing and fighting with other children – that will be enough pay-back for me.'

The boy then left the room and I explained the Honesty Tests to the meeting. They had to test, under very controlled conditions, whether or not the boy would steal again when given the opportunity. Immediately after a test he should be told that he had passed or failed a test and the news would be shared with others in the community of concern. They should then congratulate and honour the boy for his courage. In the case of stealing happening again the test period would start from the beginning.

3.5.8 The period of testing

I was touched to learn that Mr Fanie included the whole school in making public the commitment of Dyllan, Yusuf, Marshall, Alie and Anthony to undergo honesty tests in order to win back their good names for honesty. He made an announcement in assembly at school. As time went on, he also made announcements about their progress with Honesty Tests and congratulated them in front of the whole school.

The four boys who were in the same class received tremendous encouragement from Mr. Adams, as well as from the whole class. He assisted the boys when they needed money and encouraged them to participate in sport. His influence was strengthened through his involvement with the rugby. The Muslim boys were also encouraged to attend Islam classes and Mr Adams spoke to Dyllan about attending Sunday school. He explained to me that, although it was a Muslim school, the children from other religions were encouraged to participate in their own religious activities. The four boys started monitoring and policing each other. I was thrilled to hear that members of a “gang” who had been accused of their bad influence on their members, were now turning into an “honest gang” who were supporting each other to regain a reputation for honesty! I checked the progress by visiting and phoning the school regularly and writing letters of congratulations. I have to admit that sometimes I was too scared to ask about progress, as I feared the news was going to be bad. I found that the staff, who knew about my connection with the boys, would lay all sorts of complaints about their behaviour. I then had to remind them that my main interest was about their progress in regaining a reputation for honesty:

“Has he stolen again?”

“ No!”

“Has he passed tests?”

“Yes.”

That was the way in which I would get the information I was after. My insistence on asking about the progress with the honesty reputations, as that was the contract I had with the boys, resulted in people at the school looking out for progress. They spoke in more acknowledging and hopeful ways about the boys, rather than picking so much on every bit of problematic behaviour. It was quite amusing how a teacher would start telling me about one of the boys being rude or naughty, but, when confronted by my blank expression, would change in mid-sentence to comment on and remember the success with honesty instead!

3.5.9 The New Zealand connection

At that stage I visited New Zealand to attend Narrative therapy workshops with David Epston and Johnella Bird and was able to give David some feedback on the work concerning the boys. He was very encouraging. I also learned that Mr. Adams, the teacher I got to know well, was planning a rugby tour for pupils of the school to New Zealand the following year. I brought back information and pictures, which I shared with him, the principal and some of the boys.

3.5.10 Progress

Dyllan

The reports I received regarding Dyllan were very good. There was an incident where he picked up money and brought it to Mr Fanie. Another time Dyllan reported to Mr Fanie that Alie had taken something. Mr Fanie called him to the front in assembly and congratulated him in front of the whole school on both occasions and the pupils applauded him. Dyllan was also encouraging others to be honest. He was playing wing for his rugby team and Mr Adams could see that he was trying hard with his behaviour for honesty. Mr Fanie called him a 'model child' and his aunt Joan was very happy about his progress.

Another interesting incident that Mr Adams told me about was when Dyllan was meant to go to Sunday school one Sunday, but arrived at the rugby field where the Muslims were playing a match. He lied to his aunt, and when she found out what he had done, he defied her authority by reminding her that she was not his mother. Joan spoke to Mr Adams about this incident. Mr Adams had a chat with Dyllan encouraging him to attend Sunday school and urging him to apologize to Joan. Dyllan did this and after that, attended Sunday School regularly. By November everyone agreed that he had proven that he had regained his reputation for honesty.

Yusuf

Yusuf also passed some honesty tests and his mother and aunts reported an improvement in his behaviour. Mr Adams said that his behaviour in class had also improved greatly, although he still struggled scholastically. Yusuf was attending his Islamic classes and came home

straight after that. By November it was decided that Yusuf had also regained his reputation for honesty.

Marshell

Marshell's mother reported that he passed tests three times. It was clear that the family relied on Marshell to contribute to their household by doing odd jobs for money. The conditions at home were very bad and sometimes, when they were drunk, Marshell had to take money from his parents to buy bread for himself and the other children. He attended school regularly, wearing his school uniform. Mr Adams said that Marshell tried hard and that he admired his resilience under very difficult circumstances: 'It takes guts to try so hard under such circumstances.' Mr Fanie was happy with Marshell's progress and sure that he had proven that he could claim a reputation as honest person.

Alie

Unfortunately Alie did not quite make it. After a stealing incident where Alie took money from the school bag of one of his classmates, it was decided that he would have to work for three more months at his honesty reputation. He was trying hard and playing good rugby. He also received much encouragement from Mr Adams and the class. Fatima, his mother, was blaming the school for Alie's problems and felt that he was being made a scapegoat.

Anthony

Soon after the Honesty Meeting, Anthony stayed away from school for long periods of time. Often Achmat was with him on those days. Two months after the meeting, the two of them were caught when they broke into a house and stole medals, food, and other goods. Some neighbours saw them and reported it to the police. Mr Fanie said that he was quite helpless as Anthony had missed a lot of school. Some nights Anthony did not even sleep at home. This got me to worry about the rumours about his involvement with adult criminal activity. His parents also expressed concern, but did not seem to be able to improve things much. Both these boys were in serious trouble for truancy and stealing.

By the middle of November we were preparing for an Honesty Celebration. Having checked with the school and parents, as well as spoken to Dyllan, Yusuf and Marshell, a date was set for the handing over of Honesty Certificates. I wrote letters to the people who attended their honesty meetings and invited them to the celebration.

3.5.11 Honesty celebration

At a special assembly of all the pupils and staff, Mr. Fanie reminded the school of how Dyllan, Yusuf and Marshall used to spend many hours in front of his office in punishment for the trouble and stealing in which they were involved. He said that Dyllan had changed from a “trouble maker” to a “model child” who had not only changed his own life, but also helped his friends to do the same. He called Dyllan, Yusuf and Marshall to the front and congratulated them by saying that he knows that the tests were tough, but that he was impressed by their honesty. I could hardly recognise in them the troubled, angry and shameful faces which I had seen the first meetings: they now stood tall, looked me in the eye and shook my hand firmly. I presented them with their Honesty Certificates which they received with broad smiles and nodding heads. The staff and pupils applauded. My eye caught Alie’s eye, as he was standing on his toes in his line with an eager expression on his face. I then told the school that this was not a small achievement. Of the five boys who had made a promise to become honest, only three had succeeded. I added that while two of the boys I had met six months earlier have almost given up on school altogether, there was Alie who was still trying hard: I hoped to hand him his certificate in the next year.

The three proud boys, and some of those who cared about them, celebrated with tea and cake. Mothers and aunts and sisters laughed and talked while we poured tea and served cake. Although shy and a bit overwhelmed, Dyllan, Yusuf and Marshall basked in the glory of praise and congratulations from staff and family members. They were very pleased when there was enough cake for them to take home and to their class to share with their classmates. Mr. Fanie and Mr. Adams commented on the boys’ transformation by saying that they have gained a completely new sense of self, becoming confident and positive about their lives in general.

3.5.12 Alie receives a certificate

I kept in contact with Mr Fanie about Alie’s progress and heard that he was never caught stealing again. Although he was struggling with schoolwork and got into trouble for rudeness and aggression from time to time, by March we felt convinced that Alie had succeeded in regaining his reputation for honesty. I took him a certificate so that Mr Fanie could present it to him.

3.5.13 Going public with the good news

As I listened to the children talking about having their photos in the community newspapers for sport achievements and knowing the big role those newspapers play in our community, I thought it might be a good idea to put the success story in one of the community papers. I discussed this idea with the children and their parents and they agreed that this would be a wonderful idea. When I approached the journalist at the paper she did not seem to understand how “stealers” would want their identities disclosed even though doing this was to tell a story of changing these reputations. Maybe I did not try hard enough. The plan was aborted. But I still think that a community in which crime and violence affects our daily lives could do with reading about hopeful success stories such as these.

3.6 HOPE AND PASTORAL CARE

Annelie Pauw, a colleague who had accompanied me to the Honesty Celebration, reflected on what she had witnessed that day. The pride and joy of the people who celebrated, the real involvement and care for the boys, the support they received and their happiness and joy, touched her deeply. She was so impressed by the many lives which had been touched that urged me to share the work with colleagues at the SAAMFT Conference. Her response inspired in me an appreciation of the value of this work and of the hope that flows from it.

I shared the story with members of a Rotary Anns club in our community in a letter asking them for sponsorship for Mr Fanie, the principal, to attend the SAAMFT Conference. This would not only enable him to learn from and network with colleagues, but would also enable him to witness the telling of the story to which he had been an important participant.

I quote from the letter:

Obviously I'm very pleased about the positive outcome of this work for these boys, the school, their families and their community. More than that, however, I'm moved by the way my own life has been enriched through my involvement with this school. I worked very closely with Mr Fanie, the principal, and was touched by his sincere caring for each of the boys. He knew them and their families well through taking the time to talk to them, sometimes getting into his car to fetch them or to speak to them at their homes. He arranged all appointments for me and made sure that everybody (sometimes up to

twelve people at a time) was present at the meetings. He totally supported every “weird suggestion” I made and gave his full co-operation. I was impressed by the way he understood the process (not your normal, regular counseling, I can assure you) and participated, no matter the time and effort involved. The spirit of community and caring in that school where many children come from homes where poverty, crime, violence, abuse and death form part of everyday life was remarkable. The staff members I met and worked with demonstrated the same concern and love for the children. I soon stopped noticing the limited facilities and lack of space as I started to enjoy the warmth of the people of the school.

A picture and article about Mr Fanie and the conference appeared in our local community newspaper, spreading the good news into the community. The student who applied these ideas with a young client presented her story at a Conference in Stockholm in 2000.

A group of boys who caused a lot of trouble and unhappiness have managed to become part of a success story that they can be proud of. Families who have seen the devastation of crime for generations can now look to this generation with hope. Problem-saturated stories have been turned into success stories. Scolding, punishment and despair were replaced with celebration and applause.

Through this moment of insertion (Cochrane et al, 1991), I have been forced into participating in a holistic practical theology which refused to reduce its concerns to individuals and family, but which made me part of transformation within the community. I now have hope that there are ways in which I can be more like the Good Samaritan: reaching out to the “other” (Ackermann 1998:91); binding up some of the wounds (Ackermann 1998:81); being accountable after having been unaware (Ackermann 1998:90); collaborating instead of participating in hegemony; and helping to heal some of the devastation inflicted by apartheid while finding healing for myself as a white South African (Ackermann 1998:83). I have been inspired by the resilience of these children in extremely restricting and challenging circumstances involving poverty and tenuous connections (Couture 2000). If they could do what they did, there is hope for many others. The community way of working has become a wonderfully enriching experience. Not only was I impressed by the contributions of the community who participated in the work, but also by the support and interest of my colleagues and friends. I have made real connections with people whose lives had been separated from my own. I believe that this is indeed what Pamela Couture (2000:61) means when she reminds us not to underestimate the accumulative value of small, regular commitments as part of our pastoral praxis.

3.7 MUTUAL CARE

Both narrative therapy and feminist pastoral therapy address the issues of power within the caring relationship, placing a high value on greater equality and collaboration (White 1997; Freedman & Coombs 1996; Graham 1996; Couture 2000). White (1997:131) says: ‘A two-way account of therapy is one that emphasizes the life-shaping nature of this work in respect to the therapist’s life.’ According to Graham (1996:49), the emphasis is on ‘mutuality of care in contrast to the formality and hierarchy of old’. I have referred to the joy the people of the Muslim school brought me through the way in which they spoke Afrikaans, my first language. That was just one of their precious gifts to me.

A few months after meeting the people at the school for the first time, I got ready for a trip to New Zealand. I will never forget how Mr Fanie phoned asking me to drop in at the school before I left as they had “something” for me. To my surprise, I was presented with a carefully selected toilet bag filled with luxury items for my trip. Mr Fanie explained that June Fairburne, the school secretary, was responsible for buying the farewell gift on behalf of the school. I still remember June’s shy smile as I thanked her and our warm embrace as the tears were running from my eyes. I never expected such loving care.

When the school rugby team returned from their tour of New Zealand, Mr Fanie shared with me the photos and stories of their experiences. These were wonderfully heart-warming stories of the community that had raised all the money for the air tickets. The pride, excitement and expanding of horizons that formed part of that undertaking was extremely moving to witness. As a result of that tour, most of the players received bursaries to go to good high schools in our area the following year. I felt extremely blessed to be entrusted with some of the memories and joys of that experience.

Another gesture that I took as a great compliment and a vote of confidence was when Mr Fanie referred two of his family members to me when they experienced difficulties. To me, this was a sign of the trust and the acceptance of my way of working and of me as a person. It meant a lot to me.

I cannot remember how many times I received wonderful warm, sweet tea and lovely biscuits, home-baked samoosas and cake from Auntie Fati who works at the school. Auntie

Moena was always kind and patient when she had to accompany me to open the Iqra Hall for me to work in. June, who often had to take messages and arrange appointments, did so most graciously, always taking an interest in me, ever welcoming and kind.

Mr Adams shared with me some of his own dilemmas in teaching and the choices he had had to face in his career, always talking about his loyalty to the Strand Muslim community where he grew up. I felt honored by his hand of friendship and enriched in witnessing his concern and care for the children.

Every year at Christmas time, a gift from the school would arrive at my house, accompanied by a card with good wishes for the Season and words of thanks. This year Mr Fanie brought the present to my house and had tea with me. During this informal visit I was able to ask him about his childhood in the Strand and the spirit of community that is so clear from what I witness in his work. It gave me great joy to introduce my son, Hannes, to him and, when Mr Fanie learnt that Hannes was a keen cricketer, he was ready to show Hannes a few tips in skills training.

