

**WHO BENEFITED?  
IMPLICATIONS OF "PROJECT GO" FOR  
THE CHILDREN IN A CHILDREN'S HOME**

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IMPLICATIONS OF “PROJECT GO” FOR  
THE CHILDREN IN A CHILDREN’S HOME**

by

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*Aan my man, René:*

*vir jou opoffering, liefde en onderskraging.*

*en*

*Aan my ma, Mercia Rossouw:*

*die eerste om my te leer om op ander maniere oor bekende dinge te dink.  
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## SUMMARY

The transformation of child and youth care ran concurrently with the political transformation in South Africa. One of the projects aimed at establishing the transformation of child and youth care, was Project Go. This project placed a moratorium on the transfer of children “deeper” into the child care system. It aimed at reunifying children in residential care with their families. Furthermore, the project assessed the children in the system with the aim of accommodating them in the least restrictive, most empowering child care facility.

This narrative action research study focused on the effects of Project Go and the transformations on the children at the Children’s Haven M T R Smit. This study can also be described as emancipatory action research.

This qualitative study is positioned within a social construction discourse. Knowledge was socially constructed through multiple reflexive conversations.

I researched the background to the transformation of the child and youth care system and investigated the implications of the transformation for the children at the Children’s Haven M T R Smit, as well as for the child care workers and management of the haven.

A narrative approach was employed. I relied on the Foucauldian discourse to come to some understanding of issues of power and resistance. Following Foucauldian thought, I investigated discourses constituting the care that the children at the Children’s Haven M T R Smit received. This investigation led me to formulate some understanding of the history of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) – the body responsible for the management of the haven since it was founded in the early 1920s.

Once I reached an understanding of some of the historical developments of the DRC (which I learned was closely linked to Afrikaner politics), I explored some implications of the transformation for the DRC’s future involvement with the children in its care. This

exploration led me to a comparison of the theology of the DRC and black liberation theology, focusing on prophetic practice.

Although not an initial aim of this study, I learned that the transformation of child and youth care held implications not only for the pastoral practice of the DRC, but also for the helping professions such as psychology, social work and child care. I focused briefly on the ethics and some limitations of care provided by the profession of psychology. I reflected on the implications of the transformation of child and youth care for the helping professions.

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## BACKGROUND TO AND AIMS FOR THIS STUDY

### 1 BACKGROUND

#### 1.1 The history of the Children's Haven M T R Smit

The history of the M T R Smit Children's Haven illustrates the development of the role of the Dutch Reformed Church in child care but more than that: it illustrates the general theological and political ideology of the Dutch Reformed Church. The history of the haven, which stretches from the early 1900s to the present, also offers an impression of the effects of the church's theology and political ideology on the children who are in the care of the haven. An understanding of the historical background to the haven creates a context against which the implications of the transformation of child and youth care for children and for the DRC can be understood.

Rev M T R Smit documented the history of the haven in 1964 in a book: *Die Romantiese verhaal van die dorpie Ugie* (The Romantic story of the town Ugie). This book served as the source for the following paragraphs. The haven had its origins in a picturesque little town of Ugie, situated at the foot of the Drakensberg in the Eastern Cape. The founder of this haven was a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, Rev M T R Smit born in 1888. He started his ministry serving the soldiers in the First World War and was later awarded the Military Cross by the King of England, King George V (1865-1936) for his bravery during the war (Smit 1964:63). The motivation for the founding of the haven was based on a need for a school with the facility of a hostel to provide education for the children of the farmers in the district.



*(Rev M T R Smit)*

In October 1918 a nationwide flue epidemic struck at the heart of the nation. Thousands of people died leaving their children orphaned, Many of the orphans from the district found their way to the hostels at Ugie and soon there were as many orphaned children and neglected children as there were children from the bordering farming community (Smit 1964:88,93).

In his travels through the Eastern Cape, Rev M T R Smit discovered many white Afrikaans-speaking orphans who were cared for by both black and coloured people. He removed these children from their caregivers with the belief that the children would deteriorate in their care (Smit 1964:111). White Afrikaans speaking-children, who were found amongst coloured children in the care of nuns of the Roman Catholic Church, were removed in the conviction that they would come to harm.



The manner in which Rev M T R Smit “harvested” these children for the haven and by implication for the DRC, the Afrikaner nation and the white race, becomes an interest of this study. In chapter three I offer a contextual discussion of the history of the DRC.

By 1937 the haven was registered as an orphanage and the finance of the haven became the responsibility of the Department of Welfare (Smit 1964:116). The haven became the largest orphanage in the Cape Province. In 1962, under the directorship of Rev S Ozroveh, the haven was moved to a new complex at the far end of the town on a twenty-eight morgen stretch of land. The children accommodated there were put in the care of “house parents”. Siblings were housed together to create the atmosphere of substitute families for the children. Playgrounds were developed for the children and a central kitchen and laundry catered for the families’ needs. The development of the complex was aimed at creating homes for the children that they could be proud of, could feel a sense of belonging to and grow to love (Smit 1964:206-220).

The haven was funded mostly by the Department of Welfare shortly after it was registered as an orphanage. For the financial year ending in March 1963, the government subsidy covered 64% of the haven’s expenses, which totaled R 95 044.04 (Smit 1964:236). The government subsidy for the financial year ending in March 2000 covered just over 50% of the expenses, which totaled R 1641 792.62 (Children’s Haven M T R Smit Annual Report 2000). Currently the balance of the haven’s income is covered mostly by fundraising.

In 1989 the haven was moved to Port Elizabeth for practical reasons. Ugie was eight hours drive away from Port Elizabeth where the children received medical treatment and therapeutic assistance. Furthermore, the government introduced changes to the way in which children’s homes were to be subsidised. According to these changes, child care institutes were to be subsidised on a provincial level. As a result child care facilities were forced to restrict the admission of children to its geographical area. Children, who came from areas outside of the province, were transferred back to institutes in their province of origin. The number of children who were accommodated at the Children’s Haven M T R Smit, declined drastically (Jordaan 1999).

Today, the haven is situated in Walmer on a large property across the Walmer West Primary School. The haven houses approximately one hundred children in ten cottages. The children live in cottages that are shared with a child care worker and her family. As far as possible, siblings are housed in the same cottage. Several teenagers who are in the process of completing school live in a house in the community together with a child care worker and her family. The children have access to a swimming pool, a basketball court, jungle gyms, a library and a computer laboratory. They attend different schools depending on their individual needs and take part in extra-mural activities. They receive catechism at the haven and attend church. From time to time the children are taken on field trips.

One of my aims with this study was to get an impression of the children's life experiences and the impact of transformation in child and youth care on them.

## 1.2 Transformation of child and youth care

The transformation of child and youth care forms an important focus of this study. The background to this transformation sketches the stories of thousands of black children in residential care who lived in inhumane conditions and were suffering a "double punishment" during the apartheid era. They were subjected to discriminatory measures firstly, because they were abandoned or neglected by their parents and secondly, because they were black (Department of Social Development [Dep Soc Dev] 1996b:11).

The transformation ran concurrently with the political transformation in South Africa. Since the early 1990s the National Association of Child and Family Welfare and other non-governmental organisations advocated for changes to the child care system in the country. There existed great concern for the well-being of thousands of children in child care institutions (Theron 1999).

In 1995 the president Nelson Mandela requested that a committee be formed to investigate the care of children in reform schools, schools of industry and Places of Safety be investigated (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:2). In the same year the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk (IMC) was formed. An investigation was launched

and based on their findings, the IMC urged a complete transformation of child and youth care (Dep Soc Dev 1996c:4). In short, the IMC found that the standard of child care in South Africa did not comply with international standards and that in many cases the human rights of the children in child care facilities were being abused.

The IMC continued to draft programs aimed at transforming child and youth care and designed stages in which the transformation process would be implemented. A crisis in the Department of Correctional Services led to the launch of Project Go. Dr S Msimela, the minister of Correctional Services at the time, announced on May 16, 1995 that within the next twenty-four hours all children who had been imprisoned would be released (Dep Soc Dev 1996c:4). This decision was both in line with South Africa's new constitution and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) (Dep Soc Dev 1996d:4). Hundreds of children were released into the care of the Department of Welfare and were accommodated in places of safety. However, these facilities were not designed for the safe-keeping of juvenile prisoners and they started to "escape" from these places of safe-keeping. It was at this stage that Project Go was launched (Dep Soc Dev 1996d:8).

### 1.2.1 Project Go

Project Go was launched by the National Ministry for Welfare and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young people at Risk in November 1997 and was led by the Department of Welfare. The project was one of several projects, developed in response to the investigation of the IMC into the standard of care of the child-in-need. Together with the other projects it was aimed at transforming child and youth care. Its immediate goal: Minimising the number of children awaiting trial in prisons as well as the monitoring of children who were in the care of the Department of Welfare (Dep Soc Dev 1996d:7).

Project Go was aimed to control the process of the removal of children from their homes, their placement into child care facilities and their transfer between these facilities. It was designed to ensure that each child in the care of the Department of Welfare was referred to, or remained in the least restrictive and most empowering facility that was appropriate

for the child's developmental needs. In doing so, placements and transfers of children could happen only on the basis of new ways of assessment, which were introduced by Project Go, and only after the approval of a representative Project Go-committee. The mission of the project was to reunite the children with their families and communities of origin as soon as it was in the interest of the child. This mission values the unity of the family as a powerful and meaningful part of society and it was set against the destruction of families in the past and the disempowerment of the parents and the child by estrangement of the child from his community of origin (Dep Soc Dev 1998e).

The project placed a moratorium on the transfer of children deeper into the child care system, in other words, from a less restrictive facility to a more restrictive one. This moratorium was initially introduced for the period January 1998 to November 1998 but later this date was extended until November 1999 (Woods 1998; Dep Soc Dev 1998c)

The Project was named "Go" to emphasise the movement that it would introduce into the child care system where children had been "stuck", in other words where children had remained in a facility for extended periods of time without proper assessment and follow-up of their circumstances

When I refer to the implications of the transformation for the children (chapter six), the DRC and the helping professions (chapter seven), I refer specifically to the implications of Project Go, which signified the transformation of child and youth care for children's havens.

### 1.2.2 Developmental Assessment

The Developmental Assessment, which established a new manner of assessing the circumstances of the child-in-care, was introduced along with Project Go. This form of assessment was based on the lack of therapeutic and educational programs in the child and youth care system on which the investigation of the IMC had focussed. This model emphasised the development of the child in the child care facility as an individual (Dep Soc Dev 1996d.4).

The Developmental Assessment was adjusted from child care models that had been used in Canada and England in their work with disadvantaged communities (Woods 1998; Theron 1999). The new model was based on a philosophy of child care that follows a post-modern approach with a move away from pathologising discourses to an empowering one. It was a novel philosophy for those who had been working with children in residential care and it was not readily understood and appreciated by the child care workers, whose training at that stage was already lacking. The philosophy underlying the model of Developmental Assessment focuses on the children's strengths and not their weaknesses; it builds competency rather than attempting to cure, and on privileging the uniqueness of the child's context (Dep Soc Dev 1996d:5).

The background to Project Go and the Developmental Assessment is provided in chapter four of this study.

### 1.3 Implications of the transformation for the children

This study originated from the immediate effects of the launch of Project Go in November 1997. The period that followed the first Project Go meetings in which the children were involved left the children upset, emotionally labile, anxious and traumatised. Their behaviour at the haven and at school deteriorated. Their reactions left the child care workers and the social workers concerned about the immediate welfare of the children. They found themselves ill-equipped and inexperienced to deal with the children's reactions (chapter six).

According to my conversations with the staff, their concern reached beyond the children's immediate discomfort. The child care workers and the social workers, in many instances questioned the decisions of the Project Go-committee to transfer children out of the child care system back to their homes. They knew the children better than anyone else and also knew the circumstances that awaited the children at home. These circumstances, which include poverty, physical and sexual abuse, alcohol abuse and gross neglect, created the contexts from which the children had originally been removed.

The implications of the transformation of child and youth care on the children of the Children's Haven M T R Smit are shared through the stories of some of the children who have had to return to the haven as a result of failed reunification and those who have remained reunited with their families. One such story involved a fifteen-year old girl, Suanne (chapter 6, 2.1). She was reunited with her mother and her stepfather as a result of Project Go. One year after the reunification her stepfather raped her. The story may seem irrelevant to the reader unless I explain it further. The stepfather had previously served a prison sentence for sexually abusing Suanne and her sister. Prior to the prison sentence, he had been given a suspended sentence for the same offence. Despite the stepfather's circumstances, the Project Go-committee regarded reunification in Suanne's best interest.

#### 1.4 Theological context

An appreciation of the implications of the transformation of child and youth care for the children of Children's Haven M T R Smit and for the Dutch Reformed Church, under whose auspices it is managed, is facilitated by a historical view of the development of the theology of the Dutch Reformed Church (chapter 3, 2,7). Some focus on black liberation theology offers the reader the context against which the political liberation (chapter 3, 11) occurred and illustrates aspects of the prophetic role of theology (chapter 3, 11.2; chapter 7, 3.4).

Neither the theology of the DRC nor liberation theology developed in isolation. As with any form of theology these two theologies were determined by their historical contexts. The theology of the DRC has to a great extent been shaped by the concurrent development of Afrikaner nationalism and the development of Afrikaner politics. An overview of the relationship between the theology of the DRC, Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaner politics offer a context for the system of apartheid and the resistance of the DRC to relinquish their ideology of separate development, which they for many years based on the Scripture. It also sketches the background against which the DRC amended its policy of apartheid, confessed to, and eventually apologised for the role that it played in

creating and maintaining a system that caused tremendous suffering, humiliation and hurt to millions of people (chapter 3, 2–10).

Liberation theology in South Africa has its origins in the black liberation struggle, which was optimum in the early 1980s (Maimela 1998:112; Sparks 1990:278). Although by no means a uniform theology, it strived towards one goal – liberation of black people from white oppression. Aimed at challenging the marginalisation, discrimination and oppression of black people, black theology became the heart of the black liberation struggle (Maimela 1998:113,114).

A more detailed discussion of the theological context of the Children's Haven M T R Smit is found in chapter three (chapter 3, 11).

### 1.5 Implications of the transformation of child and youth care for the pastoral practice of the DRC

Whereas the previous paragraphs refer to the contextual issues and the historical development of the theology of the DRC, I attempt to explore the implications of the transformation for the DRC and for pastoral practice in this study.

The implications refer to those needs of the children of the Children's Haven M T R Smit that have been created by the previous child care system (chapter 4, 3; chapter five) as well as the transformation of child and youth care (chapter chapter six). The study attempts to illustrate that the transformation does not take place in isolation – it is directly linked to the larger process of political, social and economical transformation in the country (chapter 7, 2). These issues are discussed in detail in chapters six and seven of this study.

The implications of the transformation of child and youth care have brought about challenges for the Dutch Reformed Church.

A short historical overview of the role of pastoral care is provided focusing on the prophetic role (chapter 7, 3.1-3.3). At times, such as the old Israel in the Old Testament,

pastoral practice focussed strongly on the injustices committed – it had challenged those authorities causing the injustices. At other times, and in other contexts, for example during the earliest period of the Christian religion, pastoral practice had failed to address unjust practices and had chosen to maintain the status quo (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:29). The implications of the transformation of child and youth care for pastoral practice and care are discussed against the backdrop of the needs of the children at the haven and the current political and economic context in South Africa. A call is made on the DRC to turn to its prophetic role addressing issues such as power abuse, discrimination and marginalisation of the children at the haven and their families (chapter 7, 4).

## 1.6 Implications of the transformation of child and youth care for the other helping professions

A short discussion of the ethics for psychology is presented (chapter 7, 5.1-5.4). This discussion relates the limitations of ethical codes for psychology. Moreover, it reflects on the failure of modernist approaches to sufficiently address ethics in the therapeutic relationship. The discussion is completed by reflection of the therapist's responsibility to address unjust and unethical practices in society.

## 2 AIMS OF THIS STUDY

### 2.1 Need for the study

The Children's Haven M T R Smit is situated in Walmer, Port Elizabeth. In my practice as a clinical psychologist, I have been involved with the children of this haven for the past seven years. I have seen a number of the children from the haven in psychotherapy for emotional and behavioural problems. The need of the children at the haven has always appealed to me. For this reason the haven became the focus of this project.

Before embarking on this study project, I approached the management of the haven and asked whether they felt that they could benefit from taking part in a research project. They welcomed the opportunity. I invited them to identify a specific area that needed to



be focussed on. Their immediate need was that I assist the children and the staff during the initial phase of the implementation of Project Go.

A further need, was to assess what the implications of the transformation of child and youth care were for the children of the Children's Haven M T R Smit as well as for the Dutch Reformed Church, which has been involved in its management since it was founded in the early 1900s.

### 2.1.1 Emotional well-being of the children

During my initial contact with the staff of the haven regarding this study, they expressed their concern about the emotional and psychological welfare of the children resulting from the initial meetings that had taken place as part of Project Go. Although Project Go had been designed to improve matters for the children in the long term, that is, transferring them out of institutionalised care and reuniting them with their families, it caused immediate emotional discomfort for the majority of the children at the haven. Despite the expectation of the majority of the children to be sent home after their Project Go-meetings, these children were informed either by their parents or social workers that their parents were unable to care for them on a permanent basis and as a result they had to stay on at the haven. The study's initial focus fell on addressing the children's emotional needs in the period immediately following their first Project Go-meetings.

### 2.1.2 Implications for the children

Following the need to assist the children and the staff during the initial phase of the implementation of Project Go, was the need to focus on the implications of the transformation of child and youth care for the children.

During the course of this study it became apparent that not only were the situations of the children at the haven affected, but also those of the child care workers and the rest of the staff at the haven. These implications were investigated as far as they impacted on the children and recorded for the duration of Project Go.

### 2.1.3 Implications for the pastoral practice of the DRC

During the research project it became apparent that the transformation of child and youth care affected both the way in which the Children's Haven M T R Smit was managed and the role of the DRC, since the DRC has traditionally been the agent of managing the matters of the haven. The implications however, stretched beyond issues of management; it reflected on the theological role that the DRC plays in the lives of the children.

### 2.1.4 Implications for other helping professions

The transformation brought about changes in the care of the children at the haven. Although this was not an aim at the outset of this study, I became aware of how these changes impact on the helping professions, such as psychology, social work and child and youth care. This issue is discussed in chapter seven (chapter 7, 5).

## 2.2 Significance of the study

Much has been written about the staff and children of children's havens in this country and elsewhere. The importance of the relationship between the child care worker (previously referred to as the houseparent) and the child has been recognised (Botha 1981) and training programs have been developed and administered on child care workers and staff. These programs have focussed predominantly on modernist approaches and include behaviour modification programmes (Garbers 1990), programmes for communication skills (Neatle 1986), systems oriented therapy (Joubert 1983), bibliotherapy (Kroon 1994) and ecosystemic group therapy (De Meillon 1993).

This study addresses the unique implications of the transformation of child and youth care in an equally unique context of socio-political and economic transformation. The approach applied in this study attempts to reflect this uniqueness. In contrast to the studies mentioned above, I introduce a narrative approach with an epistemology rooted in post-modern thinking.

The knowledges created by this study were obtained through multiple reflexive conversations with the children, the child care workers and the staff at the Children's Haven M T R Smit as well as with various officials in the Department of Welfare.

### 2.3 Problem Statement

The immediate effects of the transformation of child and youth care created the need for therapeutic support of the children in care of the Children's Haven M T R Smit. Furthermore, it created a need to discover, for the duration of Project Go, the implications and the effects of the implementation of the transformation of child and youth care on:

- the children
- the child care workers and staff, in as far as it was relevant to the care of the children
- the pastoral practice of the Dutch Reformed Church

(As mentioned before the implications of the transformation of child and youth care for the helping professions became a focus of this study during the course of the study.)

### 2.4 Purpose of the study

This study aims to:

- provide the children in the care of the Children's Haven M T R Smit with therapeutic support immediately after their Project Go-meetings.
- facilitate the process of understanding of what the implications of the transformation are for the children at the haven.
- facilitate the process of understanding of what the implications of the transformation are for the pastorate of the DRC and the other helping professions.

### 2.5 Feasibility of the study

The feasibility of the study was good. I have been doing therapy with the children from the Children's Haven M T R Smit for a period of seven years. I was familiar with the

children and the staff and with the haven as a whole. The children at the haven have a continuous need for psychological services and the management has little funds to pay for it. They were most willing to make the haven available for the study and have proved to be most supportive of it. The problems that this study addressed were of great concern to the management of the haven and therefore, they found the study meaningful.

### 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

This study borrows approaches and discourses from post-modern and social construction discourses (chapter 2, 1.1;1.2). The discourses on deconstruction and power (chapter 2, 1.3.5) offer assistance in coming to an appreciation of the implications of the transformation of child and youth care for the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit and for the pastoral practice of the Dutch Reformed Church.

The narrative therapy-approach with its emphasis on generating alternatives, the deconstruction of dominant discourses and the "not-knowing" stance of the therapist serve as medium through which the series of reflexive conversations with the participants who contribute to the results of the study, take place.

#### 3.1 A post-modern approach

An overview of the literature documenting work done with children in residential care and the staff who work with them, reflects a shortage of perspectives on post-modern approaches to therapy and specifically on narrative therapy.

During the last few decades there has been a gradual development in the social and cultural theories away from the modernist view to a post-modern view. The biologist Humberto Maturana is just one among a group of novel thinkers including Ernst von Glaserfeld, Heinz von Foerster and biologist Francisco Varela whose work revolutionised ideas regarding scientific objectivity (Simon 1985:32). Maturana refuted the idea that any person can objectively study another object or person and discarded the perception that people, animals or objects can be perceived as realities "out there", or something apart from the observer (Maturana 1991:30-51; Efran, Lukens & Lukens 1985:23-28, McLean

1997:11). His pioneering research viewed perception as biologically and structurally determined – that one cognitively perceives the environment according to one's specific biological and genetic make-up. Quite literally, that what is seen "is in the eye of the beholder" (Efran et al 1985:23-28; 1988:27-35).

Maturana's ideas hold significant implications for the fields of psychology and therapy, heralding a move away from modernist approaches. These approaches view people as entities who are separate from their environment and believes that people can be studied objectively. Furthermore, modernist approaches assume that the results of research can be quantified and that people can be categorised in terms of diagnosis and types. In contrast, the post-modern approach moves away from these assumptions; away from the idea that knowledge exists out there – waiting to be discovered (Efran, et al 1985:72-74; 1988:27-35).

Post-modern theories move towards an approach which emphasises the principle that objectivity is impossible, and that everything is relative (Von Foerster 1991:63-72, McLean 1997:11). The focus moves away from the debate about "objectivity versus subjectivity" to the intersubjective domain (Freedman & Combs 1996:20-40). It assumes that knowledge is determined by the receiving context of the observer and that everything that is being observed is explained from a set of presuppositions, which determine one's view of the world (White & Epston 1990:5; McLean 1997:11). Furthermore, it upholds the principle that knowledge is born through a process of interaction between people (Efran et al 1988:29). Knowledge is the result of the co-creation of ideas through discourse; there are no real truths but only "discourses of knowledge" (Kotzé 1994:37). A therapist cannot assume to have knowledge about a person and cannot accept that he can intervene or attempt to change any other person.

In the context of post-modern theories, a move away from the problem-focussed therapies such as behavioural and cognitive and systems therapy, is introduced. The development has been towards an attitude that the solutions rest within the individual and his- / her social network. Emphasis falls on growth of the life- enhancing part of a person's life rather than on correcting pathology. The post-modern view acknowledges

the power of past history and present culture that shape the lives of people. At the same time it is optimistic about the individual's capacity to liberate him- / herself from his / her problems (O'Hanlon 1994:26).

Constructivism approaches knowledge as construction of reality rather than a reflection of reality or a representation of an outside reality. Whereas constructivism focuses on the biological and neurological operations of perception, social construction theory includes social interpretation and the inter-subjective influence of language. This theory views realities as socially constructed perceptions shared between people. These perceptions are legitimised (Kotzé 1994:26-32, Hoffman 1990:1-6; Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:3) when they are interpreted as "truth" in the process of sharing perceptions (Kotzé 1994:26-32; Hoffman 1990:1-6). Ideas, perceptions and memories are co-constructed within social inter-change and mediated through language (Kotzé 1992:66). Language is the linguistic domain in which people unite in a structured manner. People exist in language. We understand what a person is saying by means of our contact with him / her - we are not understanding the person. Meaning does not exist prior to language. Language brings forth meaning and "creates the natures we know" (Kotzé 1994:37; Freedman & Combs 1996:27-28; Anderson & Goolishian 1988:377-379).

People always say things within a particular cultural and traditional perspective, it has meaning only within that tradition or culture. Second order cybernetics explains this further. Whereas with first order cybernetics (Kotzé 1994:31), the focus was on the therapist as the outsider viewing the family as a system, second order cybernetics assumes that the therapist can never stand "outside" a situation - cannot be disentangled from the observed activity. He / she is automatically a part of the situation. Second order cybernetics argues that the therapist cannot cause change through influence. People are seen as self-creating independent entities. Second order cybernetics facilitates the process of a therapist becoming his / her own observer in a study of how he / she perceives people and how his / her presuppositions determine his / her construction of ideas about what people are saying (Hoffman 1990:5; Kotzé 1994:23-35).

From a post-modern perspective the "self" is not seen as an intra-psychic entity or an inner reality but as a process or an activity that occurs in the space between people (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:3). The self is a social construction. The post-modern therapist understands the psyche not as an idea of being within, but of being-in-the-world with others. The stories that people develop about themselves and their lives become the basis for their identity. A hidden self to be revealed and to be interpreted does not exist (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:4; Freedman & Combs 1996:22,23).

### 3.2 Foucault and issues of power

Michel Foucault, a French intellectual, contributed a wealth to post-modern thinking (Freedman & Combs 1996:37; White & Epston 1990:1). He challenged the traditional views on knowledge, truth and power (Fillingham 1993:1-26). Foucault's views on knowledge and power in Western society have been assimilated into the philosophy that shapes narrative therapy (Freedman & Combs 1996:37; Epston 1998:50; White 1992a:136). Following his ideas, narrative therapists view dominant discourses in society as social constructs that are imposed on people's lives (Freedman & Combs 1996:38; White & Epston 1990:18,19). People integrate these discourses as truths and begin to police and judge themselves and their life experiences according to these discourses. Their personal life experiences that do not fit the dominant discourses are marginalised and labeled as abnormal or pathological (White 1992a:140; Wylie 1994:44). As a result their untold life stories remain unacknowledged. The narrative therapist offers people the opportunity to critically assess the construction of dominant discourses and the effects of these on their lives (Freedman & Combs 1996:39; White 1992:143). Furthermore, people are offered an audience to those lived experiences that have remained untold (Freedman & Combs 1996:39). In this process the therapist and the person in therapy become co-constructors in authoring new stories of resistance against the power of the dominant discourses (D. Th. study group 1999; Wood 1995:66).

### 3.3 Narrative approach

This study applies a narrative approach to co-create knowledge. The conversations with the children, the child care workers as well as the other persons involved, follow the principles and the philosophy of a narrative approach to offer therapeutic assistance to the children and the child care workers and to co-construct knowledge.

The children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit targeted and mostly affected by the transformation are the focus of this study. Moreover, these children are pushed onto the sidelines of society, marginalised and stigmatised for the mistakes and the inadequacies of their parents. For these reasons I feel an ethical and spiritual obligation offer them care through counselling and to attempt to change the situation they find themselves in by means of the process of co-constructing meaning.

Narrative therapy stories people's lives (Freedman & Combs 1996:27; Freedman, Epston & Lobovits 1997:xv). As well as having therapeutic value, a narrative approach offers information about people's lives that makes valuable research (White & Epston 1992:123). Research is seen as part of a circular process: research implies therapeutic value and therapy becomes research of the person's life. In the case of this study a narrative approach offers a way in which the goals for both research and therapy could be achieved.

The world is understood through the written or spoken language. Realities are kept alive and passed along in the stories that we live and tell. "In order to make sense of life, people arrange their experiences of events in sequences across time in such a manner as to arrive at a coherent account of themselves and their world" (White & Epston 1990:10; see also Dill & Kotzé 1996:20; Freedman & Combs 1996:30; McLean 1997:17; White 1998b:1; White 1992a:123).

It is with these stories, as well as with an undetermined amount of untold stories, that people approach therapy (Epston 1998:43). Untold stories are those events in their lives that go unstructured and untold for a long time (Freedman & Combs 1996:32). Narrative research is about the retelling and the reliving of stories and the discovering and



exploring of untold stories (Freedman & Combs 1996:32,42; Anderson 1995:32; Schwartz 1997:44; Nicholson 1995:23).

Hermeneutics, the study of texts and discourses, form an integral part of narrative therapy (Dill & Kotzé 1996:19). The narrative therapist and the client become students of the language that is used to narrate a story. Moreover, the therapist becomes a student of the ways in which his / her own presuppositions create meaning to the stories being told. By means of a process of co-construction new stories are collaborated or co-created (Anderson & Goolishian 1992:2; Anderson 1995:27; Hart 1995:185).

When listening to stories, the therapist and client attend to both the individual story and the cultural or contextual stories being told. The cultural stories are those narratives that people are born into. Individual stories are those constituted by cultural stories. Assumptions, presuppositions and prejudices are anchored in cultural stories (Freedman & Combs 1996:31,32; White & Epston 1992:124; Bubenezer, West & Boughner 1995:16; White 1992:125).

It is within the cultural or traditional stories that issues of power lie. The work of Foucault has contributed significantly to the understanding of power in people's lives. According to Foucault, people tend to internalise "dominant" discourses in society by believing that they reflect the truth. In the process of internalising the dominant story, experiences that do not support the dominant narrative, are marginalised and remain unstoried and thus untold (Freedman & Combs 1996:32; White 1998b:2). These are the stories the therapist and the person in therapy have to focus on, for it is often in these subjugated knowledges that people find their liberation (White & Epston 1990:14,19,20).

### 3.3.1 Deconstructive listening and externalising

Deconstruction was developed from Derrida's "deconstructive analysis". I understand deconstruction to mean that when deconstructing a concept, one literally erases the concept by crossing it out without losing its format. To deconstruct a principle, one first needs the principle to exist in order to understand its implication and then to "undo" it by

deconstructing it (Sampson 1989:6-12; Freedman & Combs 1996:46; Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:7).

A narrative approach provides the skills to introduce deconstruction in therapeutic conversations. A narrative approach encourages a move beyond empathic reflection and circular questioning (Freedman & Combs 1996:47). The knowledge and experience of therapists, who have moved through the "first and second waves" of psychotherapy, have shown that empathic reflection is not sufficient when a person is faced with entrenched problematic patterns (O' Hanlon 1994: 22).

The questioning used to deconstruct someone's perceptions offers a person an opportunity to view stories from a different perspective. A person can discover how his / her stories are constructed, how he / she came to believe what he / she does and how these stories have affected his / her life (Dill & Kotzé 1996:20; Freedman & Combs 1996:47; White 1992a:121). In this way people can analyse their biases and prejudices in terms of when and how specific perceptions were introduced into their lives and how they have been maintained. It also gives them an opportunity to consider other options for their beliefs (Freedman & Combs 1996:46; Sands & Nuccio 1992:491; Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996:64; Richer 1990:59; White & Epston 1992:121; White 1992a:126; White 1998b:4).

The skill of listening when applying a narrative approach is not aimed at attempting to intensify the pathological aspects in the stories of the people. Instead, listening focuses on the gaps in people's stories, those experiences that have not yet been storied and that has "escaped" the problem saturated narrative (Wood 1995:121; Freedman, Epston & Lobovits 1997:95). White (1988:37) refers to the untold stories as "unique outcomes" – "those outcomes that contradict aspects of the problem-saturated description" of the person or the family (White 1988:37; White 1992:126). This way of listening attempts to examine the clients' stories in new ways to create new meanings in their lives (Freedman & Combs 1996:45; Anderson 1995:31; Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:7; Wood 1995:65; White 1998a:219,220).

In the context of a narrative approach to therapy, "problems" are viewed as being separate from the people who are experiencing them (Wylie 1994:43). Problems are seen as something outside the person, as something invading a person's life. The problem is the problem, the person is not the problem (Freedman & Lobovitz 1993:189; Freedman et al 1997:8). Externalising of problems seem to be effective as people tend to internalise discourses and events and these events colour their interpretation of subsequent life experiences. By deconstructing and externalising a person's problems, the narrative therapist does not attempt to brush aside the person's problems, nor does he get drawn into it, but to "dethrone" the problems (O'Hanlon 1994:26; Freedman & Combs 1996:47; Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996:64).

While externalising the problem, the therapist acknowledges the role that the political and cultural contexts play in the continuance of peoples' problems by focussing on the effect of dominant stories on a person's behaviour, thoughts and emotions (Wylie 1994:43; Freedman et al 1997:51; Epston & White 1995:277,278). The process of externalising problems, undermines the person's sense of failure and it opens up alternatives for dialogue between the person and the therapist as well as between the different members in the person's family. Furthermore, it opens up possibilities for action (White & Epston 1990:16,38; Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:9,10; Carlson 1997:272; Wylie 1994:43; White & Epston 1992:126,140; Epston 1998:49).

### 3.3.2 Not-knowing stance

A narrative therapist's approach to his / her client reflects the attitude that he /she never has access to privileged information about the person (Wood 1995:74). One can never fully understand another person. Every person will always need to learn more about a person than what the person had said and about what had not yet been said (Kotzé 1994:52; Anderson & Goolishian 1992:26; Hoffman 1992:17; McLean 1997:19).

The not-knowing stance in my opinion, should not create the impression that the therapist (or researcher) enters conversation neutrally – such an assumption would move back towards modernist claims of a therapist's objectivity. The relationship and the therapeutic

conversations between the therapist and the client, never escape the effects of power. Both enter the conversations with the stories of dominant discourses.

Rather than claiming that the therapist is not-knowing, I prefer to regard the therapist's role as *listening without claiming to know*. In narrative therapy the client takes centre stage and the therapist avoids becoming the main role player. Questions are asked and information is shared in a way that focuses on the client (Anderson 1995:29). The therapist serves at most, as the narrative co-editor and the process of therapy is collaborative. An atmosphere is created for the client's opinions to be heard, confirmed and accepted. A readiness is shown to explore narratives and different perspectives, and to co-develop new options for acting, feeling and living that are unique to the person's beliefs and circumstances. The therapist's role is to develop a "free conversational space" and to facilitate discourses from which newness can come forth (Anderson & Goolishian 1992:32; Anderson 1995:34; White 1998b:1).

This therapeutic approach entails a stance in which the therapist's actions and conversation communicate genuine curiosity (Wood 1995:73). The therapist's position avoids conveying the idea that questions are asked from a set of preconceived opinions, diagnosis and expectations. The therapist remains in a state of being informed by the client and treasures the uniqueness of the person's narratives and experiences (Anderson 1995:34; Efran et al 1985:72).

### 3.3.3 Reflexive conversations

Since the 1950s the observation of a therapeutic session from behind a one-way mirror has become a valued therapeutic tool. It has offered a therapist the opportunity to get different perspectives of the therapeutic event and to gain some "objectivity" from his / her involvement in the therapeutic process. The idea of a reflecting team developed from this practice and was first introduced to narrative therapy by Tom Andersen (Andersen 1987:415-427). Its value for family therapists, as well as for individual therapy with children and adults is significant. Moreover, as the therapists are introduced to the clients, the ethical dilemmas related to using anonymous therapists in reflecting teams, are solved

(Freedman & Combs 1996:169,170; Wood 1995:66; Kotzé 1994:57; Lax 1995:146; Tomm 1987:167).

The goal of a reflecting team is to offer the therapist and the family new perspectives on their stories and to do this in a transparent manner. It shows a move away from the days when the “professionals” would discuss their hypothesis of a family’s problems and create theories about the peoples lives in their absence. Instead, this manner of offering new perspectives to people, respects their uniqueness and represents the not-knowing stance of narrative therapy. Furthermore, it offers the therapist an opportunity to become aware of power imbalances in his sessions with people (Freedman & Combs 1996:169-192; Wood 1995:74; Kotzé 1994:57; Andersen 1995:17; White 1992b).

Andersen’s idea with the reflective team was that it should introduce some difference into the therapeutic process in order to trigger change. At the same time the team must maintain a balance between too little and too much difference (Kotzé 1994:58; McLean 1997:22). The word “reflexive” underlies not only the principle of the reflective team but also of narrative therapy as a whole. Whereas the word “reflecting”, would imply a process of merely mirroring back what a person had said, the process of reflexive dialogue draws upon the person’s own life story and perceptions when reviewing what had been said. Hoffman (1992:17) describes this as a process being represented by the figure eight written sideways – a symbol of infinity. Each individual (in the dialogue between the therapist and the person) has a set of beliefs and a story and call on their inner dialogue when they meet in discourse. When a reflective team is used or reflexive questions are asked, it is emphasised that the dialogue is a mutually influenced process and not an uni-directional process (Hoffman 1992:17).

Freedman and Combs (1996:173) summarise the tasks of the reflecting team as:

- developing an understanding for the client’s problems
- noticing differences and events that do not fit the dominant narrative
- noticing beliefs and ideas that support problem-saturated descriptions

The reflecting team remains at all times speculative and offer their perceptions tentatively while leaving the family an opportunity to select, correct or reject their ideas (Kotzé 1994:57).

When a reflecting team is used during a therapeutic session, the team is introduced to the family and the procedure explained. The team position themselves either behind a one-way mirror and enters the therapy room after a session between a therapist and a family has been completed, or it remains in the room from the start of the session. I prefer the latter position of the reflecting team as it facilitates transparency. The therapy session would follow uninterrupted after which the therapist suggests that the team gets a chance to reflect on the session. The team then continues to reflect for about ten to fifteen minutes, sometimes while interviewing each other and sometimes by offering relevant personal experiences from their lives. The session then concludes with the therapist and family briefly reflecting on the team's perceptions (Freedman & Combs 1996:182; Lax 1995:169,170).

This study applied the concept of reflexive conversations in its methodology, which is discussed in the following paragraphs.

#### 4 RESEARCH APPROACH

A theoretical discussion of the methodology applied in this study is discussed in more detail in chapter two (chapter 2, 2). I offer here an outline of the methodology.

##### 4.1 Different faces of the research approach

The nature of the research approach applied in this study is qualitative (chapter 2, 2.5). The study attempts to understand the implications the current transformation holds for child and youth care. A basic part of the study will be a process of investigating these implications by working in collaboration with participants including children and child care workers at the Children's Haven M T R Smit and officials with the Department of Welfare.

In this study I will argue that there are as many forms of knowledge as there are participants. These knowledges are co-constructed through series of reflexive discourses between the participants themselves and between the participants and myself. This aspect renders the methodology a dialectic nature (chapter 2, 2.9).

The research in this study can also be described as *action research* (chapter 2, 2.7) as it attempts to participate and critically appraise both the discourses that underlie the transformation of child and youth care, and the discourses that underlie the DRC – the managing body of the Children's Haven M T R Smit. The term "emancipatory" is linked to the action-type character of this research as it attempts to empower the participants, particularly the children in the study. By applying the reflexive conversation-method, the participants express their thoughts, deconstruct their knowledges about the transformation and the structures that underlie the haven. Through their active collaborative participation in the research, they become active agents in bringing about changes in their understanding (chapter 2, 2.7).

The narrative approach of this study offers opportunities to include narratives. The stories of the children form the axis around which this study revolves. Their stories relate the effects of the transformation of child and youth care and express the effects of the structures, such as the DRC and Afrikaner nationalism, that underlie the management of the haven.

#### 4.2 Collaboration of knowledges

As mentioned before, the knowledges regarding the implications of the transformation for the children was co-created in reflexive conversations between them and myself on various occasions and at various stages of the process of the transformation. I had therapeutic group discussions with the majority of the children of the haven. With the permission of the children and the principal at the haven, conversations were tape-recorded and some transcribed.

Some of the children's stories were narrated by myself and some were told in their own words. I tried to use their own words as far as possible but in some instances it was not possible. Some children expressed themselves with difficulty or they used a dialect of Afrikaans which, when translated, loses its original meaning. Since the conversations were conducted in Afrikaans I had to translate their stories.

The study does not reflect the children's real names. Most of them chose their own pseudonyms so that they would be able to recognise their stories. I chose pseudonyms on behalf of the children who had already left the haven.

There were six groups of children, which were compiled by the social workers according to gender and age. Every group had about six members. The groups convened in the playroom of my practice for a period of two hours per group. From these sessions, individuals who were in further need of therapy were identified and referred for individual therapy.

I included in this study conversations from a narrative perspective with the child care workers at the children's haven. The child care workers and their spouses were divided into two groups of eight (four couples) compiled by the principal. The rationale for the composition of the groups relates to the interpersonal relationships among the child care workers. The groups met once a week for a period between eight to twelve weeks. The attendance of the groups varied and people withdrew at various stages, depending on their other commitments. During the period mentioned above, the child care workers were given an opportunity to explore their own families of origin stories in order to come to some understanding of how the values that underlie their parenting styles were constructed and what the effects of these values were on the children at the haven. Furthermore, they had an opportunity to address their perceptions and experiences of the effects of Project Go on the care of the children.

After the first eight to twelve weeks of the period spent with the child care workers, the one group lapsed when they achieved their goals. The second group continued to meet occasionally. During these meetings they spent time further exploring the effects of



problems related to their parenting styles as well as issues related to their employment at the haven.

#### 4.3 Multiple reflexive conversations

The understanding created in the sessions between the children, the child care workers, the management of the haven and myself, was reflected on during different stages of the study and by various groups of people. Firstly, the children and child care workers reflected on their own conversations. Management reflected on the knowledge created by the children and child care workers. They, in turn, reflected on the reflections of management. Reflexive conversations were held with the principals of two schools, members of the Project Go-committee and officials of the National Department of Welfare. The child care workers and management had an opportunity to reflect on the latter conversations. My fellow students and our study leader reflected on the process and content of the study throughout its course.

#### 4.4 Self-reflection

The process of multiple reflections includes reflections by the researcher (or in the case of therapy, the therapist). The researcher and the therapist never stand outside their values and their discourses – “values infuse all knowledge” (Hare-Mustin 1994:31). For the aim of positioning myself as the researcher as well as for the sake of transparency, I present the reader with a short self-reflection.

I trained in the professions of teaching and psychology in the 1980s and the early 1990s. The training involved modern approaches to child and adult development and to therapeutic models. In 1997 I commenced my studies in the narrative approach and for the first time I was confronted with novel ways of thinking. During reflection-sessions with my D-Th study group (1999), I discovered the powerful effects of the discourses dominating my understanding of the people I work with. At the same time, I realised the powerful effects when these discourses were deconstructed.

#### 4.5 Ethical considerations

The methodology described in this chapter serves as a guiding principal to bring about change benefiting to the participants of the study.

Verbal and written forms of informed consent were obtained from the principal of the Children's Haven M T R Smit, Mrs C Watson. She acted as the legal guardian of the children in the haven. Verbal consent was obtained from every child and verbal and written consent were obtained from the adults who participated in the study. Coercion was avoided at all cost. Since the child care workers were expected to attend group meetings as part of their general training, it was made clear to the principal of the haven, as well as to the child care workers, that a person would not be discriminated against in any way or by anybody, should they choose not to part take in the study. I have the written consent forms in safekeeping.

The concept of confidentiality was explained to all involved. It was stressed that information that was shared in the sessions would not be included in the research report if the participants specifically asked that it not be done. Furthermore, the persons were told that they would remain anonymous. As far as possible, the groups endeavoured to maintain the agreement that matters discussed in the groups, would remain confidential. The limitations to confidentiality were also stressed and the children and adults were discouraged to divulge personal information that would be inappropriate or would cause them discomfort. Their permission was obtained, at the beginning of each session, to audio-tape record their conversations.

The content of the information provided by the children and the child care workers was often "sensitive" information about the staff and other children in the haven. In order to avoid victimisation, it was vital that they were assured of the confidentiality of the sessions and that this information was not reported back to the staff, other children or child care workers.

The participants reflected on the knowledge created in the course of this project. The aim was to remain accountable to the participants, but also to ensure that the report contained accurate reflections of the participants.

#### 4.6 Continued accountability

It would complete the process of accountability towards the children, but also to others, who storied their experiences in this study to take their stories further and not to limit their audience to a handful of academics (Freedman et al 1997;130,131). The audience I have in mind with this study would be the National Department of Welfare, residential care centres, the Dutch Reformed Church and professionals in the helping profession who work with children in residential care.

### 5 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter sketched the background to and the aims for this study. The next chapter provides a theoretical background and research methodology. Chapter three explores discourses constituting child care at the children's haven M T R Smit. The transformation of child and youth care is described in chapter four followed by the narratives of the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit. Chapter six explores the implications of the transformation for the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit while chapter seven focuses on the implications for pastoral practice and the other helping professions. In the final chapter I reflect on the study.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

### 1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO THIS STUDY

Epistemologically this study is grounded in a post-modern discourse which privileges the view that knowledge does not exist out there waiting to be discovered, but that knowledge is relative to the historical and cultural contexts from which it is generated. The unique situation of the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit in a time of social and political transformation is described in this study against the backdrop of a post-modern epistemology.

As part of the epistemology applied in this study, social construction discourse adds that people create knowledge through language and in interaction with one another. The methodology of this study develops from the principles of a social construction discourse in the sense that this study makes use of stories constructed by the participants, most of whom were the children at the haven.

The Foucaultian discourse offers the third part of the theoretical background to this study. It creates a context in which power inherent to the different discourses such as the DRC, Afrikaner nationalism and politics (discussed in chapter three) and the resistance to that power, can be understood and explained.

#### 1.1 Post-modern discourse

##### 1.1.1 Introduction

The term "post-modern" is an elusive and difficult-to-describe umbrella term referring to a cultural phenomenon covering the fields of art, history, architecture, literature, political science, economics, philosophy, psychology and theology. A post-modern discourse does

not only offer a new set of assumptions, it offers a “radical transformation of framework in which we cognitively operate” (Gonvalges 1995:11). It refers to the current epoch frame in the Western world rather than to an ideology. It is characterised by a break with modernity. It is not a monolithic phenomenon. Rather, it is characterised by controversy and disagreement (Van Wyk 1999:105; Dockery 1995:13; Mohler 1995:67; Sands & Nuccio 1992:488).

An understanding of a post-modern discourse cannot be complete without knowing what worldviews and life views preceded it (Dill & Kotze 1996:2).

### 1.1.2 Pre-modernity

Pre-modernity in this context refers to the medieval period. During this period people approached understanding in an organic way. God was regarded as the centre of the world and of understanding. The world was held together by the theme of resemblance. The people of this era believed that nature and history reflect God’s immutable ordering of the cosmos and that God ruled the destiny of humanity and nature (Henry 1995:36; Van Wyk 1998:2; Parker 1989:58).

The character of pre-modern times required that knowledge be logically coherent as well as compatible with the Christian understanding of reality as defined by the church. The whole creation was subordinate to God and his plan for this world. The church represented this plan and to challenge the church was to challenge God. Questions about the world were directed to the biblical texts to discover the true words of God (Rossouw 1993:895; Parker 1989:58).

### 1.1.3 Modernity

Oden (1995:20) views the life span of modernity as exactly 200 years spanning from 1789 to 1989, “from the Bastille to the Berlin Wall”, the time between the French

revolution and the collapse of communism. Other authors are less specific about the time frame of modernism (Parker 1989:58; Henry 1995:34).

A new stance of which Rene Descartes was a major figure, replaced the concept of God as the centre of human understanding that characterised pre-modernity. Descartes' worldview as summarised by the words: "I am thinking therefore I am", lead to the new concept of the human as a rational and autonomous being (Van Wyk 1998:3). Modernity set out to free humanity from its fate of existing in a God-ordered universe where human beings had little or no influence and where humanity had to look at the church for answers to its questions about the world (Henry 1995:34).

During this period feelings and intuition were regarded as inferior. Little value was placed on the transcendent and the immanent and these areas of being human were not regarded as sources of knowledge (Van Wyk 1998:4; Rossouw 1993:895). Knowledge was regarded as separate from the wisdom gained from this experience. Therefore, "true rational" knowledge excluded the affective, the corporeal and the relational. Regrettably, it also excluded from its focus the matter of ethics of behaviour and discourses on values (Van Wyk 1998:6; Rossouw 1993:897). This was regarded as emotional and not within the realm of reason. While the inclusion of values and ethics are essential for man's survival in this world it became marginalised concepts in the modern discourse.

Independent and rational thinking were valued. According to Rossouw (1993:896) something was meaningful and intelligible when it met two criteria: 1) it should be based on evidence that is obvious to everyone, and 2) deductions that are made from this evidence should be made in a logical consistent way so that it could be duplicated. In this manner the subject-object dualism came into existence and the "exact sciences" were introduced. Nature and people were seen as objects to be manipulated and to be interpreted from a strictly quantitative point of view (Van Wyk 1998:7,8). This led to an unqualified confidence in scientific enquiry and the deification of technical rationality. Scientists were regarded as people who could produce unambiguous knowledge and who could claim absolute truths from an exclusive stance. Rationality became the system that

had power and irrationality that which was without power. As Van Wyk (1998:4) put it: "Science became a dogma instead of remaining just another discipline." It became the paradigm that framed our social, intellectual, economical, political and theological thoughts.

#### 1.1.4 Post-modern thinking

Post-modern thinking stemmed from the disillusionment with the products of modernity (Dill & Kotze 1996:3). It broke the "mesmerizing, spell bounding vision of human possibility that has held the human imagination in its grip" for more than two hundred years (Oden 1995:24). Secular science, with its new-found intellectual order of the world, promised a new freedom for humanity and progress of the planet (Henry 1995:34). Instead, the people of this world experienced the horrors of two World Wars, the devastation of nuclear weapons, the oppression and exploitation of people and the destruction of the environment. The world has witnessed a "crash of the moral immune system, a collapse of virtue, a moral spinout" (Oden 1995:24; Mohler 1995:67).

In reaction to the claims of modernity and in the light of the current affairs world-wide, people have looked in earnest at how this all came about. Intellectuals and philosophers stood one step back and reflected on the "truths" which have been taken for granted for the past two hundred years. From this reflexive stance a post-modern worldview developed (Anderson 1995:27, Van Huyssteen 1999:28).

A post-modern discourse asserts that there are no rational structures or that we cannot know them. Things or events do not have intrinsic meaning or if they do we cannot claim to know it (Dockery 1995:13). Universal truths do not exist, they are impossible. It rejects the idea that theories that can govern matters (Sands & Nuccio 1992:492; Van Huyssteen 1999:34). Post-modern thought denies the possibility of meta-discourse or the "grand narrative" (Mohler 1995:67; Van Huyssteen 1999:34). It wages a war against the "closure" of modernism and constructions that present themselves as "presence". It opposes the idea of essences (Van Wyk 1998:14). Instead, post-modern thinking holds

the idea that all discourses are particular, limited and insular. Knowledge is local and all that remains is "petit narratives" (Mohler 1995:67). It emphasises diversity, multiplicity and pluralism and view categories such as race, class and gender as too reductive (Van Huyssteen 1999:30). Post-modern thinking emphasises differentiation and an awareness of contingency and ambivalence (Sands & Nuccio 1992:492). Knowledge is created in the relationship between people and meaning is created through continuous interpretation of the world. This meaning or knowledge is constituted by language and not by reason and occurs within a specific context of which we are all part (Dockery 1995:13; Van Wyk 1999:109).

The context from which we interpret the world is never a fixed context. It is constituted by social, cultural, economical and political factors, that interact with each other in unique ways (Sands & Nuccio 1992:492). The tool with which we address meaning to our world is language, which on its part is not neutral but permeated with personal and culturally determined values (Dockery 1995:13). As an example, binary oppositions such as male / female and good / bad, characterise our daily use of language and of thought. These binary oppositions through which we interpret and understand the world around us contain in itself specific value and inevitably carries with it power differences (Van Wyk 1998:10,11). The expression of these binary oppositions reflects the desire of the modern society to impose order, control and dominate (Flax 1992:453). For example, the word "male" brings to mind associations of strong, rational, the norm and therefore privileged whereas "female" is in opposition, associated with weak, emotional, inferior and therefore marginalised. Within the latter sentence lies another binary opposition i.e. rational / emotional with the latter being regarded as inferior. To be "female" as opposed to the defining concept of "male", is to be inferior and to have no independent character or worth of one's own. This illustrates in short that the relationships in which we negotiate meaning and constitute knowledge can never stand apart from power (Van Wyk 1999:112; Weedon 1987:36-42).



Social constructionism, hermeneutics and the deconstruction of power, which is associated with the work of Derrida and Foucault, characterise a post-modern discourse. These concepts will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The implication of post-modern thinking for social sciences and theology is been far-reaching. This is an important focus of this study and will therefore be discussed, along with the implications of social constructionist discourse and the Foucauldian discourse.

## 1.2 Social construction discourse

### 1.2.1 Introduction

A social construction discourse is an epistemology referring to the processes by which people come to describe, explain and account for the world in which they live (De Silva Gonçalves 1995:11; Kotzé 1994:24; Kotzé 1992:51).

Different names have been used to describe social construction theory such as constructionism and social construction. These words however differ from the term "constructivism" (Hoffman 1992:8). Kotzé (1994:31) explains the difference between constructivism and constructionism: "Although both emphasize language, constructivism was developed from a biological individualistic vantage point, while social construction theory took its vantage point in the social and language domain. Following Kotzé's suggestion, the term *social construction discourse* is chosen for this study. The latter term moves away from claiming the exclusivity of a specific theory towards a more open-ended and inclusive term that invites continuation of the discourse (Kotzé 1994:31; Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:2).

The last fifteen years saw some alternative approaches to human beings as social beings. These approaches are reflected in various fields of study such as critical psychology, discourse analysis, deconstruction and post-structuralism (Barr 1995:1). A social

construction discourse can be thought of as an orientation that underpins all of these fields (Burr 1995:1).

It is difficult to offer a single definition or description of the term "social construction". The different definitions authors provide of "social construction" are linked by means of a resemblance in how they view the world and recurrent features in the work that they share (Burr 1995:1). Some features that characterise a social construction discourse will follow the discussion on the background to the discourse (Dill & Kotzé 1996:4).

### 1.2.2 Background

Traditionally there were two basic epistemological orientations that characterised human knowledge. The first is the exogenic perspective that sees knowledge as copying the contours of the world, reflecting and mapping it as it is. An example of this perspective is behaviourism with its emphasis on the environment as determinant of human activity (Gergen 1985:269-271).

The second perspective is the endogenic perspective represented in phenomenology and the cognitive psychology. According to this perspective, knowledge depends on processes endemic to the organism, that is, the tendency to think, categorise and process information. These tendencies, rather than characteristics of the world, are important in creating knowledge (Gergen 1985:270, Olssen [s a]:203).

The above mentioned two perspectives shaped the human sciences for the first part of the century. The concept of "socialisation" was introduced to the field of psychology through the study of child development during the 1930s. Since the beginning of the twentieth century there has been an opposition to psychology's reluctance to introduce the social nature of the human (Burr 1995:7; Gergen & Gergen 1991:76; Olssen [s a]:203). The Second World War led to the emergence of Social Psychology. Social Psychology developed as a discipline as a result of attempts by psychologists to provide the USA and the British governments with knowledge that could be used for propaganda.

and the manipulation of people. During the war psychologists attempted to answer questions such as: "How can we keep up the morale of the troops?" and: "How can we encourage people to eat unpopular food?" (Burr 1995:11). Social psychology was regarded by some as a science, which was paid for by those in positions of power in the government and in the industry. During the 1960s and 1970s social psychologists became increasingly concerned about the way in which their discipline represented and promoted the values of the dominant groups. Against this background the voices of constructivism and a social construction discourse were heard as a challenge to the oppressive and ideological uses of psychology (Burr 1995:11).

In essence, the core of social construction discourse represents a preference for the Kantian model of knowledge over the Lockean model. Immanuel Kant, who lived in the eighteenth century, regarded knowledge as the invention of an active organism interacting with an environment (Efran et al 1988:28; McHoul & Grace 1993:60). Locke on the other hand, saw knowledge as the result of the outside world making an impression on our cognitions that are regarded as empty or blank ("tabula rasa") at birth (Efran et al 1988:28). The knowledge of the objectivist can be seen as discoveries about the outside world whereas the knowledge of the constructivist can be seen as inventions about what is out there. Scientists and intellectuals like Edmund Husserl, Karl Popper, Jean Piaget and Gregory Bateson and more recently Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela contributed to the field of constructivism (Kotzé: 1992:50, Gergen & Gergen 1991:77).

It was George Kelly who introduced the personal construct theory. He emphasised that we should not confuse our inventions with discoveries (Efran et al 1985:28). Within his theory knowledge was seen as the computation or processing of information rather than a reflection of reality. That which is seen, for example, is the observer's cognitive processing of the object being studied (McLean 1997:11). The structure of this cognitive processing determines his / her perceptions of the object (Simon 1985:34). The observer's knowledge depends on his / her own individual structure (Kotzé 1992:54). The true constructivist acknowledges the active role he / she plays in creating a view of the

world and interpreting observations in terms of it. Constructivism postulates that our hypotheses about the world are not directly provable (Efran et al 1988:29).

According to the constructivist perspective humans and other living beings are seen as autonomous, autopoietic and structured. They are therefore seen as organisationally closed. The idea of causality such as with the behaviourist principle is replaced by the principle of being structurally determined (Kotzé 1992:55; Hare-Mustin & Marecek 1988:455). The traditional context or culture in which people live and the meaning they contribute to events are critical characteristics of constructivist thinking. Everything is said from within a tradition and has meaning only in that tradition. Put it in a new context and it has new meaning. Through language a community negotiates (by consensus) the meaning attributed to experiences and things. Meaning is therefore a socially sanctioned narrative (Efran et al 1992:29). Language is recognised as the medium through which people link with each other to create the world in which they live. It becomes the way in which people co-ordinate their interactions (Kotzé 1992:66).