Kaethe Weingarten visited the Cape to do a workshop at the beginning of the year and since Mr Fanie had attended her talk at the SAAMFT Conference in 2000 (Weingarten 2002), I asked him to welcome her on behalf of the people of the Helderberg basin. In his talk Mr Fanie mentioned that our area is known for the people of extreme wealth who live there – ‘most millionaires per km² in South Africa’ - but also for the greatest poverty when you visit the squatter camps and townships where black and coloured people live. Mr Fanie went on to acknowledge our collaboration and the meaning this has for him: that ‘the descendant of the Dutch Settlers’ (me) and ‘the descendant of the slaves’ (him) were working together in our community of extreme difference in class and living conditions where we share the beauty of the surrounding mountains and sea. I must admit that his honest and open addressing of the dynamics of power and the differences of gender, race and class which were present in our relationship and his emphasis on mutuality and collaboration moved me deeply (Graham 1996:49). This public acknowledgement of my work was an unexpected and special act of care towards me. It also paved the way to the research and the conversations - which will be recorded and reflected on in the next chapter – in which Mr Fanie shared the history of the Strand Muslim community with me. He has been a generous and enthusiastic participant and cultural consultant who cared for me through his keen interest in my research. Mr Fanie

assisted me in a respectful and patient way by putting in many hours of talking and reading and providing useful documents and connections with people, places and resources. We have experienced what Pamela Couture (2000:69) describes as:

Within a short time, people who enter deep relationships with others and themselves, discover that acts of mercy continually reorganize that power relationship, until people who share in acts of mercy give to and receive from one another. This reconstruction of power is an act of grace.

CHAPTER 4

THE STRAND MUSLIM COMMUNITY

4.1 THE HISTORY OF THE MUSLIM PEOPLE IN THE CAPE

4.1.1 Muslims in the time of slavery: 1652 -1838

When the Dutch settlers arrived in 1652, the Cape was populated by groups of herders known as the Khoi. As the Khoi did not want to give up their independent way of life to work for the settlers and the Dutch East India Company forbade its officials to enslave the local people, the settlers began importing slaves. Soon the settlers were outnumbered by the slaves. There is a common belief that all slaves came from the East Indies, but research shows that slaves came from all around the Indian Ocean. Most of the slaves who came to the Cape were from East Africa, Madagascar and the Indian subcontinent or the East Indies (Indonesia and Malaysia). Thousands of their descendants were born into slavery at the Cape (Bickford-Smith 2001:15-16).

Although law restricted Islam during the period of Dutch East India Company rule, Muslim slaves, prisoners and political exiles still practised the religion in the Cape. The most prominent political exile during the seventeenth century was Shaykh Yusuf, the Indonesian religious and military leader from Macassar. He arrived in the Cape in 1694. He and forty-eight followers were kept on a farm called Zandvliet in an isolated area near the False Bay coast. Today this area is known as Macassar, and is situated near the Strand. In spite of its remote location, the farm apparently became a meeting place for Muslim slaves and exiles in the colony. After Shaykh Yusuf's death in 1699, his body was initially entombed at Faure, near the Zandvliet farm, but in 1705 the body was transported back to Indonesia. The tomb of Shaykh Yusuf became a popular Muslim pilgrimage site. By the 1800's it was referred to as a *karamat*, which means 'divine grace' in Arabic, but which signifies a holy place of spiritual power in the Islamic world of South Africa (Chidester 1992:158-159).

According to Mr Fanie (2002), some of the slaves ran away from their masters in Cape Town and were assisted by Shaykh Yusuf to go along the coast of False Bay where they settled behind the sand dunes and lived from the sea. Mr Fanie explained that they settled where the

Rialto, the old movie theatre and a well-known landmark in the Strand, still stands. This community became a fishing community.

4.1.2 From slavery to segregation

In 1834 slavery was abolished and slaves were freed. From then on, all people - black or white - were supposed to be equal before the law. All men, but no women, had the right to vote in local and government elections, but only if they earned a certain wage or owned property. In Cape Town society in the 1800's, an individual's status depended more on wealth and gender than on race. Almost all of the rich were white, or considered themselves white, but the poor included people of all colours (Bickford-Smith 2001:16).

Martin (2001:249-253) discusses the usage of the term "coloured" and the debates surrounding the validity of term. He concludes that the term "coloured" can only be approached as one composed of individuals who were classified as such in the course of South African history. The sole criteria for distinguishing coloured people from other South Africans arose as a result of the Group Areas Act of 1950, one of the cornerstones of the policy of apartheid. Despite being subjected to discriminatory measures and being objects of social ostracism, towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, coloured people still enjoyed a measure of civil rights that were denied to other black people. They could vote, be elected into political office, and form political organizations that inevitably were led by the economic and intellectual elite.

Although there were some white people who spoke out against racism, by 1901 there were many who urged that in Cape Town black people - coloured people as well as Africans - should be barred from trams, cabs and even sidewalks, just as had been done in the southern parts of the United States. It became official policy to separate white and black people in government institutions such as hospitals, jails and schools. Sometimes these policies were enforced by law. Many privately owned facilities like theatres and bars, as well as sports teams, also became segregated. But it was more difficult to segregate residential areas (Bickford-Smith 2001:16).

As a member of the secret society, the Afrikaner Broederbond, I.D. du Plessis took an interest in the identity of the Cape Muslims in the 1930's, reinforcing a separate ethnic identity for

them (Chidester 1992:167). He played a major role in reinforcing the idea that white culture epitomised the principles of civilization. He worked relentlessly to prove that coloured people were different from Africans. This alleged difference allowed I.D. du Plessis to attach coloured people to the Afrikaans population, and thus to white people, but in a subordinate position. This formed part of the strategy of 'divide and rule' of the Nationalist Party (Martin 2001:253). In reinventing the 'Malays', I. D. du Plessis describes the 'pure Malay' as 'inclined to speak slowly, to be passive and indolent. When aroused he may lose all self-control and run amok' (Rassool & Thorne 2001:96).

4.1.3 Nationalist party and apartheid laws

In 1948 the Nationalist Party took over the Government. Between 1949 and 1953 the apartheid laws were passed. The Population Registration Act of 1950 officially divided South Africans into four groups: Whites, Coloureds, Asians and Natives and required them to register accordingly. There were even "race inspectors" appointed to decide difficult cases. This opened the way for more complete segregation in the Cape. Marriages and relationships between black and white became illegal according to the Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Act of 1950. Other laws aimed to segregate schools and universities, political organizations, buses, trains and taxis, ambulances and hospital wards, sport and music, restaurants and theatres, parks and beaches, benches and public toilets, libraries and post offices, even graveyards. The Group Areas Act of 1950 aimed to stop mixed residential areas in South African cities. From 1951 the government took control of all property transfers and changes of occupancy that went across racial lines (Bickford-Smith 2001:15-16).

Over the next 25 years nearly four million people were uprooted, many of them several times over, in pursuit of the policies of apartheid. The Cape's liberal tradition and the relatively high coloured population all meant that, though economics produced segregation of a kind, when it came to working class areas in particular residential patterns were characteristically integrated. These were the areas which were torn apart as proclamation after proclamation declared white or coloured (mostly the former) forcing other classifications of people out (Mc Eachern 2001: 226).

4.2 THE STRAND MUSLIM COMMUNITY

4.2.1 A childhood in Market Street, Strand and the forced removals

Sharing with me stories of his childhood in the Strand Mr Fanie explained: ‘Our people lived down there between Wesley and Fagan Streets.’ That is an area a block away from the beach front right next to the central business area of the Strand and a few metres from the jetty where fisherman still gather today to sell their fish. This is the area that is also behind the Rialto Cinema, as he had pointed out to me earlier when referring to the slaves who ran away from Cape Town seeking safety. There are three mosques in the neighbourhood, indicative of the number of Muslims who used to live there.

I asked Mr Fanie about his commitment to the community and the way in which I have witnessed him working almost relentlessly - giving of himself far beyond what is expected. He said that he learnt this way of survival and commitment in the pain and hardships of his childhood. Despite the difficulties, he seems to remember with great fondness his childhood in Market Street. He said that it was a time of tolerance and respect for differences. Christians and Muslims lived together in the same street and all the children played together. In the time of the fast the Christian mothers would not allow their children to eat in the presence of the Muslim children. When it was time for prayers one would sometimes hear a Christian mother calling: “Come inside - it is time to pray. You should not be on the street now.” She would then send the Muslim children to the Mosque. At Christmas time all the children, Muslim and Christian, would sit under the tree and sing carols together. The Centre for Popular Memory of the University of Cape Town has compiled a book (Field 2001) in which they have recorded the memories of people who have survived forced removals in the Cape. A common thread running through these oral stories is the sense of neighbourliness and community spirit. Poverty and the shared experiences of day-to-day hardships brought people together in many ways (Swanson & Harries 2001:75).

Mr Fanie recalls:

I remember living in Market Street and how we had a club with one of the young men who lived there. He was the driving force behind the ABC’s – the Atomic Boys Club of Market Street. Our leader used to hammer it into us: ‘You are the best. Believe in yourself. You are always the best.’ Their leader used to tell the children of Market Street that they were the brightest. These were not only Muslim children, but all the children who grew up together and who went to school together. The ABC’s did judo,

boxing and wrestling together. We challenged other streets to compete against us and we were very proud, as ours was the only street club with our own team wear.

Le Grange (2001:106) explains that memory is partly informed by place and continues that 'in these remembered urban districts *the street* was the major public space - a space for the reproduction of social relations' (Le Grange 2001:109). It was the place in which resident's identities were confirmed and where they could pronounce their sense of belonging. The street and their associated corners were the places of gathering, of crooning, of meeting friends and even sometimes gambling. With these associations these streets become an integral part of the memories of displaced residents (Le Grange 2001:110).

Mr Fanie wistfully recalled their close proximity to the beach in the time of his childhood. He told me how he used to run down to the beach from their home in Market Street and how, when he got thirsty, he would return home for a drink in his swimming costume before going back to the beach. 'It has been with the implementation of the Group Areas Act, the forced removals, that our people landed up here.' Mr Fanie is referring to the coloured area of Rusthof where they had moved and where the school is. It is far removed from the central business district and the beach. He explained that it was in 1964/65 that they were forced to move: he was in Std 4 and eleven years old at the time.

About this event and his personal experience of it Mr Fanie says:

Yes, to me it (the Strand) will always be home. I think it was Mr Wentzel who said that if the staff wants an extended break time at school, all they have to do is to start talking about the old days in the Strand and 'then Mr Fanie becomes so carried away that he forgets to ring the bell.' Yes, it is everything to me. (Ja, vir my is dit alles.) Surely one of the events that hits me, personally, the hardest was when we had to move. The way in which people lived in the Strand, the community (samehorigheid), the mutual respect whether you were Muslim or white or non-white...I feel that all of those beautiful things that we struggle to accomplish in South Africa were broken down then. You know what happened with our people? Within the first ten to fifteen years...I would say that about 80% of our elderly people died and I suspect the reason was that they could not come to terms with the move. There were so many old people then, sometimes we had two to three corpses a week. The conditions in which we had to live were terrible (haglik). You got houses without ceilings, without floors, the toilets were outside, there were no storm water pipes, no sewage, none of that, one tap outside the house, no bathroom and so on. That is one of our things...it is very important to us, to any person...

It was only later that the full implication about not having a tap inside the house of a Muslim family hit me. As I read about the ablution rituals that precede the salat (prayers), I realized

that ‘a full bath by means of running water is required after marital relations, seminal emission, and the termination of menstruation or post-partum bleeding’ (Haneef 1994: 137).

My reflection on this conversation

Journal entry after the interview:

Visited the School for first interview with Mr Fanie. It was very, very difficult for me, came home and went to my bed where I sobbed my heart out. I was particularly haunted by images of, what he describes as the ‘ergste dag van my lewe’ [‘the worst day of my life’] when they were removed from Market Street in the Strand in accordance with the Group Areas act. It was terrible to hear about the horrible circumstances they had to live in and how their old people died because this was so difficult.

I remembered my visit to Ferial Johnson’s house on the Cape flats, the apologies she made for the neighbourhood, how they showed us her husband’s work, the tiling, the woodwork and everything he did to make it into a warm, comfortable and pleasant home for them.

Then Ferial’s ambivalence about leaving that home on the Cape Flats again to ‘go full circle’ by moving back to the City Bowl as they bought a house in University Estate. They were ‘fixing’ that newly bought house in the city with great care. And what a good job they did I discovered on my visit there, what a beautiful setting with a view of the harbour and nestling against the mountain. It is a vibrant and colourful neighbourhood with beautiful architecture.

In my mind’s eye I could see those families leaving the open, clear space with the sea and seagulls and then settling in the flat, sandy, unattractive “township” areas of the Cape Flats following the forced removals. I feel so sad and angry at what happened to these people.

4.2.2 The children take the community back to its roots

Mr Fanie shared with me a video that was made of a school concert held in October 1998 as part of the school’s seventy-year celebration. The theme was *Happy Memories: Back to Our Roots*. Mr Fanie explained to me that they had used the idea of the musical *District Six, the Musical* by Taliep Petersen and David Kramer. This musical had a tremendous impact in raising awareness in the 1980’s regarding the fate of the 60 000 people who were forcibly removed from District Six in central Cape Town to barren outlying areas - aptly known as the Cape Flats - while their houses in District Six were flattened by bulldozers (Kolbe 2001:15).