Whereas constructivism focuses on the biological and neurological operations of perception, social constructionism includes social interpretation and the inter-subjective influence of language (Roux 1996:6; Gergen & Gergen 1993:78; Olssen [s.a]:203). Constructivism still emphasised the importance of human agency and the individual's ability to actively construct their realities therefore neglecting the social, cultural and the organisational. In contrast, social constructionists switched the primary ontology from the individual to the social. It works on the basis that all humans are essentially social beings (Schwandt 1994:127). Meaning is not inherent in behaviour or in cognition but is located in the public realm. Social constructionism implies that knowledge is a set of meanings that emerges continuously from the interactions between people. These meanings are not "skull-bound", in other words, not merely neurological products; they are part of the general flow of constantly changing narratives. Thus, there has been a swing away from the biological cybernetic metaphor that compares a family to an organism or a machine. Terms like "homeostasis, circularity and autopoiesis" are all spatial metaphors that explain how entities remain the same and imply that knowledge is

static, whereas in social constructionism, knowledge and narratives are constantly changing (Hoffman 1992:4; Kotzé 1992:56, 67).

The features of social construction discourse will be integrated under the following headings.

### 1.2.3 A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge

Social construction discourse challenges the view that conventional knowledge is based on the objective, unbiased observation of the world. It is therefore an opposition to a positivist and empirical stance. It cautions us to analyse our own assumptions and encourages us to ask why so much importance is given to certain bodies of knowledge, and not to others (Gergen 1985:267; Burr 1995:3; Sands & Nuccio 1992:492; Du Toit 1997:942).

Social construction discourse has criticised the traditional view that scientific theory can serve to reflect or map reality in a direct or decontextualised manner. It invites one to challenge the objective basis of conventional knowledge and postulates that what we take for knowledge of the world, is neither a product of induction, nor the building or testing of hypothesis (Burr 1995:3; Freedman & Combs 1996:5; Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:3).

Saunders ([s a]:3) quoted Gustav Flauberts as having written: "[T]here is no truth; there are but ways of seeing." Knowledge is therefore not a direct perception of reality; it is not an objective fact (Hoffman 1992:9). Knowledge is reflective; it is derived from looking at the world from some perspective or other and it is in the service of some interest or other (Saunders [s a]:4). It is opinion, it is experiential, it is subjective, it is personal, but nevertheless it is still knowledge. Knowledge is not a static commodity as theories are in constant change. As Saunders ([s a]:1) accurately put it: "[T]oday's knowledge can tomorrow be yesterdays quaint belief."

Constructivists laid the foundations for the criticism of science's claims of objectivity and neutrality. It emphasised the value-laden nature of all human undertakings (Von Glaserfeld 1991:17) and revealed more and more that even in theory the interests and activities of the scientific observer cannot be fully disentangled from the observations he / she produces (Efran et al 1988:29; Van Huyssteen 1999:36). Rather than being impartial, objective, and independent, science is a human activity "bedevilled with human biases and whims" (Saunders [s a ]:1). Human subjectivity refers to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual. It further refers to a sense of the self and the ways in which the person relates to the world. Subjectivity is a product of the society and the culture within which we live and it is ever-changing (Woodon 1987:32). These thoughts and emotions include ethical and moral issues from which perceptions of the world can never be split – people's knowledge often comes from these beliefs and not from "good facts" (Saunders [s a ]:1). Social construction discourse attempts to move away from the dualism between objectivity and subjectivity towards a position of inter-subjectivity.

#### 1.2.4 Historical and cultural specificity

The ways in which we understand our world are historically and culturally specific. It depends on where and when in the world we live, on the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time. Knowledge is artefacts of culture (Burr 1995:4,6; Anderson 1995:30).

The terms in which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people. The process of understanding is not a product of merely "reflecting" the world as we see it nor is it understanding through cognitions. It is the result of an active co-operative enterprise of people who are in relationships with one another. Changes in the way we understand matters lie in historically contingent factors and are dependant on the social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time (Burr 1995:3,4; Gergen 1985:267; Sands & Nuccio 1992:491). It denies "once-

and-for-all descriptions of human nature" (Burr 1995:6). Social science should therefore be about studying history and the development of "truth".

### 1.2.5 Social processes sustain knowledge

In contrast to Western ideological focus on individualism, social construction discourse argues that individuals have relational identities. Who the individual is, is constituted by the relationships in which he / she finds him- / herself. According to Kotzé (1992:64), it is unnecessary to situate the one approach against the other (i.e. individualism against social construction discourse), as it is after all the individual who constitutes the social. And social dynamics are the results of individual differences. We have a repertoire of practical skills for giving expression to these ways of being. These skills are learnt from others. We are artefacts of our society (Burr 1995:4; Harré 1993:2,3; Gergen 1985:268; Freedman & Combs 1996:22; Schwandt 1994:127).

The self is a location within a historical time and culture and not a substance or an attribute (Freedman & Combs 1996:34). It is not an awareness of an entity at the core of one's being (Henry 1995:38, Kotzé 1994:49; Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:3; Heshusius 1995:117). The self is not innate or genetically determined, but is socially produced in an economical, social and political context (Gerkin 1984:84; Anderson 1995:31; Hoffman 1992:10). It is not individually unique but socially specific (Gerkin 1984:56,73; Sampson 1989:4). Psychology has, in its focus on human interaction and social practices, looked for the explanation of social phenomena inside people in the form of attitudes, motivations and cognitions. Sociology on the other hand, held the view that social structures such as the economy and the institution of marriage give rise to social phenomena. Social construction discourse questions both these approaches and states that explanations for human interactions are to be found neither in the inner psyche nor in social structures, but in the interactive processes that take place between people through language (Gerkin 1984:57; Kotzé 1994:49; Freedman & Combs 1996:35). Language is the place where social organisation and its consequences are defined. As Weedon

(1987:21) puts it: “[I]t is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity is constructed.”

People construct knowledge between them and it is through the daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge are shaped (Burr 1995:5). As stated before, the understanding of people’s action or behaviour depends on the understanding of that behaviour at a specific historical time and within a specific culture (Harré 1993:2). Knowledge about the world is negotiated understanding and descriptions and explanations of the world constitute forms of social action, and they form integral parts of various social patterns (Gergen 1985:268).

The notion that knowledge is the product of co-construction does not imply that the actions people perform are socially caused. On this point Harré (1993:3) stated that the social construction perspective does not imply that people are not responsible for their behaviour. People are capable of autonomous behaviour and they are able to engage with other people in reflexive discourse through which they are provided with alternative ways of acting (Henry 1995:40; Gerkin 1984:49; Freedman & Combs 1996:35; Anderson 1995:31).

Inherent to social systems are norms and values without which humans could not exist as social beings and through which social relationships are made possible (Kotzé 1992:66). These norms and values contribute to a social code of ethics by which a culture lives and measures itself. There is a move away from individual responsibility to a social dimension to responsibility. These social codes of ethics are also bound to a historical time and culture. It is because of these socially constructed ethics that people have choices of the ways in which they behave. This implies that humans have both an individual and a social responsibility for the choices they make (Kotzé 1992:69; Freedman & Combs 1996:36; Hare-Mustin 1994:31).

The notion that social processes sustain knowledge has far reaching implications for research. In modernist research the responsibility for the researcher reached as far as the



choice of a sound research methodology. With postmodernist research, where the epistemology is based on social constructionist thinking, the responsibility stretches beyond the methodology to the participant. In this regard this study does not only serve research as such, but it aims to serve the participants, in this case, particularly the children of Children's Haven M T R Smit. Responsible action research focuses on the stories of the children and strives to increase the level of participation and collaboration between the researcher and the participants.

### 1.2.6 Language

The twentieth-century has witnessed a general move away from understanding human behaviour in terms of individualist and intra-psychic approaches, to an understanding of human behaviour in terms of social organisational patterns in the fields of psychology and sociology (Olssen [s a]:203). Yet, it is social construction discourse that moves beyond the approach of universal and normative systems towards the understanding and meaning of human behaviour within locally determined socially constructed dialogue and communication (Anderson & Goolishian 1988:377; Freedman & Combs 1996:28; Anderson 1995:30). With regard to language, social construction discourse shows an affinity for the hermeneutic sciences (Freedman & Combs 1996:27; McLean 1997:13).

A Derridean perspective contributes to the field of social construction discourse (Wolfreys 1998:5). I prefer to use the term "Derridean perspective" when I refer to the work written on Jacques Derrida as I cannot claim having read Derrida's work. A Derridean perspective undermines the traditional view of rationality and the nature of Western metaphysical tradition (Lechte 1994:06; Boyne 1996:91). The Derridean perspective argues that the Western tradition has an "extremely fragile an ambiguous basis" (Lechte 1994:108). Lechte (1994:108) quotes Derrida's comment on the contextuality of language: "... the thing signified is no longer easily separable from the signifier." In other words, the persons using language to describe experiences narrate these experiences from a specific perspective, which is coloured by their specific frames of reference (cultural context). In summary, the Derridean perspective constitutes that

language or texts are not a natural reflection of the world (Jones 1999:7), language is not neutral – it carries with it assumptions and presuppositions that are culturally and traditionally determined (Lechte 1994:109). The implications of Derrida's deconstructive philosophical approach for the social construction discourse are discussed in the following paragraphs (Gergen 1985:270).

All humans have the capacity to acquire skills which, though they differ in their specific forms from culture to culture, are nevertheless of the same general kind. The most important of all these skills, is the capacity to acquire and use language (Harré 1993:3). Language is a form of social action through which the world is constructed (Weedon 1987:21). As social beings we live in the domain of language (Kotzé 1992:66; Anderson 1995:30; Hoffman 1992:8).

We are born into conceptual frameworks and categories that already exist. All people in a particular culture use these concepts as they develop language and the concepts are reproduced everyday (Maturana 1991:47). Language is therefore a necessary precondition for thought and not the other way around as believed by theorists such as Piaget (Von Glaserfeld 1991:16). As Harré (1993:3) stated: "Without language there would be neither people as we know them nor the forms of life that we unhesitatingly take to be human" (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:5; Maturana 1991:30). Neither social reality nor the "natural" world has fixed intrinsic meaning merely reflected by language. Language constitutes reality. In this sense, people exist in language and language is not merely a medium of expression (Kotzé 1992:66; Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:4). Communication and discourse define social organisation. In other words, a socio-cultural system is the product of social communication rather than communication being a product of social organisation (Gergen & Gergen 1991:88). Language brings forth a world that we create in co-operation with each other (Anderson & Goolishian 1991:24; De Jongh van Arkel 1991:71; Efran et al 1985:28).

According to Anderson & Goolishian (1988:377) language can be described as: "the linguistically mediated and contextually relevant meaning that is interactively generated.

through the medium of words and other communicative action. This generated meaning (understanding) within a particular social context is evolved through the dynamic social process of dialogue and conversation." In this context language differs from the psycholinguistic definition of language, which views it as systems of logic, signs, symbols and grammatical structure and humans as information processing systems. Rather, we "are in language", and language is seen as a dynamic social operation (Anderson & Goolishian 1988:377). Language is the social creation of intersubjective realities that is constituted by the local context (Gergen 1985:270). The construction of meaning is therefore a constantly changing, creative and dynamic process. Understanding is always a "process on the way"; it is never complete (Anderson & Goolishian 1988:378; Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:4,5; Gerkin 1991:61).

Language cannot have any social or political effect except through the actions of individuals. Individuals from a specific historical and cultural perspective use language to give meaning to experiences and act on them with specific socio-political goals (Weedon 1987:21,22). Different languages and different discourses within the same language give different meanings to ideas and experiences. In this way the meaning of femininity and masculinity for example, vary from culture to culture.

### 1.2.7 Discourse

Discourse can be described as meaning systems in language, as areas of expertise or knowledge or dominant ideas. It is also described as "systematic and institutionalised ways of speaking" or bodies of knowledge (McHoul & Grace 1993:26; Kotzé 1994:36; Fillingham 1993:100; Middleton 1995:90; Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:2; Hare-Mustin 1994:31). Social structures and processes are organised through institutions and practices such as the law, the political system, the church, the family, the educational system and the media. Each of these institutions are located and structured by a particular "discursive" field for example, the field of medicine and the field of politics (Weedon 1987:35; Madigan 1996:51). Discursive fields consist of competing ways of giving meaning to the world and of organising social institutions. They are powerful and shape the structures of

society. Not all discourses carry equal weight or power. Some maintain the status quo and others challenge it. These discourses dominate the way in which people address meaning to life experiences and every discourse has the potential to exclude others (Van Wyk 1999:111).

Social construction discourse offers the therapist and the researcher an approach to analyse and come to some understanding about how certain discourses of knowledge came about (McHoul & Grace 1993:27). It offers a hermeneutic key to discover meaning about the world. Although it does create a frame of reference for understanding morals and ethics in society or the lack of it, it does not answer the crucial questions about the role of power in a society. The social construction discourse does not offer the therapist and the researcher the tools with which to address the ethical issues involved in discourses of knowledge. It seems that one needs to move beyond hermeneutics to find an approach that would offer a key to unlock the understanding of ethical and power issues in discourses (McHoul & Grace 1993:34,64).

This brings this study to the importance of the Foucauldian discourse because it is herein that the answers to power and ethical related question are found (McLean 1997:13).

### 1.3 Foucauldian discourse

#### 1.3.1 Introduction

A lot has been written about Foucault's contributions to the post-modern discourse and a discourse has developed around his work. Instead of claiming to have read and understood his own writings, I will refer to those writings about his work and ideas as the Foucauldian discourse. This discourse is not about merely interpreting Foucault and trying to refer back to his insights – it is about building forth on Foucault. It is not about reducing the discourse to Foucault, but to extend it beyond Foucault – it is to participate in the Foucauldian discourse.

Foucault associated himself with structuralism but broke away from it because structuralism's emphasis on the structures of society limited the individual's freedom (Fillingham 1993:94; McHoul & Grace 1993:34). Foucault moved towards acknowledging the role of language in the construction of reality as well as the theory that the rules that govern society, are centred on binary oppositions such as good / bad, male / female etc. (Fillingham 1993:12,95). He postulated that one has little freedom to constitute thoughts outside these oppositions. As with structuralism, his association with Marxism was fleeting as a result of the Marxist belief that the individual was a product of the ideology of his / her historic time (Foucault 1980:58; Fillingham 1993:98).

The Foucauldian discourse builds on, but also moves beyond hermeneutics and the social construction discourse in its understanding of knowledge. It emphasises the point that knowledge does not exist without power. Foucault regarded power and knowledge as inseparable – to the extent that he preferred to place the terms together as power/knowledge or knowledge/power (White & Epston 1992:21). It is not possible to have knowledge and not to acknowledge the power that accompanies it. Discourses, which are bodies of knowledge, have power to subject people into believing the truths that the discourse claims. Furthermore, it has the power to subjugate knowledge that falls outside the boundaries of its truths (Fillingham 1993:10,100).

The Foucauldian discourse states that in order to “unmask” or deconstruct power one needs to analyse the political history that brought about the power (Du Toit 1997:947; Fillingham 1993:20; McLean 1997:19). Foucault was especially interested in the historical development of the medical and psychiatric discourses, and discourses on discipline and punishment, and sexuality. I will shortly focus on the Foucauldian view of mental illness as well as punishment and discipline.

As a therapist who was trained in modernist psychology almost a decade ago and more recently in post-modern approach to psychology and therapy (narrative therapy), I find the deconstruction of the psychology and pathology discourses imperative.

Since this study is done from a narrative approach, the Foucauldian analysis of the psychopathology discourse bears relevance. Foucault's work on discipline underlies the preoccupation of society, as we know it, with normality and the treatment and correction of abnormality. I find these aspects of Foucault's work a striking correlation with the work described in this study. I therefore include this discussion to the theoretical background of this study. Furthermore, this study deals with the larger political discourses that constituted the transformation of child and youth care such as the dominant theology of the Dutch Reformed Church and the black liberation theology, Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaner politics. In an attempt to understand the effects of the power of these discourses on child and youth care, and more specifically on the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit, this study leads me to the Foucauldian discourse.

### 1.3.2 "Madness"

In his analysis of the history of mental abnormality, or "madness" as he refers to it, Foucault traced the origins of the concept of madness to the Middle Ages (Fillingham 1993:33). It is during this period that segregation of people on the basis of "normality" began. Those people who suffered from leprosy were separated from the rest of society on grounds of their illness being regarded as contagious. Moreover, they were disturbing to look at (Shumway 1989:27; Richer 1990:61).

In the fifteenth century people started to cast out those people who behaved "out of the ordinary" (Foucault 1980:39; Shumway 1989:31). At the same time people started to develop a fascination with the strangeness of the "madness" of these people (Fillingham 1993:34). During the seventeenth century imprisonment of people became a common thing and the sick, the mad, the poor and those accused of criminal deeds, were imprisoned (Fillingham 1993:40). The confinement of people originated from the fear for idleness and a failure to work, thus offering economical motives for imprisonment (Fillingham 1993:41; Foucault 1980:40). Furthermore, at the time labour was much valued by both Protestant and Catholic theology and idleness was viewed as a rebellion

against God (Shumway 1989:33). Subsequently, those people who would not work and therefore would not contribute to the well-being of society (who were all working religiously), were viewed as moving outside the limits of reason. In this way "madness" came to be associated with *reason* or *the lack of reason* (Shumway 1989:33).

During this period people became interested not only in segregating the "mad" from the "normal" people, but also with understanding what "madness" was (Foucault 1980:61). There was a fascination with the "mad" and once locked up these people could be visited and stared at by the public (Shumway 1989:34). Since the mad were seen as having lost their reason, they were regarded and treated like animals who could only be mastered by punishment and brutality (Shumway 1989:32).

Halfway through the eighteenth century the fear arose that a terrible disease, physical of nature but with the connotation of religious immorality, was spreading through the prisons. The "normal" prisoners (who had committed offences) had to be separated from the "mad" prisoners to protect them from the disease of the "mad" (Shumway 1989:38). This separation guaranteed the continuation of the cheap labour the prisoners were used for (Fillingham 1993:50; Shumway 1989:32; Foucault 1980:40). The "mad" were taken out of prisons that they shared with all the other outcasts and put in specially created institutes for the mentally insane (Fillingham 1993:54). This process was regarded as a humane act and liberating to the "mad". The people associated with this liberation were Pinel and Tuke and they were highly regarded for their part in this process (Fillingham 1993:51; Shumway 1989:38).

A closer look reveals that the transfer of the mentally ill was far from a liberating procedure. "Mad" people were now being studied and monitored in asylums and although these institutes claimed to provide the mentally ill with freedom away from the prisons, these people found themselves imprisoned by the new rules of normality and the criteria of abnormality (Fillingham 1993:54,55; Shumway 1989:39; Richer 1990:61).

Medical doctors were put in charge of the asylums because of the authority they enjoyed in society. They approached insanity from a medical perspective and had the absolute power over the patients in the institutes. The doctor was regarded as the parental authority and in his relationship with the patient, lay the answer to normality (Shumway 1989:47). The improvement albeit not of the patient was determined by the way in which the patient related to the authority of the doctor (Fillingham 1993:56-58).

Foucault's work refers to that phase in the history of psychiatry when the person with a mental problem became a patient as "the birth of the clinic" (Fillingham 1993:60; Shumway 1989:32); when the patient became a disease to be studied and probed and when he lost himself as a person. This happened against the background of the French Revolution when an ideology of the ideal society free from disease reigned supreme (Fillingham 1993:63). It was also during this period that modernity originated and humans became the object of sciences. The doctor gained prominence as the examiner of patients and students alike. His powerful gaze of knowledge became the diagnostic tool (Fillingham 1993:67).

Soon it was realised that the powerful gaze of the doctor was not enough to render all the answers about humans. This is where the practice of the dissection of corpses developed from, for it was not enough to know the people from the outside (Shumway 1989:46; Fillingham 1993:70). Hard sciences, which were fast gaining prominence, needed to study humans from the inside in order to complete their knowledge of humans. This, according to Foucauldian discourse, offered science the opportunity to subject all of the human body to the scientific "gaze" (Fillingham 1993:74).

Previous to the eighteenth century, human beings "did not exist" (McHoul & Grace 1993:32; Fillingham 1993:83). In other words, there was little knowledge about human beings apart from God around whom everything revolved and there was little need for such knowledge. Regard for God, once regarded as central to all knowledge, diminished and with the development of science humans became the centre of knowledge instead. Man became the object and the subject of study. This notion lasted until halfway through



the twentieth century when the work of social constructionists and post-modern thinkers developed into current philosophies that offer alternative ways of understanding human beings.

### 1.3.3 Punishment and discipline

Similar to Foucault's historical analysis of psychiatry and pathology, his analysis of discipline and punishment offers an interesting deconstructing view. In the eighteenth century severe torture was regarded as an appropriate punishment for crimes whether the person had been proven guilty or not (Fillingham 1993:117). However, the torture of criminals failed to frighten the people into law-abiding citizens (Boyne 1996:109). Also, social gatherings and festivities had the potential to become uncontrolled. It was feared that these meetings could lead to political unrest and in the nineteenth century it was stopped under pretext of being unsophisticated and uncivilised (Boyne 1996:109). It was in the context of an emergent capitalist society with its emphasis on productivity and order that the transformation of punishment occurred (Fillingham 1993:118,119; Boyne 1996:109).

A new practice of punishment was required – one that would bring along order and productivity. There was a move away from punishment as a form of revenge to punishment as an attempt to correct. Torture was replaced by imprisonment where criminals were punished by doing tedious work for extended periods of time amidst a strictly regulated routine (Fillingham 1993:127). This was an effort to “correct” criminals in order to preserve social and economic order (Boyne 1996:109). Foucault postulated that the concept of the king as the monarch ruling over a country was replaced during the nineteenth century by the social body that needed to be protected like the king of the previous centuries (Foucault 1980:55). Therefore, there was a continued segregation of the sick, the delinquent and degenerates from the larger society (Foucault 1980:55). Boyne (1996:118) draws this comparison in discussing the work of Foucault and Derrida on discipline and punishment: “[S]ociety has in truth become the protestant God that keeps all under constant observation, and all the individual members of the God-Society

take this task unto themselves for their own and other's sakes." The sovereign power of a king became anonymous; it was everywhere, ever present "but never locatable" (Boyne 1996:114). Although this form of punishment was indeed more humane than torture, it was never less powerful.

An integral part of the concept of imprisonment is discipline. The definition of discipline as we know it is the training or a way of life aimed at self-control and conformity. It also implies maintaining order. Observation and control are important aspects of discipline (McHoul & Grace 1993:66; Foucault 1977:263). A prison is the extreme application of discipline as it facilitates absolute control and constant surveillance of inmates. This form of discipline was not restricted to prisons, it also found its way into schools, military camps, large companies, industrial factories, psychiatric hospitals (Fillingham 1993:120; McHoul & Grace 1993:66) and certainly also into child care facilities.

Along with the changes caused by the transformation of child and youth care, the new constitution abolished corporal punishment. The abolishment of corporal punishment introduced challenges for some child care workers who had relied on physical punishment in disciplining the children and for whom punishment was linked to their Christian duties. These issues are discussed in chapter six of this study.

According to the Foucauldian discourse, a few principles governed this form of discipline. The first was spatialisation, in other words, in the facility (be it a prison, school or a ward in a psychiatric clinic) each inmate, pupil or patient had a specific placement which defined who and what that person was (Fillingham 1993:121). Secondly, there was detailed control of activity. The day was structured in minutes and hours, each second accounted for (Fillingham 1993:123; McHoul & Grace 1993:68). Repetitive exercises of the same task or instruction with the aim to standardise performance were introduced (McHoul & Grace 1993:69). The same kind of discipline was also characterised by detailed hierarchies where each level kept a watch over the lower level and each level held specific authority and demanded specific training (Fillingham 1993:124). Lastly, there were normalising judgements that reflected to the

people when they were deviating from the normal and accepted behaviour. These rules were often set out in negative terms that limited unacceptable behaviour but they rarely specified acceptable behaviour (Fillingham 1993:125). This approach to discipline contributed to the order of an organisation as well as to society as a whole. Furthermore, it generated civilisations of productive citizens, which were a necessity in maintaining a capitalist ideology (Fillingham 1993:129; Boyne 1996:110-112; McHoul & Grace 1993:71).

The Foucauldian discourse introduces the Panopticon principle, which underlies the discourse's conceptions about discipline (Fillingham 1993:126; McHoul & Grace 1993:67). The Panopticon was an architectural concept associated with Jeremy Bentham who lived in the eighteenth century (Fillingham 1993:126). This structure was envisaged for the building of prisons. The architectural basis of the Panopticon structure has a tower in the centre of a round building that allowed natural sunlight to shine in. The structure was divided into cells with each cell facing the tower. The placement of the tower allowed the guards to observe each prisoner at any time of the day or night without the prisoner being directly aware of the observation (Fillingham 1993:126). The manner of observation epitomised absolute and final control because, without any direct punishment, physical force or threat, prisoners became their own guards – they started to control their own behaviour knowing that they were being observed but never quite knowing exactly when they were the focus of the guard's observing stare (Fillingham 1993:127; White & Epston 1990:68).

The ideology of capitalism gave rise to the need for societies to be productive and orderly. It also constituted an ideology of personal improvement and progress. This ideology was aimed at improving society's ability to point out people and to correct everyone who was not in compliance with the criteria of the norm. It resulted in an effort to eradicate "otherness" (Fillingham 1993:129). Boyne (1996:113) referred to the "cloning of the subject population". The process of normalising people with its ultimate goal of total efficiency of the society replaced the old opposition of good and bad, which was prominent before the nineteenth century. Instead of the "bad" needing punishment

and the monarch having the power to control the bad, the "norm" became the control (Boyne 1996:113; Townley 1993:5; McHoul & Grace 1993:68; White & Epston 1990:70).

In the process of normalising itself, society as we know it today, is in a constant process of measuring and assessing people in terms of their health, their productivity, their mental ability, their mental stability and their behaviour. At the same time society is reporting on the results of these assessments on a continuum ranging from normal to abnormal. When abnormality or un-ideal normality is found, great importance is placed on the discovery and a lot of capital is invested in improving and correcting the impurities and imperfections. Health care professionals, of whom I am one, form a part of this context. We value concepts such as self-awareness and self-improvement and make it our business to bring clients to a position of health; we encourage our clients to give their best and to work towards optimum functioning and productivity.

The notion of normalisation is evident in residential child care. The previous policy of the Department of Welfare moved from the premise that families were either healthy or they were "dysfunctional". Based on this premise, it lay down criteria according to which children were removed from their "dysfunctional" families and placed into institutionalised care that was aimed at "normalising" the children's situation. This study focuses on these premises and the effects that the removal of children from their families have on the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit. Furthermore, the study highlights the new premises that accompany the transformation of child and youth care and also on the effects of these on the children.

#### 1.3.4 The Panopticon principle

The Panopticon principle serves as a metaphor for understanding how the power involved in normalising societies operates (Boyne 1996:110). The discourse on pathology for example, serves as the tower in the Panopticon structure (Foucault 1977:200) as it establishes a normalising "gaze" that reaches a whole society without them being directly

aware of it (White & Epston 1990:68,69). People measure their thoughts and behaviour in terms of "truths" (criteria) about abnormality that they have internalised (Boyne 1996:118; White 1992a:137,138). They control their own behaviour in terms of this internalised "gaze" (Olssen [s a]:205). "The gaze is alert everywhere" (Foucault 1977:196). As a result we have controlled, structured and disciplined societies in which people monitor their own actions without the need of an authoritative or a military government that dominates its people into a state of orderliness (McHoul & Grace 1993:72). This demonstrates how subtle power and control act and how people are a part of the process of power (D. Th. study group 1999).

### 1.3.5 Power and resistance

The most significant Foucauldian contribution to the post-modern discourse, in my opinion, is its view on power. This view moves beyond the traditional views that regard power as a unilateral phenomenon, in other words, a force that is used by specific people or authorities onto others who are the helpless victims thereof. According to the Foucauldian discourse, this would be regarded as domination.

Power is not a substance, but a relation. It is therefore not possessed but exercised (Halperin 1995:16; Van Huyssteen 1999:32). Power is not situated in one person or one organisation (Halperin 1995:16; McHoul & Grace 1993:39). It is much more subtle, easier to overlook and harder to resist (Boyne 1996:112). It is not hierarchical flow from the top down; it is local everywhere (Bordo 1989:15; Halperin 1995:17; McHoul & Grace 1993:39). There are no relationships that stand outside of power (Halperin 1995:17; McHoul & Grace 1993:39,40).

There is a complex interaction or relationship between bodies of knowledge and those people who either buy into that knowledge or resist it (Townley 1994:5; Foucault 1980:52). Power and resistance go hand-in-hand and are related because, in as much as power is exerted by a discourse, so do people buy into this discourse (Halperin 1995:17). Resistance is inherently part of the relation (Fillingham 1993:145). People do not only

accept the knowledge of a specific discourse as the "truth", they internalise the "gaze" of the knowledge that the discourse offers. This brings along the dynamic of power where people start to monitor themselves and their knowledge about themselves with the internalised knowledge of the discourse. There is a reciprocal relationship between power and people (White & Epston 1992:137; Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:9,10; D.Th. study group 1999).

What does the Foucauldian discourse offer the post-modern researcher and therapist? In my view it offers the therapist tools to critically assess the practices of the helping professions. In its analysis of the historical development of the health and helping sciences as they stand today, it offers a critical look at the segregation of those who are "diagnosed as abnormal" from the rest of society by the helping sciences. It reflects on the ethics of the practice of segregation. Furthermore, it offers a framework from which to understand the dynamics of the power that is inherent to these discourses and to assess the ethics thereof.

The Foucauldian views of power and the ideas about the role of the post-modern intellectual, offer in my opinion, a novel challenge for the post-modern researcher and therapist: "(To) provide instruments of analysis ... a ramified, penetrative perception of the present, one that makes it possible to locate lines of weakness, strong points, positions where the instances of power have secured and implanted themselves by a system of organisation ..." (Foucault 1980:62). In other words, researchers and therapists have a role to critically assess the historical origin of their professions' current practices, to identify the power hidden in the helping professions' discourses, and to determine who benefits from the "truths" of their discourses (White & Epston 1990:25).

Furthermore, the Foucauldian discourse offers me valuable arguments on the issue of "change". Since change forms the theme of this study with its focus on the transformation of child and youth care, these arguments are relevant and will be summarised shortly. I found Foucauldian ideas on Marxism particularly valuable in understanding the socio-political context in which this study was situated. Foucault (1980:60) stated that change

cannot be forced down or operated from the top of the governmental hierarchy towards its people in the hope that it would bring about change. Change has to happen locally, in other words, it has to happen within people's attitudes and their behaviour. Foucault (1980:60) pointed out that change cannot happen unless "the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the state apparatuses, on a much more minute level, are not also changed."

These words become relevant to this study when the transformation of child and youth care is viewed against the larger political transformation in South Africa and the focus falls on the nature and the effects of the transformation. These issues are discussed in chapters three and six of this study.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Introduction

The two-fold aim with the methodology of this study reflects on the methods of study that are applied and to illustrate the assumptions of science of the epistemology on which the research is based. Methodology is not a fixed map; it changes during the course of the research. The nature of collaborative and participatory action research implies that the participants structure the course of the action and open new possibilities for the research.

Historically, social sciences were seen as "soft sciences" in comparison to sciences such as physics and chemistry (Guba & Lincoln 1994:105). This description defined social sciences as inaccurate and lacking dependability and therefore social sciences were seen as inferior. The theory reflected in social sciences did not lend itself to conversion into precise mathematical formulas and were thus less useful for predicting and controlling natural phenomena (Guba & Lincoln 1994:105; Von Glasersfeld, 1991:12-15).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Western world became disillusioned with the products of modernity during the 1960s and the 1970s. Critics of the modernist sciences have shown that scientific observation of a subject is impossible. Efforts to prove that

independent knowledge about the world has been discovered have been fruitless (Gergen & Gergen 1991:76).

During the 1940s and the 1950s the cybernetics paradigm was developed (Kotzé 1992:41). This paradigm developed over two phases, first-order cybernetics and second-order cybernetics. What distinguishes the latter from the first is the fact that second-order cybernetics made room for the observer as part of reality (Kotzé 1994:23). It allowed research to move beyond the notion that knowledge equals the observations of the observer; it introduced the premise that observers are as much part of the creation of knowledge as their observations. This notion went hand-in-hand with post-modern ideas that objectivity is a myth and that knowledge is neither objective or subjective, but inter-subjective.

Amongst others, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela were pioneers in the development of this notion and their theories were important in developing a post-modern approach to family therapy. Their theories about knowledge contributed to the constructivist epistemology. In short they postulated that the observer's biases are primarily outcomes of the scientist's cognitive processes, that researchers plan, conduct and interpret their research from a cognitive predisposition (Kotzé 1994:23; Kotzé 1992:50).

Another contribution to post-modern research is a social construction discourse that emphasises the role of language in observing the world. According to this discourse research becomes an expression of relationships among persons and not an expression of a researcher's cognition. Focus is on the meanings generated by the participants in a study, not on the individual's mind. A social constructionist's approach to science is not that science has become redundant and impractical, nor does it attempt to define language as a device for mapping the world. Rather, it focuses on the performative function of language in science. Knowledge is therefore not a product of an individual's mind, but it is the co-ordinated activities of individuals to accomplish locally agreed upon purposes concerning the real world (Maturana 1991:32,33; Gergen & Gergen 1991:79-86; Kotzé 1994:30,31; Kotzé 1992:63).



## 2.2 Ontology

This study positions itself in a social construction discourse. Therefore it adopts a relativist ontology. Knowledge is regarded as social constructions about what is out there in the world. It is the result of dialogue among people about their experiences and about their narratives. This approach leaves room for differences in knowledge and acknowledges the cultural and other differences of research interpreters (Guba & Lincoln 1994:111).

## 2.3 Epistemology

Knowledge regarded as being accumulated through discourse, is a dialectic process. It is acquired through transactions between people. The epistemology is therefore inter-subjective and transactional (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:13). The criteria used to judge the quality of a study like this are trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln 1994:111).

## 2.4 Method of study

The method of study can be summarised as dialectic (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:13). The enquirer uses dialectic discourses i.e. asking questions and reflecting on the answers in his / her search for knowledge (Gergen & Gergen 1991:88; Guba & Lincoln 1994:112).

These criteria guide the documenting of this study. The study reflects the experiences of the people as storied by them. It documents their experiences and perceptions by using their own words and metaphors as far as possible. Furthermore, it documents their reflections on their own conversations.

## 2.5 Qualitative research

The goal of research is to expand and enrich understanding. It is about the co-creating of ideas and opening up new reflexive discourses about knowledge (Gergen & Gergen 1991:79-86). Post-modern research has increasingly moved towards qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research.

The term *qualitative* implies, "an emphasis on process and meanings that are not rigorously examined, or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount intensity or frequency" (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:4). Qualitative researchers emphasise the socially constructed nature of reality and they stress the point that inquiry is value-laden. They search for answers as to how social experiences are created and how people give meaning to these experiences (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:4). Qualitative research emphasises the process of investigation and does not attempt to prove causal relationships between variables (Guba & Lincoln 1994:107).

The concept of "subject under study" has been replaced with "participant in a research project". The participants are not only actively involved in creating knowledge, but they are called upon to reflect on the "results" of the project and to have co-ownership of the report that is published.

Quantitative research aims at obtaining results and deriving conclusions from results on which another person or institute can take action. Action research, on the other hand, is aimed at creating knowledge during the process of intervention. The implication of this way of research on the power sharing between researcher and participant is that the participant benefits from the research at the time that is taking place. Furthermore, the participant is from the start of the project to the finish the owner and co-creator of the knowledge. This had ramifications for the ethics and addresses issues such as accountability, deceit and informed consent. Most important, it addresses the injustice of minority and disempowered groups becoming research populations in projects from which advantaged academics would benefit and those being studied would enjoy no benefit at all.

The wide field of qualitative research goes back to the 1920s and the 1930s (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:4). One cannot assume that this study falls purely under the umbrella of qualitative research, but it fits in this description better than it does the quantitative research – because qualitative is more open for post-modern research.

The following paragraphs do not argue the advantages of qualitative and quantitative research; neither do they attempt to offer a study of the distinctions between them. Qualitative research is an accepted and even privileged method of research especially in the social sciences and this study will not attempt to justify the choice of this model of research. The models of research do not *per se* determine what constitutes good science, but the epistemology and ontology that underlie it (Alvesson & Skölberg 2000:3,4). As Janesick's (1994:210) stated, qualitative research begins with a question, it designs a study "with real people in mind".

## 2.6 Participatory and collaborative research

"When I ask myself 'Am I part of the universe?' and answer 'Yes I am', I decide here and now that, whenever I act, not only I change, but the universe changes as well" (Tomm 1995:110). These words summarise the concept that a researcher's actions are inseparable from the actions of the participants and vice versa. Not only does this illustrate the potential of research to bring about change, but it also reflects on the additional responsibility to ensure that when introducing change, that it occurs primarily to the benefit of the participants (Tomm 1995:110).

The issue of participation is two-fold. On the one hand it refers to the role of the researcher and on the other hand, to the role of the participants. Researchers position themselves either in the position of outsider and / or insider, or as Dreyer (1998:8) argued, in both positions. Researchers become part of the constant dialogue with participants. As participants, involved in the creation of knowledge (along with their own stories and values), they are regarded as insider-researchers (Anderson & Goolishian 1988:384).

However, in the process of critical reflection on the knowledge created by research, researchers also move to the outsider role in an attempt to distance themselves from the knowledge created (Dreyer 1998:12). In my opinion, neither these roles are completely possible. One cannot claim to become fully participant in the stories of people, nor can

one claim to stand completely apart from one's own story. Gergen & Gergen (1991:79) expressed this accurately: "Each attempt at self-understanding (or understanding one's research efforts) can only lead to a replication of the same dispositions one attempts to transcend through self-reflection." For example, I entered the research process from the role of a professional person with the status and power associated with the white middle-class. The participants on the other hand, are a group of marginalised children with no voice in society and who come from disadvantaged communities. It would be presumptuous, if not arrogant, to assume that I would, at any stage of the study be able to be either insider or outsider. Gergen suggested that, in order to overcome these limitations, one needs to invite the expression of alternative voices and perspectives into one's activities (Gergen & Gergen 1991:79).

What is the position of the participation of the participants in the research? One distinguishes between passive and active participation of the participants on grounds of the extent to which they are involved in the planning, the execution and the interpretation of research results (Dreyer 1998:12).

Outsider research refers to the process where the researcher makes constructions about the results. In this process the research itself does not lead to change. The researcher enters the process with specific maps in mind and constructs the research according to these maps (Dreyer 1998:11).

In contrast, insider research participants co-construct the maps for the research. In the process of becoming actively involved in the research, they bring about change for themselves. Insider research becomes possible when the researcher remains in the not-knowing position and the participants are given a voice in the process. In this manner their needs and aims are centred (Dreyer 1998:11,12).

In my opinion, traditional research practices reflect a lack of participants' participation. Although some researchers encourage participants' voices to have the final say, the researchers still determine the research. The researcher still identifies and formulates the

research question, still plans the course of action, still orchestrates the action plans and still dominates the feedback of the results and the writing of the research report.

## 2.7 Emancipatory action research

Action research can be described as “the critical appraisal of current policies and practices with the immediate intention to change them. The processes of evaluation and of implementing change *are* the research” (Ballard 1994:311; Ballard & Bray 1997:12; Bawden 1991:10). Action research has also been described as “collaborative, critical and self-critical inquiry by practitioners ... into a major problem or issue or concern in their own practice” (Zuber-Skerritt 1996:3).

Apart from addressing technical improvements for the participants such as the efficacy of a situation and the practical improvement, such as the understanding of transformation, emancipatory action research goes a step further. It aims at changing the system itself; it implies emancipation from the dictates of dominant discourse – the system in which it finds itself. This research also aims at collaborative research where the participants (“researcher” and so-called “participants”) are all on equal footing and they contribute to the creation of new knowledge (Zuber-Skerritt 1996:4,5).

Action research consists of several elements, distinguishing it from other forms of research. It employs reflexive critique, which describes the process of deconstructing one’s own biases and dialectic critique, which deconstructs the various contexts in which the research takes place. Furthermore, it implies that there will be collaboration between the researcher and the various participants on various levels regarding the understanding of the situation being researched. There is also an element of risking the disturbance of the process of the research and the results of it. This is achieved by a willingness to submit the research to critique from various sources and on different levels. Lastly, action research implies that in the process of change theory and practice become interdependent (Winter 1996:13,14).

To the extent that researchers can deconstruct and expose dominant discourses or systems, so can they buy into the discourses of the liberated. Power does not only exist in the forces of repression and exploitation, but also within those structures that advocate liberation from those structures. The abuse of political power by the previous government (discussed chapters three in four) had affected the lives especially of black children in residential care. The discussion in chapter six illustrates how the democratically elected government in South Africa is as vulnerable to power struggles as a former white government used to be. Jennings and Graham (1996:175) explained the issue of power as follows: "Concepts such equality, freedom and justice are merely tokens in a game, in an interplay of forces."

How does the researcher stay clear of the power-trap? The responsibility of the researcher is to prevent the dialogue, which action research introduces, of becoming one-sided, of dominating voices silencing other voices to the effect that marginalisation is perpetuated. The action researcher needs to keep in mind that the resolution of problems is never final – research merely gives rise to new questions.

The work of Foucault and Derrida, discussed earlier in this chapter, contributed to the understanding of the significance of deconstruction and of power issues when challenging dominant discourses. When one analyses the historical development of systems or organisations, for example, one argues from the premise that relations between people and between institutions do not stand free from power. In as much as bodies of knowledge or tradition exert power, so do people buy into that power and maintain their relationship with it. In this study I attempt to analyse the historical developments of those discourses underlying the care of the child-in-need with the aim of bringing about changes that would benefit the children at the haven. The discourses which I attempt to analyse are pastoral practice and the theology of the DRC, the prophetic role of black liberation theology, Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaner politics.

## 2.8 Narrative research

Ballard (1994:25, 293) illustrated the importance of people telling their stories as part of research. In his work *Disability, family and Whānau* he argued that the stories of disabled people serve to communicate their experiences of their disability in a novel and unique manner. The importance of his argument for my research lies in the fact that the participants in Ballard's work were intellectually disabled and therefore marginalised by their society. In a similar way, the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit are disadvantaged and similarly, their stories have been overseen and subjugated not only in the previous dispensation, but again by the process of transformation.

I found in Ballard's work several aspects corresponding with my work with the children and the haven.

Ballard (1994:13) said that a specific language is used to describe people with disabilities and this language conveys assumptions and beliefs about them. This language serves to label these people and to promote discrimination. The label *disabled* is intended to benefit people but it "is also used to emphasise that people are disabled *by society*" (Ballard 1994:13,14).

Ballard (1994:22) substantiates the reporting of the stories of the people he worked with

I believe that these stories are as important, relevant, valid, reliable, meaningful and generalisable as any other writing that is referred to as research. Also these stories go beyond simply being a research account of validity. They provide a critical analysis of current issues undertaken by people who have experience of disability in New Zealand. This analysis indicates directions for change in policy and practice.

In South Africa research involving children in institutionalised care has always been done and recorded by people other than the children themselves. The children have not

contributed directly to the bodies of knowledge that have been collected on them. They have not been allowed authorship or copyright of the research that has been published on their lives.

As discussed in chapter one of this report, the rights of children in residential care have been disregarded in the past, they found themselves on the seams of society: labelled, excluded and discriminated against. From a post-modern research approach, knowledge about these children cannot be generated by researchers, who find themselves in privileged and even powerful positions in society, with validity and trustworthiness. The researcher and the policy makers would err should they assume that they know the system in which disadvantaged people operate. As Ballard (1994:294) stated: "[U]nless they are disabled themselves, they may be unaware of the attitudes, power relationships and day-to-day activities that govern peoples lives." Disabled persons, or in this case disadvantaged children, have never shared in the power that accompanies policy making. They had no role to play in developing policies about their lives.

As discussed in chapter one of this report the telling of stories is a traditional way of sharing experience and of communicating with others. The stories of people offer the reader compelling, engaging encounters of the life experiences and perceptions of others (Ballard 1994:24). The narrative approach as research method is not so much a technique that is applied to understand phenomena "than it is a matter of 'entering into' the phenomena and partaking of them" (Clandinin & Connelly 1991:261).

In a small social system, such as the Children's Haven M T R Smit, stories are told and retold. These stories form the basis of collective stories that serve as the source of group identity (Goodman 1992:127). The narratives of the participants' lives are more than descriptions of the persons' histories, "it is a meaning-giving account, an interpretation of one's history and as such provides a way of understanding the experiential knowledge of ... participants" (Connelly & Clandinin 1987:131).



In Ballard's opinion, the question regarding the generalisation of the knowledge created by the stories of people, is a simple one. In his perception knowledge is as applicable to other situations as any other form of research since it depends on the subjective experience of the readers. If the information speaks to the readers they will apply it to other situations and the other way around (Ballard 1994:24).

In his study Ballard (1994:295) touched on the issue of the professional learning from the people who are the focus of the research. This ties in with the assumptions that underlie the narrative approach that clients, and in this case the participants of a research project, remain the experts on their lives – that they maintain authorship of it. Furthermore, their position of being disadvantaged is not a fact waiting to be discovered, but an experience to be described. The goal of the research goes beyond listening to their stories but ensuring that their stories are made heard (Ballard 1994:295). The researcher must find the most effective way to relate the participant's stories to the reader. Jancsick (1994:214) remarked that one stays close to the original data of the participants when relaying their stories.

According to Ballard (1994:297), action research with disabled people, as with the disadvantaged, does not limit itself to the participants. It becomes curious about the particular cultures and histories in which the narratives of the participants are embedded, about how their life stories are shaped by the larger professional discourses and by socio-political discourse (Clandinin & Connelly 1991:275). This inclusion emphasises that the "isolation, stigmatisation and poverty often experienced by (these) people... is not necessarily an outcome of their learning impairment but is a direct result of social discrimination and oppression" (Ballard 1994:21).

## 2.9 Reflexive research

Our daily lives are filled with judgements – of when to get up, whether to get up, which road to take to get to work and what to eat for lunch. These judgements are based on sets of assumptions about the world we live in. Everything that we utter about our life

experiences and about people reflects the bodies of knowledges that we privilege. These bodies of knowledge rely on interpersonal negotiated processes of interpretation. The language that we use to describe our perceptions is not neutral nor is it private, it is loaded with the meanings that people create in collaboration with one another in specific contexts (Winter 1996: 18,19).

When I recently attended a conference about the integration of children of all races into child care facilities, it struck me how value-laden everything we think and utter is. A group exercise explored the role of a person's values when interacting with people. The exercise challenged the participants to select a few people from a list provided, who in their opinions ought to survive the destruction of all people on earth by some disaster in order to ensure the survival of man-kind. The list described people in ways that evoked strong prejudices: a prostitute, a homosexual man, a Rastafarian, a Chinese drug dealer, a priest.

The exercise elicited strong discussions and interesting arguments. What struck me most was that the exercise disclosed a lot about the participants' values and others' responses to them, and nothing about the persons described on the list!

When constructing research (as when doing therapy), a complex relationship exists between the researcher (therapist), the context of research (therapy) and the participants (clients). Maturana (1991:46,47) sketched the complexity of this relationship as follows: "We deal with the explanation of our own human experience, not with the explanation of reality... We do not encounter things, we live in experience... We exist in language, we generate experience through language." The creation of knowledge is influenced by the linguistic, social, political, and theoretical elements of the researcher and the participants (Alvesson & Sköglberg 2000: 5).

Reflexive research has two basic characteristics: careful interpretation and reflection. The first characteristic is based on the assumption that empirical results are not the reflection of reality but the interpretation of data by researchers who plan, approach, conduct and

interpret their data from a specific theoretical frame of reference (Alvesson & Skölberg 2000:5). This frame of reference is constructed of the researcher's academic theories and presuppositions. I would prefer to substitute the *interpretation of data* with *co-construction of knowledge* as the latter, in my opinion, is more congruent with the nature of collaborative and participatory research.

The second element of reflexive research deals with the researcher's personal linguistic and socio-political contexts. It illustrates the role of the researcher's own cultural context and heritage in constructing the values used to approach his / her role and the roles of participants (Alvesson & Skölberg 2000:5). This issue highlights the responsibility to critically evaluate their assumptions and values and to reflect on the effects on the research in terms of setting aims, giving direction to it and interpreting the results (Ballard 1994:312, 295, Goodman 1992:123).

Alvesson & Skölberg (2000:6) define reflexive research as follows:

*[T]he interpretation of interpretation and the launching of critical self-exploration of one's own interpretations of empirical material (including its construction). Reflection can mean that we consistently consider various basic dimensions behind and in the work of interpretation, by means of which this can be qualified.*

It is impossible for researchers to recognise their own blind spots and prejudices that influence their interpretation of research findings, because it is impossible for researchers to step out of their own contexts, which constitute their values and perceptions. Maturana (1991:41) expressed this issue as follows: "We claim our emotions do not participate in the generation of our scientific statements and explanations... our emotions, however enter legitimately and constitutively into what we scientists do..."

Reflexive methods offer researchers the opportunity to take a step back from their research position and to gain critical reflection and awareness of the restrictions that they place on their research (Alvesson & Sköglberg 2000:6).

The principle of reflexivity makes modest claims for research results. This study does not claim that the knowledge created by the research has universal meaning or that the analysis of the research by the researcher is final. Reflexivity implies that the knowledge is local and that the results remain open-ended so to speak, that every new reader will create new meaning to it (Winter 1996:19). Goodman (1992:124) summarised the role of reflexivity accurately: "Reflexivity erodes the authority of academic discourse in order to challenge concepts of power, legitimacy, and domination."

Meaning is therefore not the creation and the property of the participants in the research project nor is it the creation or the property of the researcher – it is the product of the interdependent relationship between the researcher and the participant, the result of the collaboration between them. Gergen emphasised this point as follows: "The confirmation (or disconfirmation) of hypotheses through research findings are achieved through social consensus, not through observation of facts" (Gergen & Gergen 1991:81).

## 2.10 Research conversations

Traditionally, the style of the interview used in research would take the format of the interviewer asking a set of pre-planned questions while the interviewee would answer them. The narrative approach that is applied in this research does not follow this traditional format. Instead, it centres the interviewees and their stories and it asks questions to facilitate the sharing of the interviewees' perceptions, opinions and values. Furthermore, it regards the contributions of the participants as gifts (Limerick, Limerick & Grace 1996:450).

The responsibility of the interviewer goes beyond the collection of data. Questions lead to conversations and new perspectives are shaped for both "interviewer" and "interviewee"

as previously untold stories are *language*. The initial aim with the interviews in this study was not to gain data but to offer opportunities for the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit to benefit therapeutically and to facilitate change through the multiple reflections with various interviewees at different stages of the study. This aim was based on the assumption that these interviews with the children (and the other participants) could facilitate emotional growth. This is in agreement with the ideas of Clandinin and Connelly (1991:258): “[D]eliberately storying and restorying one’s life.... is, therefore, a fundamental method of personal growth....”

The traditional ways of interviewing pose an asymmetrical relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. The very terms *interviewer* and *interviewee* imply that the one is active in the process of the interview and the other is passive (Limerick et al 1996:449; Tripp 1983:33). This asymmetry denies the agency of the interviewees and disempowers them. Limerick et al (1996:449, 452- 454) argued that: “this asymmetry creates a depersonalizing, exploitative, and patronising relationship.”

Opposed to the traditional research interview, narrative research focuses on co-creation, collaboration and on the authorship of the participants (interviewees). The interviewees have equal responsibility for what questions are asked and answered and the interviewer has an equal responsibility to answer questions of the interviewee. In this sense it becomes a discussion – a conversation rather than an interview (Tripp 1983:33).

The position of authority of the interviewer (researcher) is deconstructed. The interviewees are regarded as experts on their stories and their stories, rather than the questions of the interviewer, are centred (Clandinin & Connelly 1991:276).

## 2.11 Audience

Within a narrative approach an audience is the person or persons who would be interested in listening or be invited to listen to the client's story (Freedman & Combs 1996:238). Listening to the client's preferred knowledges would enhance the telling of alternative

marginalised stories. In line with the audience created in a narrative approach to therapy, the researcher attempts to broaden the audience of the participants' stories in order to enhance the stories – to create participatory communities serving as audience for all the participants. The aim is to benefit the participants as much as possible. The audience should be broader than the participants themselves; it should reach other researchers and invite them to think differently about their way of practice and research. Also, something of the collaboration between the researcher and the participants should be shared (Clandinin & Connelly 1991:276, 278).

### 2.12 Trustworthiness and authenticity

Trustworthiness and authenticity replace the terms credibility, validity, generalisability and reliability when referring to the evaluation of research. Some qualitative researchers (Janesick 1994:216, 217) still cling to these terms and in the process they privilege modernist criteria in constituting good research. This does not mean that qualitative action research cannot be scrutinised and evaluated, but in all justification it has to be measured by its own criteria. One cannot grow apples and assess their quality in terms of what constitutes good pears.

### 2.13 Summary

As this chapter draws to a close, I reflect shortly on what I presented in this chapter and what follows. In this chapter I described the epistemology this study is based on. I drew from the post-modern, social construction and Foucauldian discourses to co-construct the study with my fellow-participants. The methodology that I apply with the help of the participants, aims to facilitate change and understanding of their situation and to benefit them. In the next chapter I attempt to deconstruct those discourses underlying the care that the children receive and have received at the haven.

DISCOURSES CONSTITUTING CHILD CARE AT  
THE CHILDREN'S HAVEN M T R SMIT

1 INTRODUCTION

My involvement with the Children's Haven M T R Smit left me with the impression that our understanding of the care of children reflects discourses that historically operated within our cultural systems.

Today, three years since the launch of Project Go, marking the start of the transformation of child and youth care, and six years into a democratic South Africa, a board of nine voting members, of whom I am a "new" member, manages the affairs of the children's haven. The members are all white Afrikaans-speaking members of Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) congregations in Port Elizabeth. Five of the members are ministers of the DRC. Nine of the ten child care workers at the haven are white and eight of them are white Afrikaans-speaking women. So are the principal and the social worker. The staff responsible for the domestic labour and gardening are all coloured and black people. Thus, the majority of those responsible for the care of the children are white-Afrikaans speaking people.

The care of children did not develop in a vacuum. Our understanding (I regard myself as part of the management board, as part of the DRC and indoctrinated by the discourse of the dominant white, Afrikaans-speaking tradition) of child care and specifically of the child-in-care, is mapped by our historical and political contexts (Burr 1995:4,6; Anderson 1995:30). Our knowledges of the child-in-need are artefacts of our cultural (historical and political) discourses. Added to our cultural understanding of children, are the voices of our various professional discourses: psychology, theology, social work and child care. These voices reverberate theories about "normal" and "abnormal" child development and about the therapies that are applicable for "normal" and "abnormal" development.

In an attempt to understand the maps constituting our care of the children at the haven, I searched through some historical developments in the DRC and developments that seemed to lead to some sense of unity of the white Afrikaner people. The DRC has been involved in the care of the children since the haven's founding in the early 1920s. The boards of management running the haven have always consisted of members of DRC congregations. Their approach to the care of the children is mapped by their historical and political contexts.

In this search I discovered what I thought to be meaningful resonances between the historical developments and the present situation at the haven – aspects such as the role that power played during the developments and the effects thereof, as well as the resistance to that power. In understanding some of the effects of power in these historical developments, I hope to contribute to a knowledge that would benefit the care of the children at the haven.

Although there were always voices of resistance within the DRC, the dominant discourse of the DRC supported the previous apartheid regime. In 1997 the DRC confessed to, and apologised for its role in the apartheid policy of the National Party government – for the suffering and humiliation that this policy had caused millions of people in the country (Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk [NGK] 1997:3,73-76). Yet, for close to fifty years the church played a significant part in bringing about and maintaining the social, economical and political system of apartheid of which all South Africans, but mostly the black, coloured, Asian and Indian people, still suffer the consequences today.

The Children's Haven M T R Smit had to reflect on the past during this time of transformation. During my involvement with the staff and the board of management over the past few years, I realised that, whilst trying to adjust to the fast moving process of transformation, we have to question both the new principles introduced by the transformation of child and youth care and our traditional practices.



It seems that the challenges facing the pastoral practice of the DRC in its care of the children are two-fold:

- implications of the transformation of child and youth care for the children needs to be addressed (discussed in chapters four, five and six).
- challenges born from critical self-reflection on past practices, such as the abuse of power (discussed in this chapter)

If one grasps the circumstances that shaped the close association between the DRC and Afrikaner politics and the power accompanying this association, one realises how it came about that the DRC and the Afrikaner were blinded to the injustices caused by their politics. The background that follows attempts to create some understanding of the need for self-reflection of the staff and the board of management of the Children's Haven M T R Smit, of those practices in our history that abused power in the interest of the advancement of the Afrikaner. With such reflection, I hope to make the reader aware of how the power issues related to the care at the haven, both in the old and the new dispensations, resonate with practices in our history.

These issues bear more relevance in the light of the racial discrimination that the coloured and black children at the haven (and in other DRC children's havens) currently suffer. Moreover, the haven is pressured by the current government to review its racial policies – to integrate children, child care workers and board members in line with the Employment Equity Act no 55 of 1998. The pressure to integrate is given momentum by the threat to cut back on government subsidies. These issues are discussed in more detail in chapter five.

In an attempt to come to some understanding of the traditional approaches to the care of the children, I journey briefly through the history of the DRC in South Africa and the historical occurrences that brought together a group of white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans and constituted discourses dominating the political and cultural views of the Afrikaner people.

In fairness to the complexity of the circumstances in which the DRC developed, I do not claim to draw final and definite lines between the historical context of the DRC and the management of the care of the children. I would rather attempt to focus on the discourse underlying both the historical development of the DRC (and Afrikaner nationalism) and the management of the Children's Haven M T R Smit.

As a result of this conscious attempt, this study moves beyond the system (organisation) of the Children's Haven M T R Smit to focus on those discourses that underlie the system. In doing so, I hope that other systems, dominated by similar discourses (dominant bodies of knowledge), could benefit.

The "dominant Afrikaner discourse" refers to a particular understanding and interpretation of reality by a group of white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. This understanding dominated the political, theological and cultural spheres of the Afrikaner people before and during the apartheid era. I do not intend to imply that all Afrikaners were white or all Afrikaners formed part of this dominant group. Similarly, with the "dominant" theology of the DRC, I refer to a particular understanding and interpretation of reality by a group of DRC theologians that dominated the political, theological and cultural spheres of the Afrikaner people before and during the apartheid era.