The video of the school concert starts with the wonderfully excited buzz of a big audience of Muslim families in the Strand Town Hall. Mr Fanie makes a short speech to welcome

everyone. This is followed by a group of boys singing lively songs, accompanied by a band of string instruments and the emblematic drum, the “ghoema”, which reminds me of the Coon troupes who sing and dance in their colourful costumes through the streets of Cape Town every year to celebrate their New Year carnival. Martin (2001:257) points out that the Malay choirs and the Coons represent two essential facets of the Cape peninsula’s working class subculture. In contrast, the coloured intellectual elite, however, saw the Coons as a degrading form of escapism where participants were seen as impersonating clowns and making spectacles of themselves for the pleasure of their white masters. Despite this criticism, these festivals and the music contribute richly to the South African culture and still enjoy great support within the community.

I have transcribed some of the dialogue from the various scenes of the school concert. The theme is the forced removal of coloured people from streets in the Strand, which Mr Fanie had told me about earlier. The stories told in the video are based on the stories that people told about their memories. Field (2001:110) says that through these memories evocative oral histories are created and expressed. He reminds us that the words we speak are usually fluid because they do not have to obey the rules of grammar and spelling like written words. The result is that when these spoken words are written down they often look unusual and ungrammatical. But this untidiness is a strength, which reveals clues about how people remember and talk about the past.

In a **scene on the market square** people are saying: ‘It is the last time that we will sit on the market square, we have read about the Group Areas act in the newspaper. There are rumours that the people of District Six have to move. Those “boere” (term of contempt used by people of colour referring to white Afrikaans speaking people) sign a paper and then the people have to move....The same is going to happen here.’ There are also voices of resistance: ‘I will not move from this place, this is my property, in my name. Over my dead body!’ Someone mentions the streets from where people will have to move: Fagan, Therooven, Market, Faure and Wesley Streets. Some voices offer plans of actions: ‘We must draw up a petition to object about the move of the people of the Strand. We must stand together and sign the petition so that the rest of the world can see how bad the apartheid laws are.’ Yet another predicts: ‘Bloody “boere”! They will tell us that we are no longer allowed to walk on the beach and that our children may not swim at the jetty!’

In another scene the **fishermen** are selling their fish at the jetty in the Strand. Someone refers to the help, which the fishermen receive from the Jewish shopkeepers in the wintertime when they do not have such a good income ('skraal winter maande'). A white couple approaches the fishermen and the wife urges the husband to ask for advice for arthritis (jig) as 'Slamaaiers' (Muslim people or people from the Islam) have such good home remedies. While the rest of the fishermen snigger behind their hands, the Malay fisherman tells them in careful detail to catch two 'viper' mosquitoes, cut the kidneys out, and cut the fat off the kidneys and to use that as a cream. The audience loves this part where the white people get ripped off!

Stories of the fish market evoke a sense of community as a shared place. This was a place where you could meet everyone and which everyone shared in common. Like the stories people tell about their lives in District Six (Mc Eachern 2001:239), people talk here about how they enjoyed the Strand with the beach and the jetty. All these places were theirs, part of their space, and part of who they were.

In a scene of a **family in their home** the adults have friends over who come to discuss their concerns about the implications of the Group Areas Act. It is decided that they should get the people together to discuss the situation. At this meeting in the street people express a mixture of frustration, hope, plans, fears and anger.

'The municipality will kick us out of the Strand.'

'Yes, but the houses in Rusthof are new.'

'They say that ours is a Slum area.'

'Some people are crying, where will we find houses? This is a serious matter. The Group Areas has arrived in the Strand. The "boere" are doing this in the whole country.'

'Communities that refused to move have been confronted by the Police and Army.' 'Is there nothing that we can do? What about a petition to show the outside world? We have to sign the petition....'

Home and family seems to have been a crucial site of respectability. This is what made the legislation so painful. The Apartheid Government's Group Areas Act attacked coloured people at the very site of respectability – their residence, their home. In this way, the Group Areas Act undermined self-determination, which accompanies respectability (Mc Eachern 2001: 241).

There is the singing of songs expressing freedom and solidarity. Someone mentions that it is a good thing that the school is already in Jan Niemand Street in Rusthof, the coloured township where the people of the Strand had been relocated. Another person expresses a dream of a big new house. Someone else reminds everyone that the school is far from the jetty, making it difficult to find the time to catch fish after school. They decide to visit Rusthof that Sunday to see what awaits them.

In a **moving scene in Rusthof** the people face reality and express themselves as follows:

‘Things are looking bad, I just cried when I saw where we will have to stay. Now that I have seen it with my own eyes I can understand why the people are crying so much.’

‘We are being thrown to the dogs. When I saw the little house we have to move into it broke my heart. The “boere” think nothing of us, the room is so small that after I had put my bed and cupboard in there is no space for me.’

‘Bare cement floors, walls without plaster, no taps inside, only one outside the house. No pipes and plumbing.’

‘The “boere” have a bloody smart plan to get us despondent.’

‘There are no shops in the neighbourhood, they are trying to force us to buy from the white people in the Strand.’

‘Yes our orders are still good enough!’

‘We should boycott the shops of the white people and support people’s shops, that will be a good way of hurting them.’

‘What will it cost me to send a child to town by bus to buy food every time? I cannot afford to do it on my pension.’

‘We will wear our shoes out walking to the shops and our wages will go into bus fares. Those of us who work in the city will have to get up even earlier in the morning to get to work.

Fortunately the school is already up there.’

‘We will live amongst strangers and we will no longer know the children of our friends and family.’

‘Our old people will not make it through the winter. The children will become naughty and the adults will be split.’

‘We will have to start packing, the lorries of the municipality are on the way.’

A **big yellow lorry** loaded with furniture moves across the stage.

‘They are taking the people of Fagan Street to Rusthof.’

‘We will have to start packing....It is sad, but what else can we do?’

In this scene, just like the story that Mr Fanie told, the video suggests that the people did not live as isolated nuclear units in the Strand. They all had kin, as well as friends, living close by. The children seemed to have been able to walk freely and readily into the homes of family to talk and eat as if in their own homes. This takes on particular significance when one considers the poverty that most people had to cope with. Kinship links were critical to coping with poverty at a day-to-day level. After the move, people had to spend more money on commuting to work as well as on higher prices that shops and services with monopolies in the townships could charge. More often than not people were now living far away from kin and neighbours with whom they had built up long-term networks of support and cooperation. Now they were isolated in their poverty and made to feel it much more (Mc Eachern 2001:237).

The anger expressed at the “Boere” or white Afrikaans-speaking people who made up the majority of the Nationalist Government, indicates the extent of the betrayal which people experienced. This betrayal was made even more cruel in the light of the privileging of coloured people over the African population. Particularly in the Western Cape, coloureds were seen as being more like the whites and were used as a buffer between the white and African people. Mostly Afrikaans speaking, coloured people were at some stage “cultivated” by the very people who then appeared to turn on them and cast them out in the 1950’s (Mc Eachern 2001: 241).

4.2.3. Afrikaans

All the text of the video and the conversations with Mr Fanie as well as with the other people at the school were in Afrikaans and had to be translated into English for the purpose of this research. In an article debating the current claims of white Afrikaans speakers on Afrikaans and its protection within traditionally Afrikaans universities, Prof Ronnie Belcher (2002) points to the fact that Afrikaans is the language of Islam especially in the Western Cape. He mentions that the first Afrikaans book was written by a Muslim Turk from Istanbul and was printed in Cairo. Bickford-Smith (2002:15) quotes Davids who described Afrikaans as ‘the language that slaves made.’ Martin (2001: 257) points to the ironical fact that ‘Afrikaans

which, in the opinion of the ultra conservative Afrikaners, is the first perimeter of their “identity” is in reality the product of a communication system established between the slaves and their masters at the Cape.’

On the timeline in the District Six museum (Rassool & Prosalendis 2002:98) there is a reminder that Afrikaans was used in Muslim schools in Cape Town in 1815. The earliest Afrikaans texts are in Arabic script in student notebooks. Mr Fanie told me about the Islamic documents that were in Arabic script, but were written in Dutch. He said that he regards Afrikaans as *his* language. Many Muslim people would disagree with him, regarding Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor and preferring not to be associated with it. Part of the Afrikaner nationalist movement was the language movement formed in the Cape during the 1870’s and 1880’s to promote Afrikaans as a language in competition with English. ‘For those [white people] with Afrikaner hearts, the Afrikaans language would express their unique character as a people, or *volk*, with its own culture, history, and religion, since no nationality could be created without its own language’ (Chidester 1992:189). Quoting the work of Davids and that of Stone, Mc Eachern (2002:259) refers to the Afrikaans spoken by the coloured people of the Cape as containing a specific dialect that is relevant and meaningful because it represents a specific aspect of the use of Afrikaans in the South African context. In the translation, unfortunately, much of the richness of expression is lost.

4.3 STRAND MOSLEM PRIMARY SCHOOL

4.3.1 A school with a unifying and transformative role

According to Karaan (1988:19) since the very beginning Muslims in South Africa were concerned about the preservation of the Islamic faith and their cultural identity. The madrasahs (Koranic schools) played an important role in retaining their Islamic identity. Muslim people also realized that adequate secular education was essential if they wanted to make progress in social, political and economic affairs. There was a need for proper secular education while at the same time retaining Islamic values.

Illiteracy was one of the biggest problems in previous generations in the Strand. This was chiefly due to the fact that there were no State schools in the area and no Muslim schools to

serve the community (Karaan 1995:1). For many years secular education in the Cape of children who were not white had been largely in the hands of the Christian churches and missionaries. For them education was a means towards winning souls for Christ and extending the kingdom of Christ on earth. Generally regarded as another R, religion heavily complimented the three R's of reading, writing and arithmetic. As a result there was a marked reluctance and palpable resistance towards sending Muslim children for what elders called "Christe geleerdheid" (Christian education) (Karaan 1995:1). To the Muslims, learning how to read the Koran and knowing how to perform *salat* (prayer) were the most important things they needed to know in life.

In the Strand the situation was such that if a Muslim family wanted their children to learn the art of reading and writing, they had to send them to one of the church schools. There were two such schools in the immediate vicinity – the Strand Methodist School, or the Wesley School, and the Dutch Reformed Church School. Most of the Muslims attended the Methodist School. Muslim children were admitted only if there was accommodation available after children from those churches had enrolled and on condition that they attended religious instruction classes, church services and even Sunday schools and sing in church choirs (Karaan 1988:19).

Karaan (1988:19) notes: 'No doubt the Muslims agreed to much of this reluctantly and with resentment.' He also writes that even in spite of such resentment, the relations between Muslims and Christians were in general quite good. This situation continued for more than thirty years from the end of the nineteenth century until the church people started to complain that there were too many Muslim children in the Christian schools using their facilities and that there was a lack of conversions to Christianity.

By 1927 the Muslims in the Strand felt that the need for their own Muslim mission school was a very high priority. At approximately the same time, similar Muslim schools were being established in Cape Town and other areas. Not wanting to be left out of these developments, a few public-spirited Muslim from the Strand came together in 1927 to establish the Strand Muslim School Board. They set a goal for themselves – to purchase a piece of land in the heart of the Strand where a Muslim school could be established for the town's Muslim community. It took hard work and dedication for them to achieve this goal. Various fund-raising efforts such as bazaars, picnics and concerts enabled them to reach their target. Land

was bought from a Mr Faure and a start was made 'for the most ambitious scheme the Strand Muslims, as a whole, had ever embarked on' (Karaan 1988:19). At the time there were three Muslim congregations in the Strand and the establishment of the school seems to have been a collective effort involving families from all three congregations. There is reference to 'stormy meetings' and 'family feuds' that could be seen as 'an indication of the tremendous interest shown...to achieve the best for the community' (Karaan 1988:20).

Within a matter of months, building started on the school structure and, in 1928, the school was officially opened. Capetonian Haji Johaar Adams was appointed as the first principal of the school. He had the help of one assistant. The school building consisted of a single hall, which was divided rather primitively by wooden partitions into three big classrooms. Teaching in such a place was no easy task. Not only were the partitions not soundproof, but there were also up to three classes clustered together in one classroom. The community was inexperienced in managing a school and 'the initial inspector's report of the 1930's was definitely not flattering at all' (Karaan 1988: 20).

Soon enough the school building became the central point of Muslim activities in the community as all *jama'ah* (congregation) meetings, weddings, bazaars, shows and *mouloods* (birthday celebration of prophet Mohammed) were held in this venue. The building was also used as the official *madrasah* with the religious instructor taking over from the school in the afternoon. One major advantage was that the school was situated in the heart of the community and was thus easily accessible to all members at all times. It was practically within walking distance from every Muslim home (Karaan 1995: 2).

Establishing itself in the community was not always easy. Many Muslim parents did not send their children to the school immediately because they did not trust the academic standards that the school would set. Over the years there was a marked change in this regard and, since the 1960's, those who did not patronize the school were considered to be non-supporters of the Muslims' efforts. There were also other obstacles. Conditions at the school, such as the inadequate accommodation, inefficient toilet facilities and the lack of a playground proved to be points that the Education authorities would complain about at all times. A further serious setback came in 1956 when the area was declared a White Area in accordance with the Group Areas Act. This meant that the school which the community had worked so hard to establish would now have to be moved. When the old building in the Strand became completely unfit

for use as an educational center, the present school, which is more spacious with bigger playgrounds, was built in Rusthof and opened in July 1957 (Karaan 1995:2).

In 1966 the Strand Muslim Council was established. This brought about the amalgamation of all the various bodies dealing with Muslim affairs in the Strand. A special sub-committee looking after educational affairs was formed and they have looked after the interests of the school since that time (Karaan, 1988: 21).

When the Department of Coloured Affairs took charge of so-called 'Coloured education' in 1964, lively discussions took place in the educational committee as to whether to sell out to the Department and allow the school to become a state school. Although a certain burden would have been lifted from the community, it was felt that the disadvantages would be far too many and it would constitute a betrayal of the ideals of the original pioneers. The school continued to function as a Muslim missionary school (Karaan 1988: 21).