In contrast to the dominant theology of the DRC, black liberation theology addressed the oppression of the black people. I will briefly discuss the prophetic practice of liberation theology in an attempt to illustrate its approach to pastoral practice. In chapter seven the prophetic nature of liberation theology is discussed in an attempt to indicate the significance of and need for prophetic pastoral practice for child care.

The history of the DRC is interwoven with the development of the Afrikaner nation (O'Meara 1983:67-77; Moodie 1975:52-72, 234-258). In 1915, D F Malan positioned the DRC in his speech at a ministers' conference. His statement was published in *Die Kerkbode* of 15 February 1915 (Moodie 1975:71-72):

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[T]he church has a special calling with respect to the Dutch-speaking population, "with whose existence it is bound up in such an intimate manner" and it is thus the duty of the church "in itself to be nationalist, to watch over our particular national concerns", to teach the People to see the hand of God in their history and "to keep alive in the Afrikaner People the awareness of national calling and destiny, in which is laid up the spiritual, moral and material progress and strength of a People."

Initially there was a clear distinction between the DRC and Afrikaner culture on the one hand and party politics on the other. The majority of the DRC ministers felt the conviction that the DRC should be a People's church – a *volkskerk* but that the state and the church should remain separate. In order to maintain this schism, the clergy started to distinguish between party politics and People's politics (*kultuurpolitiek*) (Moodie 1975:72). However, it became increasingly difficult to maintain this distinction (Moodie 1975:115).

The following paragraphs provide a short historical overview of the collaboration between the DRC, Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaner politics. The information presented in these paragraphs was drawn from a large collection of historical facts (Scholtz 1970, Sparks 1990, 1994; Krüger 1969; NGK 1997; Ryan 1990; Elphich & Giliomee 1989; Moodie 1975; Serfontein 1982; Van Jaarsveld 1975; Giliomee 1975; Van der Watt 1976, 1977, 1987; Allen 1994; Smit 1964; De Klerk 1990; O'Meara 1983). The decision for highlighting certain pieces of information (and not others) was determined by themes I regarded as relevant for my discussion – themes resonating with the circumstances and context at the children's haven. I do not imply that they represent the entire history of the DRC, of Afrikaner nationalism, Afrikaner politics and of black liberation theology. And neither do I intend to minimise the richness of history. The aim of this study is not to provide a historical analysis. The aim is to reflect on the ways in which we bought into the discourse of normalising truths – knowledge that we held as the one and only reality – as the final answer.

For so long we believed that apartheid was a just system, that separate development was biblically correct, that racial differentiation was in the interest of black people. We believed that we could take care of children better than their own parents could and that children could not possibly know what it was that they needed. We believed that we had the only knowledge, the right, as the "chosen folk" to make decisions on other people's lives on their behalf. We believed they had no right to protest against our decisions. In fact, if they did we squashed them with the indignation of a patriarch being challenged.

The themes I use to explore the ways in which we submitted to the normalising truth discourse are intertwined with the historical discussions, which follow more or less chronologically from the Dutch occupation of the Cape in 1652 to the point when the DRC had a change of heart in the early 1990s. As mentioned before, the theme of power and the resistance to it, is highlighted. From the rule of the Dutch East Indian Company (VOC) to the rule of Afrikaner nationalism, South Africans served the goals of economic or political enrichment. The DRC was no exception and neither did the children at the haven escape service to a "higher" goal. The notion / theology of the Afrikaner as the "chosen people" is explored – its origins and its effects and the ways in which it resonates with the care of the children. Closely related to the "chosen people"- identity of the Afrikaner was the theological perception that white people were "masters" and that black or non-European persons the "servants". This notion underlay and maintained racial prejudice and discrimination – something that the children at the haven still suffer today. The patriarchal nature of the social life of the Afrikaner is explored and ways in which it resonates with management and parental patterns we apply at the haven are highlighted. The history of the Afrikaner to isolate him- / herself from others is discussed and the effects of such isolation. Resonating with this theme is the way in which the management board of the haven has operated. As mentioned before, Afrikaner nationalism is a central theme in this chapter. The powerful effects of the Afrikaner Christian nationalism on the theology, the political goals and the culture of the Afrikaner are explored. Linked to this theme is the role of segregation, separation and finally institutionalisation of those people who do not fit the norm – who do not form part of the "nation's" ideal.

## 2 REFLECTIONS ON THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH, AFRIKANER NATIONALISM AND AFRIKANER POLITICS

The following paragraphs trace the history of the DRC and Afrikaner's political tradition back to the Dutch occupation of the Cape and follows some developments until the South African War.

### 2.1 Cape of Good Hope

It is difficult to believe that South Africa with its complicated and violent history has its origins in the simplest of ideas – a refreshment station. The fact that it was a refreshment station in service of ships trading in a seemingly insignificant product such as spices (or specifically, pepper) adds to this notion. If one keeps in mind the monetary value attached to trading in spices, it puts matters in a different perspective.

In 1652 the Dutch East Indian Company (VOC) found a small permanent station at the Cape of Good Hope as refreshment centre for the crew of its passing ships. It provided fresh produce necessary for the survival of these crews (Ross 1989:243; Van Aswegen 1989:77). Over the next two hundred years French Huguenots, German immigrants, British settlers and other nationalities joined the small Dutch community at the southern tip of Africa (Van Jaarsveld 1975:34,35).

The VOC did not manage to produce the goods profitably (Van Aswegen 1989:85). The Company surrendered the idea of an employee-driven refreshment post (Van Aswegen 1989:85) and encouraged its employees to set up their own farms in the district of the Cape settlement (Ross 1989:244; Giliomee 1975:30). Some of these *vryburgers* (free citizens) started their own drinking and lodging houses for the crewmen and soon the Cape grew into a small town (Ross 1989:244). Slaves were imported to do the labour in the fast growing town accommodating an equally fast growing population (Giliomee 1975:16; Van Aswegen 1989:85).

The VOC was a private commercial undertaking and it had sovereign rights in all of its territories, the Cape included (Schutte 1989:287; Van Aswegen 1989:79). The Company's ultimate goal was profit and the community of *vryburgers* was created for its benefit. These inhabitants were regarded as second-class citizens in service of the mother country (Schutte 1989:287).

The Company's authority was not as effective in the interior of the Cape as it was in the town (Schutte 1989:291). Conflict between the *vryburgers* and the VOC developed (Schutte 1989:305). The *vryburgers* demanded more fertile farming land, more lucrative compensation for their crops and protection from stock theft at the hands of the Khoikoi (Van Aswegen 1989:103; Schutte 1989:309). The burgers were also unhappy about the preferential treatment that the native spokesmen received from the Company (Schutte 1989:315). The constitution of the Cape was structurally unsound and the VOC had little hold on its citizen's loyalties (Schutte 1989:316-324). In 1709 the *vryburgers* came into resistance against the governor, W A van der Stel. In response he had several *vryburgers* arrested and even exiled (Van Aswegen 1989:106). The resistance of the *vryburgers* against the oppressive measures of the VOC was continued in 1738 by the Barbier Rebellion and by the Cape Patriot movement in 1778 (Van Aswegen 1989:106-108, Schutte 1989:308,309). Although the conflict between the stock farmers and the VOC officials contributed to the social and cultural differences between them, "it was the economic structure of the Cape that made such conflicts virtually inevitable" (Schutte 1989:316).

The formation of the "Afrikaner people" developed within the context of the Dutch colonial rule (Schutte 1989:316; Van Aswegen 1989:114).

In 1795 the British forces took command of the castle in Cape Town ending almost 150 years of VOC rule (Freund 1989:324). At the time of the British occupation the white society in the Cape colony was "neither egalitarian nor homogeneous" (Freund 1989:334). Although the character of the colony was predominantly Dutch, the presence of French, German and Asian immigrants contributed to the multi-cultural nature of the

colony (Van Aswegen 1989:88). People were divided into groups based on wealth and control of property. A small minority owned a disproportionately large share of valuable land as well as the majority of slave labour (Freund 1989:335; Van Aswegen 1989:92). Productivity in the colony was reliant on slave labour (Freund 1989:335).

## 2.2 British colonisation

The end of the VOC's rule in the Cape was the direct outcome of the battle between France and Britain which came to an end with the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 (Van Aswegen 1989:163). The defeat of Prince Willem of Oranje of the Netherlands, by the French during the same period, led the British to annex the Cape of Good Hope in an attempt to safeguard its assets against the French (Van Aswegen 1989:163). The transition of the Cape to British rule took place between 1795 and 1814 (Van Aswegen 1989:163; Freund 1989:324).

During the transition period the social constitution of the Cape changed. With the arrival of the British Settlers in 1820 a large English component was added. Unlike the earlier Huguenots the settlers did not lose their own culture to the dominant Afrikaner (Dutch) culture (Van Aswegen 1989:182).

A large number of the first whites in South Africa were Protestants (the so-called Huguenots) who had fled Europe because of persecution by Roman Catholics. They settled in South Africa in the venture of gaining religious freedom and regarded themselves as the "chosen people of God" who "viewed the outside world as a sort of Canaan in accordance with their Calvinistic principles. They believed they had the right, as Christians, to subjugate the world and reap the material rewards ... the differentiation between 'Christian' and 'Heathen' was maintained" (Van Jaarsveld 1975:3). Whatever their goals were these settlers were primarily allowed into the Cape colony to serve the interests of the colonising governments (Krüger 1969:4).



Since the arrival of the Dutch at the Cape in 1652 close ties existed between the Reformed Church in the Netherlands and the colonists (Van der Watt 1976:4). With the development of the colony, the Reformed Church (later known as the Dutch Reformed Church) was formally established in 1665. The VOC was adamant that the religious aspect of the citizens' lives should be maintained (Van der Watt 1976:4). Initially the Reformed Church could not afford a minister but in 1665 it appointed its first minister, Rev J van Arckel (Van der Watt 1976:7). The church was managed by the VOC and although in 1665 this function was taken over by the church council, it did not operate independent of the authorities (Van der Watt 1976:9, Elphick & Giliomee 1989:188). The church followed the confessional principles and church order of the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619). In 1842 the church became officially known as the Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk*) (Van der Watt 1976:11).

Initially the church in the Cape nurtured its ties with the Netherlands. Efforts to anglicise the colony began in earnest in 1814 (Moodie 1975:4). The English seemed to carry a sense of superiority that stemmed from their strong military and economic positions in the world at the time (Sparks 1990:48,55). According to Scholtz (1970:103) they regarded everything that was English as good and honourable and looked down on other cultures. In their view other "impoverished" cultures were to regard it a privilege to be bestowed the honour of being colonised and anglicised by the British Empire.

Immediately after the colonisation of the Cape in 1806, the British government asserted its power over the Reformed Church (Van der Watt 1976:14). The church's subservient position towards the state was reaffirmed. The government realised the significant role that the church played in the Cape community and by subjugating the church it ruled out the possibility of resistance. Moreover, the government saw the church as a useful instrument in its policy of anglicisation (Van Aswegen 1989:187). The government appointed a high-ranking official as representative on the church council. All ministers were appointed by and accountable to the government.

In an attempt to anglicise the church even more, Scottish Reformed ministers were imported to replace Dutch ministers of religion. Due to their economic disadvantaged position, the church in the Cape colony could not afford to train their ministers in the Netherlands and they had little option but to accept the Scottish ministers (Van Aswegen 1989:188; Scholtz 1970:76; Van der Watt 1976:27). This interference in the running of the church was the prominent factor (Scholtz 1970:76) that led to the resistance against the British authority. Initially the government was adamant that English would replace Dutch in the churches and in 1824 this was accepted by the Cape Synod of the church. Due to the sensitive nature of this issue the church was allowed greater freedom from 1843 to appoint ministers and Dutch was officially confirmed as the language of the Reformed church (Van Aswegen 1989:188; Van der Watt 1976:70).

In 1828 the British government ordained that whites and "non-whites" (Khoikhoi) were to be legally regarded as equals (Sparks 1990:66,77). Although this could seem a liberal attitude, it was liberal only in theory. Significant social and economic discrimination against the black people at the time remained (Scholtz 1970:74; Krüger 1969:6). Nevertheless, the legalisation of racial equality interfered directly with the principles of the Dutch-speaking white settlers because they viewed themselves as "Christians" who, as a result of their religion, could not be associated with the black inhabitants of the continent, whom they regarded as "heathens". They saw themselves "through the eyes of God" as the "Canaanites", the "chosen people" put on this continent to be free from religious oppression and to spread the Word of God to the "heathens" (Moodie 1975:5; Van der Watt 1987:75). They compared themselves to Israel of the Old Testament and this metaphor would serve their actions for centuries to follow (Krüger 1969:10; Scholtz 1970:415).

As well as being very religious (in their own way), the Dutch-speaking settlers were described as having a strong sense of individualism – a people who valued freedom and liberation (Van Aswegen 1989:102). Politically, they were unsophisticated, apathetic and therefore uninvolved. They were uneducated and poor. This was due to their way of living – they were mostly simple stock farmers who were geographically spread over a

large area and isolated from any outside influence (Van Aswegen 1989:101). What grouped them together as a people, was their common religion, language and a common opposition: the British government, as well as their resistance to be mixed with, or assimilated into the black tribes (Krüger 1969:5-10).

### 2.3 The *Great Trek* (Groot Trek)

The circumstances in the Cape colony as sketched above shaped the context for the start of the *Great Trek* in 1838.

The Cape Synod of the DRC disapproved of the *Great Trek* and regarded it as an infringement of the Christian responsibility of subjugation to authorities. This point highlights the incongruity of this group of *white Trekboere* (or Voortrekkers or early Afrikaners) in terms of their response to authority. On the one hand they seemed to value respect for the elderly and for persons in positions of authority. They were raised in the tradition of authoritative paternalism – they tended to be a patriarchal group or society. They showed fierce loyalty to their leaders during the *Great Trek*. Within each family, the father was a law unto himself and a total autocrat over his domain. Yet, towards authority who did not represent their interests, they showed defiance. The very reasons for the *Great Trek* stemmed from their defiance of the British government. This identity of these early Afrikaners would remain with them for the next two hundred years and would eventually determine their political ideology of nationalism well (Scholtz 1970:290; Krüger 1969:5; Sparks 1990:155).

To refer to all Afrikaners in generalised terms, would be unfair. There were and are Afrikaners who did not fall into this "Afrikaner mould". There are Afrikaans-speaking people involved in the care of children at the children's haven (chapter five of this study) not fitting this pattern of thinking.

Up to this point I have referred to "white Afrikaans-speaking people". It is not clear to me when the term *Afrikaner*, *Afrikaner people* or *Afrikaner nation* first originated – the

authors I consulted use these terms throughout their works. I will use the term *Afrikaner* and *Afrikaner nation*, but I do so conditionally – I do not imply that a united group of Afrikaners exists. Rather, I refer to the group of white Afrikaans-speaking people that dominated the socio-political and theological discourses of the white Afrikaner community.

During the *Great Trek* the unity between the *Afrikaners* seemed to be mostly due to their collective need to move away from British domination (Moodie 1975:5; Van Aswegen 1989:201; Peires 1989:499). The aforementioned authors emphasise different reasons for the *Great Trek*. Peires (1989:500) prioritised the abolishment of slavery whilst Van Aswegen (1989:201) emphasised the shortage of farm land as motivation. I summarise the most common reasons.

The economic pressure on the farmers (*boere*) was great. They were accustomed to moving from one piece of land to the next in their methods of farming. Few of them owned their own land – they were poor and unskilled and incapable of competing in the economy. More and more of the farmland was bought by a handful of wealthy farmers and large pieces of land were occupied by the Xhosa. Land became progressively scarcer and more expensive (Van Aswegen 1989:201). The British government allowed generous land grants to the British settlers and the Khoikoi but not to the Afrikaner farmers (Peires 1989:506; Van Aswegen 1989:201). They resented the government for failing to protect them against stock theft and they regarded the Sixth Frontier War as the turning point (Van Aswegen 1989:202).

The emancipation of the slaves caused further discontent amongst the Afrikaner farmers. By 1828 the farmers on the Eastern border of the colony had more than six thousand slaves, the majority of them the property of Afrikaner farmers. At a time of an economic depression, when labour was most needed, the slaves were freed (Peires 1989:500). As a result of the abolishment of slavery the farmers and their families had to do the hard manual labour themselves. To aggravate matters for the farmers, the British government

failed to compensate them for the loss of the slaves as promised (Moodie 1975:5; Van Aswegen 1989:202).

To some extent common religious values further contributed to the *Great Trek*. The *trekboere* aspired to preserve the proper relations between master and servant (Peires 1989:500). The way things were going in the Cape colony interfered with the "master-servant" relationship" and the British were seen as a direct threat to this "Christian" principle (Van Aswegen 1989:204). The *trekboere* relied heavily on religion to motivate and inspire them and their families during very difficult and dangerous times. The constant danger involved in the trek was a strong binding factor among the Afrikaners (Krüger 1969:7; Scholtz 1970:379).

The further they trekked, the more convinced they became that it was their God-given mission to fight and beat the "heathens in dark Africa" and to claim their land as their own (Moodie 1975:5; Scholtz 1970:415). Scholtz (1970:415) added to this mission of the Afrikaners, the noble enterprise of spreading the Christian message to the "savages". It seems that the first priority was rather to defeat the "savages" and drive them off their (the natives') land. The initial goal of the *Trekboere* was one of gain and not one of spreading the Gospel to the non-Christians. In fact, missionaries presented a threat to Cape farmers who feared that their labourers would desert to join the missionaries and that the missionaries would be sympathetic to their grievances (Freund 1989:340; Bosch 1991:229).

Scholtz (1970:610) views the *Great Trek* as having preserved the Afrikaner nation – "Without the act of isolation ... it would have been highly unlikely that the Afrikaner nation would still have existed today." Van Aswegen (1989:276) challenged this view and stated that in the short term, the *Great Trek* divided the Afrikaners more than it united them. The Afrikaners in the Cape felt little empathy towards the *Trekboere* (Van Aswegen 1989:276). The Afrikaners in the *Great Trek* formed a small part of the Afrikaner population. The *Great Trek* served to weaken the bond between Afrikaners.

The isolation from "alien influences" kept the Afrikaners united but also uneducated, unsophisticated and uninformed of the politics and the rise of humanism in the Western world (Van Aswegen 1989:272). This isolation also did not stop after the *Great Trek*, but continued during the establishment of the Boer Republics and flourished after the election of the National Party into power in 1948. Since 1948 Afrikaners have isolated themselves from the black, coloured and Asian cultures of South Africa by means of discriminatory, unjust and inhumane laws. In effect, they also isolated themselves from the English-speaking culture. The majority of Afrikaners lived in a microcosm of a white Afrikaans school, a white Afrikaans church, a white Afrikaans university and white Afrikaans cultural organisations. Sparks (1990:146) describes the situation of the Afrikaner as "isolating itself in its self-centred anxiety from the rest of mankind."

Afrikaners took effective measures to cut off information coming from the outside world by prohibiting freedom of speech, freedom of the press and by monopolising the radio and later television. This in effect, robbed the Afrikaners of meaningful opportunities for reflection and it severed them from the potential richness found in cross-cultural discourse. The following words of Breytenbach (Sparks 1990: 218) express the effects of this isolation.

Apartheid works. It may not function administratively, its justification and claims are absurd. And it certainly has not succeeded in de-humanising – entirely – the Africans, the coloureds or the Indians. But it has effectively managed to isolate the white man. He is becoming conditioned by his lack of contact with the people of the country, his lack of contact with the South African inside himself .... His windows are painted white to keep the night in.

(Sparks 1990:218)

The isolation of the Afrikaner had far-reaching implications for the DRC and, more specifically, for the management of the Children's Haven M T R Smit. As I will argue later, the DRC systematically isolated itself from critical reflection with its persistence to

preserve unity and later its position of supremacy. This was reflected in the DRC's management of the care of the children. To date, management board of the Children's Haven M T R Smit has consisted almost entirely of white Afrikaans-speaking (adult) members of the DRC. The boards seem to resist opportunities for critical reflection. This resistance could be interpreted as an unwillingness to be confronted with the unpleasant results of self-reflection. It suggests a practice of perpetual domination.

What are the effects of domination in policies of child care? Had this domination been addressed before, what difference would it have made to the care of the children? These issues are discussed in chapter seven of this study.

#### 2.4 The Boer (Afrikaner) Republics

The years that followed the *Great Trek* were characterised by a continued struggle by the Afrikaners to establish their independence from British domination. No sooner had they reached and settled in Natal, when the British troops arrived to annex the province (Moodie 1975:7; Van Aswegen 1989:281). Some Afrikaners stayed behind and "accepted" submission to the British government as their lot. Others again packed up and trekked further inland to establish the South African Republic (SAR) in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State (OFS). At that time these republics were recognised as independent by the colonial government (Scholtz 1970:443; Krüger 1969:9; Moodie 1974:7; Van Aswegen 1989:284). The British government could not afford to resist the independence of the republics as the financial cost had become too great. Moreover, the government had its own problems to focus on as it was battling two large wars on the Eastern border (Van Aswegen 1989:303).

A sense of symbioses seemed to exist between the Afrikaner and the English in the country in their attitude and actions against the black population. The British authority in the Cape colony kept the Afrikaners relatively safe from the threat of being overpowered by the black "tribes". The northwards movement of the *Trekboere* contributed to the breaking up of the black tribes and neutralised their military power. This suited the

British government who could not afford the unity of black people in this country. Again, when the British annexed the SAR it happened at a time when the Afrikaners could not control the racial turmoil (Moodie 1975:7). When slavery was abolished, a desperate need for labour was created and with thousands of black people homeless and in need for employment, the British government employed them at minimal wages. In a sense they merely continued slavery in another form – “[the government] moved from slavery to serfdom” (Sparks 1990:66). Although the British government was politically correct in creating equality for the black and coloured people since the early 1800s, the equality was hardly ever carried out in practice and the government saw to it that the authority of the white settlers was maintained (Krüger 1969:8).

In the SAR and the OFS Afrikaners established clear boundaries between themselves and the black population. They regarded themselves as having arrived in the “promised land” like the Israelites had in Canaan; the goals of the *Great Trek* had been fulfilled. Krüger (1969:11) highlighted this perception accurately:

They saw the parallel between the history of their own Trek from the Cape Colony through the wilderness of the interior and the history of the children of Israel, who as God's chosen people in the ancient days had been led from Egypt through the desert to the promised land, miraculously preserving their separate identity amongst a host of heathens. As Calvinists they acknowledged the sovereign power of the Lord of Hosts, hearing His mighty voice in the thunder of the heavens and in the howling of the storm. Like Israel of old they had been guided to a new country and with God's help they had withstood the onslaughts of the mighty barbarian hosts. Like Israel they did not mix their blood with that of the children of Ham, but kept their race pure.

The analogy of the Afrikaners as God's chosen people, along with the strong attitudes of racial discrimination that prevailed, developed into the dominant theological and political discourse our grandparents and parents were brought up with. As the story of the DRC



and the Afrikaner continues, the power accompanying the discourse starts to manifest. At the same time resistance starts to show against this dominant discourse.

The independence of the two Boer Republics lasted as long as the British could see no obvious financial gain in annexing them. All of this changed when diamonds were discovered in the OFS and not long thereafter, gold was discovered in the SAR (Moodie 1975:8). These discoveries attracted the attention of thousands of diggers, adventurers and tribal blacks. Racial turmoil in the SAR gave the British the excuse they needed to annex this part of the country exactly at the time that gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand (Gauteng) and in the eastern part of the SAR. Soon after the annexation of the SAR, the Zulus and the Bapedis were completely subjected by the British. It was during this time of war that Afrikaner consciousness began to rise when the *Boere* (Afrikaners) defeated the British at the Battle of Majuba (Krüger 1969:14; Moodie 1975:8).

## 2.5 The South African War

In 1899, following the annexation of the SAR, the South African War broke out between the British and the Afrikaner Republics. The British could not tolerate the independent republics as economic competitors and political rivals in Southern Africa – “it made the British jingoes fear for England’s supremacy in South Africa” (Moodie 1975:9). Likewise, the Afrikaners were not prepared to forfeit their independence from the British. The identity of the Afrikaner was seen as synonymous with their independence. Without independence they would be lost:

The Boer people, man, woman and child, fought and suffered and died to preserve the independence of these republics, and the feeling grew more sharply that their heritage, their identity, everything they held to be their own – their *ei*e – was wrapped up in that independence and dependant on it. Without their own land they could not be their own people; there could be no Afrikaner Volk ... they were all one, all Afrikaners together.

(Sparks 1990:127)

The war, which lasted from 1899 to 1902, represented an attempt by Britain to destroy Afrikaner nationalism, just beginning to bloom. The British defeated the *Boere*, but not without effort. Whereas they expected the war to be swift and uncomplicated, they found themselves up against the force of the *Boere* who knew the land much better and who were both motivated and skilled to defend what they believed were their God-given right (Sparks 1990:126). Eventually, the British resorted to burning the *Boer* farms, removing their families to concentration camps where between twenty thousand and twenty six thousand people; of whom more than three quarters were children, perished from disease and hunger (Moodie 1975:10; Sparks 1990:128). To add insult to injury, the British officials tried to anglicise the children who survived the concentration camps, by prohibiting Afrikaans in schools and forcing them to use the language of the conqueror, responsible for the death of their families (Sparks 1990:128).

Ironically, the effort by the government to force the language of the authorities on a nation was later copied by the Afrikaner Nationalist Government in the 1960s and the 1970s when it forced black children to use and to be educated in Afrikaans (Sparks 1990:301; Ryan 1990:177). In doing so, they merely repeated the strategies and the same oppressive measures the British government employed. The issue of Afrikaans as the official language in black schools was only the tip of an iceberg in black education. In his speech in parliament in 1953, Minister of Native Affairs, H F Verwoerd commented on the introduction of the Bantu Education Act:

Racial relations cannot improve if the wrong type of education is given to Natives. They cannot improve if the result of Native education is the creation of frustrated people who, as a result of the education they received, have expectations in life which circumstances in South Africa do not allow to be fulfilled immediately, when it creates people trained for professions not open to them, when there are people who have received a form of cultural training which strengthens their desire for the white collar

occupations to such an extent that there are more such people than there are openings available.

(Sparks 1990:196)

Verwoerd also stated: "There is no place for... [Africans] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour' and that existing schooling misled the black child 'by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze'"(Allen 1994:5).

The education system designed for black and coloured people during the ruling of the apartheid government, was of an inferior standard and was aimed at keeping black people uneducated and unskilled for any form of employment requiring more than (cheap) manual labour. The funding of black education mirrored the discrepancy in the funding of child care facilities accommodating black children on the one hand and white children on the other in the previous child care system – one of the motivations for the transformation of child and youth care. This issue is discussed in chapter four of this study.

This issue of poor education and care that black children received, resonates with the situation of the children at the haven. The abuse of power by a government and the harmful effects of the abuse on children seemed to be a pattern in our history. The Afrikaner child-survivors of the South African War, as the black children in the 1970s, became pawns in the political power games of the authorities – serving the authorities' political goals. These power "games", seemed to be cloaked in allegedly noble notions such as: "*vir volk en vaderland*" (for nation and fatherland).

The 1994-government seemed not to have learnt much from these practices as they instituted the transformation of child and youth care causing harm to so many children. The familiar notion: "the interest of the children", drove the transformation process and as in the case with the previous governments, one is left with the perception that politically, the government has more to gain from the transformation than the children. This issue is discussed in chapters four, five, six, seven and eight.

### 3 NATIONALISM

The term "nationalism" was first used in 1798 (Bosch 1991:298). Until the 1700s people found their identity and their coherence in religion and in their ruler (Bosch 1991:299). After the Renaissance and the Enlightenment the emphasis moved "from God or king to the consciousness of a people as an organic entity" (Bosch 1991:299). The French Revolution, which took place during the late 1700s, saw the birth of the principle of national self-determination as a basis for a new political order (1991:299). Nationalism was popularised by Germany towards the late 1800s at a time when its language and culture had stagnated (Bosch 1991:299; Sparks 1990:164). Herder, a philosopher associated with nationalism, submitted that a *volk* identified itself through a common language (Bosch 1991:299; Sparks 1990:164). Over time these ideas of nationalism were wedded to the Old Testament concept of the "chosen people" (Bosch 1991:299) which, as mentioned, was a concept which the Dutch settlers and the *Trekboere* and later the Afrikaner nation clung to as did "virtually every white nation... the Germans, the French, the Russians, the British, the Americans..." (Bosch 1991:299). Much later in the 1970s, South Africans saw the rise of black nationalism:

Their (the black people's) experience has produced a black nationalism, just as the Afrikaner sense of grievance produced Afrikaner nationalism. But it is not a narrow, narcissistic, exclusivist nationalism intent on preserving its own little *volk*... Black nationalism embraces mankind. It does not shrink from humanity... it is an open, inclusivist, integrationist nationalism.

(Sparks 1990:146)

If one evaluates the ethics of a nationalism one needs only to ask: Who benefited from the nationalism and who didn't? From the above quote and from the paragraphs to follow it is clear that the only people who benefited from Afrikaner nationalism are the generation of Afrikaner people (and other whites in this country) who designed nationalism and apartheid and the next generation who lived off the fruits of white

minority rule (and still do). The rest, black, coloured, Indian and Asian people only suffered the direct effects of Afrikaner nationalism. As do all South Africans still suffer the aftermath of Afrikaner nationalism today.

And black nationalism? It was born from the black peoples struggle for liberation from Afrikaner nationalism. What will its effects be on South Africans? Will it remain "an open, inclusivist and integrationist nationalism"? To what extent has it succeeded in including people into society instead of marginalising them? What has its approach been towards marginalised groups of people such as women and children in care? Chapters six and seven explore some ways in which the new government approached the transformation of child and youth care rendering some ideas to these questions.

When the South African War ended in 1902, the defeated Republics surrendered amidst a serious rift between the Afrikaners (Krüger 1969:19, Moodie 1975:9). The already poor Afrikaner communities of the two republics were now left even poorer with burnt down farms, destroyed stock and the horrific effects of the concentration camps. Yet, they emerged from the war with a newly-won pride in their military achievements, a new self-respect and national consciousness (the seeds for nationalism) stronger than ever before (Krüger 1969:20; Sparks 1990:126).

The renewed sense of unity and nationalism of the Afrikaner gave rise to various cultural and political activities. For the first time Afrikaans poetry and literature, lamenting the suffering of the Afrikaner during the war, saw the light (Moodie 1975:41; Krüger 1969:20). A cultural movement, for years closely linked to Afrikaner politics, was initiated. A political party *Het Volk* (the nation), aimed at reconciliation with the British, was founded. The party also campaigned for the protection of white labour. This surge of nationalism resulted in Botha winning the first election in 1906 in the SAR and Fischer in 1907 in the OFS (Krüger 1969:20).

The South African War reinforced the traditional, authoritarian and patriarchal nature of the Afrikaner. The Afrikaners' participation in the war was regarded as brave and heroic

but they also emerged as martyrs. Sparks (1990:127) captured this sentiment well: "Just as the heroic past became sanctified, so did the heroes become deified." Afrikaner politics became an intensely personal and authoritarian issue and it lend "an aura of infallibility" to the leaders (Sparks 1990: 127). It became impossible to question or challenge the authority of the leaders. After this devastating war, the pressure to conform and the call for unity among Afrikaners became stronger than ever.

This episode in the history of the Afrikaner nation, seems to have shaped the particular Afrikaner mindset: of loyalty to the government (the Nationalist Party), the church (DRC) and the cultural organisation (*Broederbond*) more than anything. This seems to be the birth of a mentality of blind support for authorities while rejecting all alternative perceptions and insights. The Afrikaner allowed for such power to be invested in these bodies of authority, that voices from outside of the Afrikaner "laager" were not granted any significance. The loyalty and pre-occupation with unity became so powerful, that when the effects of it became immoral and unethical, the Afrikaner could not accept alternative options. Even when individuals within the bodies of authority started to resist and challenge its policies and ideology, it had little influence. This theme will be developed further in this chapter.

The new nationalism of the Afrikaner was fed by sympathy for the Afrikaner cause. Not only from the outside world, but also from within in the form of self-pity. The suffering of the Boers during the war was nurtured and turned into a "massive preoccupation with the self" (Sparks 1990:129), a national narcissism that had blinded the Afrikaner to the injustices it later inflicted on others.

With the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, British nationals in South Africa lacked cohesion and a sense of unity. They were under significant pressure from the government in England to reconcile with the *Boere*. As an act of reconciliation England returned the Republics' "independence" and in 1910 the Union of South Africa emerged (Krüger 1969:21).

#### 4 THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE ECONOMIC DEPRESSION

Soon after the birth of the Union, the First World War broke out in 1914. The South African Union became involved on the side of the British Empire – the enemy the two republics had fought merely twelve years before (Krüger 1969:83). The Afrikaner had no aggression towards Germany and little loyalty and sympathy towards the British Empire (Van der Watt 1987:341). Their participation in the war and the support of the Afrikaner leaders to this participation was resisted by a group of Afrikaners in a rebellion led under De la Rey (Van der Watt 1987:342). This marked the first physical struggle amongst the Afrikaners themselves, but it was not the first time that there had been a rift in Afrikaner politics (Van der Watt 1987:341; Krüger 1969:94). The DRC whose role became prominent after the rebellion, called an urgent conference in 1915 in Bloemfontein. The main goal of the conference was to bring about unity both in the DRC and in the *volkslewe* (the life of the people). Apart from its calling as a Christian church, the DRC also had “a specific calling regarding the Dutch-speaking Afrikaner nation. Whereas the church is inextricably linked to the nation, the church has the responsibility to remain national to be able to procure the national interests and to educate the nation regarding these national interests” (my translation) (Van der Watt 1987:346). In *Die Kerkbode* of 11 February 1915, the sentiments of the DRC ministers expressed at a minister's conference, were cited:

First, the church has a special calling with respect to the Dutch-speaking population, “with whose existence it is bound up in such an intimate manner” and it is thus the duty of the church “in itself to be nationalist, to watch over our particular concerns”, to teach the People to see the hand of God in their history and “to keep alive in the Afrikaner People the awareness of national calling and destiny, in which is laid up the spiritual, moral and material progress and strength of a People.”

(Moodie 1975:71)

Soon after the misery of the war and the rebellion, the tremendous effects of the economic depression hit South Africa around 1920 (O'Meara 1983:67). The depression was unforeseen and led to unemployment and poverty. There was an influx of white farmers and black workers into the urban areas (Krüger 1969:120, Moodie 1975:197). The urbanisation of the Afrikaner occurred both as a result of the devastation of the farm lands during the South African War and the industrial revolution that was taking place in the country. The effects of the urbanisation of the Afrikaner were more intense than the South African war. As said previously, the identity of the Afrikaner was closely related to their land. They had always been people who, like the black people, had lived on open spaces of land. Sparks (1990:130) stated that their "ethos was bound up with the land."

The city was an alien place to the Afrikaner – it was governed by the English culture and English-Jewish businesses. The Afrikaner couldn't cope there as they could not speak English. Afrikaans was regarded as inferior and referred to as "kitchen Dutch" (Ryan 1990:9). The Afrikaners felt inferior, they lacked skills and financial power and they were untrained in those trades that the economy relied on. An estimated sixty percent of the Afrikaners were reduced to the state of poor-whites. They had to compete with black labourers who were employed at a cheaper rate and were therefore a threat to the whites (Sparks 1990:132; Ryan 1990:8; Van der Watt 1987:358; Moodie 1975:96). Quoting from Dr. Malan's speech in 1938 during the commemoration of the *Great Trek*, Moodie (1975:199, 200) stated: "The Afrikaner People are today on a trek to a new frontier, which is the city, the new Blood River, where fellow Afrikaners perish daily on a new battlefield – the labor market... [T]he freedom sought by Afrikaners means more than a republic... it means the right to preserve the rule of the white race." Unity of the Afrikaner people was a priority "and more particularly, the need to win workers to Afrikaner nationalism" (O'Meara 1983:71).

For the first time in history these "proud, free men of the *weld*" felt true humiliation (Sparks 1990:133). They were poor and deprived of their dignity – something that violated their tradition. Their supremacy that had led them thus far, was reliant on the fact that they were the "kings of their own land". The urbanisation robbed them of this status



and for the first time they had to report to employers and do physical labour that they had never done before (Sparks 1990:133).

Whereas before they had been the "masters" and the black people had been the servants, they found themselves not only on equal footing with the black people, but also in competition with them. While on the farms, the *Boer's* authority was ultimate and unquestionable; now he had no power over the black people. The only way the Afrikaner had to assert his power was his white skin – his racial symbol and he felt the need to exert his superiority. The rising numbers of black people in cities shifted the focus of the Afrikaner from the fear of being anglicised to the fear of being engulfed by the black people (Sparks 1990:133,148; Ryan 1990:8).

In cities white and black people came to live in close proximity and this posed the gravest threat to the preservation of the Afrikaner nation. It touched on their Christian conviction that they held since they left the Cape colony – they could not be placed in a situation where they could expose themselves to racial integration and consequent "hastardisation". They had come that far to avoid it and had managed to keep their "blood pure" and they were not going to allow it to happen then. Apart from their white skins but also because of it, they had another advantage over black people – the vote. They were the majority of the electorate and therefore had political power and with this power they soon ran the government (Sparks 1990:134).

In 1921 the government, which was dominated by Afrikaner politicians at the time passed legislation that protected white labour and restricted black people to be employed in unskilled labour practices that paid less than the semi-skilled positions of white people (Krüger 1969:120). This legislation kept white people on the majority of farmland and started extensive subsidising schemes for white farmers. The effect was that black farmers were unable to farm their land. The labour creation for white people did not stop there: skilled mining labour was allocated for white labourers, as was employment in the steel industry, the electrical power industry and the railways (Sparks 1990:134).

Whilst black farmers were kept off most of the rural farmland, they were also kept out of cities. They were not allowed to live in the cities but had to settle in shanty towns on the outskirts, not too far off, since their cheap labour was much needed in the fast developing mines, industries and businesses (Sparks 1990:135). Moreover, they were conveniently close to serve the needs of the white households. Very few white households in this country could (still can) function without the domestic worker who, at minimal remuneration, did all the manual labour – the “dirty work”.

South Africa moved towards compulsory segregation, towards the fantasy of apartheid, the delusion of black workers working in the cities for minimal salaries that barely maintained their families. At the same time black people were not allowed to settle there, because they had a “homeland” which to return to. The homeland was a piece of land chosen for the black people by the white government where the black people would “develop along their own lines” and not impinge on the whites’ world, or in any way could lay claim to the economic prosperity that they were helping to create (Sparks 1990:136).

Separating oneself from “other people” on the basis of personal preferences, is part of human culture. To associate or to disassociate is determined by personal (or group, communal, cultural) considerations. Problematic, however, is when separateness or disassociation is *institutionalised*, when people are denied human rights on the grounds of whatever makes them “unacceptable” to a person, group, community or culture.

The practise of segregation was discussed in chapter two with reference to people who were “unacceptable” in society, due to mental illness of their criminal behaviour. Society determined that they should be institutionalised. Whereas these people, “other” than the “norm”, were institutionalised (imprisoned), they (still) served society in that they provided cheap labour. Apart from removing them from view of society, they could still be useful to society.

In South Africa, under white rule, black people were regarded as necessary and useful for their cheap labour. The majority of white people’s dependence on the poverty of black

people painted an ironic picture – white people's standard of living could not be maintained without the cheap labour of black domestic workers and gardeners. Yet, black labourers were not allowed to live amongst whites – apart from living in a servant's room in the backyard. For years (privileged) white people managed to carry on with their lives oblivious of turmoil in townships and the poverty on the edges of white suburbs until crime, as by-product of poverty, started to impose on them.

The children in residential care as "other" than the "norm" were treated in a similar manner. As marginalised people they were removed from their communities due to circumstances beyond their control. The care of these children indeed served as an indication of the community's Christian charity and kindness as they graciously took care of them. At the same time children – at least in the DRC children's havens – were "harvested" from their communities for the DRC. As is discussed in the paragraphs to follow Afrikaner children were "rescued" from the care of coloured families and a Roman Catholic institute after the flu epidemic in 1918 and placed in the DRC orphanage, which would later become the Children's Haven M.T.R. Smit. It is hard not to admire the compassion accompanying the care that the DRC offered these orphans. Seen against the larger context however, the "harvesting" of children could be argued as serving the needs of the DRC. At the same time as the British government had implemented its anglicisation policy (also in schools) the DRC, in response, started its charity of offering Christian nationalist education to its people: "Christian charity was becoming Christian nationalist charity, for the N.G. was coming to see that without the Afrikaans-speaking community, their church could not survive" (Moodie 1975:70).

Colonising people for Christianity was hardly a novel idea. Europe's colonisation of the peoples of Africa, Asia and the Americas started at the end of the fifteenth century and introduced a new era in the world's history (Bosch 1991:226). Despite the initial refusal of the Dutch and British authorities to allow missionaries into the Cape colony (as discussed before), this picture changed during the nineteenth century when colonial

expansion became closely linked with mission<sup>1</sup>. Again, the reason for the relationship between colonisation and mission was generally due to economic reasons. The missionaries served the interests of the political colonisation in that they worked with the local people and got to know them better than any of the foreigners. They were in the best position to win these people over and to submit them to their new rulers, but also, to influence them and educate them in the ways of the colonial government (Bosch 1991:303).

Seen against the larger context, it did not seem far fetched for the DRC to "colonise" children the way they did. As discussed in chapter five, for years only white Afrikaans speaking children were admitted to the Children's Haven M T R Smit and then they were forced to attend the DRC services. Later when the haven's doors were opened to coloured and black children they too, had to step "the DRC line". Moreover, they had to adopt the Afrikaans language and culture. Only recently were children allowed to support the denominations their parents did and only since the start of the transformation of child and youth care, do children have the right to be spoken to and taught in their own language and by someone of their own culture.

When African (and other) inhabitants were colonised by the missionaries from various European countries, the Christian religion was introduced as the prestigious, dominant religion associated with respectability, civilisation and decent living. In order to become Christian the local people had to identify with the ethos and value system of the aspiring white middle-class leading to the conversion of people to the dominant culture. Their knowledge was regarded as inferior and the inhabitants were separated from their historically rich contexts (Bosch 1995:417; Dulwich Centre Newsletter 1993:4). The effects of the "colonisation" of children by the DRC resonate with the above effects. These children had little choice in their submission to the religion and the culture of the haven. They were separated from their contexts, their families and their communities. Often ties with their families were severed forever, leaving them completely dependant

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<sup>1</sup> The term mission refers to the activities "by which the Western ecclesiastical system was extended into the rest of the world" (Bosch 1991:226).

on the charity and the care of the DRC. This issue is discussed in chapters four, five and seven. At the same time, the same community that offered charity to the children did not allow them to really become a part of them. In chapter five the report demonstrates further how these children experienced institutionalised discrimination and how they were ostracised on a daily basis and effectively kept on the outskirts of the community.

## 5 POSITIONING THE CHILDREN'S HAVEN M T R SMIT

As mentioned before, the origins of the children's haven go back to the early 1920s. As a child of his time, Rev M T R Smit's approach to child care was determined by the socio-political and economic context, by the values of the Afrikaner people at that time. Long after his death, these values remained the determining principles for the care of children – at least at the Children's Haven M T R Smit. An understanding of the values that prevailed at the time of the founding of the haven and thereafter, introduces an understanding of the traditional care of the children.

The Children's Haven M T R Smit started operating in *Griekwaland* in the Eastern Cape in the time between the two World Wars, the time of the Depression, the time of the *arm blankes* (poor whites). The children admitted to this institute were white Afrikaner children coming from the poor socio-economic circumstances described in the previous paragraphs. The haven was originally intended as a school hostel for children whose parents were living on farms in the district. The flu epidemic of 1918 left many children orphaned. Rev M T R Smit gathered these white Afrikaans-speaking orphans in the surrounding areas as far as Transkei and brought them to the haven to be cared for. Smit (1964:110) (my translation) captured this episode in the history of the haven:

I traced down many neglected little children and I specifically undertook journeys to Transkei to take away little children whose parents were killed by the influenza and who were in danger of deterioration, from the Kaffirs... I found many such little children from these districts ... and from little towns in the native areas... I called in the assistance of the

magistrate and the police and in this manner, I found white children who had already been living with the Kaffirs. I brought them in and gave them a home.

He described an incidence where he came across a Roman Catholic institution on a farm outside Umlata (in Transkei). There he discovered a couple of white children who were living with coloured and black children in the care of the nuns. He went up to the children and asked them what their surnames were. He described his own reaction to their answer: "I was outraged about the discovery and it caused me sleepless nights. These are Afrikaans surnames and how did it happen that they landed up, not only in a Roman Catholic institute, but also amongst the blacks?" (Smit 1964:111). On his return he reported the incident to the synod of the DRC and soon afterwards the nuns of the Roman Catholic institution delivered thirteen Afrikaner boys to the haven.

Rev M.T.R. Smit was a young man when he founded the children's haven. He was rooted in Afrikanerdom. Rev Smit's father fought in various Frontier Wars (also referred to as the *kaffir wars*) and with his two older sons, in the Anglo-Boer War (the South African War of 1899). Rev Smit's father died years later due to a wound he sustained in this war. His mother was raised in a "strict Calvinist" home. His grandfather, a deeply religious man, had a good relationship with Paul Krüger (president of the SAR) (Smit 1964:58).

During the period Rev Smit served in the ministry, the DRC became the Afrikaner nation's anchor and their public meeting point. The church got involved at every level where it seemed there was need and became a major institute of socio-economical assistance.

As the social service for needy, the church's *Diens van Barmhartigheid* had been actively involved in helping the orphaned or destitute children, the poor, the aged, those with alcohol problems for more than a hundred years (De Klorck 1990:4). Wherever there were Afrikaner families in distress, the DRC minister was there, doing what he could to

encourage and help them. He became the central figure in the life of a disheartened nation (Sparks 1990:155).

There are similarities between the role of the DRC in this era and the role of black liberation theologians forty years later. In the same way that *predikante* (ministers) were at the centre of the Afrikaner nation's needs, did black theologians have a pivotal role in the black liberation struggle. To both the white ministers and the black theologians the care, comfort and motivation of their people were of paramount importance.

The Afrikaners were mostly poor farmers and their children had limited access to formal education. Small farm schools were started in association or with the assistance of the DRC and the content of the *skoolmeesters* (teachers) teachings was in line with the teachings of the church. In this way the Afrikaner's education became almost synonymous with the opinions of the DRC (Scholtz 1970:76). It comes as no surprise that this relationship between church and school prospered and that later, when the Afrikaner came into power, the political party, the school and the church relied on one another to maintain unity.

From his narration it becomes clear that Rev Smit's social service stretched beyond the Afrikaner community to the Griekwas and the coloured people. Apart from the children's haven, he started a separate DRC congregation for the Griekwa-people, the coloured people and for black people who lived in and around Ugie in a "location" (settlement). He performed these duties from the conviction that the word of God can reform the "most unbreakable sinner" (Smit 1964:74).

Rev Smit's record of his ministry offers a first-hand reflection of the worldview of the Afrikaner and of the Dutch Reformed Church of that era. His descriptions of the black people reveal a deep-seated racial prejudice and the conviction of white superiority and supremacy. He described the local black people as "dancing, bloodthirsty savages who were easily enticed into violence" (Smit 1964:25). He came to the conclusion that "it is evident that only the whites, with their hundreds of years of development and education,

are capable to rule here in South Africa and to develop the land ... the coloureds and the blacks can not uplift and govern themselves without the supervision and the sympathetic guidance of the whites" (Smit 1964:19).

The words of Rev Smit seem to echo the DRC's viewpoint on white rule – later to be developed into apartheid. He explained the policy not as a contention against people of colour, but a struggle on behalf of them – an attempt to best serve their interests. The DRC regarded its white guardianship not as a right, but as a higher calling.

Rev Smit's remarks came at a time when the Afrikaners were utterly convinced of their divine calling in dark Africa to guide and uplift black people. However sympathetic this "guidance" was intended, the effects turned out to be more uprooting than uplifting. His remarks came at a time, merely four years after the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, where "sympathetic guidance" resulted in sixty-nine black people being killed by the police for protesting the pass laws restricting movement of all "non-whites".

The fact that a clergyman such as Rev Smit justified the Afrikaner government's oppression of black people, shows how far-reaching this political discourse was at the time.

Reading this, I realised how the voices of that discourse still reverberate today in people's approach to the children at the haven. As discussed in chapter five, the children are still subjected to discrimination at the haven. Not only do the children face discrimination for being children, for not being able to take part in decision-making on their circumstances, but the black children at the haven face the additional legacy of former white rule. The belief, as expressed by Rev Smit, that only the white people could rule and make life-altering decisions on behalf of other cultural groups, is still powerful. As discussed in chapters four and five, the previous child care system enforced a policy of removing children from their families and caring for them in ways the system thought to be in the best interest of the children. This left the children and their parents disempowered. Chapters six and seven will show how this way of thinking lives on in the new system.



The new system also fails to recognise the importance of consultation with children and their parents.

## 6 GROWTH OF AFRIKANER NATIONALISM

Towards 1934 the gold price started to rise and with it economic prosperity returned to the Union. The poor-white problem was addressed. And, Afrikaner nationalism began to prosper (Krüger 1969:67). The DRC, Afrikaner cultural organisations and political power all contributed to the rapid growth of nationalism.

In Europe the 1930s saw a fervent revival of nationalism. Hitler was leading Germany from the humiliation of defeat and depression after the First World War. During this time many new-generation Afrikaner students went to Germany for post-graduate studies. They returned as a new intelligentsia with new idealism and soon they were running the faculties of political science, philosophy, sociology and psychology at new Afrikaans universities (Sparks 1990:149).

Amongst these graduates were DRC theologians who were trained in new ideas of National Socialism about separate development and the divine right of each nation to a separate existence. Nationalism, which was regarded as the supreme expression of human fulfilment, served as a tool to justify racial segregation. In addition, it served capitalist economies of the European countries as it would come to serve South Africa's white dominated economy. The newly trained theologians took over the church's seminaries and they succeeded to structure the educational system in the country according to the Christian nationalist ideas (Sparks 1990:149).

With its newly acquired ideology, the Afrikaner *wolk* (nation) now became a special nation with an even more special mission. Added to the "new" nationalism, was their Christian Calvinistic value of striving for sovereignty and their dogma of white supremacy. The notion of a chosen people with a special calling took on a new meaning and a new thrust. The segregation of people based on race became not only politically

necessary for survival, but also theologically; it became an execution of God's will (Krüger 1969:187; Sparks 1990:149).

In terms of party politics, the unity of the Afrikaner was symbolised by the unification of the majority of Afrikaners under the leadership of Smuts and Hertzog with newly formed United Party in 1934. On the cultural scene the *Federasie vir Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings* (FAK), an organisation aimed at promoting the Afrikaans culture and the use of the Afrikaans language, came into being (Krüger 1969:189).

The commemoration of the *Great Trek* was an event that contributed significantly to the growing sense of nationalism and unity among Afrikaners (Sparks 1990:169; Krüger 1969:190; Moodie 1975:185). One hundred years after the *Great Trek* the Afrikaners organised a commemoration to pay tribute to the thousands of Afrikaner men, women and children who were part of the *Trek*. The commemoration took place over a period of five months during which ox wagons re-traced the different routes the *trekboere* had followed, ending in Pretoria. During the time of the *Great Trek*-commemorations the DRC focussed on *volkseenheid* (the unity of the nation). At a conference on 3 October 1938 in Bloemfontein the DRC called for "unanimity and mutual tolerance". Moreover, it called on the Afrikaner people to reposition themselves in "the right relationship with God" (Van der Walt 1987:358; Moodie 1975:179).

All along the route that the *trekboere* followed, the DRC organised welcoming parties and festivities. An estimated two hundred thousand Afrikaners travelled to Pretoria to take part in the final phase of the festivities. It was an emotional occasion that focused on the bravery of the Afrikaner and its survival, despite the British and the blacks, in their country. The Afrikaners returned home with the growing conviction that politically and culturally, the Afrikaners belonged together (Krüger 1969:190; Sparks 1990:169).

During the same year, 1938, "*Die Stem*" was introduced as anthem of the National Party ("*Die Stem*" later became the national anthem of South Africa) and was played and sung

at official gatherings instead of the traditional "God save the King". Soon after that, the Union Jack was replaced by the Union Flag (Krüger 1969:192).

The Second World War broke out in September 1939. It caused, once more, a rift amongst the Afrikaners (Krüger 1969:196,197). They were divided between support for the Allied Forces and Nazi Germany. The emotional and intellectual links the Afrikaner had with Germany, led to major Afrikaner support for the cause of Nazi Germany. The group of Afrikaners who felt allegiance to Britain, were seen as traitors (Sparks 1990:162-164; Moodie 1975:192,193).

Until the exposure and demise of the Third Reich, Afrikaner nationalism was strongly influenced by the ideas and political ethos of Nazi Germany during its formative years of the apartheid policy (Sparks 1990:161). The *Ossewabrandwag*, until the Second World War claiming to be an Afrikaner cultural organisation, started to openly flaunt their radical political policy. Their political ideal was a one-party republic based on the model of Germany's National Socialism and they identified strongly with the ideology of white supremacy (Moodie 1975:212,229). The *Ossewabrandwag* protested publicly against the Union's loyalty towards the Allies. Although the government eventually quenched the flame of the *Ossewabrandwag*, the rift in Afrikaner ranks remained (Krüger 1969:223; Ryan 1990:32).

The rift posed a threat for Afrikaner politics and the dream of power over the British and the blacks. Once again the DRC and organisations promoting Afrikaner nationalism stepped forward to serve the cause of Afrikaner unity.

## 7 THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH'S THEOLOGY OF APARTHEID

In 1837 the Cape Synod of the DRC expressed disapproval of the *Great Trek*. The synod, made up mainly of Scottish DRC ministers, could not identify with the aspirations of the *trekboere*. They were concerned about the spiritual impoverishment that the *trekboere* would undergo on the *trek* and mostly, the synod disapproved of the *trekboere*'s defiance

of the British government (Van der Watt 1977:13). During the same era, the DRC initially welcomed coloured people to its congregations and they were regarded as "equals" (Sparks 1990:15). The integration caused an emotional outcry from some Afrikaners. Ryan (1990:25) argued this to be one of the reasons for the *Great Trek*. As the numbers of the coloured people increased, the church experienced more and more pressure from its members to rethink its policy (Sparks 1990:154). As a result, in 1857 the DRC declared that people from different races would be organised into separate congregations. This declaration soon became a rule and led in 1881 to the founding of a separate church for coloured people, called the *Sendingkerk* (Mission Church). Later, the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika* was established for black people and the *Reformed Church in Africa* for Indians (Ryan 1990:25). The segregation of races by the DRC laid the foundations for the theological justification of apartheid. Up to the end of the nineteenth century the policy of segregation was merely pragmatic and not yet ideological and dogmatic (Sparks 1990:155).

After the rebellion of 1914 and again during the 1920s and the 1930s the DRC served as the anchor of a demoralised Afrikaner nation (Serfontein 1982:60; Van der Watt 1987:353; Sparks 1990:155). The DRC took the lead in organising a conference of people to devise ways to combat the poor-white problem (Allen 1994:147). The DRC started feeding schemes for the poor, created employment and started Afrikaans schools in the vestries of churches to establish what it called "Christian-National Education" (Sparks 1990:155; Serfontein 1982:60).

The DRC came to be regarded as the *volkskerk* (the church of the nation) (Sparks 1990:155; Van der Watt 1987:355). The DRC ministers were the driving force in the expansion of the Afrikaner culture and national awareness. "... [T]he problems of anglicization and poverty were seen as two sides of the same coin, and education as a major solution to both. Christian charity was becoming Christian nationalist charity, for the N.G. was coming to see that without the Afrikaans-speaking community, their church could not survive" (Moodie 1975:70). The church leadership became more and more politically organised and started to muster the Afrikaner people politically. The church

leadership began to focus attention on the threat of the mushrooming black working class (Sparks 1990:155).

In 1921 the Dutch Reformed Church leaders had the first of many discussions on the racial issue (Van der Watt 1987:75). In their minds the "fair solution" almost always pointed to the policy of apartheid (Van der Watt 1987:75). The racial issue was investigated in 1921 by the *Algemene Sendingkommissie* of the Cape, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Their finding was that the "development of the Bantu was not to be opposed, but that it should take place on the basis of geographical and industrial segregation" (my translation) (Van der Watt 1987:76). This finding was the first of many similar church decisions (Van der Watt 1987:76). The *Federale Raad van Kerke* (FRK) also participated in talks regarding racial issues. In 1913 it gave its full support to the *Naturelle Grondwet*, an act regarded as the first constituting territorial segregation (Van der Watt 1987:76).

In 1928, Professor J Du Plessis, a senior lecturer at the seminary at Stellenbosch University, was accused of heresy by the *kuratorium* (board of curators) of the DRC Committee of the Synod (*Sinodale Kommissie*) of the Orange Free State and was found guilty. His "liberal" thinking was linked to his association with the University of Utrecht in Holland and the DRC advised its young ministers to study at the Free University of Amsterdam instead (Sparks 1990:155,156). Here they came under the influence of Abraham Kuyper, theologian, politician and at one stage prime minister of the Netherlands. Kuyper was an influential figure in Holland's *Hervormde Kerk* (Reformed Church), known for its rejection of liberalism and rationalism. Kuyper's theology was to become dominant in the DRC in South Africa (Moodie 1975:57). Kuyper held the belief that human life was shaped by separate spheres, such as the state and the family and that each had sovereignty over its affairs – "it has above itself nothing but God" (Sparks 1990:157). O'Meara (1983:68) explained the relationship between Kuyper's thought and Afrikaner Christian-Nationalism: "[T]hese Calvinist reinterpretations provided the ideational and symbolic framework within and through which the redefinition of Afrikaner nationalism into Christian-nationalism began." Kuyper emphasised the

principle of diversity (Van der Watt 1987:100). This notion was seized by some Afrikaans theologians who found biblical passages which, to their mind, proved that God intended people to exist as separate nations (Ryan 1990:25). Kuyper also promoted the right to teach religious doctrine in schools – a policy adhered to in South Africa until 1994.

The DRC theologians selectively adopted and adapted Kuyper's argument that nations were part of the "law of creation". This conviction was based on the interpretation of the story of Babel in the Bible where God intervened to prevent man's falling into chaos by dividing humanity into separate nations and states (Van der Watt 1987:87). This interpretation resulted in the view of the state and state authority as "institution of God", operating according to God's laws. In South Africa Kuyper's views were interpreted as meaning that white, black and coloured people should exercise their own sovereignty in their own spheres as separate nations (Van der Watt 1987:87; Moodie 1975:54,55). Some theologians argued that God had willed the Afrikaner to survive the *Great Trek*, to liberate themselves from the British, that God had protected Afrikaner identity and that it was his will that it remained protected (Sparks 1990:159). As mentioned before, the Afrikaner people regarded themselves as "Israel" of the Old Testament, the "chosen people" and some theologians emphasised this parallel (Van der Watt 1987:75). As Moodie (1975:164) stated: "Afrikaners are Afrikaners because of God's calling and God's calling means that they should be exclusively Afrikaner."

The DRC was further influenced by the German missionaries in South Africa who declared that "the ultimate aim of their Lutheran mission was to found a ... national church in which the national character and the social relations of the indigenous people would be preserved" (Sparks 1990:159).

With the demise of Nazism in Germany, the DRC downplayed its links to National Socialism. But by that time the biblical basis for the policy of separate development in the church, the social, educational, economical and political spheres in South Africa was

firmly established. The church considered the differential treatment of people according to race as a means of enhancing life and independence (Sparks 1990:160; Ryan 1990:26).

In 1933 the FRK "impatiently" requested that its Committee on Native Affairs (*Naturrelle Kommissie*) paid attention to the racial issue since it was a contentious issue in the DRC (Van der Watt 1987:78). The FRK requested more communication with the prime minister, Hertzog and strengthened the government's position in the execution of apartheid (Van der Watt 1987:80).

It was against this background that the DRC's role in Afrikaner politics started to become even more defined. In 1935 the DRC stated that their mission policy endorsed segregation and apartheid (Van der Watt 1987:80). This policy, also the official policy of South African governments between 1920 and 1948, was originally designed to define the "natural boundaries" between groups of people. Although these boundaries hadn't been enforced before, during the early 1940s it became important for the DRC to ground apartheid biblically in an attempt to justify it (NGK 1997:8; Ryan 1990:34; Van der Watt 1987:81,87). The theological debate of justifying apartheid continued into the late 1950s. Although many theologians were not convinced of the biblical justification of apartheid and severely criticised it, they nevertheless rationalised it in terms of the socio-economic context of the country (Van der Watt 1987:81,96). In fact, in 1948 the DRC repeatedly urged the government to implement the policy of apartheid and various laws came about with the approval of the DRC (NGK 1997:9; Van der Watt 1987:84-86). These laws included the prohibition of mixed marriages and the separation of living areas.

At the beginning of the 1950s the DRC studied and discussed the country's complex racial issues on various church conferences and congresses (Van der Watt 1987:94). In doing so the church unmistakably contributed to form public opinion. Central issues were Christian principles in government's policy of apartheid and the DRC's own policy of separate churches. Practical politics also came within the scope of these conferences and congresses (Van der Watt 1987:94). In 1950 the DRC's Federal Mission Council held a conference and called for the total separation of the races (Ryan 1990:36; Van der Watt

1987:95). During the next decade two million black and coloured South Africans were forcibly uprooted, removed from their homes and dumped onto barren, undeveloped areas called "homelands". Their original homes made place for the extension of white suburbs. The effects of the policy of segregation saw the majority of people living on thirteen percent of the country's land (Ryan 1990:42).

In an interview with Dr E P J Kleynhans in October 1978, shortly after he was elected moderator of the DRC General Synod, Kleynhans described the relationship between the DRC and National Party politics as follows: "It is not the NGK which is following the government: it is the other way round. We were first with a policy of separate development which began in the 1850s when separate church structures were provided for each separate racial group to enable them to listen to the Word of God among their own people and in their own language" (Serfontein 1982:63-64).

An understanding of some of the workings of the DRC would be incomplete if the powerful role of the *Afrikaner Broederbond* (Afrikaner Brotherhood) in the collaborative relationship between the DRC and National Party (Afrikaner) politics, is not considered: "... [T]heir racial policies were the same, both adhered to the philosophy of Christian Nationalism and both were part of the Afrikaner Nationalist establishment coordinated by the secret Afrikaner Broederbond" (Serfontein 1982:70).

## 8 THE BROEDERBOND

The policy of apartheid within the DRC did not develop in isolation - it was linked to both the development of the Afrikaner nation and Afrikaner politics, it was a product of the interdependent functioning of the National Party, the *Broederbond* and the DRC. "While the National Party provided the institutional pillar of apartheid, and the Afrikaner Broederbond the ideological pillar, the religious and moral pillar was supplied by the Dutch Reformed Church" (Ryan 1990:24). The DRC was described as "the National Party at prayer" (Sparks 1990:153). Serfontein (1982:63) affirmed this notion "... [T]he church (DRC), state and Broederbond are so interlocked that it is difficult to say which



wing of Afrikanerdom is actually responsible for a specific policy or plan of action ... [T]he policy of the NGK towards racial and political matters reads like a blue print of the policies of the National Party."

The *Afrikaner Broederbond* emerged in 1918 as an organisation that would work towards the reconciliation of all Afrikaners amidst a context of confusion and disunity (O'Meara 1983:59). It was to work towards promoting the Afrikaner's interests in South Africa and towards their survival amongst the English-speaking whites and the black population and it claimed the policy of Christian-Nationalism (Allen 1994: 275; Moodie 1975:99). Soon after it was founded, the operations of this organisation became covert and membership became secret (Moodie 1975:99; Ryan 1990:26; Sparks 1990:176). "[A]lthough the Broederbond formally excluded *partypolitiek*, it allowed – indeed encouraged – *kultuurpolitiek*, which included civil-religion ideals such as the republic" (Moodie 1975:113). The *Broederbond* grew into an organisation that formed the inner body of the Afrikaner's new political intelligentsia and it was to have considerable influence on South African politics in decades to follow (Ryan 1990:26). The *Broederbond* has been compared to a political Mafia (Sparks 1990:176) and when one considers the power it exerted, this is an apt description.

It was in politics that the *Broederbond* exercised its most profound influence. For more than fifty years no major new idea in Afrikaner politics was expressed in public without being scrutinised and approved of by the *Broederbond*. The government used it both as a think tank and a sounding board (Sparks 1990:177). It became one of the prime movers of Afrikaner Nationalism and the politics of apartheid (Ryan 1990:10; Moodie 1975:101). During the 1930s the *Broederbond* was as influenced by the current of romantic nationalism emanating from Nazi Germany, as were the church and the National Party.

In the 1950s and 1960s the powerful bond between the DRC, the National party and the *Broederbond* reached new heights. The *Broederbond* had many members in top positions in the public service as well as the government. This point is emphasised by Ryan (1990:10): "...practically all government posts went to *Broeders* (members of the

*Broederbond*), so it often became hard to say whether the government selected the *Broeders* or the *Broeders* the government." When individuals within the DRC (as probably within the National party and the *Broederbond*) had opinions contrary to those of the apartheid policy, it was difficult to oppose the collective force of these powerful organisations. Individuals who expressed opinions in conflict with the policy of the time were forced to conform to the prescribed way of thinking. According to Beyers Naudé (quoted in Ryan 1990:108) many of the DRC ministers were "frightened to speak up about their deepest Christian convictions... because... they will either be ostracised or lose their jobs."

During the 1970s the *Broederbond* was reputed to have a total membership of twelve thousand carefully selected men (Moodie 1975:100,102) who were organised into eight hundred cells around the country. It controlled the Afrikaner cultural life through the Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Unions (FAK) (Moodie 1975:105; O'Meara 1983:61), the *Voortrekkers* (a scout movement), the *Afrikaanse Studentebond*, the *Ritterweg* (a junior *Broederbond*), the *Rapportryers* (an equivalent of the Rotary Club), and the South African Bureau for Racial Affairs (SABRA). Between 1939 and 1949 the *Reddingskadebond* (Rescue-Doed League) (Moodie 1975:205) launched ten thousand Afrikaans businesses, among others the Rembrandt Tobacco Corporation, Volkskas Bank and the building society Saambou Nasionaal (Sparks 1990:177).

The DRC's theology of apartheid and the powerful role of the *Broederbond* in Afrikaner politics paved the way for Afrikaner supremacy in South Africa.

## 9 COLLABORATION BETWEEN AFRIKANER POLITICS AND THE THEOLOGY OF THE DRC

The National Party was founded in 1914 by Hertzog and it officially proclaimed the policy of Christian-Nationalism (O'Meara 1983:59; Moodie 1975:78; Serfontein 1982:60). In May 1948 the National Party came into power. Dr D F Malan, leader of the National Party, stated at that time:

Our history is the greatest masterpiece of the centuries. We hold this nationhood as our due for it was given us by the Architect of the universe. ....The last hundred years have witnessed a miracle behind which must lie a divine plan. Indeed, the history of the Afrikaner reveals a will and a determination, which makes one feel that Afrikanerdom is not the work of men but the creation of God.

(Sparks 1990:31)

The victory of the National Party was unexpected and added to the belief of some Afrikaners that God had willed the Afrikaner to rule the country (Sparks 1990:183). The fact that black and coloured people had no right to vote, despite constituting the majority of the population of South Africa, did not seem to influence the Afrikaner's perceptions.

Various authors identify the Sharpeville massacre (1960) and the Cottlesloe consultation (1960) shortly after the massacre as significant turning points for theology in South Africa, for the black liberation movement and for Afrikaner nationalist politics (Sparks 1990:235; Ryan 1990:52; NGK 1997:12).

In March 1960 the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) organised and launched a protest against the pass laws. The PAC called on its members to leave their "passes" at home on the day of 21 March 1960 and to present themselves for arrest at the nearest police station. The police fired at a crowd of protesters in the Sharpeville Township, killing sixty-nine people. This led to a world-wide outcry and the PAC and the ANC called for a day of mourning on 28 March 1960. This resulted in the declaration of a state of emergency and the PAC and the ANC were outlawed (Ryan 1990:52; Allen 1994:6; Van der Watt 1987:102).

This day became a symbol of the suffering of black people as the concentration camps were for the Afrikaner half a century before. Black Nationalist politics went underground and changed their strategies of non-violence to those of guerrilla struggle. South Africa

became a police state, violence escalated and confrontation between the government and the blacks spiralled (Sparks 1990:235).

International condemnation against the DRC followed the Sharpeville massacre (Ryan 1990:54; Van der Watt 1987:104). However, the criticism was deflected and twisted as being disrespectful of the DRC's intention and the scriptural basis of the church's standpoint (Van der Watt 1987:103,104). The church saw these attacks as a threat to the mission of the church (Ryan 1990:54; Van der Watt 1987:103).

Sharpeville seemed to have created a serious rift between the DRC and the English-speaking churches (Van der Watt 1987:104; Ryan 1990:54). It also threatened to destroy the bond between the Transvaal and the Cape moderatures of the DRC. In the early 1960s the Transvaal and the Cape moderatures were the only DRC moderatures holding ties with the World Council of Churches (Ryan 1990:54). In response to the demand of the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Joost de Blank, to expel the DRC from the World Council of Churches (WCC) (Van der Watt 1987:104), the WCC sent a representative, Dr Robert Bilheimer to South Africa to try and heal the rift among the churches (Ryan 1990:54; Van der Watt 1987:105). This led to the Cottesloe Consultation in December 1960 in which the DRC also took part (Ryan 1990:54; Van der Watt 1987:105). Although the DRC delegates were very conservative in their contributions, the road was paved for individuals within the church for critical theological and personal reflection. At the Consultation the DRC ministers came to know black people for the first time – the delegates shared living accommodation and meals (Ryan 1990:59).

At the Cottesloe Consultation some DRC delegates expressed theological opinions markedly different from the policies of the National Party and it was met by the Afrikaners with shock (Van der Watt 1987:106). Moreover, when a statement was drawn up at the end of the consultation, they supported the statement, rejecting all forms of racial discrimination (Ryan 1990:60; Van der Watt 1987:106,107). Regrettably, soon after the Cottesloe Consultation, some of the DRC delegates, back in the reality of their

communities and lacking the support of their fellow-delegates, backed down from their initial support for Cottesloe (Ryan 1990:61).

Whereas the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre and the Cottesloe Consultation invited individuals within the DRC to reflect on the apartheid policy, the government was seemingly undeterred by these events. Not even the Cottesloe statement could manage to shake the government's confidence (Ryan 1990:53). Hendrik Verwoerd, who was prime minister at the time, rejected the DRC's support of the Cottesloe-statement and discarded the Consultation and statement as interference of "outsiders" in South Africa's internal affairs (Van der Watt 1987:107,108). The *Broederbond's* executive sent out a circular to all its members rejecting the Cottesloe statement and asked them to be loyal to Verwoerd (Van der Watt 1987:114).

The DRC delegates were to appear before the synod "like accused men" (Ryan 1990:66), for being "unfaithful to the policy of church and government on racial issues" (my translation) (Van der Watt 1987:109). Some withdrew the statements they had made at the Cottesloe Consultation (Ryan 1990:66; Van der Watt 1987:110).

The synod had to decide on its position regarding WCC membership. The Transvaal DRC resigned its membership in the World Council of Churches. The DRC reaffirmed its support for the policy of differentiation (Ryan 1990:66; Sparks 1990:284).

The rejection of the Cottesloe statement by the DRC caused a rift between the DRC and other protestant churches. The DRC rejected the plea made by individuals within the DRC for unity with these churches. Theologians such as Beyers Naudé, who identified with the Cottesloe Consultation, were sharply criticised by their colleagues in the *Broederbond* (NGK 1997:19; Ryan 1990:64; Van der Watt 1987:114). Naudé reacted as follows: "I was deeply disappointed but I did not condemn them. I realised that we were up against a situation of such intransigence that it would take many, many years before we would be able to move this massive body called the NG Kerk" (DRC) (Ryan

1990:72). The “massive body” made it virtually impossible for voices of resistance to be heard.

This did not seem to stop the consistent flow of critical voices from within the DRC. In 1963, during a Southern Transvaal Synod in Pretoria, theologians requested an investigation into membership of the *Broederbond*. The request highlighted their suspicions that special positions within the church and society were often reserved for members of the *Broederbond*. The motion, however, was defeated (Ryan 1990:75).

At the same synod, the *Broederbond*'s appeal to their members not to support the theological newspaper, *Pro Veritate*, was discussed. *Pro Veritate*, under editorship of Beyers Naudé, was issued by the Christian Institute and reflected critically on church matters and obviously on the apartheid policy (Ryan 1990:74; Van der Watt 1987:112).

As early as 1962 the *Broederbond* became concerned about the increase in its general opposition. It became concerned about the independent thinking of the Afrikaner and the possible rift within the nation. It regarded views that criticised the apartheid policy as “communist liberalism”. In a memorandum it requested as follows: “... [T]he executive council solemnly calls on our Church leaders to combat this liberalistic attack on our Christian spiritual convictions and on the Christian-National philosophy on which our national struggle on the cultural, social, economic and education front is founded, and to expose it firmly and clearly” (Ryan 1990:86).

The Christian Institute (CI) was a theological organisation formed by Beyers Naudé with the support of a small group of moderate Afrikaners who were opposed to their church's support of apartheid (Ryan 1990:3; Van der Watt 1987:112). The CI was criticised for its liberal views (Van der Watt 1987:113) but also for allowing persons from the Roman Catholic Church to be elected onto their management board. This echoed the DRC's view of the “*Roomse gevaar*” (the Roman Catholic danger) (Ryan 1990:101).

The fear existed amongst Afrikaner Christians to express their ambiguity about the DRC's support of apartheid. The threat of being ostracised by their close-knit community was ever present. This fear fostered silence on these issues and at the same time it created an accompanying feeling of guilt (Ryan 1990:107).

In the 1960s and the 1970s the DRC, following trends in the political arena, gradually drifted away from claims that the Bible justified apartheid. Van der Watt (1987:116) argued that as government representatives indicated a move away from discrimination, from emphasising skin colour, the South African society realised the short-comings of the policy of separate development. The most prominent reasons were the demographic composition of South Africa, the need for more land and economic integration.

However, the church still supported the government's policy of separate development insisting that it provided a just dispensation for all races (Ryan 1990:101). The consistent refusal of the DRC to challenge the government on its policies left this task to the liberal thinking theologians within the church and those subscribing to black liberation theology. On Naudé's request, the *Kauros* working group was formed in Holland to promote awareness there of South Africa's race policies and to lend moral and financial support to the Christian Institute (Ryan 1990:135).

At the same time the government became determined to crush clergymen who were undermining the security of the state. This was done by confiscating their passports, by banning, raiding and by bringing criminal charges against the "perpetrators". In this style the Christian Institute, as well as seventeen Black Consciousness organisations were banned by the government in 1977 and Beyers Naudé, amongst others, was placed under house arrest for seven years (Ryan 1990:167-203).

The first time that the DRC positioned itself with certainty and clarity against apartheid was in 1997, almost fifty years after apartheid became institutionalised. This followed the Dutch Reformed Mission Church's declaration that separate development was a sin, that

the moral and theological justification thereof was a mockery of the Gospel and that the unrelenting disobedience of the church to the Word of God was a theological heresy. The Dutch Reformed Mission Church called on the DRC to repudiate the policy of apartheid.

In 1980 and 1981 two theological texts were published by the DRC. In these texts Professors Johan Heyns, David Bosch and Nico Smith, all theologians within the DRC, repeated the sentiments of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church. In 1982, an "Open letter to the DRC", endorsed by 123 theologians, was published in the DRC newspaper, *Die Kerkbode*. In this letter, the apartheid policy and the laws that executed the policy were declared as un-biblical and un-Christian. In the same year the Dutch Reformed Mission Church reiterated its declaration of 1979 and this led to the Confession of Belhar. The confession was a "*status confessionis*", a concept confession, an expression that the time had come for new ideas and decisions about the apartheid policies to be considered by the church. The DRC rejected the Belhar Confession of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in 1984 and warned the Mission Church to reconsider its policy. The DRC justified and reiterated its support for the policy of separate development (NGK 1997:36-37).

The WCC supported the Dutch Reformed Mission Church's *status confessionis*. The WCC had been influenced by its consultations with the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians with Allan Boesak as leader. This organisation denounced apartheid as a sin and declared the policy's moral and theological justification a heresy. This declaration was brought before the WCC at a conference in Ottawa in 1982. The Council accepted the declaration and suspended the membership of the DRC and the *Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk* (a conservative Afrikaans-speaking church) until they could prove that their policies have been amended (Sparks 1990:286; NGK 1997:38).

In 1984 the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of which the DRC was still a member, followed the WCC and exerted pressure on the DRC to reject apartheid on the grounds that it was a sin and un-biblical. Under continuous pressure the DRC's delegation to a



meeting of Reformed Ecumenical Synod in Athens in 1992 eventually rejected the justification of apartheid (NGK1997:41).

In 1983 the Western Cape Synod of the DRC made a policy statement that the prohibition of mixed marriages was un-scriptural (NGK 1997:38,39) and in 1986 the General Synod of the DRC admitted that it was a mistake to justify apartheid from Scripture. The DRC clearly declared that the church was not called to prescribe any political policy. The church's role should reflect the nurturing of the concepts of love, justice and dignity in a society. This admission by the General Synod of the DRC led to the breaking away of forty thousand DRC members and one hundred of its ministers to form the more conservative *Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk* (NGK 1997:42, 45).

In the years to follow, the DRC was gradually amending its policy of apartheid – albeit slowly and in a piecemeal way. These amendments did not come about without a tremendous amount of conflict and pressure from within the ranks of the DRC (as mentioned above) from black liberation theologians and “English-speaking white churches” in South Africa, as well as from international church associations (as mentioned above) (Serfontein 1982:129,130).

In the light of the previous paragraphs, it seems that at various stages admissions were made that the DRC policy of apartheid was un-biblical and therefore a mistake, but the first official apology for the effects of this policy only came in 1989 (NGK 1997:46). Until then it had been a theological debate about dogma and academic issues. Yet, with the apology, came the first admission that the effects of the dogma of the church was unethical and inhumane. The admission, issued at the Vereeniging-deliberation, was an apology “with humility and regret” for the suffering of the people of this country under the policy of apartheid (NGK 1997:46). The Vereeniging-deliberation expressed its concern for the continuation of the state of emergency in the country and the effects of it on the people. It called on the government to immediately cease the detainment of people without trial, to abolish the state of emergency and to release political prisoners. It

requested negotiations with black leadership that could lead to the transfer of the political power in the country (NGK 1997:46).

One year later, in 1990 the Rustenburg Conference took place (NGK 1997:50). In some ways this conference was similar to the Cottesloe Consultation of 1960. It brought together the representatives of eighty churches in South Africa (Allen 1994:214). The conference was called by state president F W de Klerk "to formulate a strategy conducive to negotiation, reconciliation and change" (Alberts & Chikane 1991:14). One of the prominent leaders-requested by the state president to ascertain church leadership reaction to a changing South Africa, was Prof Johan Heyns, at the time the moderator of the General Synod of the DRC and chairman of the *Broederbond*. At the conference Willie Jonker, who represented the theological seminary at Stellenbosch, offered a personal apology, as well as an apology on behalf of the DRC, for the "political, social, economical and structural injustices under which the whole country had suffered" (NGK 1997:54). Archbishop Desmond Tutu of the Anglican Church accepted the apology.

In the confession of its role in apartheid, the DRC attributed the church's support of this policy for more than thirty years to the absence of critical reflection of its own matters due to the alliance between the church and the government. It admitted that the church prioritised the Afrikaner's interest at the cost of others' precarious circumstances. The church contributed to apartheid developing into an ideology, fully aware of the consequences for the majority of South Africans. The church allowed people being turned into pawns on a chess board without humanitarian consideration. Even though the policy of separate nations in separate countries (homeland policy) failed, the church allowed the discrimination and injustice of forced separation to continue (NGK 1997:72).

Whereas the DRC initially had a leading role in establishing apartheid, the National Party accepted apartheid as policy. Due to the fact that many members of the DRC were also members of the National Party, an understandable symbiosis between church and party developed, resulting

in the church's lack of distance and critical objectivity of the affairs of government.

Due to a deep-seated and justified association with the people the DRC served – the Afrikaner – the church opted for the interests of its members above those of other people. The church was concerned about the survival of the Afrikaner while tending to ignore the plight of other people (my translation).

(NGK 1997:73).

With this admission, the DRC undertook to amend its mistakes of the past:

In the years to come, the church wishes once more to be available to the Lord, to pursue God's will in earnest and with devotion, for the well-being of its members, for the country and all its people, and to reflect in a critical way on its own interpretations of God's Word.

(NGK 1997:74)

Whereas before the DRC regarded itself as the great and mighty church, it now had to consider itself in a different light. The confession expressed that the servant-image suited the DRC better in the current circumstances, which it is after all what Christ requires of his church. Amongst many other goals, the DRC stated that it wanted to strengthen its prophetic voice in the future. It admitted that the prophetic role of the church was absent in the past. Instead, the church supported and even insisted on the execution of the policy of apartheid (NGK 1997:75).

The close collaboration of the DRC and the Afrikaner ideal had implications for the context of constituting the care of children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit.

## 9 RESONANCE WITH THE SITUATION AT THE CHILDREN'S HAVEN M F R SMIT

As mentioned earlier in this chapter (and again in chapter five), coloured and black children at the haven suffered racial discrimination. The haven was “warned” by the new government to align its practices to the new constitution and the Employment Equity Act no 55 of 1998. Apart from issues relating specifically to racial issues, other issues bear relevance to the historical overview discussed in the previous paragraphs of this chapter.

The Afrikaner tradition had its fair share of patriarchal discourse – a discourse that perpetuated a system of male dominance at the expense not only of women (Keane 1998:122,124; Ackerman 1996:39), but also of children and other marginalised groups. Men were the leaders of households, of political parties, of the structures of the DRC (Ackerman 1996:37; Landman 1998:137) and powerful cultural organisations such as the *Broederbond* and the *Rapportryers*. Following the patriarchal tradition, husbands, fathers and leaders assumed authoritative positions not to be challenged gladly. Care offered from this tradition, took on a paternalist nature. Decisions were made on behalf of those in less powerful positions such as children, women and other marginalised groups. Louw (2000:29) refers to the generation raised in the patriarchal tradition as “the shut-up-Dad-has-spoken generation”. The decision-making process in this tradition is unilateral – lacking collaboration of those most affected by the decisions.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Afrikaner during and after the *Great Trek* regarded it as their God-given mission to submit black people to their authority and in doing so, spread the Christian message. Later, Afrikaner politicians, supported by dominant DRC theologians, regarded it as their duty to “rule” the black, coloured, Indian and Asian people. The majority of white people, the only racial group with the right to vote, voted the National Party into power in 1948 and it passed laws enforcing the segregation of people – a policy claimed to be in the best interest of black and coloured people, in maintaining their cultures and traditions. The paternalist ruling of black and coloured people soon became one of complete domination, violently suppressing any

form of resistance. Resistance from within the ranks of Afrikaner politics (or theology) was met with authoritarian condemnation. The end of apartheid did not mean the end of patriarchy. "What does it mean to be a woman (I would like to add to this: a child or any marginalised person), when patriarchal structures have been left virtually untouched in the wake of democratic transition?" (Pieterse 1996:55).

The ways in which the haven was managed in the previous child care system resonated with the Afrikaner's patriarchal discourse. The haven's board of management was dominated by white Afrikaner men – the caring of the children left to women. In the running of the haven decisions were taken on behalf of the children and their parents. Their participation was never encouraged. Neither was the participation of the child care workers, who knew the children better than most, considered in the running of the haven (these issues are discussed in chapters five and six). The board of management's resistance to integrate people from other cultures and races was reminiscent of the resistance of Afrikaner politics and DRC theology during the apartheid era – an attempt at preserving power.

The professionals, psychologists, social workers and child care workers forming part of the therapeutic team, followed assessment models and therapeutic models which reinforced the patriarchal discourse – approaching the children from the stance of "the expert" who knew from his / her training, what was in the best interest of the children. These professional models encouraged as little participation and collaboration from the children as the management board did (this issue is discussed in chapter seven).

Whether the issue was the care of children or the management of the haven, the focus shifted from the children, after all the nucleus of the haven, to politics. Child care became part of a political system in which the children were mere pawns – as black and coloured people experienced for so many years.

With the transformation of child and youth care, which formed part of yet another political discourse, the opportunity was there to focus on the children's interests.

However, as discussed in chapters six and seven, the children at the haven once again, became the pawns in a new game of politics.

## 11 BLACK LIBERATION THEOLOGY

### 11.1 Introduction

The brief discussion that follows is an attempt to show how, in contrast to the dominant DRC theology during the apartheid era, black liberation theology addressed the plight of the millions of poor and oppressed black people in South Africa. In highlighting the prophetic nature of black liberation theology, I do not imply that other forms of liberation theology such as feminist theology, did not play a prominent part in empowering people.

### 11.2 The prophetic nature of liberation theology

In the same way as the themes of faith and politics were intertwined in the history of Afrikaner nationalism, so too were they part of the struggle of black people in South Africa. For Afrikaner nationalism, theology served as justification and motivation for an oppressive system. For black nationalism, theology served as liberation from the oppression. On both sides theology served as vehicle for nationalist purposes. This argument brought Sparks (1990:278) to refer to "a theological war" as much as to "a political and military one".

Black theology in South Africa developed since the 1970s in reaction to the apartheid system of the previous government. Within the black theology movement there were differences of attitude and approach, some prioritising the racial character of oppression while others added the category of class. Another trend supported a non-racial approach and centred its philosophy on general oppression (Maimela 1998:116; Van der Watt 1987:116).

It seemed that there has always been ambiguity in the Christian religion on the question of obedience, resistance to state authority and indeed, on the question of war itself. In its earliest phase, when Christians were being persecuted by Rome and the church had no relationship with the state at all, theology was "unquestionably and even militantly on the side of the ... poor" (Sparks 1990:280). But when emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in 313 AD, all this changed. Christianity became the state religion, supporting the political authority and enjoying faithful obedience from the people. It was believed that the authorities were put there to represent God's authority on earth. Those who resisted state authority, resisted what God has appointed (Sparks 1990:280).

Sparks (1990:281) made the observation that "the residual tradition of those early Christianity has remained" – the tradition of the church having no relationship at all with the state and of the church being on the side of the subversive poor (Sparks 1990:280). From this tradition liberation theology developed as a relatively recent theological genre with characteristics stemming from human oppression, of people who, for some or the other reason, were being marginalised and were suffering discrimination and injustice. Liberation theologies reacted to oppression in an attempt to find ways of resolving conflict in the light of the Gospel and to allow people to break free from their oppression (Maimela 1998:111). Liberation theology has manifested itself in various ways: in the liberation theology in Germany against the Nazification of the German Evangelical Church in the 1930s, in Latin America, where it resisted economic rather than political suffering, in feminist theology which has called the attention of the church to the exploitation of and discrimination against women, and in North America and South Africa where black liberation theology originated in reaction to systems of racial discrimination (Maimela 1998:111; Sparks 1990:281; Keane 1998:122; Hopkins 1988:12).

Black theology has its origins in the context of oppression, dehumanisation and the destruction of black "personhood". It can be defined as a theological reflection on the black experience.

In North America liberation theology is linked to the history of slavery when millions of Africans were captured, violated, sold and stripped of their language and their culture. After slavery was abolished, the blacks in North America continued to be pushed into the margins of society, stripped of their human dignity and their rights (Hopkins 1988:17).

The South African experience was different in the sense that black people were not slaves as such – they were subjected to domination, exploitation and oppression, starting with European colonialism and ending in the system of apartheid (Maimela 1998:112).

Maimela (1998:112) argued that black theology owed its origin to a racial situation where colour – the colour of one's skin – determined peoples' whole lives. It determined their superiority or inferiority with respect to others. It determined who they were destined to be. "Where a person may live, where a person may work, what bus or train to use, which schools or churches to attend, which restaurant or toilet s/he may use, whom s/he may love and become a neighbour to – all these things were determined by whether s/he is black or white" (Maimela 1998:112).

As I have indicated in this chapter, the difference between white and black was highlighted and politicised over many years in South Africa to the extent that, from a white perspective, anything "black" came to be regarded as "negative and bad" (Maimela 1998:113). Because of this racist notion, black people suffered for a long time, submitted to the notion that their culture, religion and language were second-class – being assimilated into the existing "superior" ways of Western religion and culture (Maimela 1998:113).

The intention of black liberation theology in South Africa was to return black people to their God-given humanity and the conviction that God became human in Christ to liberate humanity. In doing so, black liberation theology valued the ideology that God is always on the side of the oppressed and the underdog and that God willed all humans to be free. The theology placed its emphasis on the historical life of Jesus according to Scripture – as a human being born in a stable and not into wealth and social status, as one



would have imagined. Jesus lived among the poor and the oppressed, always taking the side of the weak, the sick, the hungry, the homeless and outcast. Even in his death, Jesus identified with the marginalised as he hung between two common criminals during his last hours (Maimela 1998:114-118; De Gruchy 1991:84,85; Hopkins 1989:2; Du Boulay 1989:174).

Ironically, as the oppressive theology of the Afrikaner claimed a personal identification with the Israelites as the chosen people of God in the Old Testament, so did black liberation theology. Both theologies identified with the symbolic liberation of the Israelites from the oppressive Egyptian pharaoh – Afrikaner theology referring to their liberation from British domination and from the fear of black power, and black liberation theology referring to the liberation from white Afrikaner domination.

In his address to the Eloff Commission<sup>2</sup> in September 1982, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who became synonymous with the black liberation struggle, reiterated the prophetic nature of liberation theology:

I will show that the central work of Jesus was to effect reconciliation between God and us and also between man and man. Consequently, from a theological and scriptural base, I will demonstrate that apartheid, separate development or whatever it is called is evil, totally and without remainder, that it is unchristian and unbiblical. It has recently been declared a heresy by a world body of responsible Christians, a body to which the white Dutch Reformed churches belong and which can therefore not be dismissed as a so-called left-wing radical body... If anyone were to show me that apartheid is biblical or Christian, I have said before and I reiterate now, I would burn my Bible and cease to be a Christian. I will want to show that the Christian Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord is subversive of all injustice and evil, oppression and exploitation

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<sup>2</sup> The Eloff Commission was appointed in 1981 to investigate financial irregularities within the South African Council of Churches.

and that God is on the side of the oppressed and the downtrodden, that he is the liberator God of Exodus, who leads his people out of every kind of bondage, spiritual, political, social and economic. Nothing will thwart him from achieving the goal of the liberation of all his people and the whole of his creation.

(Allen 1994:56)

Black liberation theology wanted to highlight the conflict and polarisation between white and black, dominant and oppressed, powerful and powerless (and therefore poor), present in the South African society and called for a transformation of individual and social structures through the gospel as the promise of reconciliation between oppressor and oppressed. The gospel was seen as having the power to bring a complete break with the past and to enter into new relationships with others (Maimela 1998:117).

Based on these values, black liberation theology in South Africa took a stand against the neutrality of a theology that maintained the *status quo*. Instead, it advocated for active challenge of oppressive systems and saw its battle against the oppressive apartheid government as a struggle between life and death (Maimela 1998:117).

### 11.3 Trends in black liberation theology

As indicated earlier, there are various approaches within black liberation theology – the Black Solidarity trend, the Black Solidarity Materialist trend and the Non-racist trend. The Black Solidarity trend represented the first phase of black theology and theologians such as Sabelo Ntwasa, Manas Buthelezi, Allan Boesak and Desmond Tutu emerged as proponents of this trend in black theology. Sabelo Ntwasa was the director of the Black Theology Project under the auspices of the University Christian Movement (Maimela 1998:114).

Towards the end of the 1970s the Black Solidarity-Materialist trend began to emerge as a result of the banning of black consciousness organisations by the National Party government. The black theology movement and the black consciousness movement were

closely related, both dependant on the other. Maimela (1998:115) made the comment that "the one cannot exist without the other; for it is in their mutual complementarity that they constitute useful instruments for effective liberation for the oppressed Blacks." On this issue both Black Solidarity and the Black Solidarity-Materialist trend agreed, as did they on the point that the liberation of black people in South Africa could not be brought about by white people despite their sympathies with the liberation struggle. The reason was that the whites have not shared the experience of what it meant to suffer as black people under white oppression. The mutual point of departure for these two theological movements was white racism. Whereas Black Solidarity viewed white people as the cause of the oppression of black people, the Black Solidarity-Materialist trend regarded the causes as more complicated. This movement believed that it was class division that determined the division of races – that a concentration of economic wealth and political power in the hands of the minority of whites perpetuated a race-based class difference. The Black Solidarity-Materialist trend drew the support of theologians such as Simon Maimela, Takatso Mofokeng, Itumeleng Mosala, David Mosoma, Lebamang Sebidi and Buti Tlhagale (Maimela 1998:116)

The Non-racist trend moved away from racial emphasis towards class and gender. The Non-racist trend emphasised solidarity with the poor and oppressed, regardless of existing racial divisions. This movement moved away from the black consciousness movement and identified with the non-racial philosophy of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and its emphasis on the Freedom Charter. The main representatives of the movement were Manas Buthelezi, Allan Boesak, Frank Chikane, Shun Govender, Smangaliso Mkhathshwa and Desmond Tutu (Maimela 1998:116).

This brief overview of black liberation theology may create an impression that all black South Africans subscribed to the theology of liberation. This was not the case. Black liberation theology (as the black consciousness movement) was lead and supported by the politicised black intellectual elite. Many from the lower levels of society belonged to an abundance of indigenous African churches, also referred to as the African Initiated Churches. These churches were deeply conservative and avoided the radicalism of the resistance movements. Millions of black people who were members of these churches

submitted to preaching "that Christians must suffer in silent obedience to God's appointed authorities" (Sparks 1990:293). During the black liberation struggle there were nearly four thousand of these independent churches (today closer to eight thousand) with the Zion Christian Church as the largest (Sparks 1990:293; Hayes 1998:160).

#### 11.4 Collaboration between black liberation theology and the black consciousness movement

As the theology of the DRC served the Afrikaner nationalism, so did black liberation theology serve the black consciousness movement. However, there was a moral difference between these theologies. Whereas the ethics of the black liberation theology was guided by liberation from oppression, the dominant DRC theology during the apartheid era was motivated by self-preservation and domination.

In South Africa black liberation theology committed itself in earnest to black liberation after the Sharpeville massacre (1960) and the government's rejection of the Cottesloe Consultation (Sparks 1990:280-282). The active role black students of the University Christian Movement played in establishing black theology, is described as "an effort to supplant white missionary religion" and a "rediscovery of black cultural authenticity" (Sparks 1990:285).

The "black cultural authenticity" included aspects of the African tradition stressing the ancient religious concept of *ubuntu* – the unity of humanity and God, and the oneness of the community (Sparks 1990:285). Christian churches such as the Catholic, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and the United Congregational churches, made up predominantly of black members as well as the South African Council of Churches, began to take tougher positions on apartheid, denouncing apartheid as being in conflict with Christian principles (Sparks 1990:284).

In 1981, Boesak, who was the dynamic force of the new theological movement, took the lead in forming an Alliance of Black Reformed Christians denouncing apartheid as a sin

and declaring the moral and theological justification of apartheid both a heresy and a denial of the Reformed tradition. A year later Boesak took the apartheid issue before a conference at the World Alliance of Reformed Churches whereupon this organisation suspended the membership of the DRC and the *Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk*. This step was regarded as a victory for black theology. Later that year, Desmond Tutu, representing the Anglican Church, declared apartheid a heresy (Sparks 1990:285; Allen 1994:54).

In 1985, at the height of political unrest in South Africa, 150 clergymen of all races and denominations drafted a theological commentary on the situation in South Africa. This has been referred to as the *Kairos*-document. The word "*kairos*" is Greek, meaning "moment of truth". The *Kairos*-document represented an exposition of the black liberation theology (De Gruchy 1991:221). This document challenged the government's claims that the government had the divine right to use violence against black people and those who were supporting the liberation struggle. The document argued that the government's subjugation and oppression of people was unjust and that Christians had the right to rebel. The document claimed that the church had the obligation to avoid collaborating with tyranny and lending legitimacy to an amoral, illegitimate regime and it offered (limited) justification for the violence in resisting tyranny. The *Kairos*-document further criticised the lack of active opposition to apartheid on part of the English-speaking churches. The document warned against an attempt at reconciliation between good and evil in the country until the injustices had been removed. It regarded reconciliation as possible only once the apartheid regime had confronted the forces of evil and showed genuine repentance and remorse. The document regarded God not as "standing neutral" and that theologians could not, in the name of Christianity, maintain the *status quo* on grounds that spirituality existed separate from the world. *Kairos* was seen as a commitment to a prophetic theology and called for active involvement in the struggle against apartheid (Sparks 1990:287–288; Ryan 1990:135; Cochrane et al 1991:72; De Gruchy 1991:222).

The South African government counter-acted the onslaught of black liberation theology. In 1981 it appointed a commission of inquiry into the affairs of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), which the government regarded as the theological centre of the assault on apartheid and the Afrikaner religion (Du Boulay 1989:171-184). The council was accused of supporting "Marxist terrorism" and was regarded as "the godless forces of darkness and death" (Sparks 1990:279). In 1986 Khotso House, the SACC headquarters, was destroyed in a bomb blast (Allen 1994:151).

The government's reaction did not deter black liberation theology and during the 1980s the struggle intensified in the black townships (Du Boulay 1989:220-223). Black clergymen took the lead in organising and supporting the struggle. "Churches became meeting places and centres of information. Clergymen provided leadership at both national and local levels. They buried the dead, comforted the bereaved, and were among the foremost speakers at the great funeral rallies" (Sparks 1990:289).

## 12 REFLECTIONS ON THE PROPHETIC PRACTICE OF THE DRC AND BLACK LIBERATION THEOLOGY

The Cottesloe Consultation of 1960 and the *Kairos*-document of 1985 pleaded for the damnation of apartheid policies and for the South African churches to challenge these policies. The *Kairos*-document represented appeals from clergymen from different denominations for commitment to prophetic theology. Both the DRC and the National Party government rejected their pleas.

The admission and apology from the DRC in 1989 at the Vereeniging-consultation and in 1990 at the Rustenburg conference (NGK1997:46,54), brought the DRC closer to the acknowledgement of injustices caused by its theology. The DRC officially confessed to and apologised for its role in the apartheid policy of the National Party. In the confession the DRC committed itself to return to a prophetic theology (NGK 1997:75):

The DRC has to acknowledge that its prophetic voice towards the former government, many whom were members of the DRC, should have been more pronounced. At times it failed in providing the government with scriptural guidance. At times the church allowed itself to be taken in by political leaders.

The DRC wants its prophetic voice towards the government to be as clear as possible, the DRC wants to honour the government, assist the government in governing wisely so that we can have peace and less crime in our fatherland.

(NGK 1997:75)

### 13 REFLECTIONS ON THE VALUE AND EFFECTS OF PEOPLE'S NARRATIVES

The powerful effect of people's understanding, of their narratives of themselves and of others made an indelible impression on me in the course of this study. Although this report does not allow for an extensive discussion of this issue, I feel compelled to reflect shortly on this.

It seemed that people's narratives were instrumental in bringing about changes in the minds and hearts of people who were set within their specific worldviews.

Beyers Naudé's "pilgrimage of faith" as told by Ryan (1990) indicated how personal meetings with individuals on the receiving end of the policy of apartheid, made impressions on him. He entered into personal conversations with Indian and coloured people who had been affected by the forced removals in Fordsburg; he shared the stories of local black theologians and clergymen from other countries. He was touched by these interactions (Ryan 1990:47, 53-62, 125-147).

In his book *Tomorrow is another Country*, Sparks (1994) related incidents that built up to the political transformation of South Africa. From his documentation of the circumstances leading up to the release of Nelson Mandela and the first democratic elections, it seemed that series of personal meetings and negotiations between politicians (some of whom were also clergymen) contributed to the process of peaceful negotiations. Politicians met at secret venues all over the world, engaging not only in formal talks, but more importantly, they got to know each other personally in informal settings where they shared their experiences of the apartheid system. These politicians were not individuals who were "neutral" in the political conflict. In fact, some were snugly settled in the heart of Afrikaner nationalism, the *Broederbond* or the black liberation movement. Some of these politicians were Willem de Klerk, Willie Esterhuize, Sampie Terblanche, Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma, Oliver Tambo, Aziz Pahad and Harold Wolpe (Sparks 1994:68-90).

The meetings between these groups of people allowed for conversations that stretched beyond political talk and resulted in meetings filled with humour, long walks in the woods, fishing trips and friendship. In their sharing of personal stories it seemed that stereotypes that they held about each other were challenged. These meetings offered opportunities for critical reflection.

The powerful effect of people's personal narratives was seen again years after the elections of the first democratic government when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) started its work. When the TRC-hearings started in April 1996, the public heard the stories of the immense suffering of people during the apartheid system (Krog 1998:vi). For two years, the victims of political violence told of the horror, the fear, the violence, degradation, humiliation and the immense sadness that accompanied the years of oppression (Krog 1998:vi). These stories were stripped of the neutrality and the clinical objectivity that one associates with the "polished" evidences delivered in courts-of-law. Instead, they were bare, raw and filled with emotion. These stories came from the hearts of people and touched the hearts of people. As with the personal stories heard by the commissioners of the TRC, the public for the first time had an opportunity



to listen to the way in which apartheid affected people. For the first time these stories could be seen on national television, free of the censorship and misrepresentation that had accompanied similar stories in the past.

The stories told during the TRC-hearings were met with disbelief, disillusionment and sometimes with denial. Whatever the reaction was, it offered an alternative to the knowledge that the majority of the whites had believed to be the truth and it invited them to adopt new perspectives on apartheid:

It (the TRC-hearings) has become an intensely illuminating spotlight on South Africa's past. Because it has allowed this past to be told through the personal recollections of those who testify before it, it has put real flesh on rhetorical phrases like 'a just war' and 'crimes against humanity'. The people who tell these stories along with the people who listen to them and, like Antjie Krog, the people who report on them, are living South Africans. They are struggling to find identity for themselves, individually and collectively, within the shadows still cast by their country's brutal history. The spotlight is thus not just a harrowing, often liberating revelation of the past; it illuminates present predicaments and future possibilities too.

Many voices of this country were long silent, unheard, often unheeded before they spoke, in their own tongues, at the microphones of South Africa's Truth Commission. The voices of ordinary people have entered the public discourse and shaped the passage of history. They speak here to all who care to listen.

(Krog 1998: viii)

The powerful impact of people's narratives in creating understanding and change, as outlined in this chapter, was useful in my approach to this study. My understanding of the significance of narratives paved the way for the methodology in this study. As the

children's "long silent, unheard, often unheeded" stories are narrated, I hope to broaden an understanding of their plight.

#### 14 SUMMARY

An overview of this particular South African history revealed that the care provided by the DRC to children-in-need did not develop in a vacuum. Aspects involved in the care of the children and the management of the haven resonating with this history were discussed. The powerful bond between the DRC, Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaner politics was argued as well as the resistance to this bond. The effects of this power in marginalising black people were highlighted. Discourses of power and resistance were related to the marginalisation and the disempowerment of the children in care of the DRC.

In contrast to the dominant theology of DRC, black liberation theology emphasised the prophetic role of pastoral practice. Two of its trends challenged injustice against black people, while a third included other marginalised groups in its battle against injustice.

The narratives of previously marginalised voices create opportunities for the understanding of the effects of domination. These narratives create opportunities for change. In the next three chapters various stories of children-in-care are narrated. Chapter four provides the reader with the stories of the previous child care system and attempts to highlight the motivation for the transformation of child and youth care. Chapter five narrates the stories of the children describing life at the Children's Haven M T R Smit and chapter six narrates the children's experiences relating the effects of the transformation.

## THE STORY OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE

The notion that “it takes a whole village to raise a child” is based on Ubuntu – a spirit of humanity that encompasses a principle of people caring for each other’s well-being within an attitude of mutual support. It says that a person is a person because of or through others. In pre-colonial and traditional societies South Africa’s children were raised in this spirit, and few if any children were homeless or abandoned.

(Department of Social Development [Dep Soc Dev] 1996d:7)

### 1 BACKGROUND

The above quote paints a picture long forgotten and far removed from the society we find ourselves in today. In a recent conversation with my gardener, a middle aged Xhosa-speaking man, about the role *ubuntu* plays in his community, his words reflected disillusionment: “What about ubuntu?”, he asked: “...F\$#@ *Ubuntu*, it’s everyone for himself now!” (Rokosi 1998). I pondered on his remark and wondered what the loss of *ubuntu* held for him and his children – for the future of his community who lives in extreme poverty. From the research during the course of this study, I learned to some extent what the effects of poverty has been on the children from poor communities. These effects are discussed furtheron in this chapter as well as in chapter six.

Our country’s history of colonialism, urbanisation and apartheid has left its mark on our youth. The majority of our youth comes from poor, unemployed and broken families and this has resulted in the fact that thousands are neglected and homeless. In the Eastern Cape, 2 182 949 children, seventy percent of the children in the Eastern Cape, live in poverty. In South Africa, 13 565 children live in residential care of whom 1 663 are in

child care facilities in the Eastern Cape (Watson 2000:4). My gardener's humorous but bitter words indicate that, due to changes in Xhosa tradition and the effects of apartheid, *ubuntu* no longer protects children.

This chapter attempts to sketch an overview of the circumstances, which according to the reports of the Inter-Ministerial Committee (discussed later in this chapter) contributed to the transformation of child and youth care. Due to the nature of their investigation, which focussed on the shortcomings of the child care system, little is said in this chapter of the strengths of the previous child care system. The intention with this chapter is not to create a picture of the previous child care system as altogether negative since it cared for thousands of abandoned and neglected children for several decades, and in the case of the Children's Haven M T R Smit, for close to eighty years (the strengths of the care provided to children-in-care by the DRC are discussed in chapters one, five and six). In this chapter I attempt to introduce the concept of the effects of a child care system driven by political agendas and chapter six develops this theme as the effects of the child care policy of the new government are narrated and critiqued.

Since the 1990s, the National Association of Child and Family Welfare, and other non-governmental organisations, advocated for changes to the child and youth care system in South Africa. They became increasingly concerned about the standard of care that children-in-need received. A disparity existed between the care available to white, coloured and Asian children on the one hand, and black children on the other. Apart from inadequate facilities, there was a general concern about the lack of training and the lack of expertise of the managers, staff and child care workers (Theron 1999).

It was especially the care of children who were imprisoned for political and criminal offences that raised concern. Not only was the imprisonment of juveniles in conflict with international standards, several cases of abuse and even death of children in prisons were reported. In 1993 the previous government undertook to investigate the matter but it was never followed through (Dep Soc Dev 1996d:7).

In 1993, at the initiative of the National Association of Child Care, a national conference was held on child care. It was significant for three reasons: Firstly, it was the first time in the history of this country that all the organisations involved in child care met to assess the situation of child care. Secondly, it exerted pressure on the government to ratify the prescriptions that resulted from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Lastly, from this national convention developed a plan of action for child care that was forwarded to the new government in 1994 (Theron 1999).

One of the first actions of the Government of National Unity elected in 1994, was to draft legislation to prevent the holding of children awaiting trial in prisons or in police cells (Dep Soc Dev 1996d:7). This led to the Correctional Service Amendment Act no 17 of 1994 that stated that children younger than eighteen years could not be held for longer than twenty-four hours and those accused of serious offences, not for longer than forty eight hours. The implications of this act affected the functioning of the Ministries of Welfare, Correctional Services and Justice. Although there was still time left before this law was to be promulgated, the lack of inter-departmental co-operation led to a crisis. On 8 May 1995 more than 2000 children were released from prison by the Minister of Correctional Services, Dr S Msimela (Dep Soc Dev 1996c:4). The children were transferred to Places of Safety. These facilities were designed to offer a half-way house for the period between when children are removed from their families to when they are placed in a children's home. Places of Safety were not designed to accommodate children who had committed crimes and who needed safe-keeping, neither were the staff at these centres trained for, or experienced in handling children with these kinds of problems (Dep Soc Dev 1996d:8; Dep Soc Dev 1996b:6). The result was that a great number of the children absconded within a short period.

The crisis of the juvenile criminals exacerbated the long-standing crisis in the Department Child Welfare and the authorities realised that the current crisis could not be dealt with in isolation. It became a necessity to address the whole situation with urgency. The Department's approach was to "turn a crisis into an opportunity", in other words,

while addressing this crisis they would aim at transforming the whole system of child and youth care because "the prison crisis was really the tip of an iceberg" (Woods 1998).

## 2 THE INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK

In May 1995 Ms GJ Fraser-Moleketi (Minister of Welfare), with the full sanction of the president Nelson Mandela, requested that a committee be formed to investigate and report on the availability and the suitability of Reform Schools, Schools of Industry and Places of Safety for the accommodation of the children awaiting trial (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:2,1). The request led to the founding of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk (IMC) and the committee was introduced to the public in July 1995.

The IMC consisted of representatives of the Ministries of Welfare, Justice, Safety and Security, Education, Health as well as representatives of the RDP (Reconstruction and Development Program) and a number of non-governmental organisations such as Lawyers for Human Rights, the National Association of Child Care Workers and the National Council for Child and Family Welfare. Ms Fraser-Moleketi headed the committee (Dep Soc Dev 1996c:4).

The committee based its investigation and recommendations on empirical research that took the form of situational analysis (Dep Soc Dev 1996d:9). The framework used for the committee's investigation was developed from three documents: the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), which was ratified by South Africa in June 1995, the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty and Chapter 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa no 200 of 1993.

It is important to note that children's homes were not included in the sample of the research done by the IMC and that the findings of their report did not reflect on the state of these facilities as such. Yet, the findings were relevant to the general situation of children's homes and therefore the recommendations were also valid for these facilities.

In summary, the IMC found that although some of the facilities targeted in their research were suitable to accommodate trial awaiting children in terms of physical characteristics, they could not be recommended for this use because their management reflected significant evidence of abuse of the children's human rights. The IMC recommended that serious changes be made to child and youth care in general before admitting children awaiting trial to any such facilities (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:3).

In their report the IMC distinguished between recommendations aimed at the short term, which would address the crisis, and those aimed at the medium to long term (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:5-25; Dep Soc Dev 1996d:10-14). This study focuses on those recommendations that affect children's homes and offer a motivation for these recommendations based on the IMC's findings.

For the medium to long term the IMC recommended amongst others, the following:

- that changes and recommendations be formalised and supported by legislation
- that regular and unexpected monitoring of institutions be done by an independent body
- that national standards be formed by which all child care facilities should be managed
- that resources are aimed at family preservation and reconstruction work between
- children in care and their families of origin

(Dep Soc Dev 1996b:24,25)

### 3 VOICES OF THE DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

#### 3.1 Introduction

The children in residential care find themselves in the disadvantaged position of being separated from their loved ones and placed in institutionalised care more often than not, due to the inadequacy of their parents. As a result of their institutionalisation, they lack the privileges that other children take for granted. In many cases they suffer discrimination from the rest of society (this issue is discussed in the following chapter) as a result of their poor status in society.

Added to the disadvantage of being an institutionalised child, the care that the state provided the children with was inadequate, unfair and at times inhumane. Many of the black children in residential care suffered the further disadvantage of not being treated equal to white, coloured and Asian children. These children suffered a “double disadvantage”.

As mentioned before, the IMC committed itself to investigate the circumstances of the children in order to improve their situation. The results of their findings indicated that the conditions of the care that children at state child care institutions received contravened the standards and the rules of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

However, the improvement of child care was not the only mission of the IMC. As the government had been spending a large amount of money on the care of the children, an advantage of the transformation was that a lot of money could be saved.

The IMC calculated that it had cost the taxpayer (or as they state, South Africa) annually R 200 943 552 to care for the 7248 children in care of 53 of the state institutions (there are 60 in total). That came to an estimated R75 per child per day. If these children had stayed in the system between five to fifteen years (which many of them did in the previous child care system) it would have cost the government between R 138 620 and



R 415 860 per child. **The IMC argued that: “if the state paid those children’s homes, which delivered an effective service, R 50 pd (per day), or even R 75 pd (per day), and children returned to their families in a two-year period or less, the total cost to the state for each child would be approximately R 37 200, or R 55 800, or less” (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:8). The return of children back to the community would save the government a substantial amount of money. Considering that the Netherlands sponsored the cost of the transformation of child and youth care (Theron 1999; 2000), the money that was to be saved by the transfer of children back to the community would seem a profitable venture. Whether these “profits” were used in the interest of the children and families in terms of reunification services will be discussed in chapter six.**

The findings of the IMC are discussed in the following paragraphs.

### 3.2 Distance from the family

In the previous child and youth care system children were removed from their families and placed in facilities far away. The distances caused difficulties for preserving the families and for doing reconstruction work. The IMC found that 1 815 children were placed in facilities beyond provincial borders, which made regular contact between the child and the family unlikely, if not impossible (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:7). Furthermore, the reconstruction work aimed at the children and their families was found to be inadequate (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:18,19).

The reasons why most of these children were originally removed from their families stem from poor socio-economic circumstances. For the same reason these families were incapable of commuting to the facilities to keep regular contact with their children. Furthermore, the children in care were often prevented from seeing their families due to punishment by the staff at the facility, due to an internal arrangement or due to the lack of funds from the state for transport fees. Whatever the reasons, the distances that the placement of children in the child care facilities created between the children and their parents showed a disregard for the bond between the child and the family.

### 3.3 Inappropriate placements

In the previous system many children were inappropriately placed (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:19,20).

In some instances children in residential care who showed behavioural problems found themselves in conflict with the staff seeming unable to cope with their behaviour, either due to lack of training or to inexperience. These children were transferred deeper into the system – to a School of Industry and from there to a Reformatory. The criteria of the facilities for the admission of children, and not the needs of the children, determined the children's placement. These criteria included amongst others race, age and intellectual ability. Children who did not meet the criteria were stuck in Places of Safety. There was a shortage of children's homes and the majority of the homes were situated in urban areas. As a result, black children and children with special needs were unlikely to ever be accommodated in children's homes (Woods 1998).

Mrs C Watson, the chief social worker in charge of child care control in Port Elizabeth around 1995-1996, shared with me some of her experiences (Watson 2000). She described how she came across children in Places of Safety for whom no records existed in the Department of Welfare. According to the state they did not legally exist; they had no dates of birth, no names and no surnames. They were known by the names that the staff at the Places of Safety had given them. She had to take these children to the district surgeon to estimate their age by assessing their teeth and the size of their hands. She randomly chose names and surnames for the children from the court registrar that corresponded with their race. The dates on which their transfers were ordered by the children's court were backdated with their estimated ages, and so they received official dates of birth. On the other hand several children had files at the Department of Welfare, but the children could not be traced. Families in the community had adopted or fostered them without having followed the proper legal procedures. The files of hundreds of children contained no more information than the original admittance form stating their

names and the fact that their parents could not be traced. There was no information available to trace their families and no notes regarding the history of their stay at the Places of Safety despite the fact that they had lived there for years. The staff at these institutes did not take responsibility for updating their files and neither did the outside social workers, whose job it was to do reconstruction work with these children (Watson 1999).

The majority of children in the Reform Schools had been placed there on grounds of economic crimes – crimes committed due to poor socio-economic circumstances. These children were accommodated along with juveniles who had committed more serious and violent crimes and who posed a danger to others. It was plainly unsafe and unethical to group these children together in one facility (Theron 1999).

Children, who should have remained at home whilst reconstruction work was done with their families, were removed from their homes. During conversations with two girls at the Childrens' Haven M T R Smit, stories of their removal unfolded. They had been removed from their families on the grounds of sexual abuse and / or incest. Their removal resulted from the fact that the perpetrators (in both cases the stepfather) were serving prison sentences. The families' main sources of income therefore fell away. The mothers were unable to take care of the children and subsequently they were removed and placed in residential care. In both cases the perpetrators returned from prison to the family while the girls had to continue their stay at the children's haven. The mothers of these girls chose to live with the perpetrators after their release from jail rather than leaving them in order to be re-united with their daughters. The girls struggled for years to come to terms with the situation. For many years they missed out on growing up in the security of a family. These girls have experienced their removal from their families as "the second punishment", the first being the sexual assault or rape. They have resisted this punishment in various ways such as regular absconding, aggressive behaviour towards others and promiscuous conduct.