4.3.2 2002: Post Apartheid

There are 700 learners in the school at present, of whom sixty to seventy are not Muslim. The school does not turn any child away who applies at the school. The teachers are mainly Muslim. When the Muslim children go to the Mosque, the other children are supervised in a classroom: they are not forced to participate in any of the religious activities.

Pupils participate in rugby, netball, cricket and athletics, with several going on to win provincial colors in a variety of categories. Pupils also participate successfully in cultural programs such as music competitions and Eisteddfods.

However, it is its excellent academic standards that the Strand Muslim Primary School is most proud of. Several top students go on to excel in the high schools they attend. Several former pupils have earned their places among the top 10 matriculants (final year of schooling) not only in the Western Cape, but also in the whole country. Mr Fanie told me that Ms Frieda Adams, member of parliament for Western Cape, told a newspaper how she had decided to send her three sons to the Strand Muslim school. She explained that she had noticed that 60% of the top 10 pupils at Gordon High School would always be past pupils of the Strand Muslim Primary. Her conclusion was that it could not be because Muslim children are so much

brighter than other children so it must have something to do with the standard of education. Mr Fanie confirmed that this has been his experience: the standard of education was indeed higher than at other coloured schools in the area. He says that the high standards had been part of the school culture even when he started at the school in 1978, to take up his first teaching post. In its 74 years of existence, the school has produced *alims*, *hufaaz*, doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses, journalists, university lecturers and businessmen, to mention but a few.

Perhaps the real significance of the Strand Muslim School is that it has helped to transform a fishing community into a growing professional community, containing all the professions recognized in a modern society. And although at one time there were four different Muslim congregations in the Strand, there was always only one Muslim school. So in a way, this school has played its greatest role in fostering the idea of a united community.

(Karaan 1995:4)

4.3.3 Mr Fanie's reflections

Mr Fanie told me that he was particularly saddened and angered when he visited New Zealand to notice the conditions there, especially from a child's point of view:

When I see such a small country with so few inhabitants and what they have achieved within a democratic set-up, what could South Africa not have achieved with all its resources, human and other? It is tragic and at the same time it angers me to see what apartheid has done to us. How we have been deprived of so much and how much better off we could have been. As a teacher, education is very close to my heart and to give children opportunities is so important. I do not have much experience of other countries, but it did my heart good to see the types of schools and facilities and amenities they have for children. Like I said to them there, those are things that we can only dream of here in South Africa.

On my questioning him about whether things are improving, he replied that he sees real efforts to take steps in making things better for people who have been put at a disadvantage. Unfortunately the backlog is huge because there has not been a level playing field in the past. (Nie gelyk weggespring nie.) I also spoke to Mr Fanie about his own achievements in his career. He explained that it was the hardships that served to strengthen him and add to his determination to be successful. He says that he perceives putting the blame for all problems at

the door of apartheid and ‘gutter education’ as a very negative outlook. He prefers instead an attitude of ‘don’t let those things put you off, don’t allow it to pull you down.’

4.3.4 Hope and agency

From what I have got to know about Mr Fanie, it seems that there were a few factors in his life that stood with him in nurturing hope and agency, enabling him to make choices and to take a stand against those things that tried ‘to pull him down.’ I have been a witness to his dedication to his faith. The other feature, which seems to stem from his faith, is his strong commitment to helping others and improving conditions within his community. This commitment is reflected in him organizing the rugby tour to New Zealand and in his current initiative to extend the school building without any Government support. A fellow Muslim, Seedat (2001:xxiii-xxiv), expresses this connection between faith and commitment to community when he tells about how he got started on editing the book on Community Psychology in the Islamic month of Ramadaan:

Ramadaan is a period of intense self-reflection and heightened awareness about the disenfranchised and their struggles for human rights and independence in a pluralistic world. Thus this book and its initiation are an extension of my own personal and shared reflections about the struggles for intellectual independence and creativity that ultimately must serve the interest of the marginalized in our society.

I know that in Mr Fanie’s childhood neighbourhood friends and strong family ties as well as a culture of learning at home - with most of his brothers and sisters going on to follow professional careers - formed part of his life. He speaks with great respect about his wife and of her commitment to the community so that this is a shared value in their relationship.

In doing the research on the history and context of the Strand Muslim community, I hoped to honour the notion of the ‘concrete other’, which regards ‘everyone as specific, diverse and heterogeneous’ and to engage in a process that is ‘about interaction, encounter and reciprocity’ (Graham 1996:154). How could I possibly understand the pain and hardships experienced by the people of the Strand Muslim community of which I am a complete outsider in terms of race, class, religion and culture without knowing more about their history and lives as they remember and understand it? This chapter informs the reflecting and meaning-making process of the research, as I describe it in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

CATCHING UP AND REFLECTING

5.1 FEEDBACK ON THE REPORTING IN CHAPTER 3 AND CATCHING UP ON NEWS ABOUT THE BOYS

We reflected on the work three years after meeting Mr Fanie and the children at the Muslim School for the first time. I gave Mr Fanie Chapter 3 to read and comment on. He also caught me up on the boys and how they are doing at present.

5.1.1 Feedback on the reporting in Chapter 3

I asked Mr Fanie whether the work and the way I had reported it sounded like the same work that he had participated in. He assured me that he thought that it was a fairly accurate account. I then asked Mr Fanie about the boys and he gave feedback on each of the families as follows.

5.1.2 Dyllan

Dyllan is doing well in a local High School. He still lives with his aunt. Mr Fanie said that he felt that Dyllan is the one boy who has really shown strength of character in changing his reputation and setting an example for the other boys. He thought that the big factor in Dyllan's favor was his scholastic ability and achievement. In contrast the other boys struggle with schoolwork and the stealing and other problematic behavior was part of keeping themselves occupied. I remembered how, right from the start, Dyllan's leadership qualities were evident both in the way he spoke out and in the way he started 'policing' and encouraging his friends.

Mr Fanie is of the opinion that the other factor in Dyllan's favor is his family environment. His aunt, who is his foster mother, provides him with a stable home and adequate material care. He also has the support and example of his older cousin, a successful young man who has achieved a lot at a young age. Dyllan was taken from a home where there was alcohol

abuse and violence and placed in a stable home where there is love and support from an extended family. I remembered how central church and religious activities are to his aunt and her family. It reminded me of Gabrino's research (in Couture 2000:52) involving children who live exposed to chronic violence. They found that 'children whose parents maintain a belief system and a spirituality that gave meaning to suffering fared much better psychologically than children who had no such adults in their lives.' This was also true of Dyllan's family.

5.1.3 Yusuf

A few weeks prior to our conversation, Mr Fanie phoned to tell me that he had received some bad news. He explained that Yusuf had been arrested, together with two older friends and charged with theft involving large sums of money. Mr Fanie told me that Rashieda, Yusuf's mother, had spoken to him about hardships that the family was enduring. She was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent a mastectomy in 2001. In the meantime, the cancer had spread and she was receiving medical treatment again. She is preparing her children for the fact that she is terminally ill. Both her daughters were unemployed and they were really struggling financially. I was aware of the financial difficulty and Rashieda's concerns for her daughters who were both drinking at the time that I met her. I had had two sessions with Rashieda and her daughters in the time shortly after the Honesty Celebrations in an effort to stand with them in facing their difficulties. But they stopped attending the sessions and, after a few attempts to pick up the contact, I gave up. Mr Fanie said that Yusuf was not coping with schoolwork at all. Yusuf was conscious of being bigger and older than other children in his class while realizing that his academic work was of a very low standard compared to theirs.

Mr Fanie pointed out how Yusuf's position in his family was also problematic. Although he was the youngest child, yet, as the only male in the home, a lot was expected of him. This is the case with many of the boys: there is no male adult in the immediate family to whom they can relate. In fact, many of the boys have male family members who have criminal records. The tragedy is that crime becomes part of life for them. Yusuf's mother will not stand for criminal behaviour and she supports him as best she can in taking responsibility for his actions. According to Mr Fanie: 'Yusuf is a child with a kind heart, but he is caught up in the circle of friends and in the conditions of the environment that they are living in, being

confronted daily with crime and it becomes part of his life. If only it was within my power to remove him with his family from that environment.'

When I visited the school in September, I was informed that one of the people from whom Yusuf has stolen was the Guidance teacher at one of the High Schools in Somerset West. He had arranged for Yusuf to work for his family on a Saturday and Sunday selling fish as an act of restorative justice. They are now paying Yusuf and Mr Fanie helps him to manage the money. Mr Fanie also said that he had an appointment with Yusuf to meet him at his office every day so that he could join him for prayers at the Mosque. I was very happy to learn that these two men serve as adults who take an active interest in Yusuf's life, thereby providing him with 'the adults beyond (his) immediate family' (Anderson & Johnson 1994: 102) that he needs so desperately.

5.1.4 Marshall

Marshell has stopped attending school, although his younger brother comes to school regularly and does quite well. Mr Fanie spoke to their father some time ago and he is now very ill. One of the problems at home is that their mother is involved with a married man who visits her in the home. She has his baby and is expecting another child from that relationship. As they all live in one room together, Marshell witnesses his mother's infidelity. He has become extremely rebellious and bitter towards her. Although he did not have academic problems, Mr Fanie thinks that poverty and neglect - the shame he feels about his personal grooming and clothes - makes it hard for him to attend school with other children. Mr Fanie says that Marshell seems to be 'caught up' in the whole environment in which they live. One day he saw Marshell walking in the street pushing a supermarket trolley like a 'tramp'. Marshell is no longer attending school.

5.1.5 Alie

Alie is still at school, despite severe learning difficulties and has not been in serious trouble in the last few years. He was assessed by the school clinic and it was recommended that he should attend a school for children with learning difficulties where he would learn a trade rather than going to the academic high school. Unfortunately his parents have had to turn that

opportunity down, as they could not afford the travelling expenses involved. He is thus still at school, but struggling in a class with younger children.

5.1.6 Achmat

Mr Fanie explained that Achmat left to go to High School, but that there had been reports of trouble from the school he is attending. The principal of the High School suspected that he was involved in stealing. In the meantime, Mr Fanie has lost contact with Achmat.

5.1.7 Anthony

Anthony's family had relocated. He had been in serious trouble at one stage and he was definitely a child with special educational needs. He had serious speech problems as well as health problems which had had a bad effect on his scholastic progress.

5.2 REFLECTIONS ON THE WORK

5.2.1 Influence of the home and living conditions of the boys

Mr Fanie seemed distressed when he started talking about the work and the limited sustained good outcome when looking at the lives of the boys three years later. His reflections included the following:

I think that we omitted something important and that was to take you to see the home circumstances and conditions in which these boys live. When I look back I can clearly see the influence of the home situation on the lives of the children. It saddens me, as someone who works with the children every day, to know how opportunities are created for the children, how teachers try their best to help, but that when the children go home in the afternoon and over weekends, a lot of the effort that was put in gets undone. One cannot really blame the children: these are things that they are caught up in. Especially the children that you have worked with...

I feel that with our children there are so many things that are a real thorn in the flesh to me ('my dwars in die krop steek'), but to them it represents everyday existence. We had a little one here in one of our classes who swore terribly. We tried to correct him, but as those are the words that he hears at home everyday, this is nothing strange to him. The boys that you have worked with are in the same situation: these criminal young people

who carry knives are their role models in the community. I remember an incident that happened recently. I went to a home to find out why a certain pupil was not at school. While I was waiting outside in my car, a young boy - he must have been around five or six years old - wearing a ponytail and an earring walked past. As he got to my window he took out his little gun ('gunnetjie') and pointed it at me! I then realized that this is what is important to these children and that these are their beliefs about how things should be.

So, this is why I'm saying, maybe if you had seen these things, we could have found ways to work against them. This is why I am saying that the children have such a need for good role models that are visible to them. As things are, they are exposed to bad ways of talking, dagga smoking, assaults and all of this is seen as ways of making those guys tough and important men. Children become involved in those ways as a means of gaining status and acceptance.

Look, I think that you have tried to involve the families in your work, but I am not too sure to what extent their involvement was successful. With Dyllan it was because he had a stable home environment as well as the support of his extended family and therefore they cooperated well.

I was very aware of the high incidence of unemployment, substance abuse, family violence, delinquency, illness, family disruption and poor housing that these children had been subject to. Waldegrave (1990:23) makes it very clear that these problems are in fact 'symptoms of poverty', listing them as: 'psychosomatic illnesses, violence, depression, delinquency, psychotic problems, marital stress, truanting, parenting problems, and so on.' Insufficient housing implies insufficient space and that encourages conflict and makes it almost impossible for children to study at home after school. According to Waldegrave (1990:25), therapists can convey significant political and socio-economic information and meaning to people, commending them for their ability to survive amidst difficult circumstances:

It is our view that all good therapy should be just. The measure of its commitment to justice can be assessed by the commitment to the themes of liberation and self-determination at the heart of the therapeutic process.

(Waldegrave 1990:25)

Mr Fanie and I spoke about the difference it would have made had he taken me to the homes of the children. He thought that it 'would have added to a better understanding of what you were dealing with' for me 'as an outsider'. He hoped that having a better understanding might have brought with it 'different techniques or ways of working.' One of the things I thought I could have done was to work more with the families, although this would have made the task very big and would have required even more commitment in terms of time. I did try to do this

with Yusuf's family as well as with the family of Achmat : I had sessions with his parents and also a session that included the extended family during the time of the parents' marital difficulty.