The removal and institutionalisation of the victims of sexual abuse does not serve their interests. It removes them from the abuse but at the same time their right to grow up with their families is removed from them. Instead of removing them and placing them in residential care, reconstruction work should have been done with these families. The mothers of these children should have been supported and empowered so that their financial dependence on the perpetrators, which was a driving factor for remaining with them, was addressed.

### 3.4 The right of choice

Children were placed and transferred by bureaucratic action. The previous form of the Child Care Act enabled the Children's court to place or transfer a child on the recommendation of the social worker. In some cases this was done after deliberation with a multidisciplinary team but more often it was based on an individual's one-sided decision (Woods 1998). The children and their parents were not included in this decision-making and they had no statutory right to question such a decision. The parents (not to mention the children) were mostly in a position of economic and social disempowerment, leaving them in a vulnerable position against the power of the bureaucratic system.

### 3.5 Delays

There were serious delays in the system of placing and transferring children. The delays resulted in children waiting for placement for periods between six months to two years in prisons, police cells and Places of Safety (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:20). This was generally not due to a lack of beds available, but due to bureaucratic errors or delays. The children who were removed as a result of parental neglect or abuse were being further "punished" by these deferments. A system that was originally aimed at rescuing children from undesirable and even perilous circumstances ended up doing them a disservice and an injustice. These children found themselves in state of limbo – not knowing what the future held for them. One could speculate that these children felt helpless against the authority with which the children's court and the management at the residential facilities

made decisions about their lives without consulting them. They were in a position where their families had discarded them, where they lived in a facility isolated from their community and where they were left without adults who advocated their rights.

### 3.6 Lack of privacy and dignity

The IMC found that the conditions at the child care facilities did not reflect respect for the dignity of the children. The children did not enjoy confidentiality: Their incoming and outgoing mail was opened and their telephone conversations were listened to (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:11).

The sanitary facilities were found to allow little or no privacy for the children. The report states that: "in the majority of bathrooms there are no doors or curtains on the showers and at some facilities no doors on the toilets. At some facilities open toilets with no walls and doors surrounding them were found within the sleeping area of the dormitory" (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:11).

### 3.7 Discipline

In their report, the IMC recommended that the general approach to child and youth care should move away from an approach of "control and punishment" towards an approach of "developmental care and discipline" (Dep Soc Dev 1996c:23). This recommendation is reflected in the following quote from their report: "The punishment / reward system in many facilities is unduly harsh, with a blurring of rights and privileges. This system operates contrary to the development of a therapeutic and developmental milieu" (Dep Soc Dev 1996c:14).

The IMC found a disturbing rate of physical, emotional and sexual abuse at the hands of the caretakers in the institutes they assessed. Sodomy between children was found to be a common problem in the child care facilities as it was not the practice to employ night staff (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:15). In some instances no records were kept of the punishment

procedures (Dep Soc Dev 1996a). Isolation, a practice generally regarded as against basic child care ethics, was used as punishment in many of the facilities (Dep Soc Dev 1996a). At a specific facility children had to sit in an enclosure after school adjourned until bedtime. They were not allowed access to their bedrooms during this period and there were no recreational facilities available to keep them occupied (Dep Soc Dev 1996a).

### 3.8 Programs for the children

The IMC's findings regarding the standard and the availability of programs that address the needs of the children at the child care facilities, indicated a lack of appropriate developmental and therapeutic programs to address the children's developmental and emotional needs. Furthermore, the findings revealed that there was no individual developmental planning done by the staff for the children in their care. In many of the facilities the children did not have access to a social worker or a psychologist (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:17,18).

### 3.9 Training

The IMC report emphasised the urgency of the training of staff. The IMC identified a general lack of professional capacity to cope with the needs of the children. Statistics in the report indicated that only eleven percent of child care workers in schools of industry and reform schools, and thirty percent in Places of Safety, were qualified child care workers. There were no requirements at these institutions in terms of basic qualifications (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:9).

The staff were either untrained or under-trained. Some were trained but lacked experience for the specific positions they held. Others were doing work other than what they had originally been employed to do. There was an uneven distribution of child care workers between facilities. A video (Dep Soc Dev 1996a) taken at an institute showed eleven nurses employed to look after forty-four healthy children. At another institute security guards were filling in as child care workers (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:18).

The video (Dep Soc Dev 1996a) revealed a shocking rate of absenteeism amongst staff. The managing of the child care facilities were found to be unsatisfactory and the IMC identified the need for a profession of child care, one that would be accountable to a code of ethics and a specific code of practice (Theron 1999).

Ratios between staff and children were not standardised and it varied between 1:6 in some facilities and 1:63 in others (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:9).

### 3.10 Inequality

The investigation of the IMC highlighted the existence of inequality in terms of the care given to children across the categories of facilities as well as within the same categories. Many of these differences (but not all of them) related to the division of facilities according to race (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:11). There was a disproportionate distribution of government funds among child care facilities. The facilities accommodating white, coloured and Asian children received the majority of government funding, whilst the facilities that housed black children were significantly under-funded. The conditions at the facilities accommodating black children reflected a general lack of resources (Theron 1998).

The video (Dep Soc Dev 1996a) told the sad and shocking story of the poor conditions hundreds of black children found themselves in. The children at these facilities had insufficient clothes and blankets and their dormitories were cold and unhygienic. The ablution facilities were open either with no walls or no doors to provide privacy. Toilet paper was unavailable and at one facility the showers were used as toilets. The IMC-report on a detention centre in Bloemfontein illustrated the conditions that the children were living in: "... the ablution block has broken windows, broken wash basins and broken taps. Human excrement was found on the floors and in the showers. This is a result of too few toilets available at any time ... [A] lack of toilet paper seems to lead to

the fact that children have to use their clothing to clean themselves" (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:49).

The children at these facilities already cast out of their communities, found themselves in inhumane conditions. Their living conditions reflected a lack of respect for their dignity and failed to create any sense of security and nurturing. The standard of living in these facilities was a far cry from the international standards and ethics.

The IMC found that, although the facilities had started to integrate children from other races, the staff changes had been slow. At the educational facilities the majority of the staff was white. Afrikaans was used in these facilities and staff could seldom speak more than one language. Furthermore, there were many complaints of racism from the children (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:16).

The IMC also found discrimination on grounds of gender. They found that the proportion of male and female appointments at management level did not promote gender equality. The four facilities (featuring in the IMC-report) that catered for the needs of adolescent girls, were managed by males (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:16).

#### 4 INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS OF CHILD CARE

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) was one of several conventions addressing the rights of groups of people whose rights had previously been disregarded (Theron 1999). According to international standards of human rights, children are entitled to special care, assistance and protection based on the child's physical and mental development.

The value of the standards set by the UN convention introduced a humanitarian perspective to the debate on child care facilities. It emphasised the fundamental rights, dignity and worth of children as people. It was aimed at improving freedom of people, justice and peace in the world (Dep Soc Dev 1996b:Annexure iii).



In my opinion this humanitarian perspective is an attempt to reiterate the most basic motivation for human's existence. It reflects a condemnation of violations of human rights across the world and disregard for human life and human dignity.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) regarded the family as an essential unit in society:

... The family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibility within the community ... [T]he child ... should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

(Dep Soc Dev 1996b: Annexure iii)

In addition to this, the convention reiterated the rights of the child to freedom of thought and expression as well as the rights of parents to make decisions regarding the care, upbringing and education of their children.

The convention not only viewed the family-unit as an important milieu to raise children, but also emphasised the responsibility the family has to contribute productively to its community. According to the convention, productivity of communities relies on the autonomy and independence of its members and therefore these characteristics are identified as the ultimate goals when caring for and raising children (Dep Soc Dev 1996b: Annexure iii). The convention's focus on productivity is not isolated from the economic ideology of the Western world as capitalism relies on the productivity of people and encourages competition and the striving towards individual financial independence.

The UN convention subscribed to the universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights that state that everyone is entitled to their

human rights free from discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Special emphasis was put on the fact that children have the right to be raised and educated in such a manner that they are encouraged to respect their own culture and language, even if a child is raised in a culture and language different from the norm (Dep Soc Dev 1996b: Annexure iii).

This aspect is relevant to children in the South African context. The integration of people from different cultures has occurred on many levels over the last few years, in schools, on the sport field, in public places, at work and in churches. Although the integration is, at face value, taking place relatively free from overt forms of racial discrimination, prejudices and biases amongst races have not vanished. Discrimination has become more covert and continues in subtle ways. Discrimination becomes apparent in situations where black or coloured children are more and more accommodated in predominantly white schools and children's homes. The "newcomers" are encouraged to behave in ways that reflect Western values, languages and traditions. They are encouraged to converse, learn and play according to the tradition of the school or the home while being discouraged to speak their mother tongue in class and on the play ground or to behave in line with their culture. These children enter these schools or homes with a disadvantage (Oosthuizen 1998).

The following example illustrates the role that cultural prejudice plays in schools and children's homes. A Xhosa-speaking boy was admitted at the Children's Haven M T R Smit. Initially he went to the school across from the premises of the haven with most of the other children. As he showed difficulty in coping with the academic standard at the school, he was pushed aside by the children. Consequently he was transferred to a Xhosa-speaking school in the neighbouring black township. There he was with his "own" people. But still he was ostracised on the grounds that he lived amongst the "white rich Boere". He was seen dropped off at school every morning by a white driver – in one of several motor cars (Watson 2000). In the end this little boy had to be transferred to a predominantly black child care facility.

Another example underlines deep-seated cultural prejudice. When the first coloured children were admitted to the Children's Haven M T R Smit they were grouped together in one cottage under the care of a coloured child care worker. The placement resulted in racial conflict between the white and the coloured children. The staff then moved the coloured children in with the white children and the move brought an end to the racial conflict (Watson 2000).

The UN convention made it clear that it is the responsibility of the state to oversee that children grow up free from violence and abuse. Regarding the administering of discipline, the UN convention stated: "State Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of that child" (Dep Soc Dev 1996b: Annexure iii). In line with this statement, the convention's policy emphasised that discipline is to be administered in a manner consistent with the spirit of the convention and with the child's human dignity.

## 5 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRANSFORMATION

### 5.1 Minimum Standards

The IMC constructed a document, referred to as the "Minimum Standards", based on the following documents:

- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty
- the Child Care Act no 74 of 1983
- chapter three of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa no 200 of 1993
- the findings of the IMC's investigation into the state of child care facilities

(Dep Soc Dev 1996d:97; Dep Soc Dev 1998b; Dep Soc Dev 1998d)

The Minimum Standards formed the basis of all the projects aimed at the transformation of child and youth care in South Africa.

From the investigation and consequent recommendations of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk, several projects were developed. These projects involve all the national ministries involved with children and the youth. Some of these projects include the following:

- Changes to the policy of child and youth care were addressed and legislation was amended. The two acts that were amended in order to accommodate the transformation process are the Child Care Act no 74 of 1983 and the Criminal Procedure Act no 51 of 1977 (Theron 1999; Dep Soc Dev 1996d:21)
- The National Association of Child Care Workers designed a training project that trained child and youth care workers, and the Technicon RSA managed the training (Theron 1999).
- Individuals in the field of psychology, criminology and social work were trained as probation officers to improve their skills in preparing children's cases before court and to prepare and present children's cases with the necessary skills (Theron 1999). The training addressed the shortcomings of the previous system where social workers lacked skills to successfully present children's cases to court and felt intimidated by the court proceedings (Woods 1998).
- The Stepping Stones-project was started and is run in Port Elizabeth. The Project is aimed at children who have committed crimes. The focus of the program is on restorative justice as opposed to the retributive justice approach of the previous system. This approach offers the perpetrator and the victim central roles in the justice process and is aimed at restoring relationships (Dep Soc Dev 1998a:47; Dep Soc Dev [s a]b:45; Dep Soc Dev [s a]c).

- The Professional Foster Care-project employs people and trains them in child-care. The program aims to place children-in-need with a family member or someone in the child's community and pays the person a salary for caring for the child. Meanwhile, this person is trained for child care. Professional fostering is a new concept in this country and foster parents traditionally received poor financial support from the government and no training. This project was started and is run in Kimberley (Dep Soc Dev 1998a: 7).

## 5.2 Project Go

The project of concern to this research is Project Go. The project was launched on a national level in November 1997 and was aimed at facilitating the transformation of the child and youth care system. The key strategies of Project Go involved the assessment and the monitoring of children who enter the system, move within the system, remain in the system and move out of the system (Dep Soc Dev 1998e). The aim of the assessment and the monitoring became a slogan in Welfare circles: "To ensure that children remain or are placed in the least restrictive, most empowering facility which is appropriate to their developmental needs." In order to control the placement and transfer of children, Project Go placed a moratorium on the transfer of children deeper into the system for the period 1 January 1998 to 30 November 1998. Later, they extended this period to November 1999 (Woods 1998; Dep Soc Dev 1998e).

The term "deeper into the system" needs some clarification. Children in the care of the Department of Welfare were placed into different child care facilities depending on the children's needs and the reasons for their removal. After removal the children were temporarily placed in Places of Safety until such a time that the children's court came to a decision, with the help of a social worker, as to where the children should be placed. From the Places of Safety the children were transferred either to a children's home, a school of industry or to a reform school depending on the reasons for the removal of the children and whether they met the criteria of the facilities. If the reasons for removal

included neglect or abuse, the children were generally transferred to a children's home. Children with a history of behavioural problems were placed either in a reform school or a school of industry depending on the nature of their offences. The latter two facilities offered a more structured and secure environment for the children (Dep Soc Dev 1998e; Watson 1997; Woods 1998; Matthews 1999).

The project was named "Go" to illustrate movement and momentum in a system that had been static and slow to move children into suitable facilities or out of unsuitable facilities. To use another transformation slogan, Project Go was aimed at "flushing out" a blocked system. During the period of the moratorium, the Project Go Committee evaluated and approved all the transfers of the children in the system once the staff at the child care facilities had done a thorough assessment of the children (Dev Soc Dev 1998e; Watson 1997; Woods 1998; Matthews 1999).

Project Go's functions did not stop at the control of transfers- it also introduced a system which re-assessed all the children in the care of the Department of Welfare and other child care facilities. The assessment was referred to as the "Developmental Assessment", and it was aimed at evaluating each individual child's developmental needs and comparing those needs to the character of the facility in which the child was placed. The social workers at the facilities were instructed to assess each child in their care to ascertain whether the facilities met and accommodated the needs of the children. In addition to the assessments, the social workers were expected to develop action plans aimed at the each child's needs. Previously, developmental plans for the children were either non-existent or they were too vague and general to be of any real value to the unique developmental needs of every child. The deadline for the completion of the assessments was the end of February 1998 (Dep Soc Dev 1998e.5).

The IMC designed the transformation of child and youth care in four levels. The first level of the intervention was aimed at prevention services and programs to assist the children and their families who are at risk, for example, families who have problems with alcohol abuse, unemployment or domestic violence. In this first level preventative work

would support the children and their families to avoid that their circumstances deteriorate to the stage where further intervention would be necessary (Dep Soc Dev 1996d:20).

At the second level, the transformation was aimed at establishing early intervention programs for those children who showed signs of being-at-risk, for example those who had committed crimes or regularly absconded from home and school. Level three was aimed at statutory intercession. Before, intervention in the child care system started here. Children identified as being in need of care or protection were assessed by the children's court and placed in residential care. At the fourth level, the transformation was aimed to ensure a continuum of care services rendered to children and their families. Care at this level suggested temporary residential care with a focus on the reconstruction of the family and the eventual reunification of the child and the family (Dep Soc Dev 1996d:20,21).

Despite earlier impressions that Project Go was temporary, it continued until early 2000 when the Department of Welfare absorbed its functions (Matthews 2000). The Department of Welfare then took over the administration of the project from the Inter-Ministerial Committee. Project Go continued because the principles it represented were vital to the transformation of child and youth care. The original funding for Project Go came in part from the Netherlands and was unlikely to continue indefinitely. Therefore, the Welfare Ministry's budget had to assimilate the cost of the continuation of Project Go (Theron 1999).

### 5.3 Developmental Assessment

The model of the Developmental Assessment was designed on recommendation of the IMC and it was aimed at addressing the lack of therapeutic and educational programs at the child care facilities, which focused on developing the child as an individual. The aim of the model was: "design and enable the implementation of an integrated child and youth care system based on a developmental and ecological perspective" (Dep Soc Dev 1996d:4).

The Developmental Assessment Model was developed and designed from models used in Canada, as well as from a model used in child care in England. The Canadian models focused on the care of the youths of the Native American Indian culture. Ms. Lesley du Toit, who was the project manager of Project Go at the time of its launch, managed the adaptation of these models (Woods 1998; Theron 1999).

The philosophy underlying the Developmental Assessment Model differed from the previous approach to child and youth care. This new approach required a mind-shift for all involved in the system of child care. It required a new way of thinking not only about children, but also about people in general. Project Go emphasised the training of child care workers in the Developmental Assessment Model and the eventual training was run by the National Association of Child Care Workers (NCCW). Towards the end of 1998 most of the child care workers employed by the Department of Welfare had been trained in the new model and many child care workers and managing staff of private or semi-private child care facilities (Woods 1998).

The philosophy of the Developmental Approach formed an important background to the principles of Project Go and the transformation in general. In the process of caring for children and the youth the Developmental Approach emphasised the following aspects:

- focusing on strengths rather than pathology
- building competency rather than attempting to cure
- encouragement of trial-and-error learning
- always taking the context into consideration
- understanding and responding appropriately to developmental tasks and needs
- working with the total person, not the so-called "pathology" or the problem
- a strong belief (reflected in practice) of the potential within each child and family regardless of the reason for referral



- work is aimed at maximising potential rather than minimising the problem.
- a multi-disciplinary team (not hierarchical) approach is used in which the child and family are recognised as full members of the team

(Dep Soc Dev 1996d:5)

The Developmental Approach views development as a life-long process, something that one cannot force or accelerate but a process that one can support and nurture. The approach maintains that humans have potential to grow and change throughout their lives. It views people as “learners on a journey of development” rather than experts on other’s lives (Dep Soc Dev [s a]:1). This optimistic approach believes that mistakes are not failures. Instead “mistakes” are considered as opportunities to learn and grow. The emphasis is on the present and the future – the role of the past is at most informative to the present (Dep Soc Dev [s a]:1).

## 6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

The implications of the Developmental Assessment for the child and youth care system are multiple. Previously, decisions regarding the lives of the children in the child care system were made on their behalf. As indicated earlier in this chapter, children had no say from the time they were removed from their communities to the time they were placed in residential care. The process disempowered both the children and their families (Woods 1998). The staff and the court made the decisions regarding placements and transfers in terms of the childrens’ circumstances, their misconduct or their offences.

In contrast, the Developmental Approach encouraged the participation of the children and their families in the process of placement or transfer. Within this approach the child care workers and the social workers regarded the children as active agents in their lives. This approach determined the children’s placement in terms of the children’s needs and their strengths. The starting point became their needs and it was no longer based on whether the children met the criteria of the child care facilities.

The significance of the model lies in its distinction from the traditional model in terms of its view of the child. Within the traditional approach the child was “diagnosed”, as having a problem or having committed an offence and was placed in residential care on grounds of the “diagnosis”. Once described as problems, the children were labelled and from then on treated according to the labels, for example, a conduct disorder, a defiant child, an abused child or a rejected child. The labels determined not only where children lived (for a very long time), it also formed the basis on which the children’s therapeutic goals were set and it determined the reaction of the staff and others to the children. It was difficult for the children to get away from their original labels and they resorted to behaving according to the labels. In my conversations with the children at the Children’s Haven M T R Smit they said that people expected the worst (behaviour) from them and would not trust them as they would their own children. Their attitude became cynical: “Why disappoint them all?” In other words, let us then do whatever we are being suspected and accused of anyway.

The previous approach to children in residential care privileged the view of the child in the light of “the problem”. The “problem” might have occurred years before, and could have been the result of specific circumstances in their families or their larger communities for example, abuse or neglect of the children, abandonment, economic crimes or drug abuse. These “problems” described only a part of their lives and of who they were. The therapeutic action was aimed at this problem and the children’s strengths often went undiscovered, were left unexplored and therefore underdeveloped.

The “traditional” approach was not a foreign one but was based on the models of the helping professions such as psychology, social work and pastoral therapy. Some of these models tend to dwell on the problems and emotional injury of the past. The effect of the past on the person’s present and future is privileged. The problem that the client in therapy presents with, is given prominence and character. Clients are often referred to as “the depressive”, “the obsessive-compulsive” or “the paranoid”. Labels are shortened into slang and used between professionals when they refer to their clients. Surely we all know

these labels. There is “the schiz” (the person suffering from schizophrenia), “the passy-aggy” (the person who presents with a pattern of passive aggressive behaviour) and, as a psychology student recently referred to, a “juvie”. The student was referring to a child who has a history of misconduct and who, in old terminology, would be referred to as a “juvenile delinquent”. The practice of labelling is disrespectful and negates the uniqueness of the client (in this case the child). It degrades the complexity of the person to one phrase or one word and it reflects on a therapeutic approach that is not only unethical, but also one that is unable to see and move beyond the problem saturated story

The approach of treating children as problems privileges the problem’s description of the person – it does not pay justice to the totality of the person. The approach stems from the modernist approaches to social sciences, which claim that people can become experts on other people. It argues that to diagnose is a reliable and valid exercise and that treating the person in accordance with that diagnosis is therefore beneficial to the person. In becoming the experts on others, the persons who had trained in the helping profession start to pay more and more attention to their own voices and their theories, and less and less attention to the stories and the voices of their clients. The traditional modernist approaches privilege the contributions of statistical research to contribute to their knowledge of others and use this knowledge to make decisions on the clients’ behalf. In the process it minimises the knowledge that the clients can contribute about themselves and seldom involves the clients in the decision-making process of matters directly affecting them.

My conversations with the various participants in this study reflected that the voices of the children, their own unique stories, had for along time been silenced by the voices of professionals like social workers, psychologists and teachers. The children’s perceptions of life at the children’s haven or at school were seldom listened to. The sounds of their stories were drowned by the voices of the theories of the professionals.

The implications of a therapeutic model for the ethics of the helping of and caring for people ought to be decisive factors in choosing models. The implications of the

traditional model for the care of children-in-need, are that children are labelled, negated to “problems”, treated with disrespect, not allowed deviation from the norms of statistics, and not involved in decision-making processes that directly affect them. It is surprising that for decades professionals believed that this way of caring for children was in their best interest or that it was ethically sound.

In the same way that the Developmental Assessment Model was preferred to the “traditional one”, so a narrative approach was developed as an alternative to traditional modernist approaches to therapy and counselling. The principles of the Developmental Assessment Model and a narrative approach both value human potential and embraces human growth and change. Both these approaches regard people as holistic beings. Although both approaches acknowledge that the past has a role in people’s lives, they stress that people do not have to linger in the past. Both regard people as unique with equally unique stories. Both maintain people’s potential to change relies on the person’s strengths in the process of caring for them. Both are aimed at empowering people.

Although there are some similarities between the Development Assessment Model and a narrative approach, there are also differences. A narrative approach privileges the notion that people’s stories are socially constructed. It emphasises the storying and re-storying of stories – those told and those not-yet-told. A narrative approach challenges people’s ethics and values. It invites them to choose just and ethical ways of being.

In line with the Developmental approach and a narrative approach, the next two chapters tell the stories of the children at the Children’s Haven M T R Smit. Chapter five tells the stories of the children’s stay at the haven, the school and the community. Chapter six reflects their experiences of Project Go and the implications of the transformation for them and their families.

## THE STORIES OF THE CHILDREN AT THE CHILDREN'S HAVEN M T R SMIT

Everything has become too much. It feels like I'm carrying a mountain. Every child needs his mother in his life. I have been in the children's haven for almost thirteen years. Why do I have to stay here? ..... I hate this place; I would rather die before I spend another day here. It's easy for the child care workers because they don't know how we feel. They have their children with them. How can I love when no-one loves me, how can I care when no-one cares for me and how can I live in peace when people hate me.

It feels as if two walls are pushing against me. I don't feel like going to school and I don't feel like living. Why must the children always suffer? I did not ask to be born or to live here. So why do I have to? Every visiting day I have to sit and watch other children's parents visit them. You won't know what that feels like. Or you don't care. .... You need a mother who loves you, with whom you can share your secrets and your jokes. It feels like a part of me has been torn away and that part is the biggest part of my life. Why do I have to obey people who won't listen to me? ..... I won't stay here any longer even if I have to run away again and again and again...

(Petra)

### I INTRODUCTION

Through my work with children of various children's havens over the past seven years I heard many of their life stories either directly from them or from the people taking care of them. These stories taught me a lot about children's homes and about being a child in such a home. I am grateful for the opportunity I had to work with these children and to learn so much from their stories.

During March and April 1998 and I had the privilege to listen to the stories of thirty one children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit about their everyday experiences as well as their experiences of the effects of Projects Go. Prior to and subsequent to these

conversations I had regular conversations with individual children regarding their experiences and their problems. Some of these conversations still continue.

It is difficult to provide set statistics for the children at the Children's Haven M. T. R. Smit, as the admission of children to the haven as well as the transferring of children out of the haven is a continuous process. The number of children therefore fluctuated throughout the course of this study. In general the haven accommodates around 100 children of all races between the ages of three and eighteen years. Between 13 and 17 children share a cottage. Since the cottages are filled according to gender, the haven accommodates an equal amount of boys and girls. The youngest boys and girls between the ages of three and ten years old, share a cottage – the boys living in the one wing of the cottage and the girls in the other. The same arrangement exists for the 13 children who attend the Merryvale School for intellectually disabled children.

Due to the fact that it traditionally was an institution for children of Afrikaans-speaking families who were members of the Dutch Reformed Church, the majority of children there are still from an Afrikaans background. At present the facility accommodates about one hundred children of which about a quarter are coloured children. During the period of this study there were one or two black children at the haven.

In contrast to popular belief, only five percent of the children at the haven are orphaned. The rest of the children are there for a number of reasons:

- emotional abuse and neglect
- physical abuse
- abandonment
- sexual abuse
- parents are untraceable
- parents are unable to care for their children

(Children's Haven M.T.R. Smit 2000a:3)

Although the majority of the children have families, only forty percent of the children are able to visit their families regularly. The rest are compelled to stay at the haven for weekends and holidays (Children's Haven MTR Smit 2000a:3).

The children identified several themes that run through their lives. The rationale for a discussion of the themes in the following paragraphs is two-fold: the themes offer an understanding of the children's situation at the haven and they form the background against which to view the implications of the transformation for the children. The implications of the transformation are discussed in detail in chapter six.

## 2 REJECTION AND ABANDONMENT

From my conversations with the children the prominent themes in their life stories seemed to be rejection and abandonment. Associated with these themes were profound feelings of hurt and anger. Petra's letter at the beginning of the chapter was written by a child in the midst of an emotional crisis. The thoughts and feelings expressed in the letter were morbid and negative and it reflected the effects of the child's problems on her life at the time. It does not imply that all the children perceive and express their stay at the haven similarly, nor does it imply that the child who wrote the letter continued to feel the way she did after she wrote the letter. It merely serves as an expression of a child regarding the effects of institutionalisation on her.

From my conversations with the children, it seemed that underlying rejection and accompanying feelings of hurt and anger, influenced their day-to-day lives to a great degree. Most of the children were resourceful and managed their day-to-day tasks without allowing their emotional difficulties to overwhelm them. They seemed determined to enjoy life and reflected wisdom, independence and maturity that I found surprising for children of their ages. Yet, a number of these children experienced their difficulties as overwhelming. They struggled to continue on their journey without the hurts of the past constantly throwing them off track. They would experience life positively for a while only to be drawn in by the power of the effects of the past on them.

Situations in their daily lives that they perceived as reflecting critically on them or as rejecting them for who they are, re-awakened memories of rejection and abandonment by their parents. These situations were not necessarily unusual occurrences: their teachers scolded them, friends teased them or pushed them away, the child care workers got angry with them for their behaviour, and so forth. But in the context of the memories of the past, these seemingly innocent occurrences would have negative and often devastating effects on the children.

The letters and poetry of some of the children whom I saw individually for therapy are offered here. They have given me permission to publish their work and I do so with respect and admiration for their bravery. I introduce the children under the pseudonyms that (in most cases) they chose.

Annie was ten years old at the time that we met. She had experienced problems with Anger and Sadness. These problems robbed her of happiness and took away opportunities from her to enjoy the friendship of her peers. After many conversations Annie and I discovered that she was missing her dad a lot and that it was contributing greatly to the Sadness and the Anger. She wrote a letter of invitation to her father and drew a picture accompanying it. With her permission I included it here:

11 May 1999

Dear Dad

Hi dad, how are you. With me things are good and bad.

At school things are going well and I have many friends.

I have been talking for a long time to a lady about my Anger and my Sadness. I drew a picture for you, daddy to explain it, so that you can see that I'm standing in front and behind me stands Anger, much bigger than I.



It is Anger that everyone sees because Anger sometimes lets me do and say bad things. In this way, Anger takes away my friends and he makes grownups lose their patience with me.

After many conversations with the lady, we discovered that there is someone else standing behind Anger. That is Sadness. We discovered that in the children's haven it is easier to be angry than to be sad. Because all the children laugh and tease you when you cry. So I taught myself to get angry even when I was sad. For that reason Sadness stands behind Anger.

We also discovered what makes Sadness so large. It is because I miss you, daddy. I miss you and I want to talk to you and visit you. I want to invite you to help me to make Anger and Sadness smaller. So that I can feel like a ten-year old and not like a two-year old child. Ideas of how you can help me are to phone me and to come and visit me.

Annie then continued to copy the telephone number of the haven. A copy of the drawing included in the letter to Annie's father explained her thoughts and feelings.



With the help of the social worker we tried to trace the whereabouts of Annie's father in order to hand him Annie's letter. I tracked him down to a supermarket not more than ten minutes away from the haven, only to find that he had resigned from his job a month before. For months we were unable to trace him until recently, when he made contact with Annie. He was in hospital with terminal cancer. He died about three months ago and Annie is now an orphan. She has managed to minimise the effects of Anger and Sadness on her life. She has found a family to visit over weekends and during holidays.

Mary was seventeen years old at the time when she wrote her letter. She had been in the haven since she was about nine years old. I first met her when she was ten years old and since then she had been struggling with the effects of depression on her life. The depressive thoughts had a lot to do with the fact that her mother did not maintain contact with her. Her mother had abandoned her years before and then started a pattern of appearing and disappearing out of Mary's life. For the periods that she had contact with her mother, the depressive symptoms had no hold on her. At the time she wrote this letter, she was at a time in her life where she was taking back the control from the depression.

What is life worth?

To feel sad, withdrawn, hurt.

is that the point of life?

Or is that how one sees it?

But it is not right, for then you live in uncertainty, pain.

Uncertainty for life and for the future.

But how do I see life?

I am uncertain but I am busy to win

For I cannot leave my life to Darkness.

then I will destroy my life.

How do I want to supplement my life?

With trust and joy

so that I can approach life positively

with perseverance.

Mary left the haven after completing school. She now stays with an older sister while she is studying.

### 3 THE CHILDREN'S NEED TO BLEND IN

#### 3.1 Introduction

From my conversations with the children and with the child care workers, it seemed that *rejection* in the lives of the children at the children's haven dictated to them who they were, how they responded to people and how they interpreted other's responses to them. It blinded them to a great extent as to who they were apart from their parents' problems

and who they could become. It overshadowed their potential. A seventeen year-old girl expressed this well: "We are bad; our parents are bad and therefore we are bad."

The theme of abandonment also seemed to blind the community as to who these children were apart from their circumstances. They were stigmatised and labeled by the community as "children's home-children" (*kinderhuiskinders*), "orphans", "problem children" and "govies" (derived from the word "government"). They were associated with behavioural problems despite the fact that a minority of the children who lived at the haven presented problematic behaviour. The haven was often seen as the scapegoat when incidents and mishaps occurred at school and at church – even if children from the haven had no involvement. The children felt that their behaviour was unduly scrutinised.

### 3.2 Clothes and personal care

There never was a time when money had not been scarce at the haven. The haven's income relies in part on government subsidy, which remained unadjusted for the past nine years. In contrast to other governmental child care facilities that receive a hundred percent subsidy from the government, the Children's Haven M T R Smit receives only a fifty to a fifty-five percent subsidy. The total expenses of the haven for the financial year ending on 31 March 2000 were R 1 641 792.62. The government subsidy was R 942 000.00. The balance was made up of public donations, fund raising projects (which are managed by the principal of the haven) and earnings from trust funds. Despite these incomes, the haven suffered a loss of about R 40 000.00 during the previous financial year (Children's Haven M T R Smit 2000a; Annexure; Watson 2000).

Due to the financial problems, the children did not have the luxury of wearing new school uniforms to school, going on holidays and field trips or showing off with pocket money and lunch boxes filled with delicacies like their classmates. A child might be the third person to wear the same uniform to school and the blazer or the jersey may be a size too big. Despite extensive efforts by the staff at the haven to keep the children as tidy and

presentable as possible, they did at times stand out in a group for these reasons (Child care workers 1998).

At the haven the reigns had to be constantly pulled in on spending and the children did not have the privilege of owning their own clothes reflecting current fashions. Today's teenage-fashion is expensive and label-orientated. According to the children the way one dresses determines the peer group you are going to associate with. For example, the children have a way of telling, with one look at another child, whether the child is a "Surfer" or a "Homie". Surfers dress in a Billabong style with long imprinted shirts, knee-length shorts, slip-slop shoes and sunglasses that they wear on top of their heads. The Homies (which is associated with a gang) dress in very loose-fitting clothes, usually long pants that are darker in colour and bulky shoes. The assessment of another child's clothing is usually accompanied by a value judgment such as: "He / she is cool", which is favourable, or "He / she is a dork", which is an insult. A teenager's prestige and status are determined by the way they dress and although this may seem frivolous to an adult, the significance of fashionable clothing for the children cannot be underestimated. The teenagers' self image is directly linked to what the other teenagers think of them. According to them the way in which others judge them is based almost solely on their physical appearance.

From my observations it seemed that the teenagers from middle-class homes were more than ever aware of personal hygienic care. They valued skin care and hair care. Certain clothes stores make their existence from teenage fashions and popular magazines dedicate articles to trendy clothing and accessories. The majority of people in this country have access to television and everyone is exposed to advertising of the products that emphasise physical appearance and personal status. The poor and the disadvantaged are attracted by the same status symbols than those who can afford them. And so are the children at the haven. The fact that the children's haven is situated in a middle-class suburb, whilst the children mostly come from poverty-stricken communities, created an ethical dilemma: the children were exposed to an upmarket life style only to return to the

poor circumstances at their homes over weekends and holidays. This issue is discussed later in this chapter.

Like all teenagers, the children at the haven struggled with skin and hair problems and some of them with weight gain. Their peers at school had the advantage of the help of a dermatologist, beauty salon treatments and expensive skin care products to address their skin problems. They went to up-market hair salons and wear fashionable hair styles. Their parents had the means to offer meals that concentrate on a low fat and carbohydrate intake to combat weight gain and they had the privilege to use the parents' gymnasium membership or they got individual sport instruction. The children at the haven did not have these opportunities. They had to live with the reality of adolescence-acne, weight gain and greasy hair.

### 3.3 Food

The general standard of the food provided for the children at the haven had been good in the past compared to other child care facilities in disadvantaged communities. Since the start of the transformation, there has been a cutback on the standard of the food provided. The standard of the food is now on par with the standard of living of the majority of people in the country. The majority of the children comes from disadvantaged communities and for them the standard of living at the haven was more than satisfactory. There are a few children who come from a middle-class communities for whom it takes some adjustment to get used to the food provided. As mentioned before, the standard of living of the children at the haven is in general lower than the standard of living of the families in the community with which the haven's children associate.

### 3.4 Freedom of movement

The children at the haven lack the freedom of movement outside the premises of the haven. The property on which the haven is built is relatively large and offers the children ample space to play and to move about. It has a swimming pool, climbing apparatus and a

basketball court, which offer the younger children adequate opportunity to socialise and play. The property borders two busy roads that carry heavy traffic. The children have to cross these roads to get to school and to the shopping centre. Previously the property was fenced in and the gates remained open. Due to the danger of these two busy roads, the increase of crime in the community and incidents of intruders entering the property and breaking into some of the cottages, a wall was built around the property and security gates were installed. The children's movements in and out of the haven became more structured and controlled. The stricter security of the haven has limited the children's freedom of movement – fast becoming a common phenomenon in South Africa. The irony is whilst the children's movements were restricted at the haven in order to ensure their safety, they were allowed to roam the streets, travel on their own in taxis and frequent night clubs when visiting their parents over weekends and during holidays.

The children who attend the school across the road, have to leave the haven in a group, walk together and they arrive at school in a group. They attend church services in groups along with their child care workers. In a conversation with a group of four teenagers they described the trip by bus: "When the bus arrives at church people must think its empty because almost all the children are crouching on the floor of the bus." The children felt too embarrassed to be seen getting off the same bus with the children of the haven. The bus trip became such an issue for them that they have subsequently stopped going to the youth gatherings at the church.

The teenagers at the haven find their situation troublesome. They, more than the younger children, have a need to become part of the larger peer group at school. In the event that the children wanted to visit or receive a friend, they had to apply to the office for permission days in advance. As a result, the children's socialising with other children from the school or within the boundaries of the suburb was restricted. Their situation did not encourage them to make friends with "outside" children and if they managed to make friends, they were dependant on the friend's charity to provide money for "hanging out"-activities like going to the movies, playing video games at the games centre and getting something to eat.

The issues of clothing, food and other care products provided by the haven as well as their limited freedom of movement were vital issues for the children who live at the haven. The children were acutely aware of the differences between the way in which they lived and the way of life in the community around them. The older they got the more aware of these differences they became. They attended school and church with children from a middle-class environment and they went shopping in an up market shopping centre. They were reminded daily that they were different from other children in the community. Although they lived in the midst of the community, they didn't feel part of it; they felt like outsiders looking in and were often treated as such.

### 3.5 Conversations with Phillip and Julie

Little opportunity remains for the children to escape the identity of being a children's haven child. Phillip and Julie were both seventeen years old at the time that I met them. They highlighted their experiences during my conversation with a group of teenagers. Phillip had heard the news that he could return home as a result of his Project Go-assessment. Julie had chosen not to go home in order to finish her matric at the haven. Their comments highlighted their needs for the freedom that other teenagers enjoy.

*Riette: What are your plans from here on?*

*Phillip: I want to study, but then I have to stay on at the haven. If I don't I won't be able to study*

(The haven arranges study loans or bursaries for those teenagers who wish to further their studies.)

*Riette: If you could study, what would you choose to study?*



*Phillip: Marketing, anything with numbers.*

*Riette: It seems that you need to make a choice between staying on and studying or going home and not studying.*

*Phillip: As I said, I cannot stay in this place (the haven) any longer. For many reasons. One thing is your freedom. We are caged in. Especially those of us who are seventeen or eighteen, we need our free time, its difficult to be with friends.*

At this stage Julie shared her thoughts.

Julie: My brother has a great obsession with the haven. All his friends have money and drive cars, he just wants to go home.

Riette: What about you?

Julie: All my friends are going away (she is referring to her friends at the haven). My friends at school expect me to attend things and I can't. My freedom is limited. I am allowed to go to the café and then I have to return. I am staying to finish school.

Riette: What are your plans once you finish school?

Julie: I wanted to study photography but my parents don't have money... and the haven ... I cannot face it.

She continued to discuss the issue of the lack of freedom at the haven.

Julie: They (the staff) try to make things safe for us, they want to protect us and as a result we don't have the freedom that we want. Yes, teenagers should have limits and rules but there are no signs of freedom here. On Saturdays we are allowed to go to Walmer Park (a shopping centre in the suburb) between nine o' clock and twelve o' clock to buy necessities. If you play netball you have to return directly to the haven. There are no indications of freedom... unless you arrange it a week in advance.

Each one of these issues contributed to create the perception of "difference" between the children of the haven and the children of the community. Not only did the children physically live a different standard of life, they also associated this difference as a reflection on their status in society. The difference served as a barrier between the children of the haven and other children in the community.

The children expressed a need to become part of the community around them. They had a need to be regarded as individuals and they wanted to blend in at school, on the street and in church. They wanted to be "anonymous" and not to be known as a "child of the haven" (*kinderhuiskind*). They wanted to be given the opportunity to make friends and form relationships without people knowing that they were "different". They wanted to be absorbed by the community as their own persons – safe from the stigma of the haven and from everything that was associated with it. They felt that if given this opportunity, people would grow to like them and accept them for whom they really were.

The following two stories illustrate the awareness of two girls of their status in society.

### 3.6 Stories of Sam and Gloria

Gloria had outbursts of anger whenever they (the inhabitants of their cottage) had to go on an outing. Her behaviour resulted in spoiling the outing for everyone. The social worker referred her to me and after many conversations, Gloria and I got to the bottom of

the problem. Gloria explained that the outbursts were an effort to distance her from the other children on the outing because she was ashamed to be seen in their company. She was afraid that someone from school would recognise her with the rest of the haven's children and on one occasion, to the frustration of the child care worker, she tried to get away from them by walking on the other side of the road.

Sam, a teenager whom I have known for several years, came into the haven after having lived with her adoptive parents for several years. Her adoptive parents were financially well-off and enjoyed a certain amount of status in their upper-class community. When her parents renounced their adoption, she was received into the care of the haven. Along with a tremendous sense of loss and rejection, the change of economic status and the stigma attached to living in a children's haven, was overwhelming for Sam. She was an intelligent, proud and private girl, who had been taught to value her appearance and personal hygiene, she had to get used to sharing a bedroom and bathroom with strangers. She became acutely conscious of the fact that the children at the haven use inferior shampoos and other care products and wear mostly second-hand and old-fashioned clothing. The difference between the food she was used to at home and the food that the haven could afford was something that she struggled to come to terms with. For a long time Sam refused to eat the food at the haven. She used the money her adoptive parents sent her to buy the food and care products that she was accustomed to. At one stage she developed boils on her face due to the fact that she would not eat. Sam's thoughts would, at times, be occupied with the desire to return to the standard of living she had been used to and her behaviour at the haven and at school reflected her aversion for her new surroundings.

The previous paragraphs focused on the children's need to blend in with their peers in the community surrounding the haven. The following paragraphs describe the responses of the community to the children and emphasise its ambiguity towards the children.

## 4 THE COMMUNITY'S RESPONSES TO THE CHILDREN

### 4.1 Teasing

The community's responses to the children of the haven were ambiguous. Through the efforts of the church and individuals, people opened their hearts to the children – food donations poured in from supermarkets, money from companies, people volunteered to assist in caring for the children and to raise funds for the haven. Yet, at school the children were criticised and humiliated on grounds of their physical appearance. According to the children and the staff, the children were teased and ridiculed at school. They speculated that it happened because of the perception at school that no-one really came forward to defend them. Although teasing was not an uncommon phenomenon in schools, at times it became unbearable for the children. At least in part, it seemed to occur to them because they were a group of marginalised children. The teasing, as well as their helplessness at the knowledge that they were easy targets, caused significant emotional damage to these children who were already emotionally vulnerable. One child told of being called “Kentucky Fried Chicken”, a nickname that referred to his scarred appearance due to old burn wounds.

As a result of the constant teasing the children employed their own strategy – they stuck together. When one child from the haven was bullied or teased the rest pulled together and defended the child. These were times when the conflict that existed amongst themselves, made way for loyalty to one another. They proudly told me the stories of how they would call on their group, especially the older ones and the score between them and the other children would be settled. Regrettably, they also abused this power and threatened other children with violence. They used their power to settle scores with other children and this damaged their relationships with the other children at the school. And it strengthened the perception that they were troublemakers. Despite the hostility that they reflected towards the “other” children at times, they experienced a desire and need to become friends with them and to be accepted into their circles of friends.

#### 4.2 How Sophie and Margie beat Teasing

Two girls, aged ten years, whom I regularly met with for therapy, had problems with teasing. The teasing was not limited to the school but it was also present at the haven. After seeing them separately for a while I started to see them together, so that they became each other's audience. They shared their ideas of how they overcame the effects of teasing and gave each other tips on how to handle teasers. Later, I invited them as "experts on teasing" to address the masters psychology students whom I lecture to, on the topic of childhood teasing and peer abuse. Four students, two who had been teased as children and two who were teasers as children, formed the reflecting team for the session. I include snippets from our conversation to illustrate their thoughts on teasing but also to highlight their strengths in overcoming it. I call them Sophie and Margie.

Riette: When did teasing enter into your life?

Sophie: When I was four it started.

Riette: When did you decide to stand up against the teasing?

Sophie: This year.

Riette: How did it happen?

Sophie: I just decided to ignore the teasing.

Riette: How did you manage that?

Sophie: I counted to ten and then I walked away.

Riette: Out loud?

Sophie: Yes, or I started to sing.

Riette: How did that help?

Sophie: I could hear only my voice.

Riette: Did this work for you?

Sophie: Yes, but sometimes I called the auntie (child care worker).

I turned to Margie:

Riette: When did teasing start to bother you?

Margie: At my previous school (she mentioned the name of the school).

Riette: What were the kids teasing you about?

Margie: First they called me "Tortoise", but then they stopped.

Riette: Why did they call you Tortoise?

Margie: Because I was slow.

Riette: What were you thinking of when they said that?

Margie: I thought if I could tease them back but that would just make it worse. So I walked away.

The conversation continued for a while. I wanted her to talk to the students about the strategies she had employed to beat the teasing.

Riette: One of the techniques you used was to walk away, but there was also another way. Do you remember?

Margie nodded.

Riette: Would you like to share that?

Margie: It's the stare.

Margie developed a stare that she used to scare off the teasers. She has very unusual blue-gray eyes and she would look the teaser straight in the eyes without blinking or moving her eyes off the child. Together with the continuous eye contact she would pull a very stern, mean-looking face.

Riette: Have you used it (the stare) on a specific child or more than one?

Margie: At my school the kids make me angry and I would stare at them.

Riette: What would they do then?

Margie: They try to look away, they go outside and try to look away, but it doesn't work. They pull their eyes away but I keep staring.

Riette: Would you say that this has been a successful technique?

Margie: Yes.

She continued to share her other techniques.

I turned to the reflecting team consisting of Mark, Paula, Zelda and Wilhelm.

Riette: What is it that you appreciate about these two girls?

Mark: I was just thinking that they must be very brave to come and talk with us, because some of us look quite scary.

Riette: Is it something you may not expect of children of their age?

Mark: Yes, I wouldn't have the courage to do it.

Wilhelm: They were very brave.

Riette: What else have you learnt from them today?

Paula: I was amazed at how many ideas they came up with – six or seven. That is amazing!

Zelda: For everything that comes their way, they have a plan. That I find special!

Riette: Would you say they have the skills of plan-makers?



Zelda: Yes. What I also noticed was that once they start a plan, they don't just give up.

Riette: Especially when it comes to Margie's stare.

Paula: They spoke about laughing it off when people tease them – that is difficult. I find it very difficult to laugh with people at myself.

Riette: That takes something special!

Zelda: The stare gives one such a weapon.

Riette: Do you mean that Margie's control to keep staring at a person must be huge?

Zelda: Yes, if you can teach yourself to stare, you can do other things too.

Riette: Are you wondering if there are other things she could do with this power of control?

Zelda: Yes!

The students continued to share some of their own experiences of teasing – some as the “perpetrators” and others as the “victims” of teasing. At the end of the conversation the students presented Margie and Sophie certificates that recognised and celebrated their victory over the teasing. Their child care workers put the certificates on Margie and Sophie's bedroom walls and it became symbolic of what they had achieved.

### 4.3 Subtle disrespect

The teasing and the bullying at school were overt signs of the attitudes of intolerance and disrespect of some individuals in the community towards the children at the haven. More subtle signs showed through their behaviour towards the children. The staff explained how some people donated money, volunteered their assistance at functions or baked cakes and delivered them to the children, while at the same time they would discourage their own children to associate with the children at school or at church. Their charity extended to inviting the children to their homes for a weekend but, as soon as they experienced the children's presence as an intrusion on their privacy, their charity ceased. It seems that our Christian charity knows its boundaries – we stop being charitable when it starts to become an inconvenience. Wolfaart (2000) accurately commented that this issue illustrated the difference between charity and solidarity.

During my consultation with a group of teenagers at the haven, they spoke of many people visiting the haven individually or in groups. They knew from the people's interaction with them what the people's attitudes towards them were. They explained it as follows:

Riette: How do their attitudes show?

Gary: It shows in their body language.

Morgan: A few weeks ago a group of school children came to visit, I felt so out. I could see in their attitudes that they thought we were "poor" little orphans.

Riette: What are the differences between how they acted and how others act who are respectful?

Lance: It's the way in which they talk and behave.

Riette: In what way were the group of school kids disrespectful?

Gary: They talked down to us, not with us.

I realised that the community reflected intolerance towards the nature of the children's problems and their disadvantaged position. It also seemed that the intolerance had become more obvious since the launch of Project Go. In part the intolerance was possibly born from ignorance, but it also reflected the values of prejudice and bias towards these children. It seemed that the intolerance revealed the community's underlying values of discrimination and marginalisation of those who are "different" from us. It reflected an attitude of excluding (still) those who are in need from the mainstream. Our Christian values drive us to take care of the disadvantaged people in a gracious manner, but we still desire to do so by isolating them and keeping them "where they belong". In doing so, we keep the children marginalised, discriminated against and therefore disempowered.

## 5 RELATIONSHIPS AT THE HAVEN

The issue of teasing amongst the children at the haven was one of many sources of conflict. From my interaction with the children it seemed that the children experienced ambivalence towards one another. On the one hand they did not want to be associated with each other, but on the other hand they felt an enormous sense of protectiveness towards each other. The children's affection and love was in the first instance aimed at their own siblings. They also formed close emotional ties with other children, some of whom they had known all their lives. The children often confided to each other the most intimate information that they might never have shared with an adult. Most of the children knew the others' life stories. They nurtured and supported each other in times of need and offered pieces of wisdom that seemed beyond their age. They were tuned to each other's needs and could easily contextualise another child's behaviour.

Although they were often loyal to each other, they also broke each other's trust. Due to the intimate and private nature of their life stories, their "secrets" left them vulnerable to other children who wanted to settle a score with them or who had been hurt or angered. The children had very little if any privacy because diaries and letters were opened or stolen and read by other children and their personal domain (clothes and gifts from home) was invaded.

## 6 RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

In addition to being discriminated against on the grounds that they were "govies" or "juvies", the coloured and black children of the Children's Haven M T R Smit faced racial discrimination. The haven was opened to children of other races in 1997. This was a unique situation for the haven with a history closely linked to the white Afrikaner and the DRC.

The start of the integration of children from other races marked the DRC's change of heart towards people of colour and towards racial discrimination in general. The change seemed to have occurred parallel to the confession and apology of the General Synod Commission (*Algemene Sinodale Kommissie*) of the Dutch Reformed Church regarding its role in maintaining Apartheid (NGK 1997). The Synod of the DRC involved in the management of the Children's Haven M T R Smit, has shown, albeit reluctant, to favour the integration of children from other racial groups. However, their stance did not seem to be shared by all the other regional synods of the DRC (*Algemene Sinodale Kommissie* of the NGK 2000).

The Conference for Child and Youth Care Centres of the *Algemene Kommissie vir die Diens van Barmhartigheid* (the national commission of the DRC focusing on the social welfare) was held in Bloemfontein in September 2000. About ninety representatives from DRC children's havens across the country attended the conference. These representatives were ministers of the DRC, the principals of the havens, social workers and child care workers. At the conference it appeared that some DRC congregations were reluctant to

adopt the attitude of the General Synod Commission. It was reported that one such congregation would not allow children from other racial groups at the children's haven (that fell under their care) to attend their church services. The children were literally not allowed through the church doors. In another community the children of the children's haven were allowed to attend the church services but only if they were seated in the left wing where they were not visible to the rest of the congregation.

Racial discrimination also occurred closer to home. The Children's Haven M T R Smit has a children's choir that performs regularly at church services in order to introduce and market the haven. Recently, the principal of the haven, Mrs C Watson, planned a visit to Ugie in an attempt to nurture the ties of the haven with the community where the haven was founded. Their choir accompanied her. In Ugie the members of the community accommodated the white children in their homes. The black and coloured children however, were all accommodated at the minister's home. The minister first suggested that the children sleep on the floor of the church hall but Mrs Watson declined the suggestion especially as it was winter (Watson 2000). The theme of discrimination relates one part of the story. The other side of the story is that the members of the DRC congregation in Ugie donated a lot of money to the haven on that weekend.

On another occasion, the choir was invited by a DRC congregation of a small town in Port Elizabeth district to visit them for the weekend and to perform in the church. All the plans were finalised and the day before they were meant to leave, the minister requested a list of the children's names in order to place the children with families in his congregation. On receipt of the list the minister realised from the children's surnames that some of the children were coloured. He promptly phoned the principal and said that his congregation would not be able to accommodate the coloured children. He suggested that she left them behind. She responded that the choir would either visit them with all their members or not at all. The result was that the trip had to be cancelled (Watson 2000).

The church's new policy that led to the opening of the haven's doors to children from other races was, at least in part, driven by practical motivations. As mentioned before,

the haven has always been dependant on funding from the government. Since the start of the transformation the government has been pressurising child care facilities towards the integration of both children and child care workers, staff and the boards of management according to the Equity Employment Act no 55 of 1998. The aim was that the composition of the facilities should reflect the composition of the populations in our society.

The Developmental Quality Assurance (DQA), which was administered by the IMC in assistance with the Department of Welfare, was a group of officials, who on national level, assessed the process of transformation in child and youth care facilities. They assessed the Children's Haven M T R Smit in October 1999 and the haven received a favourable report on completion of its DQA. One concern of the DQA-team was the lack of integration, of both children and staff of other races. The report recommended that the haven has to speed up the process of integration (Children's Haven M T R Smit 1999; Children's Haven M T R Smit 2000c).

In 2000, the Department of Welfare assessed the haven's financial status and in its report it warned that the continuation of the government subsidy was dependant on the process of integration (Children's Haven M T R Smit Annual Meeting 2000b). To avoid being cut off from government funding, the haven was left with little choice but to adhere to the national policy of integration.

From what was argued above, it seems that the change in the Dutch Reformed Church's policy did not necessarily imply a change in people's attitudes. Regardless of transformation, prejudice towards coloured and black people was still alive and well in the community. A national confession by the church was not enough to change the values supporting discrimination. It is my conviction that the confession and changes in the church's policy merely brought about feelings of guilt about people's participation in past forms of discrimination. The confusion resulting from the changes in the church's policy was brought on because the church did not offer alternative ways of thinking about the racial differences and about acquiring tolerance for these differences.

From my conversations with the children and the staff it seemed that, when children from other races were admitted into the Children's Haven M T R Smit, it caused some difficulties. It was a period of adjustment for the children who came into the haven but also for the children who already have been there. The children's attitudes varied from complete acceptance of "the new children" to attitudes of suspicion and prejudice. Some of the white children felt that their status and integrity at school were damaged further because they now had to "live with blacks". They feared that, due to the prejudice at school against children of colour, the new situation at the haven would alienate the white children even more from their friends at school. According to the child care workers, in some instances, members from the different church congregations who used to donate food, clothes and pocket money to the haven, started to donate these articles provisionally. These individuals indicated that donations to the cottages were meant for the white children and not for the coloured or black children. They argued that the coloured and black children at the haven were being advanced by government projects and funds: "Mandela is already looking after them", implying that the white children were being left destitute. To some individuals it became a matter of whites looking after their own kind. The irony is that the funds made available to the coloured and black children by means of money raised by the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, were aimed at uplifting their disadvantaged conditions. The socio-economic circumstances from which these children came from were a direct result of the apartheid system, and also particularly because of the exclusion of the black children from government funding in the previous child welfare system.

According to the staff, the racial prejudice did not only stem from members of the churches, but also from schools and from adults within the haven. At the time that the coloured and black children were accommodated at the haven, schools that used to be predominantly "white", opened their admission to children of all races. The introduction of different races into the school system is a topic on its own but it suffices to say that it was no easy task. Coloured and black children were the minority in the schools in the traditionally "white" suburbs. According to the principals of the two local primary

schools, the integration had run smoothly but there was conflict between the staff and the parents of these children as well as amongst the children themselves.

There was a period in 1998, when there was tension between the white children and the coloured children at the haven. The children found themselves divided into racial groups. Some children coerced others into thinking and acting in a discriminatory manner. There were a handful of children who started and constantly fuelled the conflict. Conversations with some of the children involved at the time indicated that the reasons for the racial tension seemed to stem from their parents. The parents seemed to have had difficulty with the integration of races in the haven. Some children were living in a cottage run by a coloured child care worker and her family. The parents of these children found the arrangement in conflict with their value systems. When asked about the racial conflict, the children were far more accepting of the racial differences than their parents were.

According to the child care workers and the staff, there were individuals amongst the child care workers who were prejudiced against the coloured children. The prejudice was conveyed to the children either in a direct manner or in more indirect and subtle ways. On the other hand, there were child care workers who described themselves in our conversations as traditionally prejudiced and who anticipated that they expected themselves to be caught up in conflict with the coloured children. As it turned out, they were amazed at how they grew to love and accept the children and the children them.

As mentioned before, the racial conflict at the haven was temporary and although the children tended to befriend children of their own race, friendships across racial divide were a common phenomenon, so much so, that for two consecutive years the children elected coloured girls into the positions of head girl and vice-head girl.



## 7 HOLIDAY AND WEEKEND-PLACEMENTS

### 7.1 Background

Many parents of the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit did not have much contact with their children either due to financial reasons, or due to a lack of interest. Financial limitations prohibited them to pay for transport to and from the haven. These parents found themselves unable to afford food for the children for the weekends that the children could visit their families.

As a result, people from the community and especially from the Dutch Reformed Church-congregations were encouraged to take children out for weekends and holidays. These people offered the children opportunities to form close relationships outside the haven. They also introduced the children to family activities and outings such as family suppers, attending church, going shopping, visiting the beach and going on holidays.

According to the social workers, the placement of children with families in the community proved to be successful and beneficial to the children in many cases. The children formed close relationships with the family, especially with the mothers of these families. The "parents" served as alternative role models and as sources of support outside of the children's haven. These families sacrificed their privacy and opened their homes to the children. They offered them consistent hospitality, love and friendship. When the children grew up and left the haven these were the people they regarded as their family.

## 7.2 Failed placements

Although many holiday and weekend placements were successful, in some cases they were negative experiences for both the child and the family. Families usually had little preparation for the task and no training in how to take care of a child-in-need. Their motivations for offering a child a refuge away from the haven and their expectations of such a placement often seemed unrealistic.

Most of these families got involved in helping the child for the reason of serving the church and God. They felt a special calling to share their love and happiness with the disadvantaged children. However, the children and the staff indicated that in their experience, some families had less sincere motivations. Such families wanted to reflect an attitude of doing well and of offering charity. The children referred to this as "hypocrisy" and they were often discouraged and disappointed by the insincerity of the charity. One child referred to such persons as "the do-gooders". It seemed that in some instances a family would invite children for weekends or holidays to keep their own child company. The children soon realised this and resented that they were taken advantage of. When the children discovered that the motivation for taking them out (of the haven) was to keep a child entertained, there was pressure on the children not to offend the family's child and by doing so, run the risk of not being invited back.

Whatever the motivations were for families to invite the children for weekends and holidays, there were insufficient measures to prepare the families for the children and the children for the families. Some families would invite a child impulsively without having thought it through and without anticipating the impact of such visits on their privacy and on the needs of their own children.

In order to give the child privacy and the opportunity to start afresh with a family, free from the baggage of the past, the background of the child was withheld from the family. The children preferred this arrangement. They indicated that they wanted to form a relationship with people who were oblivious to their past problems and they preferred to

share their stories with the strangers when and if they felt ready to do so. The staff respected their needs for anonymity. In my opinion, this approach had its benefits but it also had some drawbacks. Most of the children at the haven struggled with emotional difficulties and these reflected in their behaviour to some degree. These problems did not dissipate when they went out for weekends – no matter how much they enjoyed and appreciated the hospitality of their weekend-families.

From individual contact with several children who had failed weekend placements, I gathered that there was a pattern to these placements. The pattern was usually that the child and the members of the weekend-family reverted back to their own behaviour as soon as the novelty of the arrangement had worn off. Children started to fight and bicker, as would any other children, parents “lost their cool” and became irritable, as would any parent. The children’s problems surfaced sooner or later and when they did, the weekend-families were unprepared for it, shocked by it and more often than not, overwhelmed by the impact of it on their own family. Some managed to cope with it with the help of the social workers, but others were not prepared to learn to cope with it, or if they were, they did not have enough support to see it through. However long it took, the families withdrew their hospitality and “abandoned” the children. This pattern might have been repeated several times by several families and in this manner the pattern of rejection and abandonment, which had started with their original families, was continued and reinforced.

### 7.3 Effects of failed placements

The children at the haven were vulnerable to rejection and needed more affirmation than other children. They experienced emotional problems that sometimes had severe effects on their functioning. In addition, the family’s motivations were often not child-centred, their expectations were unrealistic and they were under-informed about the children’s personal lives and untrained in coping with the children’s needs. The results of these placements were harmful to both the child and the family.

One teenager at the haven expressed the involvement of the community in the home in this way: "We are like fish in a fish tank, everyone puts their hands in the tank to play with us." He continued to explain that they felt exposed to the community; they had little privacy because everyone recognised them as children from the haven wherever they went. People visited the haven, entered the cottages and even their bedrooms. He felt that they were used as show pieces in order to encourage people to donate money to the haven. The boy further emphasised that in his opinion, members of the community got involved with them for their own benefit and not necessarily for the benefit of the children. Another teenager confirmed these thoughts by adding that people invited them for weekends only to show them off to their friends, in other words, to impress others with their charity.

The abovementioned experiences of the children did not represent the children's general perceptions of people who were sincerely involved with the care of the children. There were also stories of people who contributed positively to their lives with sincerity and with love. They described how some people voluntarily spent their spare time visiting the children, playing games and sport with them, prayed with them and who showed genuine concern for the children. As was discussed earlier, the children developed their own ways of "reading" people. They could tell from the way people behaved whether the people's intentions were sincere.

From their conversations, it seemed that the children were not blind to the patterns of the unsuccessful placements. Some claimed that they had got used to the rejection. When given a choice, some children would rather have risked an opportunity to have a good weekend or holiday rather than staying at the haven for fear of being "returned" by the family. They had become cynical and even opportunistic about the weekend-placements. One teenager explained, "Since the family won't like them once they get to know them anyway, they can just as well make the most of it while the family still does." Thus the children would ask or hint for gifts or treats – they would try to gain something tangible that would make the weekend worth their while. They would try to gain something from the weekend to take back as a prize to show off at the haven or at school. Among the

children a great deal of status was attached to who your weekend-family was and how much the family cared for you. The caring was judged in terms of the material things the family sent you home with. In individual therapy I often asked a question like: "How did your weekend with the Cooks go?", and the reply would be something like this: "It went great, they gave me ...", and they would list the presents they received.

One child told of her preference to stay at the haven rather than risk losing yet another weekend-family. Her attitude was the result of a painful rejection from a weekend-family that she had known for a long time and who were unable to cope with her behaviour.

#### 7.4 Indulgence of the children

The children enjoyed indulgence as would any child. However, indulgence was not in their interest. Families who invited the children to their homes fell into the trap of offering them a "Disney World"-weekend. Such a weekend is characterised by a lot of activities that cost a lot of money. Although it is thoroughly enjoyable, the children returned to the haven after such weekends exhausted and over-fed. The child care workers stated that by indulging the child, the weekend-families attempted to "rescue" the children. The families' attitude was that all the children needed was to have some fun and to eat some proper food.

The children were well aware of the way in which they evoked sympathy from outsiders. For the effect of being rescued, the children tended to paint poor pictures of the circumstances at the children's haven, so to speak. One child explained how she put on "a sad little expression" when she knew people came to meet them with the aim of inviting them out.

A humorous incident that happened in 1998 illustrates the rescuing attitude of some of the volunteers. The principal of the haven, Mrs C Watson lives on the premises with her husband, two boys and girl. Her children were always in the company of the other children. One specific day, a woman came to meet the children with the aim of

"selecting" a child to invite for a weekend. Not realising that one of the little girls sitting nearby was Mrs Watson's daughter, she pointed to the girl, who at the time had a problem with protruding front teeth, and said: "I want that poor little thing with the teeth." Mrs. Watson laughingly replied: "No, you can't have her, she's mine."

When Mrs. Watson shared the incident with me, it seemed funny but upon reflection, we realised what the effects of such attitudes could have on the children who had to parade almost like stock, in front of prospective weekend-families.

According to the children, they competed for the attention of the prospective weekend-parents. The children realised that there was a lot at stake when the families met them for the first time. It was important for them to make a good impression on the right family because it could ensure them weekends away from the haven.

The unfortunate part is that the children really wanted to have weekend-families who would stick it out with them and who would commit to them despite the difficulties. One child told me, that she would rather sit and talk to one weekend-mother over a cup of coffee once a week, than going out for supper, movies or shopping for clothes every weekend with someone new.

According to the child care workers, some weekend-families failed to understand that the children were not used to being indulged and that they had to re-adjust to the reality of the haven once they returned from the weekend on Sunday evenings. They had to get back to eating less interesting and often unsatisfying meals and to the boredom of the regular week routine. Furthermore, they were left with the impression that the manner in which the weekend-families indulged them, was an indication of the families' regular life styles. The child care workers explained that the children started to resent their situation at the haven because it didn't measure up to the excitement of their weekends out. The standard of the life style that the weekend family offered was in sharp contrast to the standard of living of the children's own parents. The children inevitably started to

compare the households and it caused confusion, especially for the younger children. They became critical of the houseparents, as well as their own families.

This pattern of indulging the children on their weekends out was difficult to maintain as it was an expensive and impractical way of living. Once the fun was over, the weekend-family had to settle in and get to know the children. This was often the more difficult part – the part that caused most of the failed placements.

It seems that, with the emphasis on indulgence, the children of the haven were introduced to a model for family life where personal relations found expression on a materialistic level. The children did not get opportunities to learn social skills that would equip them for adult life. Love and affection became associated with material gain. The material manner of caring became the norm for the children and they evaluated future relationships in these terms. This did not encourage or teach the children that they too had a responsibility in their relationships with the weekend-families. It enforced the idea that relationships were one-way processes in which the adults gave and the children received with no obligation to reciprocate. It failed to introduce the children to interaction that shaped emotional bonds between people, for example, conversations with the child that reflected genuine interest in the child's life.

I often heard comments from the people who work with children from children's homes that the children grew up with the attitude that "life owes them something". The attitude was not incidental – it was at least in part, due to the way in which children had been treated.

## 8 THE CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF CHRISTIANITY

### 8.1 The ritual of communion

In 1999 the issue of children partaking in the ritual of communion in the DRC gained prominence. For some time it had been a contentious issue in the Dutch Reformed

Church and it also had implications for the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit. In October 1998 the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church decided in principle that there was no theological basis not to allow children to take part in communion (DRC Hoogland September 1999; Children's Haven M T R Smit 1999).

This decision caused much discussion and deliberation within the DRC communities and people were divided on this issue even after the decision of the synod was finalised. The implication for congregations was that children could partake with their parents in the communion. It caused an immediate dilemma for the children at the haven since the conditions for using communion stipulated that the children had to be baptised in the Dutch Reformed Church and that they had to have the certificate to prove it. Few children at the haven were baptised and if they were, there were no records to proof it. Moreover, several of the children were not originally from the DRC denomination. The principal and the management committee considered the possibility of baptising the children in order to allow them to take part in the communion along with the rest of the congregation's children. However, the idea generated other practical complications. Firstly, the children's parents would have to be present at the baptising ceremony, and secondly the parents would have to commit themselves to educate their children in the dogma of the church and they would be personally responsible for committing their children to God. The parents of the majority of the children at the haven had shown little interest in and commitment to religion. As their legal guardian, the haven could take the place of the parent and that might have been an option in the event that the children's stay at the haven was permanent. However, as a result of the transformation of child care, permanency was replaced with temporary placement and the haven could not act as the children's parent.

Consequently, the children were not allowed to take part in communion like the other children in church. To accommodate the children, the principal of the haven and the ministers of the DRC started a service at the haven that symbolised sentiments of the communion. At the time the children did not seem to realise the implications of their exclusion from the communion and they did not seem to question their exclusion.



## 8.2 Reflection on the communion-issue

I found the outcome of the communion-issue ironic and sad. In my opinion, communion is a ritual celebrating Jesus' life on earth, his love for us and our love for him. It is evidence of our commitment to him and of people coming together to celebrate this commitment. Love, caring and sharing are aspects associated with the Christian ritual of communion.

Yet, as a result of the absurd way in which the DRC contradicted the purpose of communion, the very persons in our midst – the children at the haven who, more than anyone else, needed the love and caring, not only of Jesus, but also of the rest of the congregation, were excluded from the communion. I could not but wonder about the ethical implications of the exclusion – how the children would understand it and to what extent they would have any say in how the decision regarding their spirituality was made. It seemed to me that, as a church, we learnt very little from our past. We did not learn that one cannot empower and liberate people by keeping them apart from our community of Christians. We failed to realise that to exclude people was unethical and harmful as it fostered values of superiority and inferiority, prejudice and bias. Exclusion of people create "in"-groups and "out"-groups reflecting our inability to show true love and charity to the disadvantaged. The communion-issue was not seen as an opportunity to realise that our Christianity had to reach beyond superficial forms of charity to an acceptance of and respect and tolerance for disadvantaged children. It seemed a missed opportunity. I hope that with continued projects (discussed in chapter eight) the children's voices can be heard on this matter – that the effects of their exclusion from the communion ritual on them can be known.

When I reflect on the communion-issue I cannot help but think that we, the helping profession, the church and other organisations caring for children, made decisions on behalf of marginalised people in the same way that we did more than a hundred years ago when children were merely removed from their care takers and placed in children's

homes far removed from their original communities. Ties with loved ones were severed and families were broken up without actively involving and allowing the children and their families a say in the decision-making. The power imbalances between the authorities, initially the DRC and later the government, on the one hand and the individual families on the other hand, were enormous. The parents of those children who were removed, were poor and disempowered. The power imbalance was abused by the church and the state authorities. The disadvantaged families and their children were exploited.

The DRC did not view these acts as exploitation. In fact, these acts were referred to as charity service (*barmhartigheidsdienst*) reflecting the values of offering, compassion and mercifulness to those regarded by the church as people-in-need.

The DRC had been involved with charity service for more than two centuries and it focused on all forms of needs such as material, welfare, psychosocial, physical and mental needs. The concept "service" was translated from the Greek word "diakonia" and it was associated with the theological service as an outcome of the ministry of Christ. It was based on the example of Christ's life on earth – the way he revealed himself as the servant of God who came to serve and not to be served (De Klerk 1990:4).

The charity service probably served thousands of people-in-need, but it also served the ideology of the DRC – as discussed in chapters three and seven. The ideology sustaining the removal of children from their families and placing them in far-off institutes, aimed to gather children into congregations and communities separated from the larger society. The compassion and mercifulness offered to these children, were grounded in the paternalist mentality of a patriarch doing what, to his knowledge, was in the best interest of the children. "Charity without justice is cruel and without love, it is hell" (Wolfaart 2000). As discussed in chapter eight of this study, care cannot be viewed apart from the its political discourse (Sevenhuijsen 1998:137) – the ways in which the children are cared for are constituted by the socio-political context.

The patriarchal mentality described an attitude similar to that of the helping professions that for decades caused people to be involuntarily committed to psychiatric hospitals, medicated, or convinced to give their children up for adoption, institutionalisation or fostering. It reflected presumptions stemming from a perception of professionals becoming experts on people's lives; after mastering the fields of medicine, psychology, sociology, theology or child care. It is the result of a modernist approach to knowledge, negating people's autonomy and their authority over their own lives.

The above paragraphs present my own reflections on the children's situation. But it is in their stories that I find the true significance of their situation. For this reason I continue with their conversations.

### 8.3 The children's voices

According to the children, their experiences of God and of Christianity were ambivalent. Until 1998 all children had to attend church on Sundays (Watson 2000). As mentioned earlier, they attended church in groups that left them exposed and self-conscious. Four teenagers expressed their perceptions of attending church as follows:

Morgan: I go there because I have to be there.

Riette: Do you mean that you see it as compulsory?

Morgan: Yes.

Riette: What are the effects of having to go to church?

Morgan: The children get up to nonsense in church. They bunk church (they play truant). They sit and talk and write little notes to one another. They disrupt

left with the anxiety of not knowing what was being said about them and unable to defend themselves. Some children described the office as symbol of the "power" against them.

Important decisions regarding the transfer of children to other child care facilities or to other cottages at the haven were taken by the staff on the children's behalf. The staff always tried to make decisions with the children's interests at heart, but also with little reliance on the children's wishes and almost never with their parents' knowledge. This was an acceptable practice, because it was done with the majority of the children's benefit in mind and, because the decisions were taken and approved by people who were regarded as professionals in child care.

Project Go changed all of this. The transformation in child care brought along projects that required practical changes in the way that matters were dealt with at the haven. The practical changes took place with immediate effect but as could be expected, the philosophy behind the transformation took longer to surface and the benefits of the new approaches were appreciated much later. The "resistance" in the child care system to the new philosophy is reminiscent of the DRC's resistance to changing its policies of racial discrimination, of admitting guilt – *mea culpa* (Wolfaart 2000). David Bliss (2000), an American missionary working in South Africa, compared the force with which the DRC resisted political and theological protest in the past (in contrast to other denominations), to a large passenger liner. Other smaller ships (denominations) changed direction quickly at the warning of an approaching storm. But, from the moment the large passenger liner received the warning and started to change direction, it took the ship twenty-five nautical miles before its bow pointed in a new direction. The issue of change is discussed in more detail in chapters six and seven and the implications of Project Go towards empowering the children are discussed in the following chapter.

## 10 THE CHILDREN'S STORIES ABOUT THEIR PARENTS

If there is one thing that has left an impression on my mind, more than anything else, since I started working with children from children's homes seven years ago, it is the relationships between the children and their parents. After many conversations and therapeutic sessions with the children, I am still overwhelmed by the complexity of these relationships – by the diverseness of being human. The relationships seem complex and are characterised by ambivalent emotions and thoughts. The bonds the children have with their parents sometimes escape logic and seem to survive strings of negative incidents and circumstances that cross their paths.

The children argued that they were in the care of the haven because their parents failed to protect, nurture and take care of them. Many of the children were abandoned by their parents. According to the child care workers, the social workers and the children, the abandonment often occurred repeatedly. The parents would often disappoint the children promising to phone, to write, to send money, to visit the haven and to attend school functions. They would promise to provide transport for the children to come home, to collect them on Friday afternoons, to go on holidays together and to buy gifts. They would promise to leave abusive boyfriends or spouses, to stop drinking, to stop taking drugs and to find employment. Most likely they would not keep their promises. A child care worker recalled how two siblings would spend the whole Friday afternoon sitting on the pavement waiting for their parents to fetch them for the weekend as promised. Nothing would have been able to keep them from looking out for their parents. When darkness set in, they would come back into the cottage. Out of consideration for them, no-one would mention a word about their disappointment.

With my individual interaction with children, I learned that some parents made sudden and unexpected contact with their children after months or years of silence. For as long as the contact would last, the children would be ecstatic. One such child was Melanie. Once her mother had made contact after years of silence, she felt no further need for therapy and she no longer needed the anti-depressants that she was taking. Her performance at

school picked up and she became compliant at the haven. Then, without warning, the mother broke all contact with Melanie and disappeared into another spell of silence. Melanie's behaviour and her moods slowly declined into its previous pattern.

Despite all these disappointments and hurtful incidents the children generally expressed a deep love and a need for their parents. This love, it seemed, was greater than the love they felt for anyone else. Their love was reflected in their forgiveness of their parents for their mistakes, in their understanding for their parents' situation and an acceptance of their circumstances. It was reflected in their desperate, sometimes pathetic need for their parents' love.

The following responses from children illustrate the ambivalence in the children's perceptions about their parents:

Julie: Your parents make the mistakes and you end up in jail (the haven) and you have to pay. You serve time for your parents' mistakes.

Chris: I realised as I got older, for example, that your father cannot just jump on your stomach and hurt you like he used to, its not right. Only when I got older did I realise that what my father did was wrong.

Bonnie, who was fourteen years old at the time, shared the story of her family. Her parents had been divorced for years and there was a lot of conflict between the parents. Sadly, the parents' conflict succeeded to come between her and her sister and it threatened to destroy their relationship. In our conversation she explained her love for her mother.

Bonnie: My mother will disappear for two months or a year. She just stays away, she makes no contact. Then suddenly she returns, she phones. I never knew my mother. Now I've got to know her. My father always used to tell us my

mother is not interested in us. My mother has a brain injury – she does not have long to live. He doesn't understand that she needs us.

Riette: You said that Project Go decided that you could not stay with your mom. How do you understand that?

Bonnie: They said my mother drinks. But its not as if she cannot handle it. I mean she likes her beer at night before she goes to bed. I've never seen her drunk.

Riette: And you prefer to stay with your mom. What is it that she offers you?

Bonnie: We do everything together, we go to movies and we chat. Love, she gives me love.

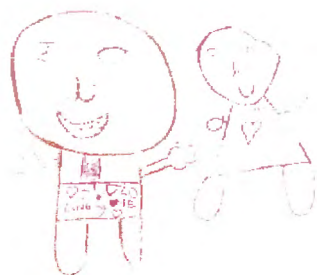
The younger children I met, were not able to express themselves verbally in conversations because they were too young. Their drawings and their explanations of their drawings painted the pictures of their beautiful parents.

A narrative approach to child therapy discourages the interpretation of children's drawings. The child's narrations or explanations of his / her drawings are privileged – not theories informing the therapist. "Narrative interviews tend to move forward by way of questions and answers rather than by the therapist's statements, interpretations, or pronouncements" (Freeman et al 1997:19). In my conversations with the younger children they narrated the stories expressed by their drawings.

Petro's picture narrated the story of herself (on the left) and her beautiful mother:



Estee sketched her love for her mother (on the left):





## 11 DISEMPOWERMENT OF THE CHILDREN'S PARENTS

Before the transformation of child and youth care, parents whose children were removed, found themselves in disempowered positions. They had little or no say in the way in which their children were reared. The transformation process addressed the disempowerment of parents (as discussed in the next chapter) but the process is slow and frustrating for both the parents, the children and the child care workers.

Before, when children were removed from their families, the state became the children's guardian and the Department of Welfare the children's parents. The power to make decisions regarding the day-to-day care of the child was rendered to the management of the child care facility to which the child was transferred. Goals for the child's education and rearing were delegated to the therapeutic teams at these facilities. As the social worker explained, the therapeutic teams at these facilities made decisions like the choice of school, school subjects and the need for academic assessments (Badenhorst 1999). The principal had the authority to give permission for therapy or medical procedures. The team approved of and arranged transfers to other facilities and weekend-placements and they arranged holiday plans and other outings. The decisions were made unilaterally and it was almost unheard of to consult the children's parents about any of the decisions. Nobody really doubted or challenged the decisions they made on the children's behalf.

The day the court order was issued and the children's removal from their parents became official, the parents surrendered all their parental rights. The social worker stated that the parents expressed their powerlessness against the authority and the autonomy that the haven had in making decisions about their children (Badenhorst 1999). The parents felt left out of the process of decision-making. Parents experienced this as a reflection on their judgment and on their parenting abilities. In turn, the parents withdrew from their responsibilities.

In our society the parents of those children who were removed from their families are judged. These parents are regarded with shame and they are frowned upon. They are rendered powerless and they are isolated from their children. At the same time, we (as professionals and Christians) isolate the children from the "expertise and knowledge" their parents have of them. As discussed in chapters seven and eight of this study, children were removed from their parents and placed in institutionalised care. Neither the previous child care system nor the new one extended the care to the parents of these children. Moreover, the parents were never participants in the decisions affecting the care of their children – a poor reflection on the ethics of care.

According to the child care workers the parents' helplessness was often reflected in their anger towards the staff and the child care workers at the haven. The parents directly, and often vehemently, criticised the manner in which their children were treated. Their anger and frustration were also indirectly reflected through negative comments they made to the children. The parents often saw themselves as in opposition to the staff, creating the idea of "us against them". This opposition had a negative impact on the relationship between the children and child care workers.

Not only did the disempowerment of the parents lead to the deprivation of the children, as mentioned earlier, it also prepared the ground for a mentality amongst the parents of not assuming responsibility for their children. The parents withdrew from their children in various ways. Some made a "clean break" with the child whilst others maintained irregular contact. Attempts from the staff at the haven to get parents to assume responsibility for the care of their children over weekends and holidays were unsuccessful. The parents always had the reassurance that the "welfare" will rescue the family from a crisis. They depended on the social workers to provide food for weekends and they knew that if they couldn't cope, for whatever reason, that the children would be removed to the care of the haven.

The attitude of surrendering the responsibility of raising one's children is not uncommon in lower socio-economic communities. The intern psychology students, whose training I

assist with, do their internships in clinics in the needy communities. I learned from them that parents, especially single mothers or grandmothers who care for their abandoned grandchildren, often called on the "welfare" to remove the children when they struggled to discipline them. The threat of being sent to "Boys town" was a quite familiar threat and one feared by the children.

The disregard for the importance of the role of parents in the children's lives illustrated the attitude that professional people, and not the children's parents, knew what was in the best interest of the children. Whilst care was taken of the children, little was done to help improve the circumstances of the parents. We have been rescuing their children but our charity have not addressed the conditions contributing to the circumstances from which the children had to be removed.

The situation of rescuing the children reminded me of the story of the fisherman who gave fish to the poor. Once there was a fisherman who was kind enough to give of his day's catching to the poor people who approached him for help. In this way he felt satisfied at having relieved their immediate hunger and offering them temporary relief. Had he taught them his skill of fishing instead, he would have enabled them to feed themselves and their families.

In the same way, the child care system was only helping the families in the short term. The help relieved the immediate crisis for the children, such as removing them from negligent and even dangerous circumstances. It also brought immediate relief for the family by providing care for the children. However, it was not the solution to their situations and it failed to address the families and the children's needs in the long term.

The child care system removed children from their families to live in institutions that, no matter how hard it tried, could not be a substitute for the biological family. The idea was that once the children were removed from their families, they were supposed to receive intervention from the Department of Welfare. This intervention was designed to enable the parents to reunite with the children. However, the reconstruction services failed – the

families were not taught the skills to fish. They were not empowered by life skills programs and preventive programs that specifically address their poor socio-economic circumstances.

## 12 DOUBLE STANDARDS OF LIVING

### 12.1 Adjusting to a middle-class life style

The children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit, like most children in the child care system, generally came from a low socio-economic backgrounds. According to the social workers and the reports in the children's personal files, the children were removed from homes where the standards of living were low – their meals mainly consisted of bread, maize and water, they had basic clothing, they shared small living areas with several family members and they sometimes lived in shacks in the bushes.

The children who came from a disadvantaged background were not used to the middle-class "luxuries" they found at the haven and at the homes of the weekend-families. Here they were introduced to things like watching M-Net or satellite television, having their own beds or bedrooms, going on holidays and weekend-outings, receiving presents on their birthdays and at Christmas, going to movies and wearing fashionable clothing. In the toddler's cottage for example, the children slept in beautifully decorated rooms with four-poster beds resembling something of a fairy tale. At their parent's homes some of these toddlers shared a bare mattress with several other people on a cement floor.

The haven received regular food donations of products that reached the shelf-expiry date from upmarket retailers. The haven always appreciated these donations without which it would struggle. The food often included "special foods", even to middle-class households. Although not routinely, the children received puddings, sweets and other delicacies that they were not accustomed to. The standard of living the haven offered, was one that every child would want and anyone would wish a child to have. And although it varied greatly from the standards of living that the children's families could

provide, it was more on par with the middle-class society in which they found themselves.

During my conversations with them, the staff and the child care workers at the haven expressed concern about the differences in the standard of care and the effects of the differences on the children. They were concerned about the ethical implications of removing children from poor economic conditions and in an effort to "rescue" them, to place them in a facility with a higher standard of living only to return them to the same conditions they originally came from. Some of the child care workers regarded the living conditions at the haven as a temporary escape for the children from their poor socio-economic conditions. In their conversations they related that some of the children, ate excessively when they arrived at the haven for the first time. The children shoved food into their mouths as fast as they could and they hid the food in their rooms and in their pockets for fear of going hungry. It sometimes took the children months to grow out of this habit and they did so only when they realised that they would get three meals a day.

The child care workers expressed ambivalence about the standard of the meals provided to the children in the past. They wanted the children to be properly fed as they would feed their own children, but at the same time they realised that it was not in the children's best interests in the long run to get them accustomed to a standard of living that their parents could not afford.

## 12.2 Adjusting to a different culture

Not only were the children introduced to a different standard of economic living in the haven, but also to a different culture. The haven is situated in a middle-class, predominantly white suburb and the majority of the children mostly attended schools that represented this culture. The staff, children and child care workers at the haven spoke mainly Afrikaans. Some of the children came from coloured communities with their own cultures – their own dialects of Afrikaans and their own way of conducting interpersonal relationships. Some of the children's use of the Afrikaans language was graphic and

explicit and they unintentionally used words that were offensive to others. Their perceptions of personal boundaries varied from those of the local community and as a result, their behaviour was at times perceived as intrusive or as inappropriate.

On the one hand the child care workers felt that they ought to respect the children's cultures and their choices of language. On the other hand, the children at the haven had to reflect an acceptable standard of conduct at the school and in public. The local community required that the children had to adjust their habits in order to blend in with the community. When the children returned home over weekends they had to switch back and blend in with their own communities again. One social worker felt that the standard of conduct the haven required was biased and that it discriminated against the cultures and the values of some of the communities from which the children came. Yet, the haven depended on the financial support from the community in which the haven is situated and the haven could not afford the perception that the children were offensive and consequently risk harming the haven's reputation in the community. The social worker also regarded the situation as an advantage for the children in that it taught them skills to adjust and to become flexible among people of different cultures – a skill that could equip the children for their future in a multi-cultural and multi-class society.

The child care workers and the social worker explained that in the previous system the children were sheltered from the realities of the circumstances from which they had come. They felt that the children were over-protected and even indulged at the haven and with their weekend-families. In the process they were not given sufficient opportunities to learn individual independence.

### 12.3 Hampering "independence"

The indulgence did not refer to material indulgence alone. It also referred to the way in which the children were mollycoddled and spoiled. This is particularly true of those child care facilities where the children lived in hostel-type accommodation and maybe not as much of the haven. At the haven they lived in cottages where they were encouraged to

assume some responsibility for chores like making their beds and tidying their rooms and cupboards. Most of the work was left to the general assistants (domestic workers) who did their laundry, cleaned the cottages, and cooked. The children were transported to their schools (those that were further away), to extra-mural activities and to church. In the interest of their safety they were not allowed to leave the grounds of the haven to explore the suburb and find their own way around. The children were not encouraged to go out on dates and they were only permitted to socialise in groups at night with adult supervision.

As a result, the children viewed the staff as restrictive and unfair and they protested against their lack of freedom. Apart from socialising at school and during their outings with their weekend-families, the children had little exposure to the "outside world". When the children left the haven at the age of eighteen, many of them did not have support systems, nor did they have the skills to function independently in the community.

An eighteen year old young man whom I had worked with at another child care facility stayed there for most of his life. When the time came for him to leave the haven, he literally knew no-one that could offer him accommodation until he could find employment. He did not know how to complete an application form for employment or how to apply for a learners driving license. He didn't know how and where to catch a bus, where the post office was or any other central points in town. But most of all, he lacked the initiative and the motivation to face the challenges of leaving the haven.

The law made provision for children in residential care up to the age of eighteen years. Thereafter, the children were left without state subsidies and were pretty much on their own. Even when special trusts or bursaries were obtained privately for the children to allow them to study further, the children still struggled with the basic issue of accommodation.

The Children's Haven M.T.R Smit had some advantage over other child care facilities that did not address the issue of the children's independence in time. In part, the structure of the haven contributed to the cultivation of the independence of the children since it

housed the children in cottages, which were run more like households than hostels. The children therefore were involved in the preparation of their meals and as mentioned earlier, to some extent they helped to tidy the cottages.

The haven purchased an ordinary house in the suburb to accommodate the teenagers. The teenage-house had progressed to become a house for young adults in the process of preparing themselves for life beyond the haven. The aim of this kind of arrangement was to allow the children the opportunities to learn the responsibilities of living in a commune-type setting. In their home the teenagers shared the responsibilities of running the household, they were prepared for and coached in finding employment and they were taught how to apply for identity documents and other chores associated with entering young adulthood.

The child care system previously did not make any provision for young adults at the haven and did not prepare them adequately for leaving the facility. Furthermore, the system isolated and even alienated the children from their original communities yet, it offered no permanent substitutes for the children's own communities. At most, it could offer temporary support, which was withdrawn as soon as the child came of age.

When they reflected on the previous system, the staff at the haven was in agreement that it would be to the children's benefit to have their own families waiting for them and ready to support them when they were leaving the haven. The family might not have been the ideal family at the time that the children were removed, but at least if there were regular contact with the family, the feeling was that the children would have the opportunity to live in their communities and to get street wise. So that when the time had come for the children to leave the haven, they would be able to find their way about and not to be isolated from the world.



### 13 Summary

In this chapter I offered a glimpse into the world of the children at the haven. Their stories related issues regarding their care and highlighted aspects where the community (in which the haven is situated) failed the children. In chapter seven of this study the implications of these stories for pastoral care, highlighting the role community, are discussed.

The following chapter will explore the implications of the transformation of child and youth care for the children. It will tell the children's experiences of their Project Go-meetings, which took place at the start of the transformation. It also narrates follow-up stories of some children eighteen months later.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF "PROJECT GO" FOR  
THE CHILDREN AT THE CHILDREN'S HAVEN M T R SMIT

1 INTRODUCTION

Whereas the previous chapter dealt with themes central to the experiences of the children at the haven, this chapter deals specifically with their experiences of the transformation of child and youth care. The stories in this chapter are partly told by the children, and partly by the principal of the haven, the social worker and the child care workers.

The chapter starts with a description of what happened during the period following immediately on the launch of Project Go. As a reflection on this project, this chapter also includes stories told by the children in our follow-up conversations eighteen months later. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the effects of the transformation on the children, as well as on the child care workers in as far as it impacted on their care of the children.

2 THE PERIOD FOLLOWING THE PROJECT GO-MEETINGS

2.1 Background

This study originated at the end of 1997 when I approached the principal of the Children's Haven M T R Smit and asked her to consider ways in which a possible research project could benefit the children. After she had consulted with the staff, she indicated that to their knowledge the children's immediate needs related to the launch of Project Go a few weeks before. She conveyed the staff's concerns about the emotional well-being of the children during the period that the Project Go-meetings were held and expressed apprehension about the children's behaviour. The principal requested that the research project should address the immediate crisis and assess over both the short term

and long term, what the implications of the transformation of child and youth care were for the children and the rest of the haven. In addition, the principal asked that I focus on the needs and concerns of the child care workers and their spouses.

At the time, the social workers and the principal of the haven, had already started initial Project Go-meetings with some of the children at the haven and were in the process of meeting with all the children and everybody concerned. They reported that the children experienced the meetings as traumatic as the meetings opened up old wounds. They requested that the children be debriefed, in other words, they were given an opportunity to talk about their experiences. They further requested that I assess the impact of the meetings on the children and that I identify children who might need continued therapeutic help as a result of the meetings.

The Project Go-committee structured the meetings with the children as follows: All the children in the care of the haven were to have individual meetings with the therapeutic team, consisting of the principal of the haven, the two social workers and the child care worker involved with the particular child to assess the children's immediate situation. At these individual meetings with each child, the child's parents or members of the extended families and the reconstruction worker were to be present. The staff had to investigate the possibility of immediate transfer of the children to the care of their parents or other members of their families.

Apart from assessing the children's immediate situation, the objective of these meetings was to provide direction to the staff on how to address the stumbling blocks hampering the children's transfer back to their communities.

The Project Go-meetings were required as a matter of urgency and at the same time, a moratorium on the placement and transferral of children was introduced. These changes caused enormous challenges for the staff of the haven. The haven's human resources had to be utilised to organise and have these meetings and to take care of all the administration involved. The haven had not budgeted for the cost of these tasks and it

drew heavily on the haven's funds. Furthermore, the staff was uncertain about what was expected of them and since they had little preparation or training to cope with the process. Many of them did not understand the rationale behind the assessments. The situation caused some resistance and unhappiness among them.

The fact that the children seemed upset and even traumatised by the Project Go-meetings aggravated matters for the staff. They felt ambivalent about the assessments and uncertain about its benefits for the children. On the one hand they respected that the instructions were given at government level and they trusted that in the long run, they would be in the best interest of the children. Yet, they were of the opinion that the children should not have been exposed to the sensitive nature of the meetings.

In my conversations with the social workers and the staff, they described the children's reactions to these meetings as alarming. The children were absconding more regularly and they were fighting amongst themselves. They were sad, had emotional outbursts, they were angry and confused. The housemothers described their cottages as destabilised and said that the children's reactions to these meetings spilled over into their school work.

Once the principal of the haven identified the children's needs and their ideas for the research project, the project started. Within the next few weeks I had conversations with the social workers, an initial meeting with the child care workers and I started to see the children in small groups of five to six. Once I had conversations with all the children I started to see the child care workers and their spouses in groups of six to eight.

## 2.2 Uncertainty and anxiety

From my conversations with the children and the staff, it seemed that the effects of the Project Go-meetings on the children were complex. On the one hand it gave them an opportunity to express their needs regarding their stay at the haven and to be present when matters regarding their futures were discussed. Although this had the potential to be

empowering, it left the children vulnerable. The children had significant anxiety about their meetings for days and sometimes weeks in advance. Despite the fact that the rationale behind the meetings and the nature of the meetings had been explained to them by the principal in a general meeting, as well as by the child care workers on various occasions, the children did not seem to understand what was being expected of them. Most of the children to whom I had spoken had restless nights and felt anxious both before and after their meetings. They spent a lot of time thinking about the meetings and it was the dominant topic of their conversations at the haven for some time. Those who had been to their meetings, spoke to the others and this led to even more fear and uncertainty.

Junior, aged eleven, described his experiences before the meeting:

I was very afraid. I started to cry and told my child care worker that I wasn't feeling well. Then she prayed for me and said that it was the Lord's decision.

Jack, also aged eleven, echoed Junior's feelings.

When I learned about the meetings I didn't know what to say. I was scared. My brother kept me awake the whole night – he asked me whether I was going home or staying. Then I said to him I want to go home but then, I also didn't want to go. He asked me to stay with him at the haven: "Don't go, don't go!" Then I said: "My feelings are different from yours."

During the meetings, the children were often tearful and scared. They were uncertain of what their roles were. The children had to indicate at these meetings their plans for the future. Those who wanted to continue their stay at the haven instead of returning to their parents, found themselves in a predicament. They did not want to disappoint or hurt their families who, in some cases, were present. According to some children, the social workers anticipated their uneasiness. In some cases they gave the children an opportunity

before the meetings to make up their minds. The staff present at these meetings sensed that the children somehow needed to be protected from the conversations that were taking place around them. The child care workers spontaneously sat close to the children, often holding their hands.

My conversations with the young children consisted of drawings and storytelling. Jonas, seven years old, explained his experiences:

One day I was at Project Go. I thought I was going home. It wasn't nice when I heard that I couldn't go. I was sad. Things at home aren't ready for me to go back.

Adam, also seven, told his story:

One day my mother and them came here. Then there was a lot of talking in the offices about whether we wanted to go home. Then we were sent out. Auntie Chrystal called us in one-by-one. Then we cried. They said we have to stay here until we were eighteen years old.

Adams's picture illustrated his experiences:



Dragon, ten years old, drew the following picture describing his perceptions.



The little ones spoke about their fear. Since the Project Go-meetings they seemed to experience fear more often than before. On my question: "When does the fear usually sneak up to you?", they answered that it was at bedtime, when everything became quiet, that fear sneaked in. The fear usually led to tears.

Didi, nine years old told her tale:

Didi: I was sad when I heard that I have to stay at the haven, but later I was OK.

Riette: How did you manage to go from sadness to being OK?

Didi: I stopped thinking about it.

Riette: And did it help?

Didi: Yes.

Angela told her story:

I cried when I realised that I wasn't going home. Then they asked my mother if she was prepared to have me at home. My dad said no, we have to stay at the haven until we were eighteen years old. They (Project Go-committee) will look at it again. My teacher told me not to think about it all the time. Maybe things will change.



Natalie, fifteen years old, related her experiences of Project Go:

I was a little bit apprehensive because I don't have parents...but since the other children found out that they were going home they made us very unhappy. They were going home at the end of the term.

Later in our conversation I asked Natalie what effects the uncertainty of her situation had on her. She replied:

Natalie: I get aggressive, I start to talk, to cry – then I go completely off my head.

Riette: When does this happen?

Natalie: When the children who have parents tease us, when they go home.

Donna, fifteen years old, related the effects of her meeting:

Since I found out about Project Go, my dad has gone overseas. He lost his job in PE. I had my meeting with only the social worker. After the meeting I went to my room and I cried because I knew I wouldn't go home. I finish school next year. Maybe he'll come back – he isn't married. I slept through my crying. I have gone off the rail, I don't talk to other children at school. My teacher noticed it and she called me to one side. I forget my books, I'm deteriorating. Sometimes at school or at the church when they talk about honouring one's father and mother... I didn't get a chance. I wish I could.

In my conversations with the children some expressed that they wanted to leave the haven because they have been there for such a long time and they resented the haven. However, they knew that the conditions at their parents' homes were not positive. Other

children wanted to return home but realised that their siblings at the haven might not be able to go with them. They did not want to leave their siblings behind, especially where the siblings were younger than themselves.

Julie, seventeen years old, shared her thoughts on the meeting:

When I heard of Project Go I thought this was the opportunity for my parents to get their matters in order, a chance to make things right. My mother refuses that my brother goes to live with our father. She wants him to stay on at the haven. My father and my stepmother want him to stay with them. My emotions revolve around my brother. If he has to stay, it means that he is worse than the other children here because our parents are bad. My brother's best friend is going home. After the meeting he was very depressed and sad. He just lies on his bed. I have never known him like this. Everyone knows him as the joker. Project Go has influenced him a lot, even my dad was sad. My brother wants to go and stay with our dad but he doesn't know how to tell our mother. Until our dad and stepmother have sorted out their money he can't go and live with them. On the one hand we feel that our mother doesn't have the right to do this, but on the other hand, we know that she cares.

### 2.3 Ambivalence

The children who wanted to go home experienced ambivalence due to their attachments to the child care workers and to their friends, some with whom they had been for years. Those children who wanted to be reunited with their families started to doubt their motivations and got cold feet. Yet, other children whose stay at the haven was permanent, who did not have parents, expressed the desire to return home. It was difficult to say what the children were thinking at the time and several said, during my conversations with them, that they couldn't explain what they were thinking and feeling. A ten year-old boy from another children's haven, whom I regularly saw during this period, convincingly

told me that he would be reunited with his mother despite the fact that she had died years before.

Trudy, eight years old, expressed her difficult position:

I don't really want to go to the new children's haven (she was going to be transferred to a child care facility closer to her mother), but my mother doesn't know it. She wants me closer to her, but I also want to stay with my friends. If I am with my mother then I won't be able to see my father. I want to be with my mother and my father and my friends. My mother will be disappointed if she found out. She wants my sister and I closer to her, but my sister doesn't want anything to do with her.

As a result of the children's expectations to go home (Project Go was nicknamed Project Go-home) most of the children were left with feelings of disappointment and distress. A small number of children at the haven were transferred home after their first Project Go-meetings. The rest were left in anticipation of going home for weeks and months after their meetings.

At the time of the first Project Go-meetings the majority of the children's families were not in a position to take the children back into their care. This was mostly due to the families' financial situation, but in some instances it was due to the fact that the parents had not addressed the circumstances that were keeping their children in institutionalised care. In one instance a child's father had remarried and the poor relationship between the child and the stepmother was given as the reason why the child could not return home. In another case, the parents had built up a life in the absence of the child and they expressed an unwillingness to receive the child back and to disrupt the stability of their family. Still, other parents merely did not show up for their children's meetings reflecting their lack of interest to take responsibility for their children.

Whatever the reasons for not being able to return home, the children's pain was noticeable. The children were upset and emotional for sometimes days afterwards. The child care workers and social workers attributed the children's reactions to the meetings to the fact that the children's former feelings of rejection and abandonment re-surfaced. They explained that it had taken some of the children years to settle into the routine of the haven and to come to some kind of acceptance of their circumstances. The staff's perceptions were that the Project Go-meetings re-traumatised them. A social worker at the haven illustrated it as follows: "It was as if the scabs that had grown over old wounds were now coming off and all the old pain was returning." During the period in which the meetings took place, the children re-lived the stories of how they originally came to the haven after not thinking about it for years and after purposefully suppressing these thoughts. The Project Go-meetings forced them to talk about it and to think about the circumstances under which they had been removed from their parents. Whereas some children were too young to really understand the reasons why they had been removed from their parents at the time, they now had to face this reality for the first time.

Candy, who was nine at the time, related her experiences:

My mom was there and my two brothers. We sat around a table and they asked us whether we enjoy it at the haven. We said yes. Then they asked us whether we wanted to go home to my mom. Then I said yes...but then my brothers didn't want to go home. I love my mom very much. I am so angry these days. I don't know what it is. I feel like kicking everyone around me. I'm scared someone kills me or something. I dream stuff and then I'm scared that they will come true. I'm scared and I'm angry.

Nancy, thirteen years old, shared her confusion after the meeting:

After the meeting it wasn't so bad. I was a bit sad because I wanted to go to my mother that day or at the end of the month. I had mixed feelings. Today still, I feel

unsure: sad, fine, up and own, up and down. I am sad when I return from my mother or when my mother has phoned me. I want to keep talking to her.

#### 2.4 Old pain resurfaced

People who work with the children of children's homes may know how the children create their own stories about the circumstances surrounding their removal from their families. My interaction with the children, not only during the period of this research project, but also prior to it, taught me that the children created identities of their mothers and fathers that they had never known. In the event that they had known their parents, they often replaced the "real stories", most of which were horrific stories, with stories that were more acceptable and often idealistic. The new stories made it easier for the children to understand and deal with the challenges of being an institutionalised child. The stories supplied them with a life story (almost an alibi) if they were asked or queried by strangers about their families. In these stories they covered up their parents mistakes and reflected their loyalty to them. My experience with these children also taught me how loyal these children were to their parents, especially their mothers, and how great their need was that I respected their stories. Often, it took a very long time for the children to recall the "real" stories and to share them with others.

When employing the narrative approach in therapy or research the emphasis is not on what the "real" or the "true" stories are, but what the child prefers to story at a particular time and in a particular context. I found that with time, though, the children started to narrate those stories they had not had the courage to story before.

Aletta almost nine years old, drew a picture of her and her mother. The pictures described her love for her mother (on the left)



At the time of the Project Go-meetings the children were confronted with the realities of the “real” stories. A narrative approach does not encourage the notion of one real story – the final truth. As people story their lives, much remains untold – not-yet-said (Freedman & Combs 1996:32). In the “real” story the mother might have been a prostitute or the father in prison. The child might have been sexually abused, physically maltreated or grossly neglected. The “real” stories brought back the reality of alcoholic parents, of unemployed parents and of rejecting parents. The stories reminded them of their abandonment and in the majority of the Project Go-meetings the children experienced yet another rejection. These meetings destroyed the ideal stories they hanged on to for survival – the fantasies that helped them to cope with the harshness of life in an institution.

## 2.5 Torn loyalties

The children's stories of the Project Go-meetings related the disappointment and the hurt it caused them. The children told of how they cried themselves to sleep after their meetings, how they resented their parents, their child care workers, the staff, their siblings and their friends who were leaving the haven. Some children who were going home started to talk about it and bragged about it to those who were not going. Some who were not going home were heard bragging that they too, were going. Fighting and bickering started between those who were going and those who were staying. In some cases siblings were divided and driven apart because one would go home whilst the other was staying behind creating another "us-them" situation.

Bonnie, a fourteen year-old girl, told how she absconded as a result of her Project Go-meeting. At the meeting she was told that she could not live with her mother. Bonnie's relationship with her mother was relatively new. Her parents had been separated for years and her mother's contact with her and her sister was sporadic. She got to know her mother a short some time before Project Go was launched and her father strongly discouraged contact between the mother and the daughter. Bonnie's mother had a history of alcohol abuse and returning the child to her would have been irresponsible and negligent. The news was a shock for Bonnie and she was unable to come to terms with it for months afterwards. During our conversations she expressed her love for the mother that she had just found. She felt that she could cope with her mother's alcohol problems should she be allowed to live with her. Her father had tried to force her to come and stay with him but she feared that should she agree to do so, he would not have allowed her to make contact with her mother. As a result, Bonnie refused to stay with her father. Her sister on the other hand, agreed to stay with the father and was visiting him regularly. The sister would return home after weekends spent with their father with clothes and other presents while Bonnie had to stay at the haven over weekends. The rift between their parents developed into a rift between them. Subsequent to our conversations, Bonnie absconded several times and became involved in alcohol abuse and sexual promiscuity.

At the time of writing this report Bonnie was no longer in the care of the haven and her whereabouts were uncertain.

Several of the teenagers who had younger siblings at the haven expressed their concern should their siblings chose to return home. The teenagers were old enough to realise that the conditions at their parents' homes did not offer the safety, food and structure that the haven did. They realised that at home they would not have regular and nutritious meals, that their parents could not afford school fees and uniforms and that their parents would not value education. The parents often struggled to maintain a routine and discipline at home with the result that studying and doing homework were neglected. At home the children had to take responsibility for chores like cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing and looking after younger children. The time spent on schoolwork or other hobbies was limited. A ten year-old boy who had gone home and subsequently returned to the haven, described how he stayed at home for three months because his mother could not (or would not) find him accommodation in a school. Initially he was thrilled by the freedom of being at home everyday but he soon became uncomfortable with it and started to worry about his situation.

Lynette, eight years old, expressed her ambivalence about going home:

The children's haven gives one pocket money and many things that one wouldn't get at home. If one is sad your child care worker will do something so that one feels better. One child isn't favoured here- we all are. I feel very bad about my parents. I know they don't have much money for sweets and things. My mother tries to borrow money from someone else to buy me something and then I say "no thank you". I try to save her money.



Valerie, fifteen years old, shared her concerns about returning home:

When they (the staff) asked me how things were at home I told them that my grandmother has started to drink at times. She didn't drink before. I said that I didn't want to go home for the long weekend. They wanted to know why? I never talk about what happens so I said that my grandmother didn't have food to feed us. She won't allow us to come anyway. Seven o' clock she's already drunk, then she swears at us: "Your mother isn't here, she ran away, you % ^ &". I am very scared. There at our place, people are raped and killed. I'd rather stay here. But my sister wants to go home. She gets spoiled there. But what if my grandmother dies, what then? My aunts are strange people.

Pete, a seventeen year-old teenager, was of the opinion that the Project Go-meetings created a false sense of hope for the younger children that they would be reunited with their families.

Project Go didn't really have an influence on me because i'm going out at the end of the year. Other children thought that there was hope for them, maybe they could go home. But for many of them hope was given when it (the possibility) didn't really exist. They thought they were going home when in fact they weren't really. In fact they were harmed by the false hope.

I am worried about my brother, he hasn't had his meeting. I would've liked it if he could stay on and finish (school) but he has a good chance of going out.

In contrast to their older siblings (teenagers), the younger children (between four and ten years old) did not understand the extent of their parent's limitations and usually expressed a blind acceptance and idealisation of the conditions at home. The idealised

impressions of the parents were accompanied by a desperate need for their parents' love and nurturing.

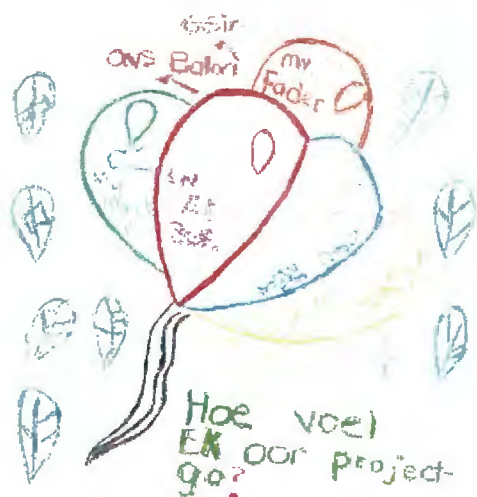
## 2.6 Those going home

Among the children I had conversations with, there were a few children who had heard that they could go home. These transfers were about to be finalised and I regarded myself fortunate to listen to their stories.

Louise, who was about nine years old at the time, wrote a letter and drew a picture to express her joy at going home. Her drawing was titled: "How do I feel about Project Go?"

### My balloon family

I have started to think, since I was small,  
of how I could re-build our family.  
When they called me in about Project Go,  
I got the feeling everything would change.  
Then the principal told me that I could go home – after two years.  
Then I felt that Project Go improved everything.



Didi expressed her joy at going home:



Three teenagers, Yvette, Ruben and Suanne, were to be reunified with their families. They spoke about their thoughts before going home. They told of their excitement and of the tears of relief when they were told that they could go home.

Yvette: When I heard that I was going home I just cried, it was such a shock. I knew that sometime or the other I would go home. But in a way I didn't think that it would happen. It was such a relief. The night before I was anxious, for in case I couldn't go. I couldn't sleep.

Ruben: I prayed the night before. I prayed for peacefulness. I started to pack all my stuff. The closer the day (for leaving) came, the more nervous I became. And the farewell...how would I do it?

Suanne: I think it (Project Go) happened because the country doesn't have money. Mandela said that children who have parents have to go home. Only children who have no parents can stay.

At the time that we met the three had already packed their belongings and were planning their goodbyes. They expressed some sadness to leave behind people they had grown to love and respect. They also expressed feelings of guilt for being allowed to go home while others had to stay.

Yvette felt particularly torn because her younger brother was staying behind. Similar to Bonnie's story, there had been a rift between Yvette's parents and the rift caused a separation in the children's loyalties – the girl siding with the father and the boy with the mother. The mother was not in a financial position to receive her son at home whilst the father's position improved to such an extent that he could care for his daughter. The

brother resented his sister for going home and saw this as a betrayal to him and their mother.

Ruben felt some trepidation about living with his stepfather. He had been removed from his mother and stepfather two years before as a result of his poor relations with the stepfather. This boy told of how he was praying that things would work out between him and his stepfather.

Suanne's relief to get out of the haven was greater than her fear of going home. She resented being at the haven since she was admitted a few years before and her behaviour at the haven and at school reflected this resentment in many ways. Her return home was something that the staff was very concerned about. She would return home to her stepfather, who had previously been jailed for sexually molesting her and her sister, and to a mother who had been accused of sexually molesting Suanne's brothers. When asked about her concerns she said that she felt confident that her parents had mended their ways and she told of how she and her sister would take measures to safeguard themselves at home by locking their bedroom door at night.

Later in this chapter Ruben and Suanne's stories are followed up.

## 2.7 Hope

My conversations with the younger children who had to continue their stay at the haven reflected in summary that they experienced the periods before, during and after the Project Go-meetings with anxiety, sadness and even despair. Those who could return home were happy and relieved, but also anxious.

It also seemed that the experiences of sadness and despair were soon replaced by renewed hope and optimism. From their stories it became apparent that the staff, child care workers and even the school teachers had played a part in the renewed hope. They told the children that there would be follow-up Project Go-meetings and that the situations at

their homes would be re-assessed regularly. The older children who had been interviewed felt that some children were given false hope. Some, whose conditions at home were unlikely to change, were given unrealistic optimism in order to settle them down and to comfort them. According to some of the older children, they did not manage to replace their disappointment and despair so readily. They had to face the reality of the Project Go-meetings and had to adjust to it gradually.

### 3 FOLLOW-UP STORIES

Although the initial number of children reunified as a direct result of Project Go was small, more children were gradually transferred back into the care of their families. To date thirty-five out of one hundred children have left the Children's Haven M T R Smit to join their families. Nationally, 4901 children from places of safety and children's havens were reunified with their families or others in their communities for the period July 1998 to December 1999 (Department of Social Development 1998b, 1998c; 2000).

Six of the thirty-five children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit, who were transferred to their parents, returned to the haven during the above mentioned period due to failed reunifications. However, the statistics collated by the Project Go-administration on a national level and on provincial level, did not reflect the amount of failed reunifications at all. An informal investigation of two other children's havens in Port Elizabeth showed that eleven percent of children reunified with their families had returned to the care of the haven. This figure reflected only the number of children who had been identified by the reconstruction social workers as being in need due to failed reunification with their families. There were no ways of telling how many unidentified children were left in the community suffering the consequences of failed reunification.

I had the opportunity to have conversations with seven children who had been reunified with their families. These conversations took place eighteen months after their initial Project Go-meetings. Five of the seven children were returned to the haven due the failure of reunification and the other two were still in the care of their families. I had

conversations with the five soon after their return. I met with the other two, Suanne at her home and Ruben at his uncle's home, eighteen months after their reunification.

### 3.1 Suanne

Suanne's experiences of her Project Go-meeting were discussed earlier in this chapter. She was fifteen years old at the time she was reunited with her family and sixteen when we had our follow-up conversations.

Suanne and her older sister went home to their mother, stepfather and three brothers. Both their parents had had a history of sexually abusing their children. The stepfather served a jail sentence for the abuse of Suanne and her sister. At the time the sisters went home, the staff shared their concerns about their safety. Suanne assured them that she would lock their bedroom door from the inside at night to prevent her stepfather from entering and in doing so avoid possible abuse.

I contacted Suanne eighteen months after her return mainly to follow up on her story and to see how the process of reunification was going. My idea was to get an idea of the difficulties facing a family in the process of reunification. I made an appointment to visit her and her mother at their home. On my arrival I found myself not prepared for the information she was about to share with me. I was shocked to find out that her stepfather had raped her eight months before. She had kept the rape a secret until shortly before I made contact with her.

The social worker, who was also involved in the reconstruction work with the family, was informed about the rape and when I contacted her she said that for more than a year after the two sisters returned home, things were going well. Between the social worker, Suanne, the mother and Suanne's boyfriend the story unfolded. It seemed that, for the first time in years, Suanne was doing well at school. She and her sister settled in at home and Suanne started a relationship with her first serious boyfriend. At the beginning of

1999 her mother underwent surgery for a serious ailment and the social worker undertook to visit the home daily to ensure the daughters' safety while the mother was in hospital.

However, it seemed that the social worker failed to do so and during the period that her mother was in hospital, her stepfather raped her in their house. Suanne kept quiet about the rape in fear that no one would believe her or that the Department of Welfare would remove her from the family as they did before.

When Suanne's married sister, who lived apart from the family, announced to the family that the stepfather raped her during the same period, Suanne disclosed the information pertaining to the rape. This incident led to a crisis in the family. They informed the social worker and she confronted the stepfather. He initially denied the allegations but later admitted to "having had sex" with his stepdaughter.

The social worker found herself in a predicament – she was bound by law to report the incident. But if she did, the stepfather, who was the sole breadwinner of the family, would lose his employment. This meant that the family of seven would have been left destitute. Four other children were dependant on the father's income. Due to these circumstances, the social worker entered into an agreement with the stepfather that he would move out of the home and that he would restrict himself to visit his wife and sons daily at the house.

At the time I made contact with Suanne, the stepfather was not respecting the arrangement with the social worker. Furthermore he was intimidating her to such an extent that she was considering leaving home to live with her boyfriend and his family. She left school when the news about the rape got out, as the children started to ridicule and tease her. The social worker described Suanne's behaviour as having regressed to where she had been two years before. Suanne was traumatised not only by fear of her stepfather, but also by his intimidation of her as well as by her mother's attitude. Her mother was siding with the stepfather and would not believe that either of her daughters were raped. Suanne felt betrayed by her family and by the social worker. She would not



consider the option of returning to the children's haven or to any other institution because she felt she had previously been punished for her stepfather's abuse and would not allow it to happen again.

As it were, Suanne's situation was likely to force her to leave home and live with her boyfriend. My concern is that she may become pregnant as they were sexually active. She, like her mother would then find herself in a position where she was dependent on her boyfriend to take care of the child. She had completed grade nine at a special school and with no qualifications, her chances of finding employment were slim. It seemed that as a result of the reunification with her family, Suanne found herself in a hopeless and disempowered situation.