When I think of the way in which Mr Fanie described Marshall's life it saddens me deeply. I see the multiple risk factors that Couture (2000:40) speaks about in the lives of economically poor and tenuously connected children. These risk factors create the likelihood that children will become troubled teenagers who remain outsiders to society. Looking at developmental psychology, Couture (2000:42) points out that 'five or six years of poverty in an adult life may be painful but endurable. Five or six years of poverty in the life of a child influences a third of that child's formation.'

5.2.2 Special educational needs of the children

It is well-known that sustained periods of poverty can have marked effects on children's cognitive development (Illback in Pillay & Lockhat 2001:90). As a result of malnutrition, many of these children manifest either mental retardation or specific learning disabilities but, because of a lack of services, they are usually not appropriately diagnosed and/or helped (Pillay & Lockhat 2001: 90). My experience, while working in schools for children with special needs, has made me sensitive to these needs of the boys with whom I worked. Yusuf, Alie and Anthony were all children who struggled with severe learning difficulties. Unfortunately, children with learning disabilities often tend to remain in the same grade due to a lack of progress, resulting in intense frustration and shame for these children (Pillay & Lockhat 2001:90).

Swartz and Gibson (2001:44) write 'that access to knowledge is not, for obvious political and economical reasons, equally spread across society.' As a result of what I observed, I offered my services and have been involved in assessing children who are not progressing scholastically and assisting in making recommendations regarding the best educational options available to them. For the past two years, this has entailed long hours of assessments at the school; meetings with staff members; contact with Marlene Bruwer, the support teacher who was appointed by the education department to work at the school two days per week; and meetings with parents to discuss options. I wrote reports and set up meetings for parents with the appropriate service-providers in the community. As I was offering the same kind of

service at my son's school to children who could not pay for private services, I was able to network with the health services, school clinic, special schools and therapists in our area. I was struck by the lack of availability of appropriate services, but we did manage to help some of the children. I also encouraged someone who was setting up a reading program for children to do some voluntary work with her team at the school for six months.

When we reflected on this work, I asked Mr Fanie whether he thought that attending to these educational needs had been steps in the right direction towards giving the children from deprived backgrounds a better chance in life. He answered: 'I would definitely say so. Yes, especially your professional advice and the recommendations you made.' Initially I felt uncomfortable about him naming this 'professional advice'. I then realized that, in disowning professional knowledge in our desire to establish a sense of equality with communities, we might well be perceived as withholding information from those communities (Swartz & Gibson, 2001:44). Mr Fanie mentioned a few children who would have had better opportunities to learn skills for the job market largely as a result of those referrals.

5.2.3 The value of my willingness and commitment to do the work

I told Mr Fanie that one of my questions was about how he had experienced my involvement. How had he perceived the time and effort I had made available - not judging it on the outcome, but just on the attempt to be helpful. He responded:

I have great appreciation for it. I sit here at the school and it is part of my everyday struggle to find solutions for these problems and questions. It really helps when people become involved to offer support or give some guidance. Sometimes one becomes despondent and feels like giving up, but when people support you, giving guidance and creating some ways of looking for favorable outcomes, it really helps. I feel that I have learnt a lot from your involvement with the school. It definitely has a lot of meaning and value.

Pamela Couture (2000:37) writes about schools often being a refuge to children in violent communities and that caring relationships with significant adults act as principal agents of change and sources of support. She continues that a basic concept in pastoral care suggests that one cares better for the individual when one also cares for others in the individual's environment – just as my involvement with the staff at the school and the parents and other family members would suggest. Mr Fanie added:

Sometimes I feel that the problems are so much part of our existence and we have to deal with it on our own, nobody on the outside really cares. Especially if we think about where we have come from, thinking about apartheid, that made it significant for me that someone from the other side of the road became involved and made a contribution. I have to admit that I had doubts in the beginning about how and what you intended and what your motives were....I have developed appreciation knowing that there are others who want to help and make a contribution.

When I offered my services and started working at the school I had expected suspicion and hostility. I was so aware of my own guilt as part of the oppressors and beneficiaries in the apartheid regime (Ackermann 1998:86). I could hardly believe that those ‘on the other side of the road’ would not spit in my face: they gave me instead a chance to try to be helpful. In the work, I wanted to learn while doing it (Mc Taggart 1997:5), but was painfully aware of what Kotzé and Kotzé (2001:9) point out: ‘Research too often becomes an intellectual activity with researchers obtaining degrees on or receiving acknowledgement based on the suffering of others – with the latter most likely not to benefit from the research.’ I am committed to participatory action research that will primarily be to the advantage of the participants. This was a very strong guiding principle in the work.

5.2.4 Witnessing and public acknowledgement

In the work at the Muslim school I was constantly aware of my position as witness to the lives of the people whom I met. In the community where I live, the life and work of the people of the community ‘on the other side of the road’ is fairly invisible, largely as a result of our apartheid history, but also as a result of differences of class, race and religion. In an effort to promote visibility for this community and hoping to recruit the involvement of others in helping where there seems to exist such an overwhelming need for resources, I have shared the story of my involvement with the school with various groups of people. I take great care to do this sharing in a ‘decentred way’ (White 1997:99) while sharing the impact of what I have witnessed on my own life. I am always very committed to expressing what I appreciate and the things that I want to acknowledge and honor about the people at the school. In Narrative therapy the practice of Outsider-witness audiences (White 1997:101) taught me a lot about the value of acknowledging the developments that speak of people’s preferred ways of being in the world through reflecting on that. This contributes to a richer description of the lives of people who struggle with difficult problems, a description that often forms part of the

counterplot of their life stories in the face of the problems that sometimes try to overwhelm them (White 1997:102).

I asked Mr Fanie about the value of him witnessing my reading of the letter of acknowledgement at the Conference and to other audiences. I wondered whether the acknowledgment from an outsider like myself - someone who noticed and appreciated the value of his work - helped him to appreciate his own work in new ways? His answer to this was:

Yes, I think so. Like I have said, so often you try hard and you don't really know whether you are making a difference and if what you do has any significance. It was like a kind of revelation to see that we can make a contribution and that we do have an influence in the lives of our children.

I told Mr Fanie that I was asked to give a talk at one of the other schools in the area and that I had spoken with enthusiasm and appreciation about what I had seen and learnt at the Strand Muslim School. I discovered afterwards that Mr Fanie's sister was one of the teachers in the audience that day. I asked him whether she had told him about my words of acknowledgement and whether that kind of acknowledgement served to strengthen him. He remembered and responded:

Yes, definitely, definitely. She did tell me about what you had said. Yes, it is good to know that you notice and speak about those things that we try and do here over and above teaching. This is what we try to do, to look at the other needs of the children and try and put structures in place to care in ways that will make a difference in the lives of our children.

Kaethe Weingarten (2000:396) developed a grid depicting the various witness positions using the positions aware/unaware and empowered/disempowered to describe the four quadrants on the grid. Since being exposed to her work, I have been actively working towards the aware/empowered position when witnessing trauma. For me this meant learning more about the lives of the people that I encountered through my involvement with the Muslim school, but also voicing that which I witnessed as best I could. (See Appendix II)

5.2.5 Working with ethno-cultural difference

Mr Fanie acted as a cultural advisor to my work. I deferred to him regarding cultural meanings and what would be regarded as helpful, always checking understanding with him and relying on him as a ‘bridge person’ to the rest of the community (Waldegrave 1990:20). Michael White (1997:202) introduced me to ‘taking-it-back practices in which therapists embrace an ethical responsibility to identify the ways in which these therapeutic conversations are shaping of the their work and lives, and in which they acknowledge the contributions of the persons who consult them to this.’ In a Narrative therapy approach we try to be ‘transparent’ (White 1992:144) about our own values, ‘explaining enough about our situation and our life experience that people can understand us as people rather than as “experts” or conduits for professional knowledge’ (Freedman & Coombs 1996:36). While reflecting on the work and our collaboration I was able to engage in the following taking-it-back conversation with Mr Fanie:

Mr Fanie, I could not have persevered at this school if I had not felt that this is a school where there is a response: I don’t work against a wall. When I put energy in, there has always been support and cooperation from you. It would have been completely different to try and do the same in a community where I felt that everything was on my shoulders. I felt extremely safe and comfortable knowing that I could trust and rely on you to guide me in how things work in this community, in your knowledge and understanding of the families and of the children. I was full of uncertainties about how people perceived my intentions and me; questioning whether I even had the right to be here and to speak to people about certain things. So, I have to tell you that, without your assistance, I could not have worked here in the way I did. When I think of the contribution of Mr Adams and some of the other people at the school, I know that without your input nothing would have happened for these children.

This was Mr Fanie’s response:

Well, I can say the same, Elize. We were stuck with the problems and we tried this way and that way and then you came with the necessary skills, training and professional background and experience and you were willing to help. For that I have tremendous appreciation. We did not even reach out to you; you came of your own accord and offered your availability. I saw that this was not a woman who wants to impose her ways and her ideas and prescribe to us, pointing out what we have done wrong and saying: ‘This is how you should do it, because this is the way we do it in my community.’ I never got that impression from you. Your approach has always been: ‘Mr Fanie, you are struggling with this problem. How can we tackle this?’ I saw a person who was prepared to help, but who also asked us what our needs were, what our ideas about interventions were, what would work better and how we would perceive things. That has been your attitude right throughout. Therefore, even if the results do not look so good on paper, I know that those children and their families and we as a

school and myself benefited and learned a lot from your involvement in the school. That is something I will always keep with me.

It sounds as if there was added significance in the fact that the school did not have to ask for my help, but that I had volunteered of my own accord. I am deeply grateful that Mr Fanie noticed and valued the fact that I was very careful not to approach the work from a top-down position - imposing my ideas on them. In a power-sharing, collaborative approach to therapy, the therapist adopts a 'not-knowing' position in which the therapist relies on the explanations of those he/she consults with (Anderson & Goolishian 1992:29). Anderson (1997:105) explains how therapists want people to take responsibility and be accountable to and for themselves and others, but how we are often trained to take responsibility away by participating in unequal conversations in which we are the experts on how other people ought to live their lives. In her writing about ethno-culturally sensitive training programs, Kotzé (1994:117) mentions the importance of taking the 'not-knowing' and 'the client is the expert' position in order to promote a meaning-specific approach in the work.

I tried to take care to be accountable to the people of the community in everything I did, keeping in mind:

In essence, accountability is about the building of trust with the group with whom trust has been broken. Therefore accountability in such a process is not about a simple reversal of roles in the hierarchical sense. It is an offering of vulnerability in trust to each other, so that the pain of injustice can be transformed.

(Tamasese & Waldegrave 1994:66)

5.2.6 Talking about success and respectful ways of relating to children

I have regrets about some things, one being my relationship with the children. I expressed this to Mr Fanie:

I think that one of the weaknesses of my work is the fact that I did not feel that I really formed a bond with the children. That is not how I prefer it to be. Normally I manage to form a strong bond with children who are referred to me, but in this case I suspect that one of the barriers was that they were accused of stealing and a certain amount of shame was involved. They were subjected to a very strong voice of authority in the way the adults spoke to them and I was strongly associated with that. Although the adults spoke in the meetings about helping, supporting and caring for the children, I was very

aware of the voices of authority, of people wanting to tell them what to do. I am convinced that in the future I would prefer to work on establishing a relationship of trust in which the children would have a stronger voice and more authority and responsibility for changing their own lives. Dyllan was the only one who spoke openly from the start, initially in their defence and then later he also took responsibility and became the leader in speaking out against the trouble.

I also expressed my view of the value of the work, keeping in mind that within an ethics of risk 'the fundamental risk constitutive of this ethic is the decision to care and to act although there are no guarantees for success' (Welch 1990:68). I told Mr Fanie:

I have learnt in this process that it doesn't matter so much what the results are: we are not here to change the world. I hope that as these children continue their lives they will remember that there was someone who was prepared to come and sit with them to try and help without judging them and making them feel worse. I hope that they will also remember that their parents took the time and trouble to come and all joined in telling them that we care about them and about what happens to them in the future. I hope that that would make a difference to them, a difference that we might not be able to see now. How would we ever know? I see that work in a community where problems are complex and there is a long history of many years and generations of oppression and hardship, means that the outcomes are different....I am far less concerned about results, but more concerned about relationships and that those should be respectful. I am hoping that we will be able to look one another in the eye and walk together. Even if we have to admit that we have done everything wrong, our intentions were good: we have remained ethical and now we can learn from our mistakes and we can just continue from here.

It gave me great satisfaction to see how some of the respectful and acknowledging ways and the 'panning for gold' (Wylie 1994) that forms part of a narrative therapy approach, has rubbed off on the staff and is being practiced within their context. I remember how in the beginning when I arrived at the school, on enquiring about the progress of the boys I'd be met with lists of minor complaints such as this one tripping up that one or that one talking in class. Since I was determined to focus on the task that the boys had undertaken regain their reputations for honesty, I would then politely interrupt and ask: 'Please, could you tell me first, has there been more stealing? How is he doing in terms of honesty?' There was always good news and cause for celebration. We had to work hard at focusing on that and acknowledging it. Mr Fanie said the following:

I agree that it has been a learning process for me too. There are many of the ideas that you have used that I can apply in other situations. I especially refer to the idea to tell children when they have been successful and to celebrate their efforts so that they can start feeling good about themselves. That is so different from our tendency to always

put down (afbreek), scold and rebuke the children. That is what seems to happen to our children at home all the time; there is a lot of shouting and putting them down, name-calling and belittling. I think that your approach of acknowledgement has a tremendous influence on children.

In a 'just therapy' it is important for therapists to acknowledge the socio-economic context of the clients and to judge success within that context. Sometimes it is necessary to acknowledge the courage to survive circumstances that we are not sure we would have survived if we had found ourselves in the same circumstances (Waldegrave 1990:25). I wanted to know from Mr Fanie whether he thought that the fact that opportunities have been created in which the children could prove themselves and experience success for a while, even though some slipped again, was meaningful for the children. I wondered what it was like for them not to be sent to his office any more, even if only for a short while.