### 3.2 Ruben

Ruben was another teenager who was reunited with his family as a result of his Project Go-meeting. Earlier in this chapter I told the story of how Ruben prayed that matters between him and his stepfather might improve. As with Suanne, I made contact with him eighteen months after his transfer from the haven. I went to visit him and his aunt at his uncle's flat.

Ruben was tense and anxious when I met with him. He was living with his aunt who lived with her son and his family in a small flat in Algoa Park. He moved away from his mother, stepfather and half-sister. He explained that the anxiety he was experiencing was related to the conflict between him and his parents. It seemed that his prayers eighteen months before were not answered in the way that he hoped.

The trouble began soon after the first month at home. The source of conflict was his relationship with this stepfather, who was responsible for his removal from his family six years before. Adding to the conflict, was his half-sister (who was born in the period he was in the care of the haven) with whom he struggled to form a satisfactory relationship. As before, he became the focus of his stepfather's hostility and his mother was unable

and unequipped to protect him from her husband's outbursts. Ruben was physically assaulted and verbally abused by the stepfather. His mother, unable to cope with the conflict, attempted to commit suicide in Ruben's presence. This was a very traumatic incident. He experienced enormous anxiety from the time he had to assist his mother until the ambulance arrived to take her to hospital. His stepfather refused him and his mother to attend church and restricted most of their activities. A few months later, his aunt took him in. Her financial situation was poor and she was financially dependant on the charity and kindness of her son.

At the time of our conversation, Ruben was trying to study for his final exams. It was a difficult task as the flat they stayed in was small and overcrowded. The noise from neighbouring flats and the presence of a toddler in the flat, made it difficult even to have a conversation. It seemed a situation far from ideal. Ruben's stepfather and mother kept on threatening and insulting him over the telephone. They were threatening to harm him and to send him to Boys town.

Ruben's future was uncertain. He was finishing school that year and although he made plans for employment the following year, these plans were vague. At the time that I met with him, he had not had any contact with the reconstruction social worker. He saw no point in reporting his situation to the Department of Welfare.

Suanne and Ruben were the first two children I approached to do follow-up conversations with. Since I did not have follow-up conversations with any of the other children who were reunited with their families, due to difficulty of tracing them and logistical problems, I was unable to report on some of the successes of the process of reunification. The issue of reunification is complex and deserves independent study as it deals with the welfare structures outside of the Children's Haven M T R Smit. What struck me was that both the children I approached for follow-up conversations, were in need of immediate intervention and neither did receive any. The question in my mind was: How many of the children who were reunited with their families, were in similar situations?

I pose three reasons why these children, even under difficult circumstances, would remain reunited with their families rather than to be removed from their families:

- The children would refuse to report the negligent circumstances in fear of being returned to institutionalised care.
- The reconstruction services were inadequate or non-existent.
- The negligence did not meet the criteria for removal.

The last statement needs some clarification. Since the start of the transformation of child and youth care, and since the moratorium on the removal and transfer of children deeper into the child care system, the conditions for removing children from their families, have changed. By implication, only those children who were suffering serious abuse or neglect were to be removed and then only as a last resort. The tighter criteria for the removal of children has its benefits, but it also implies that some children who were in need, are left in their circumstances. The original aim was that reconstruction services would be rendered to the families of these children. This would have been an ideal option, were the standard of reconstruction services not so poor.

The following stories related the circumstances of those children who returned to the haven after failed reunification.

### 3.3 The five “returnees”

#### 3.3.1 Gustav and Nicky

Gustav, fourteen years old, and his sister Nicky, seventeen years old, returned to the care of their mother at the end of 1998. Their father died in 1991 and they were admitted to the haven in 1995 as their mother was unable to take care of them. They told the story of their reunification during our conversations in 1999.

Since their mother was absent during their Project Go-meeting, Nicky and Gustav were surprised to learn that they could go home. They were happy and things at home went fine for a while. Their mother was unable to enter Gustav into a school apparently "because the schools were full." It was decided that Nicky would not attend school either, but would find employment and help to contribute to the household. Consequently, for the first three months of 1998 neither of the children attended school. They spent their time "hanging around the suburb" and Nicky started to socialise with a cousin who had been expelled from school for misconduct.

After the novelty of living at home and being free from school duties started to fade, Nicky and Gustav found the adjustment difficult. They had to get used to their mother's moodiness and found her to be critical and tired most of the time. This caused them to feel hurt and despondent. However, they learned how to adjust to her demands and started to take steps to make life easier at home for both their mother and for them. Nicky shared her wisdom in this regard: "One just has to accept it as part of growing up." She seemed equipped for a milieu where there was constantly a shortage of money and where day-to-day survival was a challenge.

As time went by Nicky became increasingly concerned about her brother's absence from school. She was also anxious about the fact that she was expected to find a job. She feared that she would not be able to cope with the demands and the responsibilities of a full-time job. There was a job opportunity as a factory employee coming up for Nicky, but she feared that she would be expected to work long hours and to be on her feet the whole day. Nicky found the idea overwhelming but she was prepared to give it a go in order to help her mother. However, this never materialised since friends of the family reported the children's situation to the social worker, and as a result, Nicky and Gustav were removed once again from their mother's care.

The siblings explained that they were shocked and upset to find out that they had to return to the haven. They felt disappointed and angry with their mother for allowing it to happen. They felt humiliated about the failed reunification and feared that the children

and the staff at the haven would treat them with condemnation. A few months before, they proudly said their goodbyes to everyone at the haven and were envied by many for the opportunity of going home. Now they had to swallow their pride and return.

Fortunately their return to the haven was far easier than they anticipated. The staff and the children received them with open arms, not asking any questions about their time at home but conversing with them as if they had never left. Nicky and Gustav appreciated this gesture and said that it made their adjustment easier. Both children settled in and Nicky was considering the possibility of completing her schooling.

### 3.3.2 The Bosch-siblings (Bosch 1999)

The following story describes the reunification of the Bosch-siblings with their father and stepmother at the end of 1998. The children were Caty, twelve years old, Vicky eleven years old, and Rudolph eight years old.

I still recall the night when everyone at the haven said farewell to the Bosch-children. It was at the Christmas party in 1998. The three proudly walked onto the stage with the other children cheering. It was such a victory for them – they were going home! It was with sadness that I had the conversation with them a few months later to discuss their return.

From their perspective it seemed that there was never a harmonious relationship between Caty and Rudolph and their stepmother. It was not surprising then, that after the reunification, it only was a matter of time before the conflict flared up again. Caty and Rudolph indicated to their father and stepmother that they wanted to go and live with their mother. The decision caused a rift between them and their sister Vicky who was loyal to her stepmother. It led to a lot of fighting in the home.

Eventually Caty and Rudolph were sent to live with their mother and the mother's boyfriend in Mpumalanga. The mother's socio-economic situation was perilous and once

Caty and Rudolph arrived there, the father refused to send them money for support. When the situation became desperate, the children moved on to stay with their step-grandmother for a while until eventually, they returned to the Eastern Cape to live on a small-holding with some distant relatives. In the few months they attended four different schools. At the last school, the school counsellor managed the situation and as a result, the children were removed and returned to the haven.

The Bosch-children said they were shocked and unhappy when they found out that they had to return to the haven. Caty felt that it was unfair of the Welfare to remove them so soon. She thought that the Welfare should have given her parents another chance. Although they settled in at the haven, they would have preferred to go back to their family.

#### 4 DISCUSSION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF PROJECT GO

##### 4.1 Immediate effects on the children

The effects of the implementation of the transformation of child and youth care that started with Project Go and included the moratorium on the transfer of children, were significant. For a period of weeks to months the children found themselves emotionally upset and unsettled. In part, the negative effects of Project Go were related to the speed with which the project was implemented. The setting in motion of the meetings held with each child and their families and the assessment of the children, followed within weeks of the announcement of the launch of Project Go by the Welfare authorities. There was no time set aside for explaining matters to the staff in a satisfactory manner or for preparing them for the possible effects of the meetings on the children. More importantly, no measures were taken to prepare the children for what was ahead of them, nor were steps taken by the Department of Welfare to address the children's experiences of the Project Go-meetings.

## 4.2 Premature reunifications

In effect, Project Go sped up the return of many children to their families. The return of the children was done without preparing the families or the children for the reunification. The children were returned to the same social or economical problems they were removed from in the first place.

Prior to the transformation, the reconstruction services rendered to the families of the children in care of the haven, were limited. When children were transferred by order of the court to institutionalised care, the reconstruction services became passive (Badenhorst 1999). The standard of the reconstruction services rendered to the families of the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit, was inadequate and did not facilitate the reunification of the children with their families.

The improvement of reconstruction services to families-in-need was originally planned as the first level (primary care) of the transformation of the child and youth care system. Due to the urgency to start the transformation (as discussed in the previous chapter), this first level was skipped (Theron 1999).

From the information gathered in this study, it seemed that the urgency with which the transformation was launched, was not in the interest of the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit. The stories of the children at the haven reflected that in the instances recorded, the domestic problems at their homes, contributing to their removal from their families years before, re-occurred soon after they were placed back with their families.

In the case of Ruben, the conflict between him and his stepfather flared up only a month or two after he returned home. During the time Ruben was institutionalised there was no therapeutic input from any source aimed at addressing the conflict at home and especially the stepfather's violent and controlling behaviour. Suanne returned to the stepfather who had previously sexually molested her only to be raped by him. Although the

reconstruction worker, made continuous contact with the children and the family, the stepfather never received therapeutic help to address his sexually deviant behaviour. According to the social worker, the stepfather never received any counselling or psychotherapy of any kind while he was imprisoned for the sexual abuse of the two children.

The same was true for the families of the children who had to return to the haven after it had become clear that their families were not managing to take care of them. With the Bosch-siblings the conflict between the divorced parents was intense. The children were exposed to consistent fighting and bickering and they were traded between households. At one stage, Caty and Rudolph were driven out of their father's house. The children were insulted and threatened by their stepmother. It was clear that the parents of these children had poor parenting abilities and that they received no counselling and support to address the problem.

There was a strong conviction amongst the staff at the haven that some children were transferred home when they should not have been. The staff and management felt that the Project Go-committee did not take the concerns of the therapeutic team seriously. The staff felt that their recommendations were disregarded. Their experience in working with children, their qualifications and training in the field of child care and their personal knowledge of what was in the children's best interest were ignored. The force with which the Project Go-committee blocked the staff's recommendations often made no sense. The situation led some to suspect that the Project Go-committee was transferring children to the community in an attempt to favourably adjust the statistics on which their successes were rated.

During the last few months of this research project, the staff at the haven started their own project, which addressed the shortfalls of the reunification services. They formed a team, which consisted of the child care workers and the social worker. Including the children, the parents and the "outside" social worker, they started to prepare the families for the reunification process.



The team met with these parties at the haven and assessed the situation of the parents. The children were initially placed with the parents for holidays and weekends. If the placements went well, the children were placed with their parents permanently in an "open" placement-arrangement. It implied that the children could return to the haven should it be found that the reunification was not succeeding. This open-transfer to the children's havens was registered as "indefinite" in order to protect the children from future abusive situations. Towards the middle of 2000, two families were involved in the reunification program. During the meetings with the families, the team addressed issues such as discipline and relationship problems and monitored the families' progress. The social worker reported that the parents, who were involved, became more empowered to cope with the behavioural and emotional problems of their children. In one incident, the parents were taught how to negotiate with their teenage daughter the issue of dating. At first the father of the family wanted to return the child to the care of the haven because of his inability to discipline his daughter during the first few weeks of reunification. With the help of the haven's own reunification-team, the parents lay down some ground rules which their daughter agreed to, and things were going relatively smoothly.

The staff at the haven did not only keep the transfers of some children an open arrangement, they also became more flexible in the kind of transfers that they made. Some siblings were allowed to go to their parents' home during the week but had to return to haven over weekends. The arrangement addressed the need of the children to be protected from the effects of the parents' alcohol abuse over weekends. Apart from the alcohol abuse, the parents were otherwise well-functioning and capable parents. Their drinking problems were limited to weekend-socialising. The haven's motivation for this arrangement was to encourage and allow the parents to take as much responsibility as was realistically possible. The children were empowered to adjust to their parents' life styles as best they could. The approach, derived from a Project Go-principle called "normalisation", worked from the premise that in most families, children had to learn to adjust to some kind of shortcomings of their parents. The children had to accept that their

families and communities were not without problems. The sooner the children adapted to it, the better it was for them.

A more flexible stance was also seen in the staff's approach to the coming and going of the children over weekends. In the past the haven has done everything in its power to secure the children's safety at all times. A wall was built around the haven, security gates installed, and they used to be transported to their extra mural activities.

Yet, over weekends when the children went home some of them were allowed to play in the streets and visit friends in the suburb until late at night. At home the teenagers were allowed to go out on dates and the children were given money to travel by taxi. In the South African context "taxi" is often linked to an industry characterised by severe and often violent competition and taxis often are notorious for road accidents.

As a result, the teenagers started to request similar freedom of movement at the haven. Following the Project Go-prescriptions, the social worker's opinion was that, instead of the staff having to deal with the disciplinary issues and the children's behavioural problems every weekend, the parents should assume responsibility for it. As a result, more children were sent home over weekends. The outcomes were not positive. Several children returned hungry, dirty and tired after weekends. Some were exposed to alcohol abuse and violence. Some mentally disabled girls were seen in the company of grown men in adult night clubs, a boy was seen dancing and drinking in the company of his mother and her friends. The children returned on Mondays confused by the differences in norms and values and the difference in the standards of living between the haven and their homes. According to the principal of the haven, many of the children didn't want to continue the weekend visits.

The regular visits to their homes also caused enormous challenges for the child care workers. Whereas the children used to spend three weeks continuously at the haven before some would visit their homes for a weekend, now a greater number of children went home every weekend. According to the staff, Fridays were "lost days" in terms of

getting the children to do any sort of homework. On Mondays they were still settling in after their weekends out – their thoughts still preoccupied by the happenings of the weekend. The remaining three days were all the child care workers had left of the week to do their educational tasks. The regular weekend visits to their families, which Project Go recommended and enforced, robbed the children of the consistency of a daily and a weekly routine and the emotional security created by it.

In my opinion, the constant disruption of the children's routine was not in their best interest. My limited experience from custody assessments on behalf of the Family Advocate's office, indicate that when parents get divorced, the court privileges the child's stability in the home of the custodian parent to the non-custodian's rights to have access to the child. The court usually structured the non-custodian parent's access to the child with the assistance of a social worker or a psychologist. A standard arrangement would be that the child spend every alternative weekend with the non-custodian parent. In the event that the non-custodian parent was regarded as an unfit parent, access was either refused or if it was allowed, then under supervision. If that were the norm, it made little sense that children in residential care, who needed protection from the circumstances at home, were disrupted and exposed to undesirable events every weekend. If the transformation were to be regarded as the "divorce" between the child and the child care system, the children's haven could be regarded as the custodian parent and the parents of the children as the non-custodian parent. Following this metaphor, the same rules that protect children of divorced parents, should serve the children-in-need.

Furthermore, not only the children who went home for weekends were affected negatively, but also those staying behind. It was usually the same group of children who stayed behind. Every weekend they had to pack and move into another cottage because the staff alternated duties over weekends. According to some of these children, they felt "doughly"-done-in, firstly because they had to stay behind every weekend and secondly because they were also disrupted in the process.

### 4.3 Blocked transfers

Apart from the objective of Project Go to prioritise the return of children to their families, the project also stopped the transfer of children "deeper" into the system. The motivation for it was to protect the children's rights to receive education and care in the least restrictive environment and it came as a reaction to the abuse that happened in the past in this regard.

At the haven were individual children who presented serious behavioural and emotional problems that infringed on the rights of other children at the haven. A thirteen-year old boy had a history of sexual deviant behaviour and other serious behavioural problems such as lying, stealing and violent behaviour towards others. He repeatedly sexually assaulted other children, some of whom were mentally disabled. The child care workers were unskilled and under-trained to cope with his behaviour. He had received prolonged psychotherapeutic help as well as psychiatric intervention. Nothing seems to have any effects on his behaviour. Similarly a fifteen-year old girl had had a history of behavioural difficulties: violent behaviour, stealing and sexual promiscuity. She was transferred from cottage to cottage at the haven and most of the child care workers attempted to accommodate the child's difficulties. The other children were intimidated by her and feared her. She committed several offences but due to the kindness and sympathy of the "victims" of these offences, criminal charges never were pressed. Like the boy, she underwent intensive therapeutic treatment but seemed not to benefit from it.

Both these children's behaviour either endangered other children's safety or infringed on their rights to harmonious and peaceful living free from intimidation and fear. The staff at the haven, as well as the management board and the teachers of the schools, requested that these children be transferred to a child care facility that offered more structure and skills to address the children's specific needs. Despite extensive efforts and well-motivated requests, the Project Go-committee did not allow the transfer of these children. They disqualified the opinions and recommendations of the professionals who were

trained and experienced in the field of child care. They abused their power to prevent the transfer of these children that would have best served the interest of the majority of the children at the haven. They proved to be inflexible and even patronising in their handling of these situations and in one incident, recommended that a child be exorcised despite assurance that the child showed no symptoms or signs of being possessed by evil spirits. Appeals were issued by the management of the haven to individuals on managerial level were disregarded and were never responded to.

The girl referred to in the previous paragraph did not attend school for the last eight months. Two schools had expelled her in short succession during the first term of 2000, and the staff was unable to get her into another school. As a result, she lost a year of education she could have obtained, had the Project Go-committee allowed her transfer to a child care facility that offers a specific educational program.

#### 4.4 Unrealistic perceptions about permanency

A guiding principle of Project Go, stipulated that children belonged with their families in their communities and that their stay at an institution should be as short as possible. The principle valued the importance of maintaining the family unit and in theory it maintained the unity between children and their parents. These values reflect an idealisation of families and of communities – what worked in Canada and in England (where the models forming the basis of the transformation were imported from) will not necessarily work in South Africa.

Albeit a noble principle, it proved naive and unrealistic. It operated from the understanding that the family was ready to receive the children back in to their care. However, the transformation had failed to address the level of reconstruction of the family and it moved straight on to the level of reunification of children with their families.

In most situations the children's families were not in a position to care for them, nor were they likely to progress into such positions. The circumstances of the children who were removed from their families under the new system were even more austere than before. Ms Badenhorst (1999) explained: "The children who arrive at our doorstep now come out of the worst of circumstances." She explained that in contrast to the period before the transformation, most of children's families now lived in poverty. To emphasise this point she related a recent visit to a grandmother's house to investigate why the children's transport fees provided by the haven, always got lost. Once she had arrived at the grandmother's home, the reasons became clear. It was a one-roomed house, with no division separating the toilet from the rest of the room. The family slept on mattresses on the floor and there was no furniture in the room. Neither was there any food in the house. The house was surrounded by mud and rubble. The situation explained why the family could not resist using the taxi fare for food money. As was the case in many of the other families, it was unlikely that the financial circumstances of the grandmother, who was in her seventies would improve.

In the event that the families were too poor to receive the children back from the haven the next option Project Go envisaged was that the children would be placed with other families in the community. This option had some potential and in some cases it proved successful, however, in other cases it was not possible at all. The staff explained that when it came to fostering a child the prospective foster parents often preferred to take care of a young child. The older the children were, the more difficult it became to find foster-homes for them. The children usually visited the prospective family for weekends and holidays until they got to know one another. In many instances, some members of the family did not like the children, or they could not cope with the children's behavioural difficulties and soon they lost interest to foster the children.

In the absence of community placements, the children were to remain at the haven indefinitely. As a result of the transformation of child and youth care, the running of child care institutions were changed and geared for the temporary stay of children and not for the children whose stay was indefinite. The standard of living at the haven was adjusted

by Project Go to fit the new conditions. The focus on the empowerment of the child as opposed to the "mothering" of the child, brought on an attitude of a more impersonal approach to the child. It might be practical and probably in the best interest of those children who would be in and out of the haven in a matter of months. Yet, for the children who made the haven their home for most of their childhood lives, these conditions created an inadequate environment.

The goal of the transformation was that there would be fewer children in need of temporary care and that children's havens would serve as a mere stop-over for children-in-need. The notion did not reflect reality. At a conference on child and youth care in Bloemfontein in September 2000 Ms J de Beer (2000) presented figures projecting the incidence of children that will be orphaned as a result of AIDS. She stated an estimated 625 AIDS-orphans were in residential care at the time, but that in the next few years, this figure could rise to between 200 000 and 250 000. The implications drawn from these projected figures were that there would be an enormous demand for permanent child care facilities in the not too distant future. In retrospect it may seem possible that the speed with which Project Go was launched, managed to "rid" the child care system of children who do have refuge in the community in order to accommodate the expected high number of AIDS orphans. If this argument is used to justify the reunification of children and their parents, in what way does the government's accountability feature towards those children who have been prematurely reunified and who have been harmed by the process of reunification? Much more should have been done with the families of these children to create responsible parenting – both by the government and by the DRC.

Should the nature of the care provided to child care facilities continue to conform to the transformation process, those children in need of permanent care would find themselves in a system geared for temporary stay. The care offered would meet their most basic needs such as food and shelter. It would not provide a sense of homeliness, affectionate parenting or create a sense of belonging. It would not meet the children's spiritual and emotional needs. Concerns for these children were related to some ethical issues. These were children in society who needed emotional and spiritual nurturing more than any

other children. Would they be denied this in order to "normalise" matters for them? What sort of children would the child care system generate?

#### 4.5 Discipline

The abolishment of corporal punishment in South Africa led to some serious adjustments in schools as well as in child care facilities. The abolishment of corporal punishment was in line with the new constitution and its introduction coincided with the transformation of child welfare. It was not so much the abolishment of corporal punishment that affected the disciplining of the children at the haven, as it was the replacement of the basic strategy of disciplining children.

Theron and Matthews (1999), both at management level of the transformation of child and youth care, acknowledged the fact that the issue of discipline was a weakness in the transformation process. In my opinion, the weakness related to two factors. The first was that the transformation introduced a new strategy, which it failed to explain and establish sufficiently. The second factor related to the inadequate training the Project Go-management provided leaving the child care workers without alternative disciplinary skills.

The first level of the training of child care workers, which formed part of the transformation process, was completed by 1999. By this time the majority of child care workers, social workers and staff members in the management of child care facilities were trained. The training was supposed to have progressed to advanced training, which would have addressed serious behavioural problems and violent behaviour of children.

At the time the advanced training was meant to start, the process was affected by changes in the management of the transformation in child and youth care. These changes came with the appointment of the new president of South Africa, Mr Thabo Mbeki. In Mr Mbeki's reshuffled cabinet, Dr Zola Skweyiya took over from Ms Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi as Minister of Welfare. According to Theron (1999), Dr Skweyiya replaced



Lesley du Toit, an advisory to the former minister. Ms Du Toit was responsible for designing and writing the advanced training programmes for the child care workers and replacing her brought a major disruption in the training process. At the time this study report was written, the training of child care workers had not resumed. The exact reasons for the delay had not been forthcoming but seemed to be, at least in part, due to political struggles on the management level of Project Go.

Whatever the reason for the discontinuation of the training of child care workers, the effects have been detrimental to the children at the haven. The effects of the transformation process affected the children's way of behaving (as discussed earlier in this chapter) as well as affecting the child care workers' sense of empowerment to discipline the children in their care.

Since the start of the transformation, the children at the haven were made more aware of their rights. On various occasions the principal of the haven explained to the children their rights in detail. According to the Minimum Standards which was based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), each child received a copy of the Rights of Children. Copies were available in their rooms. The whole process was a new experience for the children. They asserted themselves with the child care workers and they challenged the boundaries between their rights and rules of the haven. Some children treated the child care workers with contempt and soon they realised that the child care workers' hands were tied; that they could do little to "punish" them for bad behaviour. Moreover, the indirect threat of being transferred to a school of industry or a reform school if their behaviour did not comply with the rules of the haven, became an empty threat.

While there was a lot of focus on the children's rights, little attention was paid to their responsibilities. Woods (1998, 1999) pointed out that the interpretation was often made that Child Welfare "had gone soft" on the children. He emphasised the fact that as much as the children had "new" rights, so did they have a responsibility towards other children and towards adults to follow and respect rules and regulations. According to Woods

(1999), not only were children's rights previously minimised and abused, but children were never taught to take responsibility for their actions – they were never exposed to experiencing the consequences of their behaviour. In stead they were often rescued from the consequences.

During the early period of the transformation, the child care workers felt that with the emphasis on the rights of the children, their rights were overlooked and overshadowed. Some child care workers felt betrayed, angry and disempowered. In the past the child care workers were not allowed to physically punish the children in their care. Only the principal of the haven, and then only as a last resort, used physical punishment. Yet, it seemed that at times some of the child care workers, without the knowledge of the management of the haven, previously relied on physical punishment or at least the threat of it, to discipline the children. With the abolishment of corporal punishment the child care workers found their inability to deal with the children's behavioural problems was amplified.

During our conversations some child care workers linked the abolishment of corporal punishment to their religious backgrounds as well as their political views. These child care workers were of the opinion that corporal punishment formed an integral part of the Christian tradition and that their Christian duties included the disciplining of children and teaching the children concepts like respect for elders and obedience towards authority. They interpreted the term "discipline" as both verbal and physical punishment. They saw the abolishment of this responsibility of parents and therefore the child care workers, as negligence of their Christian responsibility towards the children.

Some child care workers regarded the abolishment of corporal punishment as a reflection of the values of the post-apartheid government. They were of the opinion that the African National Congress (the ruling political party), in its abolishment of corporal punishment and capital punishment, also abolished Christianity as the primary religion of the country. They viewed it as a direct attempt of the government to introduce other religions, such as Islam, into prominent positions in our country (reflecting an ignorance of Islam

punishment). They were of the opinion that the government was contributing to the decline in the moral standards of the country. They expressed the conviction to stay true to their religious belief that corporal punishment was justified. One child care worker explained as follows: "I'm going to do as the Bible tells me, rather than do what the ANC tells me" – reflecting her own interpretations of both.

With the introduction of the transformation of child and youth care, the perceptions and beliefs that underpin the child care workers' values regarding discipline and corporal punishment were not addressed. Little room was made for these people's views and where these views came from. The approach of the transformation was to merely abolish old ways of disciplining. The message related to the child care workers, was that their traditional beliefs were wrong and they were not allowed to continue to practice these beliefs. This matter was superficially addressed in training. In the training, which I underwent as well, the stance of the trainer reflected an unsympathetic attitude towards the concerns of the child care workers. The motivation to amend their views of discipline was one of "adapt or die" in other words, "follow the new policy towards child care or risk the chance of losing your job", which belies the very reason for the new approach to "discipline" i.e. threatening.

The positive effect of this approach was that changes in the child care workers' conduct towards children were enforced and occurred relatively fast. However, the motivation for the change did not come from within. The philosophy behind the disciplinary practices of the child care workers remained unchanged. The changes were superficial and insincere and did not occur from the conviction that it was the right thing to do and consequently usually subverted in a subtle manner.

The issue of change brings me back to a point made earlier in this study that – unless small changes are made by the people or participants at "grass roots-level" – in the attitudes and value systems of the people who work with the children – the major changes made in parliament and through amendments of laws and the enforcement of rules and regulations will remain superficial. The transformation process itself will remain

superficial. Unless the people most affected by the changes take part in the design of the transformation, transformation will remain something being forced. Unless transformation becomes a collaborative process between the government officials and the people and children most affected by it, it will remain a unilateral process not owned by people and children and seen as having little advantage for them.

What collaboration did Project Go invite from the children and the staff who lived and worked with the children for years? What sense of ownership did the children and the staff feel towards the transformation process?

The child care workers' philosophy towards disciplining children resided in the traditional approach to raising children. It reflected the patriarchal manner of chastising and punishing the child verbally or physically for misbehaviour. The punishment served to illustrate the difference between right and wrong. It was done within a tradition that expected children to be seen and not to be heard. It expected the children to dismiss themselves from adult conversations. It emphasised the stance that children did not have the liberty of entering an argument with an adult.

In his book, *Ope briefaan Willem de Klerk* (Open letter to Willem de Klerk), Chris Louw (2000: Foreword), offered an emotive account of the authoritarian attitude of Afrikaner culture towards the issue of discipline and obedience to figures of authority. His ideas are linked up with the history of Afrikaner nationalism and the DRC I discussed in chapter three of this study. I present some quotes from his book that in my opinion summarised the thoughts of some of the child care workers. Louw's words resonate with the voices of the children at the haven – with their resistance against adult's abuse of power, their plight to be heard, to be understood, to be consulted. In highlighting Louw's thoughts and not others (like his critics), I acknowledge my ethical and political bias but do so in my identification with the children's plight.

Dad taught you nasty things, my child.

Dad made you do wicked things.

Bend over so that Dad can give you a hiding, to cleanse you from all evil.

Just remember, it is harder for Dad than for you.

(Louw 2000:Foreword)

"My generation has to consider carefully before voicing an opinion. We have to pick our words carefully; that is how we were taught."

(Louw 2000:3)

Louw (2000:9) also refers to the present Afrikaner generation as the "shut-up-Dad-has-spoken generation." He (Louw 2000:29) describes the Afrikaners' tendency to conform as "shut up, stand at attention, do what the Uncle is telling you."

From this patriarchal perspective, discipline was understood from a position of power. The right to administer punishment belonged to the adults and was based on the grounds that children ought to respect them. The traditional approach lent itself to emotional and physical abuse of children. It facilitated the perceptions that adults had a religious and traditional right to physically abuse their children (and their spouses). Children were not raised to voice objections to adults, not to argue with adults and to respectfully comply with adults' wishes. In the process children were created who were easy targets for abuse at the hands of adults and who sometimes were unable to distinguish between abuse and parental discipline. If children were vulnerable to abuse at the hands of adults, they were equally unable to resist abuse of a sexual nature because it was the same compliance that created opportunities for perpetrators to commit sexual offences against children. From my experience with children in child care facilities, I have gathered that children-in-need are soft targets for sexual abuse. When they reported incidents of sexual abuse, their statements were often met with scepticism. Children grew up with the perception that their parents' behaviour was considered to be the norm. In my view, the perpetrators of sexual abuse were aware of this general perception and took advantage of the children's vulnerability. Children were often intimidated by the power of the adults who took care of them and were helpless as few adults truly stood up for their rights.

During the time of this study one of the children at the haven came forward to report that a schoolteacher had sexually abused her. The principal of the haven pressed charges and the alleged perpetrator was suspended. However, the school principal requested that the child be removed from the school. When reflecting on this incident the principal of the haven and I strongly suspected that, had the child come from a private home, this request would never have been made. We felt that it portrayed the perception of the community that the children at the haven lied. The principal of the haven refused to remove the child and repeatedly requested that the state prosecutor commenced prosecution. The prosecutor was reluctant and initially indicated that he would not pursue the matter. Only after several other children, who were not from the haven, came forward, did they take the case seriously enough to start the prosecution process.

From my conversations with the children and the child care workers it is my contention that the traditional manner of disciplining children did not allow the children-in-care to learn from their own experiences, in other words, to make their own choices for their behaviour and to suffer the consequences. It did not teach the children the moral and ethical implications of their behaviour. Instead, it encouraged superficial moralistic values. It did not facilitate respect for the child care workers and it led to a culture of hostility between the children and the child care workers. Due to the number of children who were in the care of a child care workers, the nature of the children's problems and their inadequacies, some child care workers were often overwhelmed and disempowered. In reaction they often fell back on previous ways of disciplining the children becoming impatient with the new approach.

The social worker, who also acted as a child care worker for a house filled with teenagers, believed that the child care workers' philosophy towards discipline needed to be addressed on an ongoing basis. She confirmed that the training the child care workers had (at the time that I spoke to her), was insufficient. It failed to address the values at the basis of their practices of discipline. She felt that progress was made only with those child care workers who were flexible and open to change. She found that the child care workers benefited most when she and the principal facilitated regular discussions with the

child care workers regarding specific incidents that happened in the cottages. She stressed that in future, the selection of the child care workers were also to be based on their views regarding discipline and their ability to show flexibility.

The absence of sufficient training in the management of behavioural problems encouraged the staff to find innovative ways of addressing the problems. During the last couple of months before this study was completed, the social worker began to delegate far more responsibility to the child care workers than before. This was in part, due to the fact that the social worker's colleague had retired and the haven was unable to finance the continuation of her post. But it was also due to the changes that occurred in her perceptions regarding the children-in-care, their parents and the child care workers. She contributed the changes in her perceptions to the effect of the transformation process. As a result, she decided to progressively empower the child care workers. According to her, the child care workers who previously proved to be talented and motivated, "flourished" at the increased responsibility. The management of the haven promoted three child care workers to a senior position and delegated tasks previously performed by the social worker and the principal of the haven to them. One such task was to take care of crises that occurred at the cottages at night. Previously the social workers (who do not live on the premises), or the principal of the haven, had to be called in by the child care workers to cope with such crises. The senior child care workers now showed that they could handle difficult situations satisfactorily. Not only did this arrangement bring relief to the social worker and the principal in terms of workload, it also increased the senior child care workers' confidence and motivation.

Another creative approach was born out of the discipline "crisis". The social worker and the principal and the social workers at other havens, formed a club that met on a regular basis to discuss possible ways of disciplining the children according to the Minimum Standards. They were in the process of compiling a booklet for the child care workers that would serve to address basic issues in the disciplining of the children.

#### 4.6 Abuse of power

According to the experiences of the staff of the haven over the past two years, the Project Go-committee at times abused the power invested in it by the Inter Ministerial Commission. Although the preceding paragraphs touched on this issue, it needs to be reiterated.

The urgency and the speed with which the transformation had been launched resulted in many queries the staff had about the practical implementation of the transformation. The staff interpreted the responses of the Project Go-committee to their concerns and enquiries as authoritative and inflexible. The objections the staff communicated to the Project Go-committee (regarding those children they had felt would have been harmed by the reunification with their families), were either rejected straightaway or not even responded to. Attempts to stress the seriousness of some children's behavioural problems and repeated requests that these children be transferred, were met with insipid solutions and even patronising and naive advice.

Urgent attempts to contact a senior official who played a vital role in supervising the Project Go-committee, were unsuccessful and the person was perceived by the staff as unapproachable. They relayed how they felt bullied by the committee and they did not experience a sense of collaboration when the future of the children in their care were decided on. The staff felt that at times, their professional integrity was insulted and that they were patronised.

According to the information gained in this study, the perceived abuse of power by the management structures in the Department of Welfare had tragic consequences. Whether the abuse of power belonged to the old system or the new system, it did not seem to escape the administration of Child Welfare. The children were already in a disadvantaged, disempowered and marginalised position and should have been served by the Department of Welfare. Instead some of them were harmed by the abuse of power.



The abuse of power by the authorities could never be justified and excused and especially not when it harms the children whom it is supposed to care for.

#### 4.7 Standard of living

As stated before the children of the Children's Haven M T R Smit, like most children in child care facilities, came from low socio-economic backgrounds. They came from homes where they were lucky if they ate once a day. They had basic clothing, they shared small living areas with several family members, some lived in a shack or in the bush and their meals consisted mainly of bread or maize.

They were not used to middle class "luxuries" that were provided by the haven and by the children's weekend-families. Eventually, the children had to return to the poor conditions from which they had been removed. The staff raised the question: How ethical was it to remove children from conditions (the same that they will return to) and provide them temporarily with a higher standard of living – that they could not maintain once they left the haven?

The same question was asked by Project Go. This issue, supported by the financial gains the government could make by transferring children home sooner (confirming Suanne's sentiments), introduced changes to the standards of living at residential care facilities. The food provided for the children at child care facilities met only the children's basic needs and generally reflected the standards of living of the children's own communities.

Previously, the haven attempted to "normalise" the care of the children so that it could compare with the standard of living of the community in which the facility was situated. This was done in order to provide the children with a substitute home that blended in with its middle-class environment. The philosophy behind this approach was of de-stigmatising child care and of absorbing the children into the community surrounding the haven.

In contrast to the haven's approach, Project Go regarded "normalisation" as reuniting the children with their communities-of-origin. Each of the children's individual care plan (ICP) was aimed at re-unifying the children with their families or their communities. All other goals and aims regarding the care of the children were secondary. As the children's stay was seen as temporary, their care was expected to reflect this. The emphasis was on empowering, and "mothering and nurturing" were strongly discouraged. Institutionalised child care was regarded as abnormal and could therefore never be a substitute for the family's care. Child care moved towards preparing the child to return to their communities.

According to Project Go, the attraction of the standard of living that had been provided by child care facilities like the Children's Haven M T R Smit, discouraged children from poor communities to work towards reunification with their families. The aim of the child care system was to relieve the needs of the children, but not make them so comfortable that they might not wish to return home. As discussed earlier, the children had not been encouraged to become independent individuals in the old system. They had been protected from the harsh realities of life "out there". At the Conference for child and youth care centres of the *Algemene Kommissie vir die Diens van Harmhartigheid* that was held in Bloemfontein in September 2000, Ms C Scott (2000), the principal of James House, related the way in which they normalise matters at their facility. She stated that in an effort to normalise conditions at the facility, they only showered twice a week as they would in their homes. One child, who comes from "better" socio-economic circumstances, is allowed to shower and wash her hair daily as she is used to do at her home.

I had the privilege to serve on a multi-professional committee for a few years at a child care facility that was managed by the Roman Catholic Church. This facility was run by nuns and was recently closed down. Their approach was that once the children had finished their schooling, the children who lived at the child care facility (some for most of their lives), were expected to move out of the home and into the community. They had to leave the protection of the children's home without any support systems in the

community. They sometimes knew no one outside the home; they had no or little contact with their extended families and they had literally nowhere to go. As the law made no provision for children who were dependant on the Department of Welfare after the age of eighteen years the adolescents were pretty much put out on the street. Even where special trusts or bursaries could be obtained privately for further studies, the children struggled to do so. I found that some of the children were unable to assert themselves. They were unable to cook a meal or constructively contribute to a household. The reason was that the hostel-type accommodation of the facility in which they were raised, provided and served meals for them, washed up after them, did their washing and ironing. They were treated like borders and in a certain sense spoiled. They were cared for and got a formal education. But they had no life skills. As a result the children left the security of that facility with a matric qualification at best, and had to find their own feet in the community.

The policy of that institute, but also of the Children's Haven MTR Smit at the time, did not encourage parents to take responsibility to stay in contact with their children. In many instances, because the children came from very poor conditions, it was thought that they were better off without their families. Their families' circumstances were not conducive to the children's "proper" upbringing but one could argue that at least their families could have offered them a refuge once they had to leave the facility. The ideal would be that the families were involved in community projects aimed at upliftment and reunification.

Although the previous approach had prioritised the children's needs, it had created a situation where children at the haven who came from disadvantaged communities, found themselves living in a middle-class white suburb reflecting the values and the norms of the white middle-class community. Although the care was offered with the children's interests at heart, it negated the children's origins. It implied that the standard of living in the haven's community was valued more than the values of the children's original community. It denied the children their rights to be raised within their own communities.

It was reminiscent of the colonial days when the Europeans saw it as their Christian duty to colonise people to their culture and religion. It reflected an attitude of arrogance and of implying that other cultures were inferior and therefore needed to be rescued by the European culture. In the same way, with sincere Christian charity, we "rescued" children by removing them from their own communities and provided them with care that we regarded to be in their best interest. We estranged children from their own communities, we denied them the opportunities to grow up in their own communities. Although we rescued them from hardship such as abuse and neglect, the removal itself often caused a geographical distance between them and their own communities. And it caused a socio-economic rift between them. Moreover, the communities were left to suffer the poverty – their plight remained undressed. What is our ethical responsibility to the families whose children were removed?

The double standards in living conditions prove to be a dilemma with no obvious solutions. The initial "mistake" that was made, one could argue, was probably to situate the haven in the middle of a middle-class suburb.

As a solution the haven could be moved to a property in a low socio-economic suburb. This would bring the children physically closer to their communities as well as in terms of living standards. Such a move could offer the haven the opportunity to involve the communities of the children in various programmes aimed at empowering the children and their families such as reunification-programmes. However, such a move would be "suicidal" – the haven would not be able to survive the financial implications of such a move. It seems that the haven will have to continue to accept children from poor socio-economic milieus and, situated in a middle-class setting, attempt to bridge the gaps in culture, tradition and social class. In ways that are respectful to all. This is the challenge beyond the scope of this dissertation, that we are faced with.

With this chapter and previous three chapters I attempted to illustrate that the DRC, the previous system of child care and the new child care system, all had intentions to care for

the children in ways they thought best. Despite their intentions, the care of the children has been compromised – the care did not always benefit them.

If one measures the efficacy of a system's caring of children-in-need, what should the criteria be? Furthermore, who should determine these criteria? In my opinion, the criterion ought to be the children's best interests – all policies should comply with what is in the interest of the children. There can be no compromise. How can we claim to know what is in the best interest of the children if we continue to follow the strategies of the previous and the current systems of child care – forcing specific ways of caring down onto children. How can we claim that our care is ethical as long as it remains non-collaborative? Admittedly, the process of drawing children into decision-making processes is complicated, but taking shortcuts does not prove to facilitate finding solutions.

In the following two chapters I attempt to answer some of these questions. I will attempt to indicate some of the challenges facing professions involved in child care in the current socio-economical and political context in South Africa.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

### THE ETHICAL AND PROPHETIC CHALLENGES RESULTING FROM THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

#### 1 WHO BENEFITED?

##### 1.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the experiences of the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit of the transformation of child and youth care. The following paragraphs discuss the implications of their experiences and of their needs (discussed in chapter five) for the helping professions. Before embarking on the implications for the helping professions, I provide a brief context for the children's needs (as identified through the course of this study) and the current socio-political backdrop against which the care of the children will continue to take place.

##### 1.2 Questions regarding financial accountability

As discussed in chapter four, the discourses that constituted the transformation of child and youth care were guided by political liberation. It attempted to correct the situation of thousands of black children who had been previously discriminated against by the child care system. Moreover, the transformation was driven by monetary motivations. Although the motivation of Project Go was always defended as primarily in the interest of the children in residential care, my perceptions are that the financial gain that the transformation promised was an equally important factor.

The projections of the IMC-report, as discussed in chapter four, indicated that the approximate saving for every child that is transferred out of the child care-system would be between R 101 420 and R 360 060 per child. When I contacted Ms A Matthews, Mr A Theron, Ms A Skelton and Mr Du Toit, all officials within the Department of Welfare, none of them were aware of any amounts that have to date been officially calculated to ascertain what the government would have saved. In order to roughly estimate the cost saved as a result of the transfer of children out of child care facilities, I multiplied the average cost per child per day (as stated in Dep Soc Dev 1996b) which is R 75 by the amount of children transferred out of the child care system, which is 4091. This adds up to a saving of R 306 825 per day for the children who have been transferred to their families from June 1998 to December 1999. The IMC projected their estimations for the period between five to fifteen years – the estimated minimum and maximum period that a child used to remain in the child care system. Following their framework, the estimated saving adds up to R 559 955 625 over five years and R 1 679 866 875 over fifteen years.

Mr A Theron (Theron 2000) re-confirmed that the majority of the funding of the transformation of child and youth care is donated from the Netherlands. Despite the fact that the functions of Project Go have now been assimilated by the Department of Welfare, the latter still does not carry the cost of the transformation. The question is: If the IMC projected the saving and the bulk of the transformation was sponsored from outside of the country, how has the money that has been saved, been spent? How much of this money is / will go into the reconstruction services of the families of the children who were transferred out of the system? If the government has saved costs by transferring these children, what is its accountability to these children from here onwards? How do the children benefit from the saving? How much of it has been spent on training child care workers in dealing with discipline of the children, or on financing development programs for the children who remain in residential care?

In my conversation with Mr Du Toit (Du Toit 2000), the national co-ordinator of Project Go, shortly before this study was finalised, he had no answers as to why statistics of failed reunifications were not collated or how the money “saved” by transferring children

out of the child care system was applied. He supposed that the money went “back into the big black hole” (Du Toit 2000).

One aspect that in my mind confirmed my suspicions that financial motivations featured in the transformation of child and youth care, was Ms Skelton’s (Skelton 2000) comments on the projected savings that would stem from the transformation of the juvenile justice system that is currently in progress. At present the Child Justice Bill is in the process of being drafted. Ms Skelton stated that the government would save approximately R 200 million per year if juvenile offenders were kept out of the prisons. The juvenile offenders in prisons country-wide are released before any procedures have been brought in place to rehabilitate them. This seems a repetition of the transformation of child and youth care wherein children have been reunited with their families in the absence of sufficient reconstruction services to reassure successful placements. So, the same question comes to mind: How much of the money that the government plans to save by keeping the juveniles out of prison will be spent on rehabilitating the children and their families? What authority do the tax payers, whom these juveniles pose a direct threat to once released, have in deciding on the rehabilitation of the children? Where is the government’s accountability to society?

### 1.3 Non-representative statistics

The statistics that have been collected by the Project Go-administration do not reflect the figures of those children who have returned to residential care as a result of failed reunifications following Project Go. At the Children’s Haven M T R Smit twenty-one percent of the children who had been transferred out of the system have returned. As was discussed in chapter six, their reunifications with their families have clearly not been in their interest despite Project Go’s insistence otherwise. These are only the children who were identified by their outside social workers as needing re-admittance to the child care system. In the course of this study, I have discovered two other children who had not been identified as in need to return to child care despite their horrific circumstances (their stories are told in chapter 6, 3.2,3.2). How many more children who had been transferred



out of the system are currently in need? What controls have been put in place for these children? Where does the government's accountability lie towards these children? Admittedly, a crisis forced the launch of Project Go and yes, crises do at times offer opportunities. However, as the stories of the children at the Children's Haven MTR Smit reflect - a crisis also causes harm. Project Go had no systems in place to deal with the harm that the children suffered as a direct result of the transformation process.

#### 1.4 "Fair" care

As said before, the "liberation" of the previously disadvantaged black children from their horrendous circumstances was a driving factor in the transformation of child and youth care. Indeed, the need for the improvement of the conditions of these children was and remains a priority and a necessity and the government deserves credit and respect for it. So does it for reuniting children with their families who were in a position to care for them.

As discussed in chapter six, forty percent of the children at the Children's Haven MTR Smit face a stay at the haven until they turn eighteen. Despite the aims of Project Go to transform the child care system from the status of permanent residential care facilities to temporary ones, based on my research I argue that the aim was unrealistic. Due to the circumstances of the children, as well as the projected numbers of AIDS-orphans (chapter six), it seems that residential care is unavoidably here to stay! In fact, the existing facilities may even have to be expanded.

In the light of its persistence about the temporary status of residential care facilities, Project Go has introduced measures to reduce the standard of care provided at the haven. The traditional "mothering" role of the child care worker, or "the housemother", as she was referred to previously, has been strongly discouraged. Instead, the role of "care provider" was introduced. The possible effect of this change in role on the children is to their detriment - forfeiting the love, nurturing and security from a mother figure. For some children their only one.

The subsidy of the haven had been stagnant for the past nine years – not keeping up with the inflation rate. As a result the haven was forced to reduce its staff and sacrifice the standard of service provided to the children. Furthermore, it was forced to cut on the general consumption: food, clothes, electricity and water. The reduced standard of living might be tolerable for those children who, as Project Go would ideally have it, move in and out of the child care system, in a matter of six months. But not for the children whose stay at the haven is likely to be permanent. As discussed in chapter six, the notion that the haven would be a six-month-stop-over facility is an utopia, far from reality at least for the next few years. Forty percent of the children don't even leave the haven for weekends and holidays and they are currently subjected to these living conditions until they leave the haven at the age of eighteen.

Before we fall into the trap of arguing the strengths and the weaknesses of the issue of “normalising” that Project Go advocates, let us remind ourselves where these children come from. They are children from the poorest of conditions, abused, neglected, abandoned or raped. They did not ask to be in these circumstances – they are victims of these circumstances. Is this how we should treat these children? Is this the best we can offer them? Granted that the cost of caring for the children is high, what does it say of our society if we continue to treat them like second class citizens? Should “fair” care not at least address their emotional needs? If the government claims that it has liberated and empowered the majority of children-in-need, what about the forty percent of the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit? Or does the fact that the “majority” of children had been liberated justify the poor quality of care that is now provided for the forty percent permanently residing at the haven? In my opinion the new system only moved the focus of the marginalisation to a new group of children-in-need.

Apart from the fact that the subsidy was not being increased, the welfare officials have threatened to cut the haven's subsidy if it fails to comply with the integration of black staff and children in accordance with the Employment Equity Act no 55 of 1998. Admittedly, the management of the haven has been reluctant to integrate and this requires

serious attention (addressed this issue later in this chapter). But the question remains: Who will benefit from cutting the haven's subsidies? Who will benefit most from such cuts?

### 1.5 Lack of collaboration

The abuse of power was not only evident in the government's threat, but also in the ways in which Project Go was administered. As mentioned before, the Project Go-committee blocked the transfer of individual children to more structured child care facilities. This move was experienced by the staff as disregard for the integrity of the professional people who as a team, motivated the recommendations to transfer these children. The committee swept the years of training and experience the professionals approached these cases with, off the table. Furthermore, the principal's appeal against the decisions of the committee were seemingly ignored. The stance of the Project Go-committee was apparently motivated by the IMC's findings that important decisions regarding the transfer of children had been done unilaterally by the staff at child care facilities. Project Go aimed to discontinue that practice.

However, such decisions at the Children's Haven MTR Smit had always been taken by a multi-disciplinary therapeutic team, consisting of the principal of the haven, the social worker, the nursing sister, the principals of two schools and a psychologist. Therefore the Project Go-committee's stance was perceived as inappropriate. I formed part of the team of professionals that motivated the transfer of these children. The Project Go-committee's responses to the team's motivation for the transfer of these children were frustrating. It seemed that the Project Go-committee left little room for the process of reflection and collaboration in these negotiations. As discussed in chapter six, the Project Go-committee's "order" to keep the children at the haven has benefited neither the children in question nor the rest of the children at the haven.

## 1.6 Inadequate training

I became aware of an ethical dilemma that has been caused by the discontinuation of the training of the child care workers. The immediate result of the moratorium on the transfer of children deeper into the system has left those children who have serious behavioural problems in the care of the child care workers who lack the skills to deal with these problems. These behavioural problems include rape, stealing, lying, substance abuse and violent behaviour. With the moratorium, the Minimum Standards (chapter 4, 5.1) of child care were introduced. The measures stipulated by the Minimum Standards rightly swept the traditional system of disciplining the children completely and unequivocally off the table. As a result of the new regulations regarding the admission of children into the child care system, the kind of problems that the children who are currently admitted to the haven experience, are more grave than ever before: Parents are poorer, the nature of neglect or abuse is more severe. How is the government accountable not only to these children, but also to the children who suffer abuse at the hand of the few with severe behavioural problems? How does the government plan to bridge the gap in the child care workers' training?

Whereas the previous paragraphs briefly sketched the children's context at the Children's Haven M T R Smit, I have provided a summarised discussion of the South African socio-political context.

## 2 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

### 2.1 Introduction

The transformation of child and youth care was designed five years ago shortly after the election of the first democratic government. This study has indicated that the process of the transformation did not develop according to plan. For example, primary care to the families of the children-in-care has not materialised – the reconstruction and reunification

services have been inadequate or non-existent. The abolishment of permanency in child care has proven to remain an utopia and the training of the child care workers has been abruptly discontinued (chapter six).

The functions of Project Go have been assimilated into the Department of Welfare from the second quarter of 2000 (Matthews 2000). These functions will be added to the job descriptions of existing staff in the department and consequently the continuation of the transformation will not operate with the same workforce as it had before. I am left to wonder how the principles of Project Go will be maintained without the workforce it had before. In the absence of further training, I wonder what systems have been put into place and which practices developed ensuring that the philosophy underlying the transformation is reinforced? What will prevent the child care facilities from slowly slipping back into the comforts of their previous approaches to child care?

In the last five years since the transformation of child and youth care was designed and implemented, our society have been changed and affected by the larger political transformation. The context within which child care will continue from here onwards will determine both the nature of child care and the challenges it will face.

This study also focuses on the implications for the DRC as it has been responsible for the management of the haven since its founding almost a hundred years ago. The needs of the children at the haven, including their spiritual needs, have been identified in chapters five and six. The context of the children at the haven forms one part of the total picture – the gestalt remains incomplete without an understanding of the current socio-political South African context. It is not the aim of this study to provide a thorough analysis of the South African context. I provide a brief and general discussion. However, I think it vital that persons in the helping professions have a far greater understanding of the political and economical discourses than I present here.

## 2.2 Political Change

The release of Mr. Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990 marked the beginning of the process of political and social transformation in South Africa. Our country's first democratic elections, which took place on 27 April 1994, marked the day when, in a manner of speaking, South Africa's "Berlin wall" came down. Venter (1997:48) employed the metaphor of the Berlin wall to describe the effects of apartheid on our country - that of the great divider between black and white, just and unjust, oppressor and oppressed.

Six years down the line, we in South Africa, are experiencing the effects of the implementation of our new sophisticated, politically-correct, human rights-based constitution. Our constitution endorses the upholding and the protection of human rights and endeavours to avoid at all costs a repetition of the atrocities that took place in the previous dispensation (Pieterse 1998:178,191). The constitution is a reaction to decades of gross neglect and of the abuse and exploitation of human rights during the apartheid era. The justice system has been advanced to execute and protect the constitution.

The changes that have taken place since the beginning of the political transformation have posed enormous challenges to all South Africans (Pieterse 1998:176). We often do not perceive these changes when they occur, we only appreciate them once they had occurred. Six years into the political transformation has brought about a contradiction of circumstances, things in South Africa have become both better and worse. The yoke of the oppression of apartheid has been lifted from the people of the country and the majority of people, black people, have been liberated after more than three hundred years of domination. The fact that this was achieved through peaceful negotiations and not by means of a civil war, is a miracle (Pieterse 1998:178).

### 2.3 Economic change and the rise of crime

It seems that in an economical and social sense, the country has not been freed at all. We find ourselves imprisoned within the restrictions of unemployment, poverty and crime (Ackermann 1996:46; Pieterse 1998:179). Mirroring the global economic trends, the gap between the rich and the poor in this country is rapidly growing (Venter 1997:51; Cochrane et al 1991:33).

The increase in poverty has prepared the soil for a dramatic increase in the crime rate. In the recent years South Africa has become notorious for its inability to fight crime. "Violence and criminality, the direct results of poverty and displacements caused by apartheid legislation, are placing the lives of many South Africans in a straight jacket of fear and uncertainty" (Ackermann 1996:36). Crime has become organised and institutionalised over the last few years (Venter 1997:57). A factor that contributes to the unemployment crisis in the country, which relates to the general situation on the African continent, is what Venter (1997:40) refers to as the "knowledge revolution" which replaced the industrial revolution. However, the majority of the population in the country is uneducated, unskilled and illiterate and therefore unable to participate in, and contribute to an economy that is aimed at the age of information and where knowledge is the product (Pieterse 1998:179). The future market employment will be focussed on the intellectual capacities of people – "from the shoulders up", and not on physical labour or trade labour as it had in the past. This in effect cuts off the majority of black people, the workforce relied upon in the past to build the economy.

## 3 THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL CARE

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I distinguish between the implications of the transformation of child and youth care for the pastoral care and for the other helping professions such as psychology, social work and child and youth care. This distinction should not create the impression

that these forms of the care provided at the haven function in isolation – pastoral care includes these aspects of care. A division between these professions prevents rather than expedites collaboration between the various fields of knowledge, which serves the interest of the children. For the purposes of highlighting the ethical discourses specific to pastoral care and psychology, these aspects are discussed separately in the paragraphs that follow. Before embarking on the challenges facing pastoral care, I discuss in short the background of pastoral care and stress the urgency for the return to prophetic pastoral practice.

### 3.2 Background

A summary of the historical development of pastoral care enjoys some emphasis here as it provides a window through which to view the ministry of the Dutch Reformed Church and its management of the Children's Haven M T R Smit during the last century. In sketching the summary that follows, I do not attempt to provide a detailed historical context. I rather relied on the work of Cochrane et al (1991) to draw lines between the origins of the prophetic role of pastoral care and the current challenges facing the DRC in its care of the child-in-need. The lines that I draw represent at most, knowledge that I have found useful in coming to some understanding of prophetic pastoral practice.

Pastoral care is practised from a specific model or approach that is typical of, or reflect the broader history of theology. Pastoral care has in the past, in its reflection of the theology of the time, focussed on various aspects such as rituals, disciplining the religious and moral behaviour of the community, on individual counselling or guidance and on greater social issues.

The original role of "the pastor" in the Old Testament addressed priestly and prophetic tasks. The priestly tasks involved the administration of rituals and sacraments of the religion. The prophetic roles involved being a "watchdog" of the morals and ethics of social issues and being the wise men or wise women who cared for the day-to-day issues of its people (Cochrane et al 1991:21; Gerkin 1991:80,84).



Amongst others, two prophetic movements or traditions are referred to. The one is the Davidic (derived from David) tradition, or otherwise referred to as the royal trajectory. This tradition is characterised by prophets who were supportive of the state and the church and whose role it was to maintain the status quo. The other is referred to as the Mosaic (derived from Moses) tradition or the liberation trajectory, which referred to those prophets whose focus fell on God's justice and righteousness and the concern for the poor (Cochrane et al 1991:21). The prophets from this tradition, such as Amos and Jeremiah, cultivated the goal of social transformation and therefore challenged the toleration or perpetuation of injustice in the kingdom of Israel. Later the innate justice dimension of the Christian faith was often overlooked (Bosch 1995:401).

Over time, the role of the pastor as prophet declined and the role of wise man and priest continued in the figures of rabbis and scribes (Cochrane et al 1991:22). The role of the pastor as prophet manifested in liberation theology and feminist theology in the second part of the twentieth century. These theologies addressed the ethics of abuse and marginalisation of people based on race, gender, class and sexual preference. But for a long time this role was neglected and when one looks at the history of the Christian religion, it becomes clear how pastoral care varied from different historical periods, depending on the way it was grounded in the theology of that period.