He responded:

Yes, the children whom we worked with all had bad reputations and were labeled and then they were given the opportunity to receive acknowledgement. I think that the acknowledgement made a big impact on those children and that is the approach that I believe we have to use more. We used it in one of our training sessions and you can take it from yourself, when someone says something nice about you, you feel good and I feel that our children need more appreciation and attention. When you acknowledge even the smallest thing about a child, he or she can start feeling good about him or herself. This is one of the ways in which we can start helping children to rise above their circumstances. We can teach them that they don't have to be stuck in difficult circumstances or copy the behavior of others who have given up in difficult circumstances. We can teach them that they can have choices.

It was interesting that Mr Fanie became sensitive to other ways of being with children within the educational system, taking some examples from the trip to New Zealand to further inform his practice:

On our trip to New Zealand we visited schools and attended assemblies where the learners conduct the entire meeting. In South Africa we would read from the Bible and sing the school song and a hymn or two. There they have a completely different approach. There all the children participated and they sang motivational songs. I remember the one school and how one of the teachers clapped her hands and the children were equally enthusiastic in their participation. They sang 'I believe I can fly'. When I compare that meeting with what we do in South Africa, I see that we are so serious and solemn while their children seem to have so much fun and joy. There are many children who participate by reading out the results of sports matches that took place over the weekend, they make announcements about cultural activities and also

discuss the program for the week. You don't see a principal standing in front giving a sermon....

We tried something similar here when we were doing a project about sexual abuse; we got two girls in Grade 7 to do a little drama for the children. I believe that the children remember better when they are involved like that. That is what I like about the way you worked; you made the children responsible and engaged them in addressing their own problems. A good example is the time when Dyllan picked up money and brought it to the office. If it were someone else who had tried to change him, it would not have had the same meaning as proving to himself that he could do it.

Participatory processes are usually conceived of as a means towards developing a community in such a way that the community begins to participate more actively in tasks and benefits associated with access to resources and increased decision-making power (Kelly & Van der Riet 2001:164).

5.2.7 Cultural and religious tolerance

Mr Fanie spoke, almost wistfully, about cultural and religious tolerance:

I have also noticed the tolerance in terms of religious and cultural differences in the New Zealand schools. In a government school here in South Africa it is unacceptable for a Muslim girl to attend with her long pants underneath her dress. People would stare and make a big fuss. At this one school in New Zealand I noticed two or three young girls from Somalia wearing their white scarves. Nobody seems to mind or object to that, nobody stares. One boy from Pakistan wears his special top on his head and he plays with the rest of the children and sits with them, no problem. The Maori children are there with their hair plaited. There is mutual respect and tolerance. I think we still have a long way to go. I do not blame any specific group, I think we all need to grow in terms of this.

It has only been in recent years that I have learnt the value of this tolerance for the people of minority groups.

5.3 REFLECTIONS BY FERIAL JOHNSON, A MUSLIM PSYCHOLOGIST

5.3.1 A Muslim friend and colleague

The comment by Bernard and Goodyear (1992:210) that supervisors working with minority-group supervisees should seek consultation with a minority-group colleague prompted me to

contact Ferial Johnston, my Muslim friend and colleague. Ferial has been very much in my mind during the time of reflection on my work at the Muslim school as she has provided me with experiences and opportunities which added greatly to my understanding of the effects of the injustices of the Apartheid system on the lives of the Muslim community in the Cape. I had worked closely with Ferial on the organising committee of the Conference of the South African Association for Marital and Family Therapy in 1999. For me there has been an instant connection of warmth and shared values with Ferial, despite my limited previous exposure to Muslim women.

One of our committee meetings took place at Ferial's home in Athlone, an area on the Cape Flats. This had become their neighbourhood as a result of the Groups Area Act and the forced removal from their home in District Six in the City Bowl with its view of the sea and mountains. Ferial also shared with the committee members the struggles in her career and the humiliation and injustice of having to train white people, only to see them being promoted while she was left to work under those she had trained. She told us about her having been labelled a 'troublemaker' for speaking out on behalf of co-workers in her job during the apartheid years. I admire Ferial's courage for going to university and for persevering with her studies while mothering two young daughters. She also shared the pain of being granted bursaries to study without any interest being shown by her (white) employers regarding her progress. We cried many tears together.

I got to know Ferial as a person with a heart for the community. At some stage she was in charge of the Boorhaanol Muslim nursery school and in a support group for Muslim principals of pre-schools, thus making her knowledge and expertise available in that way.

5.3.2 Ferial's reflections

I gave Ferial my Research Proposal as well as Chapter Three of the research to read, asking her for her comments and reflections. I interviewed her on these in August 2002.

Ferial asked me whether the young girl who attended the honesty meeting of class mates because they had stolen her watch and then had said that the boys did not owe her anything, but asked them not to do harm to others again, was Muslim (see Chapter 3 p29). I confirmed that she was. Ferial explained to me that the young girl's behaviour of exonerating the boys is

a very good example of *touba*. She quoted the Koran: 'Kind words and forgiving faults are better than *sadaqa* (charity) followed by injury and Allah is rich (free of all needs) and He is most forbearing' (2:263). *Sadaqa* also includes charitable deeds and words like forgiveness and this was what this young girl gave to her classmates who stole from her.

Ferial remarked that although the Koran speaks about the chopping off of the right hand of a person who has stolen, this is not to be taken literally. There is also mention of forgiveness and repentance such as what was included in the practices I followed. She said that compensating a person for the wrong or injury you have caused is a very strong principle in Islam. The idea of doing something to make up for the stealing (see Chapter 3 p29) fits very well within their religious beliefs.

We spoke about the injuries and injustices of Apartheid. Ferial said that she sees my involvement with the Muslim School as I have described it as a very sincere attempt to do something to show that I seek restitution. It was interesting that she identified with the mothers at the first meeting who just sat and did not have much to say. Her sense was that they were most probably evaluating my intentions (*nieyat*) in being there. Was I there to help them or to soothe my own conscience? 'As people of colour they were so used to many years of white people imposing their values and coming with their own agendas. There have been so many negative experiences in the past.'

Ferial noticed a few practices in my work that she highlighted as ones that might have contributed to breaking down the barrier of distrust of people from the dominant culture. The one was my comment about having Afrikaans as a shared language and how I had experienced that as joining. She said that she also loves talking in the way the people in the community talk Afrikaans and that she had experienced that this can be done in a joining way, without being patronizing.

She also found very joining the fact that I mentioned my own son who was the same age as those boys and that I expressed how vulnerable I often feel as a mother. Being mothers together in our concern for our children's future emphasizes sameness rather than difference.

Ferial pointed out another practice as being very sensitive to the particular community and a sign of truly wanting to make myself available: my willingness to wait at the Community Hall

with my reading and to be accepting when people were late or did not come. I shared with Ferial how hard it was for me to leave my obsession with time and punctuality behind at my practice. There I am used to viewing punctuality as a sign of respect as there I 'sell' my time. But in the community I had to remind myself that there are different realities at work here: people do not have money, transport or jobs that will just give them the time and means to keep appointments.

Ferial mentioned that she appreciated the fact that I made myself very vulnerable in doing the work. She said that leaving the security and comfort of my practice and my community behind was like 'standing naked, your cloak of protection was taken off.' She continued: 'I honour you for that.' And then she continued: 'But even so, compared to them, you have a house, a car, money...'

I did experience vulnerability and there were many times when I wanted to give up as I faced overwhelming odds. Ackermann (1998:89) writes: 'A feminist theology of praxis is characterized by risk and requires stamina. Ambitious and risky, it is an exercise in vulnerability. It risks failing, it risks appearing futile in the face of often overwhelming odds.' Although it is painful, I have to admit that many times I longed for the position of the priest and Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan. I wished that, like them, I could pass on the other side of the road and rush off to the comfort of my familiar, well-organised, 'successful' practice where I felt I knew exactly what I was doing.

Ferial seemed to understand this so well particularly as she had had similar experiences with her own work. She told me how she did community work with young girls who drove around in the taxis exchanging sexual favours to the taxi drivers for treats like food, chocolates and jewellery. She said that she could understand that, despite not wanting the bad name of a 'taxi queen' and the other risks involved, they return to the taxis after a while as the poverty and unemployment leaves them almost no other choice. When they return to the taxis after trying to cope without this dangerous practice, she realises that she cannot be God, cannot take care of everything and everyone. Ferial and I have often shared our spirituality and she told me that she asks for Divine guidance in the task of reaching out to others. Ferial seems to agree with Ackermann (1994:207) that 'a feminist spirituality which is a "lived" spirituality entails making oneself vulnerable in every aspect of one's life'. She said that it did mean a lot to her to bump into one of those girls (previously a taxi queen) on Campus at the University of the

Western Cape where she (Ferial) lectures and to know that that girl was proud to tell her: 'Ferial, I'm here, I've made it to university.' Ferial told me that reading about my work has made her realize that she would like to do more work with the girls on the taxis. She continued by saying that she now realizes in her work with people that the similarities are far more than the differences.

Ferial said this a few times: 'You sound so authentic, Elize. I was really moved by your sincerity.' I take that as a given, not to have hidden agendas in my interaction with people. It seems that for people who have been subjected to oppression, abuse and marginalization, it is a rare gift especially coming from someone like me who comes from 'the other side of the road,' the side of the oppressors.

5.3.3 Thinking of gender

Ferial and I have often spoken about the oppression of women within patriarchal society as reflected in both Christian and Muslim cultures (see Ackermann 1994: 196). The way in which she was sensitive to the stories of women in her reflection on my work as well as our previous discussions sensitised me once more to the influence of gender in the work. I asked Ferial about the role which gender played in working as a psychologist within the Muslim community. She explained that many Muslim women tell her that they prefer to speak to her about their problems, as she is a woman and not a counsellor directly associated with the Muslim religious structures. They feel that Ferial, as a Muslim, understands the oppressive structures towards women that are operative in many Muslim marriages and traditions. This made me question my own position, especially how the women within the Strand Muslim community perceived me with my strong association with Mr Fanie, a male cultural consultant. I wonder how much this contributed to my failure in trying to support Rashieda and her daughters (see 5.1.3). Perhaps I have failed in this regard as 'a "Just Therapy" is one that takes into account the gender, cultural, social and economic context of the persons seeking help' (Waldegrave 1990:6). I am forced to consider how:

[f]or so long, the battle against apartheid has understandably prioritised racial oppression as the primary evil; in this process, however, the instructed mechanisms of race, gender and class in the oppression of people have not been adequately understood. Women are separated from birth by class, location and economic status. When this

separation has been legislated and enforced over many years of oppressive white rule, our particularities isolate us from one another, instead of serving as a basis for dialogue.

(Ackermann 1994:201)

5.4 CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICES

My research has taught me valuable lessons about making services more appropriate to people in the coloured townships.

5.4.1 Access

Poverty and unemployment reduce people's ability to travel in order to access services. Many people have no car of their own and no access to public transport as a result of lack of funds (Aboriginal Health Council 2001:84). When people have jobs they have to work hard at keeping those jobs. This often entails long hours of working and using public transport to work, limiting their availability to reach and attend the services. When services are far from the areas in which people live they cannot access the services (Pillay & Lockhart 2001:94). This is the case for Alie and some other children who would need to attend a special school where they would be trained in skills preparing them for the job market. Although the service NICRO offers seems to be very good, people from the Rusthof community could not access it, because of the distance and traveling complications involved. My practice is in a predominantly white middle-class area with no access for public transport. If I had not offered an outreach service into the community, access would have been impossible for the people I consulted with at the Muslim School.

5.4.2 Shame

People who are unemployed and poor often experience emotions like embarrassment, disgrace and humiliation in spaces that have been designed for, and are mainly used by, middle-class people (Aboriginal Health Council 2001:87). In Marshall's case, Mr Fanie suspected that this shame plays a big part in him not continuing his school career.

5.4.3 Understanding Muslim ways

Mr Fanie told me about an experience his family had had with a white psychologist to illustrate the importance of respecting Muslim ways and meanings when trying to help Muslims. His wife, who suffers from epilepsy, had a seizure while cooking and burnt her hands so badly in the rice pot that she lost most of her fingers. Following this accident the doctors referred her to a psychologist. Mr Fanie said that after the first consultation his wife refused to go back, because one of the things that the psychologist told her to do was to express her anger at God for what had happened to her. Mr Fanie explained to me that his wife had no desire to do this, because this does not become a Muslim. It is not their way. He explained that his wife preferred to say: '*Algam budila*', thanking God, knowing that it could have been much worse. She lost her fingers, but she could have lost her hands or her life had she pulled the pot off the stove and sustained more serious burns. His wife felt that the psychologist had no idea about what it was like for her. She told the psychologist: 'I cannot say that I am angry with God, there is no anger in me.' He speaks with great appreciation and admiration of the way in which his wife continues doing her own housework and runs the kitchen of a take-away business with great success, despite the disability. When I asked him what it is that adds to her strength he spoke about her strength of character and her commitment to helping others. When there is a lack of an attempt to understand Muslim ways and meanings it results in inappropriate, insensitive and disrespectful practices.

5.4.4 Links with the Muslim community

It is almost impossible to build trust when there are no ongoing links between the therapist and the community. Both Mr Fanie and Ferial Johnson referred to a lack of trust that was evident at the beginning of the work. Without good links with key people in the community and their support, the consultations would have been extremely difficult. Existing networks in the community need to be respected and consulted. This is a very time-consuming task, involving frequent contact and a very tentative and respectful attitude throughout. It is important to note that it was only in the third year of my involvement at the school that Mr Fanie visited me at my house. Only then did I feel that there was sufficient trust to speak about his personal story and to ask questions about the past and the injustices of the past.

5.4.5 Organization of services

As I have pointed out, there has to be flexibility regarding appointment times and length of consultations as people have many practical problems. Often problems are complex and involve many people, all of whom arrive at the same time. There are often people joining unexpectedly or young children present as there is no one else to leave them with. The cultural differences mean that it takes extra time to establish rapport. (See Aboriginal Health Council 2001)

5.4.6 Accountability

In this regard I find the guidelines of the Aboriginal Health Council (2001:102) very useful. I have adjusted these here for this context as I have tried to apply these guidelines in my work.

- An open acknowledgement of the history of injustices and oppression experienced by people of color is needed.
- We need to recognize that, in any attempt to address injustice, the group responsible for perpetrating the injustice should be accountable to those who have experienced it.
- We have to understand that good intentions are not enough. Even when genuinely trying to ‘do the right thing’ members of a dominant group are not always able to recognize when their own cultural perspective is involving them in practices that are unjust or oppressive.
- It is important to recognize that the best judges of whether an injustice has occurred are those people who have historically experienced injustice – not members of the dominant group.
- Real power within the decision-making process needs to be invested with the people who have been oppressed, rather than the dominant group continuing to have the ultimate say. In listing the features of the community health model, Pillay and Lockhat (2001) emphasize the importance of community involvement and participation in the control of mental health services.

5.5 AN ETHICS OF RISK

At the end of this chapter the words of Sharon Welch (1990:68) resonate strongly with my experience:

Within an ethics of risk, action begins with the recognition that far too much has been lost and there are no clear means of restitution. The fundamental risk of this ethic is the decision to care and to act although there are no guarantees of success. Such action requires immense daring and enables deep joy. It is an ethos in sharp contrast to the ethos of cynicism that often accompanies a recognition of the depth and persistence of evil.

In the final chapter of this research I will reflect on the decisions to care and act without guarantees of success and the daring it requires as well as the deep joys it brings.

CHAPTER 6

WHEN NARRATIVES CREATE COMMUNITY: REFLECTIONS, LEARNINGS, APPEAL AND COMMITMENT

6.1 THE REINCORPORATING PHASE: AWARENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Reflecting on this work I realize that I am describing the risk I took in migrating from ‘innocence’ to ‘awareness’ and ‘accountability’ (Ackermann 1998). In this final chapter I am hoping to show how I have come to a ‘fit that provides for [me] a sense of once again being at home with [my]self and a way of life’ (White 2000: 27). It is within the ethics of risk (Welch 1990) that I have found the way of life that I feel more at home with.

Some might experience discomfort with the way I include much of my own story in this research report. I find the words of Bronwyn Davis ([sa]:10) useful in explaining how I see this inclusion of self in the text:

The inclusion of my embodied self in this body of writing is not in order to produce an autobiographical account of a particular life (though of course it can be read that way), but because the detail of the texts of life as I have lived it as an embodied being provide an immediate and vivid resource for examining the constitutive power of discourse both as I find myself constituted and as I, in turn, constitute the world in my reading and writing of it. It is in examining one’s own subjective take-up of the tangled threads of life that the most convincing evidence can be found for the arguments that post-structuralist theories make against universal explanatory schemas and false unities.

Helene Schoeman, a fellow-student, read my research. Her comments indicate that she has understood my intention and have encouraged me:

Having read through the thesis, not so much to find fault as to listen for the story and your thinking, I was moved by your striving to make sense of what you experience in terms of your life – to make it ethical and acknowledging what others do in making this happen for you. In giving yourself a voice and a place you positioned your learning in parallel, rather than super-imposed. It is so easy to move into a position of the all-knowing rather than maintaining a position of the co-learner in making of wisdom and meaning and change.

This seems to fit with what contextual theologians, Cochrane et al (1991:16) write:

Authoritarianism, and an imposition of one's own faith claims upon those with whom one engages in practical theology, are the opposite of this drive to self-awareness and self-critique. The method we propose depends upon recognizing the role of prior faith commitments, and upon 'coming clean' about them, that is, making them open to inspection by oneself, and by others.

6.2 CREATING COMMUNITY WITH MUSLIM PEOPLE

Within the Muslim community I encountered people who seemed to know how to retain their identity while welcoming me, the stranger, and making me at home. I hate to admit it, but for a long time I equated Muslim people with 'potential rivals,' just as the people in my cell group had done:

The equation of otherness with opposition is a dangerous fallacy because it has effects on truth. To the extent that it is believed, it shapes the relationships between nations and peoples. To see the other as potential rival is to overreact to the normal tensions of any relationship. It makes it all too easy to assume that in any conflict only one faction can win. This belligerence and defensiveness makes mutually satisfying resolution difficult and transforms difference into alienation and conflict.

(Welch 1990:35)

Assuming a position of real interest to 'learn from' rather than to 'learn about' (Bronstein in Reinhart 1992:264) made it possible for me to form connections and create community. I was surprised to learn about the similarities between Islam and Christianity. The spirit of community and commitment to their faith that the people whom I came into contact with lived and practised inspired me. This was reflected in the history of the Strand Muslim community (see Chapter 4) and the way in which this community managed to work for their own school where children could freely practise their faith. It is continuing in projects like the one in which they raised enough money to take a rugby team to New Zealand and in the way the community is undertaking the expanding of the school building without any help from educational authorities.

I am humbled by the understanding and knowledge as well as the tolerance that Mr Fanie and Imam Saban have for my faith and for the patient, generous and respectful way in which I was treated. I saw the practicing of religious plurality in the way they were willing to cooperate with me. Through our community I have learnt more about the ethics of risk:

The chaos of interdependence can be viewed as itself positive, as the fertile matrix of human creativity, leading to richer political and intellectual constructions as the insights and needs of various groups are fully taken into account.

(Welch 1990:35)

I am reminded by Elaine Graham (1996:39) to respect the fact that:

[religious] quest is necessarily corporate and social, in that personal belief and commitment is preceded by our inhabitation of a multiplicity of faith communities (some of them religious) in which the telling and retelling of narrative and meaning is already taking place.

6.3 STORY AND MEMORY AS PART OF HEALING AND CARE

It was through joining the telling and re-telling of narratives that I experienced the hospitality and community most. In exploring the ethics of risk Sharon Welch (1990) uses the writing of Marshall noting that “memory, accountability and healing are inseparable in the work of Paule Marshall’ (Welch 1990:49). The two central themes are the encounter with the past and the need to reverse the present social order. Through reading about the history of slavery and listening to the memories of the pain inflicted upon the Muslim people of the Strand through oppression and the evil apartheid system (see Chapter 4) I became more and more aware and accountable. For me the responsibility of remembering the past and seeing the horrors of the present was not borne lightly (Welch 1990:61). I have written about the effect of the remembering in my research journal:

Just come back from my run, turned out no energy available, shortened the route, slowed down, walked, cried, walked, no energy, just pain and sadness. Thinking about the conversation with the students, my vision to share the restoring of justice and ways to do it with others. Finding now people talk about wanting to learn Narrative therapy, knowing that narrative therapy is not possible without changing your view of the world and of yourself. For me that involved many, many painful realizations: most of all looking at myself as Afrikaner and member of the Dutch Reformed Church very critically. How did apartheid happen, what discourse kept it alive, what blinded me to

its effect on people's lives, how did it happen that the whole world shouted the injustice but I carried on happily with my life, reaping the benefits based on other people's pain, sitting in a church community that supported and actively condoned the unjust system, how did this happen?

Understanding a bit more about patriarchal values of a society which gave white middle class men the power to think and act as if they know what is best for everyone, having experienced it all my life at school, in church, at home and at work, I have chosen to actively seek alternative values. Having been caught up in the claws of competition, achievement, public opinion, public ideas of women's bodies, roles, status, behaviour, seeing its effects in the lives of my clients, but also in my own marriage and extended family I have chosen to position myself differently. It takes a lot of blood sweat and tears (snot and trane) almost every day. My strongest personal enemy, depression, thrives on isolation and this poses a real threat to me as my ideas and the questions I now ask threaten to alienate those I have held closely for so long. It is hard work to position myself, not compromising my values, but keeping the connections safe. Sometimes it is too difficult and I step away with much sadness and pain. Sometimes injuries are sustained on both sides...Sometimes we manage to get it right to agree to respect our difference without having to pretend, but then intimacy is compromised to a degree. Sometimes, like with Jaco (my husband) and me, we keep on struggling getting to little places of celebration before the next wave of questions hits us.

Welch (1990:93) points out that 'the healing possible for all of us, collectively and individually, lies in the recognition that although there is a way through there is no way out.' How can I care if I am not prepared to listen to the memories of pain and to accept responsibility? Like many white South Africans I have been blind to the wrongs of ancestors who participated in slave trade and the use of migrant farm workers (Welch 1990: 50) as well as many other evils. Laurance Singh, an Indian pastoral therapist whom I have met through the Institute for Therapeutic Development, has contributed significantly to raising my own consciousness by speaking out at meetings and workshops that I have attended over the past four years. He writes (Singh & Kotzé 2002,192-193):

Many white Christians are unaware of what it means to be white in South Africa. Some feel that they have never been racists, as they never voted for the National Party...If only white Christians could learn to *listen* to indigenous people...they may realize their role in complicity in the subjugation of people of colour...Even though Apartheid has been legally over in South Africa since 1994, racism is still alive. Very few white Christians are actively involved in alleviating the plight of poor people of colour.

I hope that through listening to people who have been oppressed I have not only become actively involved, but that I am also contributing towards finding ways of doing it respectfully and ethically. I resonate strongly with the words of Nouwen (1990:xvi): 'service

will not be perceived as authentic unless it comes from a heart wounded by the suffering about which it speaks.’

6.4 COMMUNITY WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

The suffering in South Africa is enormous, as De Gruchy (1994:11) points out: ‘the primary context in which much theology has to be done today is that of poverty and oppression’. In working with the children and their families I have found confirmation that even in post-apartheid South Africa the majority of children are still faced by enormous socio-economic problems, which compromise their development. These problems include poverty, disrupted family life and exposure to violence:

An examination of the available indicators of young children’s well-being, from the incidence of malnutrition, infant and child mortality rates, physical and sexual abuse, child labour, and missed education, all suggest that South Africa remains a particularly impoverished and hostile environment for most of its children.

(Duncan & Van Niekerk 2001:327)

De Gruchy (1994: 11) explains that liberation theology feels compelled to engage in dialogue with the social sciences as they help to ‘provide necessary tools and resources for analysing the *context* [my italics] within which the church is called to proclaim and live the gospel’. This is the fundamental difference between the traditional academic theologian and the liberation theologian.

In defining itself as different from traditional approaches to psychology a central premise in community psychology is ‘the importance of developing theory, research, and intervention that locates individuals, social settings, and communities in sociocultural context’ (Trickett in Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed 2001:19). Apart from the emphasis on socio-cultural context which community psychology shares with liberation theology it also ‘attempt[s] to work across, and within, many disciplines, combining the knowledge and practices of many fields’ (Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed 2001:21). Both community psychology and liberation theology criticize their more academic and traditional counterparts for their lack of community involvement and activism for social change and both have been actively involved in opposing

apartheid (De Gruchy 1994; Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed 2001). The two disciplines are both committed to developing theory and practice relevant to the oppressed and exploited majority in South Africa (Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed 2001:27; Villa-Vicencio 1994:189).

Speckman (2001:39) refers to the notion, linked to the socio-economic conditions of black and white communities, that there are two nations in South Africa and suggests that at the heart of the problem lies 'power and privilege':

those who have "power" have access to a number of privileges and [that] those privileges or resources help to acquire more power for those who are advantaged by the socio-political and economical systems. Thus political changes may take place, however, they remain cosmetic as long as they do not affect this fundamental problem.

(Speckman 2001:39)

Speckman (2001:1) proposes a search for an intervention strategy that will transcend present developmental programmes, 'which has not made Africa technologically independent, economically self-sufficient, culturally confident and intellectually respectable. On the contrary it has produced international beggars and technological, cultural and intellectual replicas of the West.' He points out that in its long history of social involvement, the Christian Church has lacked a transformative theory of social intervention:

Viewed from the perspective of the 'alternative theory' of development, a theory which focuses on developing the human potential and structural transformation, current methods of Christian social intervention amounts to almsgiving which leads to dependency at both micro- and macro-levels.

Speckman (2001:2)

A similar appeal regarding professionals' interventions and the knowledge they produce that may maintain relationships of domination, by for example, helping and encouraging people to adapt to oppressive situations, instead of equipping and encouraging them to change the situation, comes from community psychology (Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed 2001:31).

Without participation there is no knowledge and therefore no power.

(Sartorius in Speckmann 2001:1)

I have learnt that community work cannot be done *for* people, but can only be done *with* them (Bosch 1991:424). I believe that Mr Fanie's feedback (Chapter 5: 11) to me reflects this attitude of shifting from 'power over' to 'power with' that Sharon Welch (1990:6) describes as part of an ethics of risk. Mr Fanie's words were:

I saw that this was not a woman who wants to impose her ways and her ideas and prescribe to us...I saw a person that was prepared to help, but who also asked us what our needs were, what our ideas about interventions were, what would work better and how we would perceive things.

In consulting with Mr Fanie I endeavoured to stay accountable to the community in which I worked, but I also gained access to the rest of the community in order to engage them in participation. I think about community as a network of connections with people who form part of my life and I also know that each client has such a network of connections. In therapy the task is to acknowledge, strengthen, expand and use those connections to strengthen us in taking a stand against the problems that threaten to overwhelm us. Madigan and Epston (1995:257) have coined the term 'communities of concern': this refers to participant audiences in the performance of the stories of clients' lives. In Chapter 3 such communities of concern attended the Honesty Meetings and participated in the Honesty testing. More audiences were recruited to witness and celebrate success, for example, the handing out of Honesty Certificates at the school's assembly (Freeman, Epston & Lobovits 1997:125).

Although in dominant culture therapy tends to be a secret enterprise, in the narrative subculture the people who consult with us are usually enthusiastic about the idea of letting other people in on the process. We think that externalising and antipathologizing practices offer people a different kind of experience in therapy. When therapy becomes a context in which people constitute preferred selves, they have nothing to hide, and much to show.

(Freedman & Combs 1996:237)

This fits with what Sevenhuijsen (1998:27) writes:

ethics of care can offer new points of departure, through its plea for intimacy and close relationships to be counted as important humanitarian values.

6.5 STEALING, SUCCESS AND HOPE

In documenting the process of working with children who have trouble with stealing (see Chapter 3) David Epston's way of working within a narrative framework with this problem is described in detail. I think that although the children have been provided with an opportunity to change their reputations, the problems that they have been confronted with have been far more complex than the stealing problems. The ways of working proposed by David Epston rely very heavily on connections within families and the larger community to sustain the efforts of the children. Although efforts have been made for including and nurturing close relationships, in most of these boys' lives connections within families were very tenuous.

The story of success was quite strong in Chapter 3 with four of the six boys receiving honesty certificates. It was disappointing to find out, three years later, that Yusuf, who had received a certificate, was in bigger stealing trouble than ever and that the poverty and hardship of his family life has overwhelmed Marshall to the extent that he has dropped out of school altogether. Although he had lost contact with Achmat and Anthony, Mr Fanie had reason to believe that life was also difficult for them. As Mr Fanie started reflecting on the lives of the boys three years after the therapeutic work with them, he expressed distress and sadness (Chapter 5:5.2.1) pointing out that the family and life circumstances of the children seem to have a powerfully adverse effect in the face of the effort everybody had put in. I sensed in him what Welch (1990:70) describes as: 'One of the most painful aspects of an ethics of risk is knowing that "it is much, much, much too late" and continuing to mourn the loss, continuing to rage against the innumerable onslaughts against life.' While we were talking I was drew courage from the words of Couture (2000:61):

Fundamental to the work of mercy, especially with children, is this: Do not rush in to save the world. Begin small. Consider commitment carefully. Make only the commitments you can keep. Do not underestimate the accumulating value of small regular commitments. Reflect on your experience; pray about it; walk with God in it.

Holding onto the hope for the 'accumulating value of small regular commitments' I started questioning Mr Fanie about some other aspects of the work at the school. We spoke about the way in which we have been able to help children with special educational needs (Chapter 5:5.2.2). Then we started reflecting on the way in which we managed to work together, despite being from "different sides of the road" (Chapter 5:5.2.3). We participated in a taking-it-back conversation (Chapter 5:5.2.5) in which we expressed our mutual learning and

appreciation despite ethno-cultural and religious differences. I could sense the hope growing as we were speaking and reflecting, choosing to define ‘success’ in ways that would honour all the participants’ efforts and resilience in the face of the odds against us rather than giving in to despair. I had to continually remind myself that:

With an ethics of risk, action begins where much middle-class thought stops. Action begins in the face of overwhelming loss and the recognition of the irreparable damage of structural evil.

(Welch 1990:67)

How does one do this ‘action...in the face of overwhelming odds’? Kaethe Weingarten (2000:402) gives words to my understanding and experience:

Hope is something we do with others. Hope is too important – its effects on body and soul too significant – to be left to individuals alone. Hope must be the responsibility of the community.

The narratives as well as the actions and responses of many people within my own community and within the Muslim community created a community in which to do the hope that was required for me to make the difficult transition from an ethics of control to an ethics of risk.

6.6 FEMINIST PASTORAL PRACTICE

Bons-Storm (1996:27) asserts that ‘feminist pastoral care and counselling has a pastoral, but also prophetic aspect.’ I find the guidelines that Denise Ackermann (1998: 84-88) provides for a feminist theology of praxis in the light of the need for healing in South Africa very useful and hope that the pastoral practice as described and discussed in this study reflects most of these practices:

- A feminist theology of praxis begins by acknowledging the unending, relentless quality of human suffering together with the resilient longing of the human person for wholeness.

- The material for a feminist theology of praxis emerges from the stories in our different contexts, often stories which have hitherto not been told publicly.
- To seek change actively requires a collaborative effort between [people] from different cultures, religious traditions and social locations.
- A feminist theology of praxis is embodied practical theology.
- When a feminist theology of praxis dares to dream its utopian dreams of a better world and when hopes are translated into actions for healing and wholeness, imagination remains a vital ingredient.
- The concern for healing is undergirded by the belief in the role of human agency in the mending of God's creation. We have to make our hopes happen.

Graham (1996:53) supports this 'wider agenda of social justice' for pastoral ministry and sees as an aim of care the 'pursuit of proactive projects to establish social justice.' I am hoping that this is a very small attempt at such a working towards social justice and healing within the community.

6.7 APPEALS TO THE FAITH COMMUNITIES

From my learnings in doing this research I see the following as strong appeals to the Church:

- To accept and treat everybody as 'neighbour', as equal, instead of using distinctions such as 'friend' and 'foe', insider or outsider, Christian or non-Christian, male or female (Isherwood & Mc Ewan 1993:33).
- To become involved in our world and to face the uncomfortable reality that injustice is not simply an act of fate: it is caused by actions and therefore requires people's action to redress the balance (Isherwood and Mc Ewan 1993: 77; Welch 1990:52).
- To follow the example of Jesus who showed in his life a commitment to justice, which was central to his preaching; he sought to defend the rights of all, but especially the poor, the lowly, sick and alienated. We will be filled by outrage when we see injustice and marginalization of people (Isherwood and Mc Ewan 1993:75).
- To understand that for healing praxis to be truly restorative it has to be collaborative and sustained action (Ackermann 1998:83).

- To visit the poor instead of ‘caring by proxy’ is the only way in which to know what the other suffers (Couture 2000:56).
- To take the responsibility to create better conditions for children, particularly those in greatest need (Couture 2000:47).
- To focus on human development instead of seeing development as economic growth and technological advancement (Speckmann 2001:2).

6.8 CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING

Reinharz (1992:178) points out that, for feminists, research aims at creating more knowledgeable action rather than just more knowledge of the problem. One of the ways in which research can empower oppressed people is through embodying consciousness-raising (Reinharz 1992:179). I have been using opportunities given to me within the privileged community as well the less privileged community to share the story of this research and my work with the people of the Muslim community in the Strand. I believe that my sharing has led to consciousness raising, but also to an acknowledgement of the resilience and effort to survive that I have been a witness to. The audiences that I have shared this story with form an interesting and diverse list:

- Paper delivered at the International Conference of the South African Association for Marital and Family Therapy in Cape Town, April 2000.
- Meeting of the South African Association of Social Workers in Private Practice as part of their interest in working with young people against crime and violence in the South African context, Cape Town 2000.
- In a workshop on Narrative Therapy with Children presented to a group of psychologists of Free State Education Department in Sasolburg, October 2000.
- Athlone School Clinic in August 2000 to psychologists and other therapists who work with children from disadvantaged communities as illustration of work done with children who steal.
- Staff at Rusthof Primary School in 2001 who heard about my work at the Muslim school who were interested in the topic of standing with children who steal.
- Helderberg Dutch Reformed Congregation in May 2002 as part of their evening service to create awareness of community work.

- Intensive narrative therapy workshop attended by various therapists in January 2002 as illustration of community work application of narrative ideas.
- Meeting of retired business and professional people (Probus) in September 2002. They were interested in knowing more about community work.

From the response of the audiences there seemed to have been a new awareness and concern for the community in which I worked, and also many questions about what kept my commitment alive and how others can become involved in similar work.

6.9 A FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY

Like my words to Ferial reflected (Chapter 5), there is a huge temptation for me to stay in my comfort zone as ‘it is easier to give up on long-term social change when one is comfortable in the present’ (Welch 1990:15). I have tasted a bit of the ‘joy that accompanies resistance’ (Welch 1990:9) and, although the ‘aims of an ethics of risk appear modest, it offers the potential of sustained resistance against overwhelming odds’ (Welch 1990:22) of which I am committed to be a part. I have experienced that:

Deep mercy, the kind that can lead to justice, will always be required. Such mercy is so powerful that it transforms our piety and worship.

(Couture 2000:70)

I would like to conclude with the words of Denise Ackermann (1994:207-208):

Nonetheless healing and wholeness are not possible until those of us who are white women are prepared to acknowledge our complicity in the oppression of black people. We also become vulnerable when we realize how we cooperated in maintaining patriarchy in our society. We have to examine critically the damage suffered by internalising oppressive images of ourselves, as well as the damages we have inflicted on others. This critical reflection, which is more productive than guilt, comes from our desire to love ourselves, our neighbour and God.

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Appendix I: NICRO

1. A COMMUNITY PROGRAM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED IN CRIME

1.1 NICRO

I knew that NICRO, the South African National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders, does a lot of work in the community and is the only national non-government organisation providing comprehensive crime prevention services in South Africa (NICRO 2002). NICRO renders core services in terms of four major projects:

- The Diversion Programme involving high-risk young people.
- The Community Victim Support programme providing services to all witnesses and victims of crime, violence and abuse.
- The Economic Opportunities Project offering economic opportunities to NICRO clients and other marginalized, vulnerable individuals.
- The Offender Reintegration Programme designed to help support former offenders and their families.

NICRO and Lawyers for Human Rights established the diversion programmes for juvenile offenders in South Africa in the early 1990's. Diversion can be defined as 'the channelling of prima facie cases from the formal criminal justice system on certain conditions to extra judicial programmes, at the discretion of the prosecution' (Muntingh 2000:3). Prosecutors at local courts have the power to make the diversion of cases possible and should a person not comply with the conditions of the diversion, this is reported to the prosecutor who will then reinstitute the prosecution.

1.2 Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES)

I am particularly interested in the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES). It is a life skills programme called 'Mapping the Future', which is done over eight weeks, one afternoon a week, and normally involves between 15 and 25 participants. In 1999/2000 more than 7500 young people all over South Africa participated in the YES programme (NICRO 2000). The programme is aimed at children who have been charged with less serious offences such as shoplifting, theft and common assault. Stakeholders were of the opinion that it was not in the best interest of these children or of the community to be prosecuted and convicted if a more

constructive alternative option was available. The underlying philosophy of the programme emphasises taking responsibility on the part of the young person and correcting the wrong that has been committed (NICRO 2000:5). A variety of issues are addressed such as conflict resolution, crime and law, parent-child relationships and responsible decision-making. The parents or guardians participate in the first and last sessions.

In 1998 and 2000 two surveys were conducted following up the same group of people who had participated in diversion programmes. It transpired that the typical diversion programme participant is an unconvicted male aged 15-17 years, a first offender charged with property crime, who resides with his family and is in his second or third year of secondary schooling. Theft and shoplifting account for between 69% and 73% of the total of offences. In terms of household structure it is significant that in nearly 48% of cases the father was not living with the child. Feedback from participants on programme content was extremely positive and most respondents were able to remember a fair amount of detail about the programme content, which is indicative of impact. Experiential and adventure education techniques appear to have been used to good effect by the programme facilitators. A very small percentage of participants re-offended, 6.7% in the first 12 months after participating in a diversion programme and a further 9.8% were recorded in the second survey (NICRO 2000). One of the main factors in re-offending seems to be peer pressure.

1.3 Interview with a NICRO social worker

Mr Fanie told me that a social worker from NICRO had been in contact with him regarding the YES-programme in the Rusthof area. I contacted Valdila Basedien who works from the NICRO office in Mitchell's Plain. She agreed to see me and was extremely helpful in discussing her experience with the YES-programme. Valdila explained that they use social workers, employed by NICRO, as well as volunteers as facilitators. The manual for the YES-programme is very comprehensive and structured and contains all the necessary material. She said that it was very encouraging that a few young people who attended the programme came back to be facilitators. At present the young people in the groups are between thirteen and eighteen years old, but Valdila said that they are hoping to include children from as young as ten in the future. In her opinion the success of the programme lies in the fact that the young people are involved in activities like role-plays where they can work with their own experiences and challenge one another to take responsibility for their actions. These practical

examples from real life situations lead to lively debate in groups. There is also emphasis on restorative justice. The participants are required to write a letter of apology to the person who had been affected by the crime. In the first session, which includes parents and guardians, the effects of the crime on the lives of family members are explored in a role-play where children and parents swap roles. The parents attend the last session to participate with the child in the mapping of the future. Throughout the programme it is emphasized that people have choices in life and that since they are still young they can still choose for a crime free future. The groups develop their own rules and the young people learn to take responsibility for attending and being punctual, as the court requires 100% attendance.

I asked Valdila about her involvement in the Strand/Somerset West area. She explained that NICRO has an office in the Strand where she consults one day a week and that the YES programme was run at the Somerset West Public Library. I explained to her that that was one of Mr Fanie's concerns, that the venue was very far and inaccessible to young people from the Rusthof area. Valdila asked me about a more suitable venue and I told her about the Iqra Community Hall where I saw the boys and their families. She told me that a group of women travelled from the Strand to Mitchell's Plain to attend the training to assist women who are victims of abuse.

1.4 Reflecting on my work and learning from the NICRO approach and findings

Although the young people usually included in the NICRO programmes are older than the boys in my study, there are interesting similarities in the work done by NICRO and the narrative pastoral practice I followed:

- The young people are actively involved and participate in the process.
- Restorative justice forms an important part of the work.
- There is a strong emphasis on the young people taking responsibility.
- There is the opportunity to make new choices.
- The family is included in the treatment.
- There is an opportunity to talk about the effects of a criminal life style.

Appendix II

WITNESS POSITIONS