Around the turn of the twentieth century there was a return to pastoral healing – not the kind of healing associated with the medieval period (Cochrane et al 1991:40; Gerkin 1991:82) but one motivated by the field of psychology. Pastoral care borrowed the practice of healing aimed at troubled Christian congregants from the field of psychology (Cochrane et al 1991:29). For some time there was even collaboration between physicians, psychologists and pastors. For years to come pastoral care took great interest in the field of psychology and it was mostly psychoanalysis that made a significant impact on the way of thought. The influence of psychology steered pastoral care further toward individual and family care (Cochrane et al 1991:55; Gerkin 1986:17; Gerkin 1991:56).

From the field of sociology developed another influence on pastoral care that steered pastoral care toward addressing social problems and finding within the Christian religion solutions to these problems. This association between sociology and theology led to the transformation of social issues such as unemployment, crime and poverty (Cochrane et al 1991:58; Gerkin 1991:57).

Both forms of pastoral care, the psychologically-based and the sociologically-based care, addressed one aspect of pastoral care at the cost of the other. It seems as if this segregation between the areas of focus of pastoral care is still being struggled with today.

The brutalities of the two World Wars during the first half of the twentieth century gave way to the renewal of traditional religious practices in the shape of Neo-orthodox theology. This theology turned away from a religion that is aimed at the self, toward an awareness of human sinfulness and the need for salvation by God. At the same time, there was a second development triggered by Anton Boisen that sought answers to religious dilemmas in the relationship between religious issues and psychiatry (Cochrane et al 1991:60).

The association between theology and psychiatry, and later on between theology and psychology, was to characterise the nature of pastoral care until recently and in some theologies it still does. Clinical pastoral care, as this association is referred to, became a standard approach for pastoral care workers of psychiatric patients, prisoners, children, the aged and just about everybody who crossed the doorstep. In the first half of the twentieth century pastoral care moved from one psychological model to the next and focussed mostly on psychoanalysis as in Clinebell's growth model or Rogers' client-centred counselling. Pastoral care became a recognised and specialised form of ministry. This was the situation until the 1980s with the development of post-modern thought (Cochrane et al 1991:63-77; Gerkin 1986:13; Gerkin 1991:64; Graham 1996:67-85).

### 3.3 Factors leading up to critical reflection of theology

The Western social context, in which post-modern Christian theology finds itself, has witnessed rapid changes. Gerkin (1984:12) provides the reasons for these societal changes. He refers to a fragmentation of norms and standards within the current Western culture, a breakdown in morality and a period in which people ask existential questions. He contributes this stance to the upcoming American tradition of individualism, which he summarises as an emphasis in people's life goals on "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". This ideology has led to a resistance of people against cultural and religious boundaries that restricted their freedom of choice. Psychology contributed greatly to this culture in the Western world with its emphasis on aspects such as self-actualisation, self-expression and self-fulfilment (Gerkin 1986:13,14). Added to this focus, was the world's preoccupation with unencumbered human possibility, which was reinforced by the scientific, modernist philosophy of that period. This new culture allowed people the freedom to re-examine their traditional values and traditional socio-political practices (Gerkin 1991:71).

The re-evaluation of traditional practices started with the critical reflection of age-old racial discrimination practices and gave way to the Black Civil Rights Movement in America in the 1950s. This movement progressed to other areas, amongst others, sexist practices (Graham 1996:770). This led to the development of feminism and ageism, which has grown into a varied and active area of protest. In general, as a result of this culture of resistance, there has been a move towards cultural and secular pluralism. People became disappointed with, and disillusioned by the theologies that had been preached to them while, at the same time, unethical and unjust practices remained unchallenged by the Christian community. Christian theology has been criticised for being hypocritical, powerless and not in touch with the realities in which it lives (Gerkin 1986:11).

As discussed before, pastoral care models (of Christianity in the Western world) focussed mainly on the individual and the family and it moved further and further away from the

“Christian tradition” which was focussed more on the community. It became yet another form of psychotherapy aimed at self-growth and self-fulfilment. Pastoral care bought into the psychiatric and psychological discourses. Probably because theology (and philosophy) was driven outside the realm of true sciences, it was tempted by the power that these discourses held in society.

The ministry of the DRC in South Africa followed the dominant trends in pastoral care and since the birth of apartheid it followed the Davidic tradition. It aimed its care at the personal salvation and individual needs of its “own” – white Afrikaans-speaking members of DRC while millions of black people were suffering the miseries of political oppression.

The policy of personal salvation of its “own” was also applied in the DRC’s care of the child-in-need. For many years the children’s havens that were managed under the auspices of the DRC admitted only white Afrikaans-speaking children into its care. As discussed in chapter five, children from other races are still being discriminated against by the DRC-congregations and even by DRC ministers.

### 3.4 A return to a “prophetic” tradition of theology

#### 3.4.1 Introduction

When using the term “prophetic” I do not refer to a specific traditional definition as the term used in the previous paragraphs. Rather, when using the term I imply a practice that addresses political / power issues, ethical issues and a solidarity with marginalised people.

In Christianity, as in other religions, much emphasis is placed on eternity - on life after death. The hereafter is viewed as a reward for those who had suffered on earth but despite their suffering, remained faithful to Jesus Christ. The focus of ministry from this

perspective is on personal salvation, of preparing oneself for that salvation (Bosch 1993:402).

This religious ideal served the mission of the church in its care for marginalised people. Their suffering, whether it was poverty or whether it is domination and subjugation, was made bearable by the promise of the great after-life that awaited them. A life where all would be equal. At the same time, the ministry of salvation failed to address the immediate needs of these people. It did nothing to relieve their poverty and injury of political and economic violence (Bosch 1993:403).

### 3.4.2 Ethics and theology

The place of ethics in theology has been challenged in the last few decades. However in Reformed theology, theology and ethics belong together. "Ethics is the hands and the feet and face of theology and theology the vital organs, the soul of ethics" (Bosch 1993:437).

Bosch (1993:402) describes two types of ethics in Christian religion – the rational ethic, which aims at justice, and the religious ethic, which aims at love. The religious connotation of ethics is seen from the transcendent perspective and has a mystical dimension. The effect of the mystical dimension on the believer is described by Bosch (1993:402) as follows: "The mystical dimension tends to make an individual or a group withdraw from the world, devalue history, claim that one's true home is not here but in heaven, and seek communication with God without attending to one's neighbour." In contrast, the mosaic prophetic tradition encourages or invites the believer to become involved in the social needs of people and in practices of injustice. It is argued further on in this chapter that ethics cannot be ascribed as belonging to only one sphere of one's being – the "religious and spiritual" or the "rational", but that ethics encompasses the totality of being human.

### 3.4.3 Prophetic tradition in South Africa

Chapter three indicated the prophetic role of theology in South Africa as being practiced with the Cottesloe declaration (1960) and the *Kairos*-document (1985). According to Cochrane et al (1991:8), the *Kairos*-document has acquired the status of a central document in modern South African church history “with an international and ecumenical impact way beyond anything else from this religion” (Cochrane et al 1991:8).

The *Kairos*-document originated from the political crisis South Africa faced in the early 1980s (chapter 3, 11.4). In short, it pleaded for a theological practice that was relevant to the socio-political context – for the development of theological models that would address and benefit the masses of disempowered and oppressed people and would work towards reconciliation. It reiterated a call for a biblical, pastoral prophetic response to the socio-political state of emergency in this country, the *Kairos* document implied a prophetic theology that would be critical of the existing theology (Pieterse 1998:178). It called for a theology that would critically analyse and denounce unjust practices and would liberate peoples from social evils that endeavoured to oppress and marginalise people. However, it stated that prophetic practice should not stop at being a critique – the ultimate goal of prophetic ministry was to bring hope of freedom to people based on the biblical hope of eternal freedom and life with God (Cochrane et al 1991:82).

This appeal for the renewal of the prophetic practice reflects back not only to the Mosaic tradition of the prophet in the period preceding the birth of Christ, but finds its ultimate reflection in the coming of Christ and his life on earth. Although, during his life on earth Jesus fulfilled far more than the role of prophet, he embodied the prophetic tradition. His social critique was aimed at practices of hypocrisy and injustice and his alliance was with the oppressed and the disadvantaged whether they were women, poor, deaf, dumb, blind, possessed by demons or sinners. He was the person in whom the prophetic tradition was accomplished. He made this role central to his mission on earth (Cochrane et al 1991:58).

When practical theologians call for the return of the prophetic practice, they appeal for a true understanding of, and an empathy for the extent of discrimination, poverty and violence that is rife in our society (Ackermann 1996:34; Cochrane et al 1991:61; Bosch 1993:437; Graham 1996:137). They question the ethics of how pastoral practice and care takes place from a context of privilege and material abundance while working with people who lack the most basic supplies for human survival: food, clothes and shelter (Cochrane et al 1991:61). This returns one to the example of Jesus' life on earth, living amongst the poor. It emphasises the importance for pastoral care to reflect on its own socio-economic context and to get to know the community in which it operates on a grassroots-level. Critique of the traditional counselling relationship is not only relevant to pastoral care, but also to all practices of counselling that operate from the basis of an unequal relationship, in other words where the counsellor is from a different class (usually the middle class), culture (traditionally white) and gender (mostly male in the case of pastoral counselling) than the person in need. It resurrects familiar questions regarding the matter whether cross-cultural counselling can truly be effective. It reflects furthermore on the ethical issue of power imbalance in such a relationship and the potential that such a power imbalance has for the abuse and exploitation of the person in need of care.

Apart from not grasping true poverty, theologians have also been critical of pastoral care being too passive in the face of the discrepancies in material welfare in our society. Pieterse states that prophetic theology always implies action – it requires the church to become involved in society “for the sake of fellow humans” (Pieterse 1998:179,181). Gerkin (1991:71) describes calling for action to pastoral practice as follows:

The God of imaginative prophetic ministry is an active God who is ever in process of bringing about new and transforming reality. God is God not only of the past, but also of the present and the future as well. Prophetic ministry must therefore be attuned to the transformations of life that God is bringing about. Its purpose is oriented to the creation of that new reality, not simply to the preservation of the old. Prophetic ministry keeps before

it a vision of the possible toward which God is actively calling God's people.

The dominant discourses underlying the theology of the DRC during the previous political dispensation, blinded white people to the oppression of black people – maintaining the political status quo during that era (Ackermann 1996:34; Cochrane et al 1991:61).

Theology can never be apolitical – it does not stand above the dynamics of socio-political life. Theology is an integral part, moreover, a participant in society (Graham 1996:136).

The confession of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ is, moreover, an eschatological confession: a confession, which has to do with the direction and the goal of history. It cannot be either a-historical or apolitical.

... Confessing Christ is continuous with the Mosaic tradition in the Hebrew Scriptures, it implies a prophetic mode of doing theology. It points toward the coming of God's justice and peace within the human community, or more specifically within the particular contexts in which this task is undertaken.

(Cochrane et al 1991:16)

A prophetic practice calls for resistance against oppressive political systems. It labours for transformation in the establishment of a new situation of justice (Pieterse 1998:180). Practical theology should be a socially liberating force. It should enable and empower (Pieterse 1998:185). The liberation should not cease because apartheid has been abolished and liberation achieved, it should remain as the "impetus to combat all situations of injustice" (Ackermann 1996: 44). These situations include economical, political, and spiritual situations (Ackermann 1996:34).

However, pastoral practice needs to find a balance between working for justice in a society and maintaining the ideal of the transcendent (Bosch 1993:403). Pastoral practice



needs to be careful not to serve the ideology of political movements. Bosch (1992:403) refers to Niehbuhr's work in explaining this need for balance: "The religious ethic of love ... will always aim at leaving the idea of justice with the ideal of love; it will prevent it from becoming purely political, with the ethical element washed out. Love demands more than justice" (Bosch 1992:403).

In order to be accountable in our relationships with other, prophetic pastoral practice cannot but work toward justice (Ackermann 1996:45). Cochrane et al (1991:69) distinguish between three levels of justice; the day-to-day practice of justice, justice involved on an individual or interpersonal level, and the practice of justice that is on the level of social, political and economic structures. Their argument centres around the fact that justice cannot be achieved or claimed on the first two levels if it has not been established on level three, that is in the larger social structures. The following quote illustrates this well: "... the fundamental evil of Apartheid lies in the social, political and economic structure of injustice, not in individual attitudes" (Cochrane et al 1991:69). Whether one can separate the individual attitudes from the larger structures is debatable.

Liberation from oppression is a collaborative, sustained action. It is a process in which both the oppressor and the marginalised participate (Ackermann 1996:34). Graham's reference to "communicative ethics" enhanced Ackermann's sentiments: "Communicative ethics assumes the fairness of moral norms can only be discerned via a process of communicative negotiation" (Graham 1996:154). In the process of liberation, the dominant group needs to assume a confessional stance – to accept responsibility for the oppression caused and to confess to it. Through the process of self-reflection the dominant group needs to be confronted with its assumptions and it needs to unravel its positions of power (Pieterse 1998:59; Ackermann 1996:44; Cochrane et al 1991:13,14). In unravelling its power the dominant groups need to come to some understanding of the complex factors that make up and construct the social situation and its own role in the situation. Cochrane et al (1991:18) refer to the process of social analysis and define it as obtaining a more complete picture of a social situation "by exploring its historical and structural relationships."

In her work with African women, Ackermann (1996:43) have found that in SA the authoritative voices in political, social, academic and religious structures are those of “the powerful man”. She reports her experiences of listening to the voices of the women that she worked with as follows: “The telling of stories breaks the silence which blankets the lives of women and other marginalised and oppressed people and is thus intrinsic to the healing of our diverse communities. These stories encircle the grand narratives (self)” (Ackermann 1996:43). She regards storytelling and listening to the stories as one part of the collaborative process. The other part is collaboration between the social sciences with regard to the stories of the oppressed. She states that the liberation of these people also lie in “not only inter-disciplinary but also intra-disciplinary” collaboration (Ackermann 1996:440).

According to Cochrane et al (1991:30,31), the best work that has been done in the field of social analysis in theology, has been work that has addressed the situation of people at their level – the grassroots-level. They stated that traditionally the needs of communities have been determined by persons who wield the most influence in society: “We are used to have our perspectives on what is needed in a community determined by those who normally wield the most influence – the trained professionals, the leading business people, the officially sanctioned politicians and their organs of communications, the religious authorities and so on” (Cochrane et al 1991:30,31). The power with which these agents act, may often reinforce their power. The ordinary people, those on the grassroots-level, are left to feel that others are making decisions about them and for them. Furthermore, in the process of analysis, the opportunity to gain the valuable perspectives of these people, is lost.

To conclude this section it suffices to say that the history of the prophetic tradition reminds Christians that the church and Christianity is not, and can never remain a private affair only. The movement of pastoral care towards humanism and individualism that led to the eventual privatisation of the Christian religion and the isolation of pastoral care from the public and social arena has shown an ignorance of the needs of the oppressed

and the disadvantaged. It has shown an arrogance and self-satisfaction with its preoccupation with the individually related issues. Granted, it did good work at the time to assist individuals and families in need, but in relation to the enormity of the social-political problems of the time, one gets the image of pastoral care and psychology (as discussed further on) as two little goldfish swimming happily around and around in a glass bowl that is floating in the middle of the stormy Atlantic Ocean, oblivious of the dangers or even the presence of the storm.

Religion cannot be an escape from the world and pastoral care cannot be limited to working towards establishing the salvation of individuals. It has to be public, socially relevant and prophetic and aimed at working towards justice and equality.

#### 4 INVITING PROPHETIC PASTORAL PRACTICE INTO THE DRC

With the knowledge of prophetic ministry in mind I focus on the needs of the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit, and draw consequences for the DRC.

##### 4.1 Taking responsibility for reconstruction and reunification

The children in residential care are marginalised. They come from poor backgrounds, are rejected and stigmatised. They live in our midst – on our doorstep. Their families often live close by and they are equally needy. The colonising practice of the DRC disempowered not only the children (as discussed in chapters five and six), but also the parents of these children. As discussed in chapter five, the parents lost their rights to care for their children both in the eyes of the law and in the eyes of society. The transformation of child and youth care did little to empower these families through means of reconstruction programmes (chapter six). Without this empowerment reunification of the children with their families is doomed. As it is at the moment, the DRC's responsibility for the children has come to an end – the reconstruction is left to the care of others. In what ways are we prepared to get involved with the families of the children in our care? What does it say of our care of these children, our responsibility towards them,

if we continue restricting our care to the children, knowing that reunification is likely to fail? In the light of their circumstances, how can the children and their families not be our social responsibility? In my opinion the prophetic role calls on the DRC's pastoral practice to become involved in the reunification of the children with their families.

#### 4.2 Challenging and eradicating practices of racial discrimination

The continuation of racial discrimination within the haven and from outside is discussed in chapter five. The DRC has confessed to its participation in instituting and maintaining practices of racial oppression, it has apologised and it has committed the church to prophetic practice (NGK 1997:75). Despite the DRC's confession and apology, practices of racial discrimination from DRC-congregations, and even from some ministers of the DRC, against the coloured and black children of the haven, continues. There can be no justification for it. It is unjust, heretical and unethical. Have we learnt nothing from the past? Have we still not grasped the suffering that racial discrimination has caused? If the practices of confession and apology were instituted at the top-structures of the DRC, what has been done to address the prejudices and biases that constituted the racial discrimination by thousands of DRC-members? How is the church's leadership accountable to its members whom it had misled for more than forty years? How have the members been invited to take responsibility for their roles in apartheid and to address the racial prejudices that have prevailed? What does the DRC do to actively address racism and the continued racial discrimination of the children at the haven?

A value that underlies the discriminatory attitudes towards the coloured and black children is the traditional value of the Afrikaner nation to care for "its own". As Rev M T R Smit has "colonised" the white Afrikaner children for the haven at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the Broederbond and the National Party abused its economical, political and social power to privilege the Afrikaner during the reign of apartheid, so do some Afrikaners still privilege the white Afrikaner children at the haven at the expense of the other children.

As discussed in chapter three, the DRC used children as pawns in its own political power games. The new government has done the same. It seems that the children and the poor pay the price. The poor still have some power in that they have a voice – their vote. Children don't even have that – they are completely voiceless

Discriminatory attitudes and practices are not only reflected in responses to the children, they are also evident in the resistance to integrate people of other races into the staff and the management of the haven. As mentioned earlier, the Department of Welfare has taken a strong stand against the management's resistance to integrate. In my opinion, it would be a poor reflection on our sense of ethics if the threats from the authorities, and not our own convictions, lead us (the management) to invite people from other races into our midst. It reminds me of the historical process towards the end of apartheid – where “the changes” in the hearts of the DRC and the Afrikaner politicians were to a great extent the result of the threat of political violence and pressure from international economic sanctions and not the result of their own ethics. In the same vein, the materially privileged in our society do not take cognisance of, let alone address, the poverty that surrounds us until it affects us personally – when the results of that poverty, crime, touches our lives personally.

The exclusion of people from other races continues along the tradition of the DRC and the Afrikaner nation to isolate themselves from the rest of society and to resist any form of critical reflection whether from within or from without. The tradition of isolation has robbed the DRC and the Afrikaner from opportunities to enrich themselves with reflexive dialogue. As a result, it has led to the collection of power in the structures of the DRC and the Afrikaner nation and a great sense of protectiveness towards power – and a tremendous difficulty to share that power. The kind of power that is nurtured and polished by a selected few regrettably becomes a dominant power that silences other voices and abuses those in positions of less power. Today, six years since the “death” of apartheid and three years since the DRC's formal confession and apology, there are few signs of democracy in the churches in South Africa.

### 4.3 Giving the children voices

Another form of discrimination is aimed at the children at the haven in general. Often the children are regarded and treated like second-rate citizens. In part, it seems to be due to ignorance of the community as to what the children's needs are. Often though, it seems to be the result of society's tendency of pushing people-in-need onto the margins of society where they remain powerless and voiceless, where they are pitied, even shown kindness and love, but in effect kept out of the "heart" of society. The children at the haven have been abandoned and rejected by their parents and they experience ongoing and repeated rejection as a result of their status in society. More than anything, they need acceptance, respect and love. More than anyone, they deserve acceptance, respect and love. The DRC plays a significant role in showing these children kindness and even love – but what have they done to address the prejudices and the intolerance that prevails in the community? Unless people's perceptions are challenged and they are actively invited to consider new perspectives about the children, the status quo will be maintained. Is it not the church's prophetic responsibility to challenge people's views and invite perceptions that are more respectful and caring of these children? How does it reflect on us if we fail to do so?

The general kindness shown to the children has been generous but is has also been material. It has failed to reach the children on a relational, emotional and spiritual level. Consequently, the children have come to interpret Christianity as material nourishment. This study has identified the need of the children to enter relationships with people where care is demonstrated on emotional and spiritual levels. As one child stated, the children have benefited from the charity of Christians, but the Christians have also benefited from it – the children have become showpieces of the community's charitable attitude. Unlike charity, solidarity implies that one gets one's hands dirty in the process of helping others: Now that we have done the niceties, are we prepared to "get our hands dirty", to offer the children what they really need? Also if they are black?

The "colonising" of children by the DRC, as discussed in chapter three, has shown a complete disregard for the children's wishes. The care offered to the children has always

moved from the premise that adults, and specifically professionals, know what is in the best interest of the children. The children were almost never consulted about what, in their minds, was in their best interest. Prior to the transformation, children were unaware that they had rights – not to mention what these rights were. Their voices were often marginalised, sometimes not believed, almost never acknowledged. The transformation was hoped to change the tradition and to empower the children. In some cases they succeeded, but once again the children were not consulted in the design and the process of the transformation. The time had come for children to be heard, for adults and professionals to escape the patriarchal tradition that assumes that children do not have the ability to know what they need – to deconstruct our perceptions about children. What will it ask of us to address the power issues that subjugate the voices of the children? In what ways can we collaborate with the children whom we serve, in addressing the matters that affect their lives directly? In what ways can we invite their participation in the running of the haven – listen to their voices? How can we prevent the situation from falling back into an individualist approach?

Sheriva, eighteen years old, expressed her perceptions in a letter:

What I want to say to adults is  
to live in a children's haven is a headache,  
to be pitied gives one a migraine  
and not be listened to,  
drives you insane.

Adults tend to take decisions for children  
without considering the childrens' feelings.  
And so they hurt the children, not physically  
but verbally.

All I ask is: listen to a child.  
By merely listening, you make a difference.

#### 4.4 Challenging and eradicating violence towards children

The crisis that the transformation policies and the abolishment of corporal punishment introduced in terms of the discipline of the children, left the child care workers disempowered. The child care workers' disempowerment in turn, resulted in the children being uncertain of the boundaries between their rights and their responsibilities. The effects are that serious behavioural problems of individual children are not being successfully addressed and other children are harmed by these children's behaviour. In addition to the child care workers' sense of disempowerment, they were left disillusioned in their traditional beliefs that discipline and punishment formed part of their Christian responsibilities. The Department of Welfare has failed to fill the void it created and its training has been inadequate. How has the DRC been accountable towards the child care workers, and for that matter towards parents and teachers who have been in the same crisis? How has it addressed violence towards children? If the DRC has traditionally justified corporal punishment and encouraged it as a parenting measure, where does its accountability lie now? What measures has it taken to reflect on its role in maintaining a practice that encouraged violence to children? How has it attempted to offer its members new ways of disciplining their children that is more in line with the rights of children?

### 5 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OTHER HELPING PROFESSIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The transformation of child and youth care also hold implications for the other helping professions who are involved in child care. The following paragraphs explore the limited ethical awareness of psychology and the challenges that psychology faces against backdrop of the current political, economical and moral contexts.



## 5.2 Ethics for psychology

The implications of this study for the DRC, and specifically for the pastoral practice and the implications for the helping professions, are not really separate topics. In my opinion, the same challenges that face the DRC, are facing psychology, social work, child and youth care and other forms of helping professions who work with children-in-need.

Ethics does not fall solely in the theological sphere; it encompasses all the fields that deal with people. Psychology forms one important part of the therapeutic approach to child care. At the Children's Haven M T R Smit psychological services are in regular demand to assess the children for scholastic, behavioural and emotional problems. Children with serious problems are regularly referred to psychologists for psychotherapy.

Therefore this study focuses shortly on the ethics of care provided by the profession of psychology.

Psychology is a relatively new field and it was only legally acknowledged as a profession in 1974 (Wassenaar 1998:134). In August 1992, the Professional Board introduced the draft of the New Code of Conduct for psychologists for Psychology (Professional Board for Psychology 1992). In 2000, the *Code of Ethics of Professional Psychology* was published by the College of Psychology, a body of the Professional Board of Psychology.

The ethics of psychology guide practitioners along three broad principles: respecting and maintaining the autonomy of the client, beneficence – actively contributing to the welfare of the client, and non-maleficence – the avoidance of inflicting harm (Steer & Wassenaar [a]:3; Swartz 1988:18). More specifically, the code is structured in terms of the following six principles:

- psychologists' competence
- psychologists' integrity
- the professional and scientific responsibility of the psychologist

- psychologists' respect for people's rights and dignity
- psychologists' concern for others' welfare
- psychologists' social responsibility.

As with most other ethical codes, it is reactive in nature, in other words, it structures the behaviour of psychologists in retrospect of harmful practice (Van Hoose 1986:168).

The social responsibility of psychology is stated in the new code of ethics as follows:

A psychologist is aware of his/her professional and scientific responsibilities to the community and the society in which they work and live. They apply and make public his/her knowledge of psychology in order to contribute to human welfare. Psychologists try to avoid misuse of their work. Psychologists comply with the law and encourage the development of law and social policy that serve the interests of his/her patients and clients and the public. They are encouraged to contribute a portion of his/her professional time for little or no advantage.

(Professional Board of Psychology 2000:2)

Psychologists are prohibited from engaging in actions that could infringe the human rights of others. In some instances the ethical code and the law expect psychologists to go a step further: To act in cases where they become aware of practices that may be harmful to others. For example, in the case where a HIV-positive client unreasonably refuses to inform his / her sexual partner of his / her diagnosis, or where a client threatens to harm an identifiable third party. The Mental Health Act no 18 of 1973 makes provision for psychologists to report clients who pose a danger to them and to other – therefore protecting the society at large. The Child Care Act no 74 of 1983 orders the psychologist to report child abuse as does the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act no 133 of 1993 orders the report of domestic violence (Allan 1997:104-109).

### 5.3 Limitations of ethics for psychology

As with the DRC's theology, the social responsibility of the psychologist in terms of the code of ethics and the law is still limited. It does not make room for the psychologist's ethical responsibility to address the larger social, economical and political discourses, which maintain poverty, disempowerment and the discrimination of groups of people. The profession of psychology in the previous dispensations focussed on the need of a selected few – the elite, "it served only a particular segment of the community in a particular way" (Veldsman 1996:1). The profession's role in combating apartheid and addressing the structures that upheld it, was insignificant. "Whether by omission or commission, many health professionals were instrumental in contributing to the creation and maintenance of the social conditions in which apartheid thrived" (Prinsloo 1997:5).

Even in the new dispensation, psychologists are seen to defend the perpetrators of apartheid instead of taking a stand against them. The role of the forensic psychologists in the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been criticised as rendering defence for the perpetrators of political violence (Foster 1999:6). Foster (1999:6) states that "psychologists often find themselves in a moral dilemma when they try to understand or explain the doings of evildoers." This happens when we tend to see perpetrators as victims – either of their early background, or the fact that they had to act under authority." According to Nicholas (1999:7) these psychologists seem to have fallen into the trap of "colluding" with the perpetrators and their legal representatives. Quite often the perpetrators' behaviours were justified as a consequence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. "PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) seems to have become the diagnosis of choice of those seeking amnesty, justification for pension applications and excuses for memory lapses. So many perpetrators have succeeded in these applications that I am tempted to re-label this as 'Post Traumagic' Stress Disorder since it seems to magically account for such diverse behaviours" (Nicholas 1999:7).

The structures of the profession of psychology have attempted to align itself with the political transformation. The law, which governs the profession of psychology (Act 56 of

74), has been amended to align the profession with the new constitution of South Africa (Wasserman 1998:135,139). For example, PsySSA (Psychological Society of South Africa), which is the profession's representative body with the Board of Psychology, has become more representative in terms of race (Cooper 1997:2) and had committed itself to facilitating the country's transformation process (King 1997:1).

In the previous discussion I am not claiming to offer a representative opinion of the role of psychologists in the TRC or any other arena. This could be a study on its own. I am privileging Foster and Nicholas' ideas in an attempt to argue the matter of accountability of the profession (of which I am part), towards society. By doing this I am attempting to reflect critically on, and pursue the arguments of the children of the Children's Haven M. T. R. Smit – that the children feel rejected and betrayed by the school community, the church community and the community of professionals.

#### 5.4 A need for transformation

If psychology aims to become a role player in the transformation of our society instead of remaining an observer, it is essential that transformation within the structures of psychology take place, such as mentioned above. If we assume changes to the structures of the profession are sufficient, we fall into the same trap as the transformation of child and youth care that introduced changes at the "top-level" such as the amendments to the Child Care Act, the new constitution that prohibited corporal punishment and a moratorium issued on the transfer of children for a period of two years. Yet, at a grass-roots level, in the perceptions of most of the child care workers at the haven, the changes did not take place. Consequently, the care of children has not only lost its mothering-aspects as Project Go intended, it has also been unable to empower the children, as Project Go hoped (Watson 2000). The child care workers' values regarding child care remained unchanged. In a similar way psychology may have politically correct representative bodies but in their training of students and in their practice, psychologists will continue to fail to address discriminatory discourses in society. Therefore, I reinforce the point made above: If psychologists aim to become role players in the transformation

of our society, the discourses underlying the transformation should also be addressed in their day-to-day dealing with clients.

When I reflect on my experience in lecturing professional ethics to masters-psychology students for the last five years, it is my contention that there are two aspects that contribute to psychology's inability to address larger ethical issues in society. Firstly, the training of psychology students does not emphasise the ethics of the profession effectively. The courses on ethics are "thin", it lacks depth. It covers the content and application of ethical codes as well as the legal aspects that govern the profession's conduct. However, it does not reach a level where students' personal ethics are addressed sufficiently. The shortfall of ethics for psychology seems to be related to the focus of modernist approaches to ethics on meta-narratives and scientific theories. "[M]odernist ethics seem to be based in rules that can be prescribed and enforced in a 'top down' way, as in the code of ethics of the American Psychological Association..." (Freedman & Combs 1996:265). Reflection from the field of psychology comes from scientific discourses rather than from what constitutes ethical practice. In contrast, a post-modern approach to ethics focuses on the particular experiences of particular people, especially the marginalised and disempowered, and scepticism towards rules that make universal claims.

Prevailing approaches to ethics view ethics in psychology as standing "apart" from the domain of the therapeutic relationship. The ethical codes for example, evaluate psychologists' conduct towards the client: the boundaries between the therapist and client are structured in order to protect the client from potential sexual abuse and the therapist from a possible malpractice claim. There are also rules reinforcing the client's autonomy, based on the client's human rights. In these models of ethics, ethics doesn't enter the therapeutic relationship. The therapist can abide by all the ethical codes and the laws governing psychology, and still indulge in therapeutic practice that disempowers the client or maintains the disempowered status of a client in society. Ethics of therapy are found in the ways that therapists constitute themselves in relationships with clients. The ways in which the therapists constitute themselves, are in turn, constituted by their own

ethics – their views of people, their worldviews (Freedman & Combs 1996:268). Their relationships and interactions with their clients depend on the discourses that inform them of who people are and what they can become. If the therapist's discourses are fed by modernist psychological theories that view people for example, as "pathological" or inherently "bad" or governed by their instincts or by their cognitions or their childhood experiences, or whatever, the therapist's interaction with their clients will reflect these views. If psychologists are to strive towards therapy that is built on ethical relationships with their clients, they need to be trained in psychotherapeutic models that privilege discourses which view the client in ethical, respectful and empowering ways.

The choice of a therapeutic approach needs to reflect ways in which the approach succeeds in addressing ethics of societal issues. If we hope to address societal issues, and at the same time change the traditional role of psychology, psychology, (like theology) has to assume a "prophetic" responsibility. Psychology needs to become relevant to a greater audience than the little group of "white elite". It needs to move beyond its goals of self-actualisation and self-improvement and productivity of furthering dominant Western culture. It needs to address more than the dilemmas of the client sitting in front of the psychologist – it needs to address the ethics of the social, economic and political discourses that maintain the marginalisation and the disempowerment of groups of people and of individuals. The choice of a therapeutic approach should make room for marginalised voices and marginalised cultures, it should "consider the effects of particular practices in particular local cultures" (Freedman & Combs 1996:265). In order to contribute to larger societal issues, it is imperative (as mentioned before) that students of the helping disciplines should acquire an understanding of South African politics and economics. Without a proper understanding of these issues they are unable to challenge unjust issues in society and therefore remain powerless.

Therapy can be a vehicle for addressing some of the injustices that occur in a society. It could be argued that in choosing not to address these issues in therapy, therapists may be inadvertently replicating, maintaining, and even furthering, existing injustices. A "Just Therapy" is one that takes into

account the gender, cultural, social and economic context of the persons seeking help. It is our view that therapists have a responsibility to find appropriate ways of addressing these issues, and developing approaches that are centrally concerned with the often forgotten issues of fairness and equity. Such therapy reflects themes of liberation that lead to self-determining outcomes of resolution and hope.

(Waldegrave 1990:5)

The stance of addressing and challenging social discourses, does not imply that the therapist's approach should minimise the dilemmas that the client regards as central in the therapeutic conversation. In fact, those dilemmas should remain the focus of the conversations, but the larger discourses should not remain unchallenged.

## 6 INVITING HELPING PROFESSIONS TO BECOME ACCOUNTABLE

### 6.1 Becoming socio-politically relevant

The stories of the needs of the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit reflect that their problems are not primarily caused by emotional issues or issues such as family relationship problems, but are imposed by the broader social structures. They experience problems related to poverty, unemployment, abusive relationship and their marginalised cultures. In the not too distant future, the needs of AIDS-orphans will become prominent. Economic and social disparity and the discourses of patriarchy and racism form the basis of the majority of the children's problems.

It would be naïve should psychotherapy, like pastoral practice, continue to pretend that the problems of the children at the haven, stand apart from the larger social discourses and assume that therapy will empower children without addressing the larger discourses. Should psychology continue its traditional trends, it is not being accountable to the children or to society – it will remain an irrelevant profession in the face of social transformation and keep the *status quo* in place.

## 6.2 The needs of the children

With the challenges facing the profession of psychology in mind, I reflect briefly on the needs of the children and the implications for the helping professions. Although this study focuses on the needs of the children at the haven (discussed in chapters five and six), the implications are relevant for all professionals who work with helping the child-in-need.

In its investigation of child and youth care, the IMC found that children in the previous child care system had been disempowered by the programs and the policies at residential care facilities (chapter four). Their ties with their families were often severed and participation from their families were discouraged. The children (and their parents) had little control over their day-to-day care and their transfers in and out of the system. There was a lack of therapeutic and developmental programs aimed at the children's unique circumstances and their rights to privacy and respect were abused. The discipline and punishment of the children were harsh and black children were discriminated against by the child care system. Where were the voices of the helping professions who were involved in child care? What did they do to confront the larger structures that were causing and maintaining such an abusive system? How is it that psychologists and social workers did not speak up? And if there was any protest from these professionals; what silenced their voices?

Since the start of the transformation of child and youth care, abusive elements in the child and youth care system have been addressed. At the Children's Haven M T R Smit, the children have been empowered in that they were aware of their rights and in most cases their rights were being respected. The social worker has introduced transparency and some collaboration between the staff, the children and their parents. The process that the social worker started can be extended to more children and their families – to invite the parents to participate more and take responsibility for the care of their children.



There is a great need for developmental programs for the children. As discussed in chapter five, their scholastic performance is generally very poor and they have little opportunity to participate in extra-mural activities. The helping professionals can play a significant role in designing and implementing such programs.

Also discussed in chapter five, is the pattern of rejection caused by failed weekend and holiday placements. The role that the helping-professional can play in addressing the causes for failed weekend and holiday-placements, can have significant effects. The families that offer to invite children into their homes need to be well trained in how to take care of the children – how to address their emotional and behaviour difficulties. Furthermore, these families need continued support from professionals.

Apart from this practical intervention, there are needs that require intervention on a broader level. These needs touch on the “prophetic and ethical roles” of the psychologist, social worker and child care worker. The racial discrimination aimed at the coloured and the black children at the haven, the marginalisation and stigmatisation of the children in general and the teasing of some of the children are discussed in chapter five and earlier in this chapter. The implications of these issues for the pastoral practice have been discussed earlier in this chapter. The implications for the helping professions are discussed next. I shortly discuss ways in which these issues can be addressed from a narrative approach. The aim of this illustration is two-fold: It offers a practical example of how such issues can be explored and it relates the complexity of these issues.

A narrative approach can be employed to address issues of discrimination by either working with the victim, or the perpetrator, or both. Through conversations the therapist addresses the values that underlie this discrimination. These values are deconstructed – they are analysed against the child’s family context as well as the larger discourses in society. These values that perpetuate and maintain the practices of discrimination are challenged. The perpetrator is invited to take responsibility for the effects of his / her values and behaviours. Furthermore, the perpetrator is invited to choose for “new” values that privilege equality and justice. The victims of the discrimination are empowered. Part

of the empowerment can occur in the one-on-one therapeutic situation through means of collaborative and reflexive conversations. But the empowerment will also be facilitated by creating audiences for the child. One goal of the creation of audiences will be to create opportunities for the child to form alliances with other children who are victims of abuse and in this manner start a community of "children against discrimination" who will support each other and together can take a stand on discrimination. Another goal of creating audiences for the victim of discrimination is broadcasting the effects of discrimination to audiences of perpetrators and by doing so, invite them to assume new perspectives towards discriminatory practices. The role of the narrative therapist does not end with the therapy of the child. The larger systems that maintain and perpetuate practices of discrimination such as the school and the church, are challenged by the narrative therapist (White 1997; White & Denborough 1998; White & Epston 1990; Epston 1998; Freedman et al 1997; Morgan 1999; Kotzé 2000; Carey 1998; Trudinger 1996; Waldegrave 1990; Jenkins 1990).

When working with children at the haven, and for that matter, other children in residential care, their empowerment is an essential part of the therapy (Freedman et al 1997). The experiences of the children, as narrated by their stories in chapters five and six, emphasise their need to be respected, accepted and loved. What have we as professionals done to meet their needs? What has prevented us from showing them the respect, acceptance and love that they want? I suspect that our perceptions and maybe even prejudices against the children have robbed us of opportunities to really address their needs. If we hope to work with the children in ways that empower and liberate them, we need to address our own biases (Knudson-Martin 1997; Tamasese & Waldegrave 1994; Carey 1998; Markowitz 1994; Chow 1994; McGoldrick 1993, 1994; Sirkin 1994; White & Denborough 1998; Morgan 1999).

In our work with the children-in-need we need to apply approaches that centre them (Freedman et al 1997). During the course of this study the children storied over and over, their need to be listened to – to be heard, for their words to have impact – and their need for change.

If we are to respect and meet their needs, we have to invite the children to participate and to collaborate with us in finding solutions. We need to hear their voices. But then we need to create opportunities where their voices can be heard and where they can have access to audiences who can listen to their stories. We need to become the agents of change – where the children remain the main actors and those who can further empower them, become their audience (White & Denborough 1998; Freedman et al 1997; Morgan 1999; Epston 1998).

## REFLECTIONS

### 1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I reflect on three years of study. I want to reflect on the research approach, the way I attended to the aims of this study, the significance of this study and the projects that developed from it. I want to reflect on the lessons learnt from the deconstruction of the theology and psychology discourses and the implications for the ethics of child care.

### 2 RESEARCH APPROACH

#### 2.1 Introduction

This research project was guided by a prophetic and ethical pastoral approach, situated within a contextual practical theology. My primary concern was that the children affected by the transformation in child and youth care, should not be further marginalised or oppressed, but that they should be the primary beneficiaries of my research. The research approach I chose was to reflect this concern.

When reviewing the research approach and the methodology of this study, I do so with the research question in mind – the origins of this study. In short, the need of the study arose from the launch of the transformation of child and youth care with Project Go and the study focused on the implications of the transformation for the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit as well as for the DRC. My immediate goal was to offer therapeutic help to the children during the period following their Project Go-meetings.

#### 2.2 Strengths

The research approach allowed for continuous interaction between my fellow-participants and myself over the three-year study. It was a dynamic process with one conversation

generating questions for the next conversation. The possibilities for the continuation of this study seemed endless. There hardly ever came a point when I thought "this is a logical end to this study", except maybe that time ran out and for qualification-purposes the study report needed to be finalised. The study "will continue" with my continued involvement at the haven. The approach followed in this study may not have been possible had the principal at the haven not allowed me the freedom to approach the study in the way that I did.

I attempted to remain true to the chosen ontological and epistemological roots for the study – it remained conversational and the content of the conversations constituted the knowledges around which this study is built. I did not enter the conversations about the child-in-care with theories as pretext. My aim was not to confirm or to refute the transformation process nor did I attempt to prove causal relationships. With my fellow-participants, we constructed knowledges that were unique to our contexts and facilitated understanding of the particular circumstances of the children at the haven.

The research approach allowed for reflexivity. The contents of one conversation led to questions that I asked in a following one and the answers constructed there were taken back to the original participants. In that sense the reflection created new knowledges. These knowledges were primarily local knowledges – local to the haven and the South African transformation process.

### 2.3 Weaknesses

In the previous paragraphs I discussed some of the strengths of the research approach. But there were some weaknesses. The consent obtained from the participants at the onset of the study included the principal of the haven, the child care workers and the children at the haven. Whereas the principal's consent and the child care workers' consent was written, the children's consent was limited to a verbal agreement. Such a practice reinforces the notion that children cannot decide matters for themselves and that they are unable to give expression to their decisions. They should also have given written consent.

The participants were not included in the reflexive conversations at the level of the research approach and the methodology. Assuming that the participants lack education and experience in the field of research, I failed to create opportunities for them to participate on this level of reflection. In fact, I failed to consider the possibility that they might have been able to contribute at this level. The fact that the participants lacked knowledge of the academic language that would enable them to contribute, did not mean that they were unable to contribute in valuable and meaningful ways – it reflects on the disqualifying nature of academic jargon, the power that accompanies such jargon in marginalising the contributions that participants (can) make.

The same power that allows the researcher to enter the worlds of the participants, keeps them at bay – out of the design of the research. What do we do, and for that matter, what did I do, to make it easier for them to enter the research story of which they are the main characters?

In retrospect, I could have taken time at the beginning of this study to explain the rationale and the nature of the study and I could have created opportunities for the participants to “brainstorm” ideas for themes for the study – themes that they would consider meaningful. It is almost as if I duplicated the mistakes of Project Go with my research: the project was launched “prematurely” due to the crisis with the sudden release of juveniles from prisons. Due to the urgency of the children’s needs as identified by the staff, I launched my project “prematurely” before creating opportunity for the participation of the children in setting the aims for the study. I was enticed by the urgency of the situation, which was good in that the children immediately received therapeutic care – something the staff and the children felt was needed. But on the other hand, it moved away from opportunities for the children to prioritise aims for the study. I approached the principal of the haven to identify needs for a research project and she identified the aims of this study – the implications of the transformation of child and youth care. To stay true to a collaborative and emancipatory approach I should have approached the children (with the principal’s permission) directly and I should have

given them the opportunity to identify aims for the study. My own perceptions at the time that children were unable to clarify their needs, and that professionals were in a better position to have knowledge about children's needs – prevented true collaboration.

Ironically, I fell into the same trap as the DRC (chapters three and five) and the government (chapters and seven) – the trap of marginalising the children. In the process of this study my perceptions have changed and I came to appreciate that children know very well what their needs are and that they are able to express their needs very effectively. As I point a finger at the lack of accountability of the transformation of child care in not consulting with the children, so should I point a finger at myself – for not consulting them on the aims of the study. I would also have liked the participants to have had opportunities to edit their contributions. It would have enhanced the sense of collaboration if they could have read through the pre-final print of this study and entered their comments.

#### 2.4 The children's authorship

I endeavoured to use the participants' own ideas, words and metaphors, for example the children's letters, poetry and drawings. In the translation of the children's letters, recorded conversations and their poems I attempted to stay true to the original nuances of their words. Most of the children chose their own pseudonyms. I tried to steer away from interpreting their contributions, which in my opinion would have steered the methodology of this study (back) into modernist thinking. The lesson that the children taught me in this study is that they wanted to be heard. Had I interpreted their stories, drawings and poetry in my words, my thoughts and my perceptions would have been heard and not theirs. This study would have been just another academic's impression of the child-in-need, claiming copyright to the children's stories. Symbolic of the transformation which the study addresses, the research approach used in this study allowed for the "liberation" of the previously hushed (silenced?) voices of the children. Some children who had never been allowed or invited to contribute to a conversation with an adult and to be listened to, were given an opportunity not only to be listened to,

but to have their stories “broadcasted” to other adults – adults who can make a difference in their lives.

In chapter six I collated all the contributions of the children and in chapter seven I reflected on them within the broader context of political transformation.

Despite the different short journeys made into various directions such as the history of the DRC, Afrikaner-nationalism and -politics, black liberation theologies and a summary of the history of pastoral practice, I attempted to centre the children. These discourses were deconstructed and historical contexts were briefly explored in an attempt to create a context that could bear relevance to the care of the children at the haven.

## 2.5 My role as researcher

As researcher, I seemed to alternate between the roles of outsider and insider. There were times when I realised that I was “speaking the language” of the participants – I started to speak of “our children” and “us”. I identified strongly with the children and the staff of the haven and I felt one with them. On the other hand, I also realised that I returned from the haven – to my family and my life, for sometimes weeks without setting foot at the haven. I could never claim that I had a true understanding of what life at the haven was like – I had no real idea of the extent of the circumstances in which the children, the child care workers and the principal were living. I merely had a glimpse into their worlds as they allowed me to become part of it.

## 2.6 Conversations with the child care workers

With the wisdom of hindsight, I would have preferred to approach another aspect of the study differently: the principal compiled the lists of the two groups of child care workers who were to be participants in this study. She used criteria in her composition of the groups that facilitated conflict-free conversations, but it took away the initiative from the child care workers to decide on the composition of the groups. Although I created



opportunity for the conversations to evolve into open-ended conversations, I commenced with the aim of doing their genograms and exploring their families-of-origin.

Once the conversations had developed beyond this session, the research approach created ample room for collaboration and participation. The conversations didn't follow any specific structure from there onwards and the participants determined the content. One group for example, decided to meet beyond the period originally agreed on in order to discuss issues that were useful to them, to continue almost as a support group for one another. Questions and issues raised led to more conversations – the child care workers spent several sessions discussing discipline issues. In the same manner sessions were spent on discussing work-related issues specifically since the Employment Equity Act no 55 of 1998 and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act no 75 of 1997 were promulgated and these acts held tremendous implications for the child care workers' working conditions. The conversations were not pre-planned – they unfolded with the participants' stories. The conversations were guided by their stories.

## 2.7 Ethical issues

The epistemology central to the research approach prioritised ethical research practice. The advantage of a collaborative emancipatory approach, enabled me to privilege the ethics of research throughout this study. The transparency introduced by the approach, resulted in respectful and understanding ways of listening to and writing about the children and the other participants. It managed to break free from a methodology that advocates conclusions written about the researcher's "findings" of the participants. It allowed for the participants to contribute directly to the knowledges created – to the "conclusions" of the study.

Participants knew what was being written about them, some got to read their contributions and the children chose their own pseudonyms which would allow them to find their stories. The approach discouraged writing about a participant that he / she would not want to read or would not want others to read.

As far as possible the stories narrated in this study remain respectful to others referred to, such as the children's parents or persons involved in the history of the haven or persons involved in the transformation of child and youth care. Respectful discourse is in my opinion part of the narrative approach. Working with people, this approach reminds one constantly that no-one stands outside the power of discourses. The study showed me, for example, that the parents of the children, some of whom are abusive and have poor parenting skills, are disempowered by the larger socio-political and economic contexts, but also by the discourses of the helping professions. As much as poverty has left these parents with no means to care for their children, so have we, the helping professionals, contributed to the fact that many of the parents do not assume responsibility for the upbringing of their children. We have taken their children away from the parents and appointed ourselves as the children's caretakers – thereby robbing the parents of their parental rights. We have also assumed that parents automatically have the skills for parenting and when their parenting was found to be inadequate, we failed to introduce them to these skills. As another example the study made it clear that the ways in which Rev M T R Smit approached black and coloured people, formed part of the larger political discourses of the time. The reason why he did not reflect critically on discrimination, could have been due to the fact that he was surrounded by people and theologians who were subjugated to these discourses in the same way that he was.

### 3 EMANCIPATORY AIMS

Indirectly, this study aimed to bring about emancipatory changes as the research approach emanated from emancipatory action research. This is a difficult aspect to measure. What ownership can this study claim to have brought regarding change? Certainly, changes in attitudes and perceptions of participants involved in this study, myself included, were noticeable. During conversations between the child care workers and myself, I saw new perceptions being formed about the children. I witnessed renewed hope in the voices of the children. I heard resistance to domination from the staff and principal, I heard new ideas emerge from the management board. It seems that the

knowledges that the collaborative nature of the narrative conversations created were powerful enough to bring about change. The power of these conversations resided in small, sometimes miniscule changes of perceptions. I have recognised how participants would, after specific reflexive conversations, respond with new knowledges and perceptions that I recognised as the results of earlier conversations. It seems to me that it has been a three-year period of small changes in people's thoughts and perceptions that have led to their empowerment.

#### 4 HOW HAVE I WORKED TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE AIMS OF THIS STUDY?

According to the staff and the children, the therapeutic conversations that followed the Project Go-meetings of the children, benefited the children. In my conversations with small groups of children, we spent about two hours talking about Project Go and about life at the haven in general. They all told their stories of their families, their concerns and their joys. They found comfort in the stories of other children and in the reflections on their own stories. The narrative approach I used in these group conversations allowed the children to leave the sessions having reflected on their hopes and on their coping during this difficult period. It allowed for laughing and sharing techniques to overcome the feelings of fear and anxiety. The children whose stories reflected serious suffering were referred for individual counselling.

As I will illustrate later in this chapter, the reflexive nature of our conversations allowed for the stories of the children to be shared with the child care workers (with the children's permission), with the staff and the board of management. Soon after the commencement of this study I was invited to become part of the board of management. During our meetings I was occasionally given an audience to relate the children's experiences, which I did, "straight from the horse's mouth". It seems that my narrations of the children's perceptions contributed to a greater appreciation and an understanding of their situations, far more than my "professional interpretation" of issues affecting the children. It was reassuring to notice the effect of the children's stories, but at the same time, it brought

with it responsibility. In order to remain the representative of their voices, I had to remain in constant contact with the children, I had to continuously consult with them and get their consent.

The research aim of providing the child care workers with an opportunity to share and reflect on their experiences of Project Go, was approached as follows:

The child care workers had between eight to twelve sessions in which to reflect on their experiences. The conversations during these sessions went beyond the initial aims of this study – it addressed their needs to reflect on issues that impacted on their personal and professional lives. Still, their contributions in creating an understanding of the circumstances of the children were invaluable.

This research approach provided regular opportunities for the principal and myself to reflect on the situation at the haven throughout the three years. Her contributions offered reflections that went beyond the boundaries of the Children's Haven M T R Smit as she had previous experience of working as the chief social worker of child care in the Department of Welfare. The network of people involved in child care, which she had established, was of great assistance in this study.

This study would have benefited from more opportunities for reflection from the social workers, one of whom resigned from the haven during the course of this study. The enormity of their work loads has restricted our opportunities for additional conversations. Similarly, direct contributions from the ministers of the DRC would have contributed to a broader understanding of the implications for the DRC.

## 5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

### 5.1 Opportunities for change

As a direct result of this study, a group of children was formed – they called themselves the “Consultants”. Their goal was to represent the voice of the children. When making decisions affecting the children, the management board consulted the Consultants. The rationale for establishing such a group came from conversations (between the children and me) as part of this study. During these conversations the children identified issues that concerned them and I conveyed these to the management board. Our perception was that often we (the board of management) worked from assumptions regarding the children that were never confirmed. One such issue was their spiritual needs. Just before this study was finalised, the Consultants and I made our first video of a conversation about their spiritual needs. This video was played to the management board and the board watched the video with some surprise: firstly at how confident the children were about their perceptions on this topic, and secondly, at the content of their conversations – some of which contradicted our assumptions.

With the Consultants we hope to bring about a change in the collaboration and participation of the children in the care that they receive. We hoped to involve them more and more to a level where they could start assuming more responsibility for decisions regarding their care so that managing the haven could become a more collaborative process between adults and children.

In line with the contributions of the Consultants and other conversations that form part of this study, various programs are planned for 2001. The first is a religious program developed for children between the ages of nine and eighteen years, called “Youth Alpha”. We plan to train youth leaders from our community to present and facilitate the program at the haven. The Consultants assessed the program and provided guidelines as to whom they want to present the program and how it should be done. They felt strongly that the youth leaders should be trained in how to approach the children at the haven. They gave specific information that they felt such persons should have before embarking on the program. They gave specific guidelines as to the selection of the people who will present the program. With their recommendations in mind, the working group co-ordinating Youth Alpha, compiled a list of potential presenters and group leaders. 1

designed a short training program consisting mostly of the children's own stories and experiences (as related in chapters four and five). I hope to involve the Consultants in this presentation.

Another idea for a project emerged from conversations regarding the children's stories. The "Buddy-system" is a project that is still being planned. It is related to the failure of weekend and holiday-placements for many of the children. These children have a need to be involved in relationships with adults who would show true commitment, who would take an interest in them and support them, who would relate to them on an emotional and spiritual level and who could serve as role models for the children. Similar to the Youth Alpha-program, these adults would be selected and trained according to the children's criteria.

Yet another program in the pipeline, closely linked to the Buddy system, is the "Networkers". The Networkers would be people from the community who would become "friends of the haven", but who would mainly support the Buddies in their function. They would stand in for the Buddies when unavailable and assist in practical ways, for example providing the Buddies with clothes for a child or helping a child to access opportunities in the community. An important role of the Networkers would be to offer the Buddies training as well as emotional and spiritual support.

An idea that developed from this study (although not formally shared with others) includes a program that addresses the reunification of the children and their families. The idea is to expand the work of the social worker in terms of reunifying a young person with his / her parents while the teenager is still in the care of the haven. Instead of depending on the outside reconstruction workers to take responsibility for the reunification of the children at the haven (which has been known to be inadequate), the haven could take responsibility. My thinking would be to involve the child care workers, who know the children better than most, in training and preparing groups of parents for the responsibility of having their children at home permanently. Groups of parents can be brought together to form communities-of-support for each other. These families can have

access to the social worker, child care workers and other helping professionals while the children are still in the haven's care. This could avoid the situation of children being returned to harmful circumstances.

Another idea is to engage existing weekend and holiday-families and prospective families into support groups where they can be offered assistance, training and emotional support. One reason for failure of weekend and holiday placements was the fact that families were uninformed and inadequately supported.

## 5.2 Extending audiences

With the help of the principal of the haven we had the opportunity to convey the experiences of the children during the period of the transformation to the broader community when the results of the study were presented to the Conference for Child and Youth Care Centres of the *Algemene Kommissie vir die Diens van Barmhartigheid* (a national committee of the Dutch Reformed Church), held in Bloemfontein in September 2000. The principals of various children's havens under the auspices of the DRC throughout the country were present. Also present were the theologians and the social workers involved in the management of these havens and representatives of the National Department of Welfare. The theme was the transformation of child and youth care and the implications for the management of the havens. The focus of my presentation was on the implications of the transformation for the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit and for the DRC. In response to the presentation, the Managing Director of the Developmental Social and Welfare Services of the National Department of Welfare, Mr. A Theron, requested a copy of the presentation. Feedback of the research results at a national level would invite those officials who designed and implemented the transformation of child and youth care, to take cognisance of the "feedback" from the children for whom the transformation was designed. I trust that the conference and the possibility of creating an audience for the children both in the circles of children's havens under the auspices of the Dutch Reformed Church and the National Department of Welfare, would benefit the children at the Children's Haven M T R Smit.

Once this study has been published, I hope to use parts of it for publications in academic journals of the various helping professions in order to extend an audience for the children's voices.

## 6 CRITIQUE THAT CUTS BOTH WAYS

I attempt to indicate with this study that a critique of the care of the children at the haven cuts both ways. The various stories from various sources told during the course of this study do not point a critical finger at one particular source – it points to both the previous child care system and the new system, on different and sometimes similar aspects. The rationale behind the critique is the quest for an ethical commitment in these systems – the benefit of the children.

The study attempts to sketch the strengths of the transformation of child and youth care. It gives credit to the efforts of the transformation to liberate and empower children-in-need, especially previously disadvantaged children.

The study attempts to pose questions regarding the accountability of the Department of Welfare for those aspects in the process of the transformation that are harmful to the children at the haven, such as the Project Go-meetings and premature reunification with their parents. The study aims to point out the exploitation of power by the Department of Welfare in its blocking of the transfer of children with serious behavioural problems from the haven and in disqualifying the work of a team of professional people at the haven.

The study attempts to offer a critique of the way the DRC approached the care of children in the past (the discrimination against black and coloured children) and it highlights the positive contributions that the DRC made, (the material care of the children). This study compliments the contributions of the prophetic practice of the liberation theology in its resistance against discriminatory practices and at the same time, it cautions against a perpetuation of racial prejudice.



The disciplines of theology, psychology, social work and child and youth care come under critique in the search for ethical ways to approach child care. It seems that the ethics of the helping professions have failed the child-in-care and in particular the children at the haven. Neither pastoral practice nor psychotherapy seems to have effectively challenged or addressed the larger issues in society that construct or perpetuate the discriminatory practices under which these children suffer. Neither has contributed adequately to the liberation of these children. Neither has created sufficient opportunities for the voices of these children to be heard.

It seems that a "*Kairos*", a moment of truth, has arrived for pastoral practice and for psychology. This seems to be a time when the helping professions need to take stock, to consider the ethics of its role in the past and its future role in our society. Can we as helping professionals in the current South African context of economic, moral and ethical poverty, still remain on the sidelines? Can we afford to play it safe, to remain true to our traditional therapeutic models, to maintain the status quo, to improve, at the most, the lives of a few individuals? Or has the time come for a more ethical practice – to reflect on the ethical effects of the dominant discourses in psychology, pastoral practice and social work that maintain practices such as racial discrimination, gender discrimination, violence and the disempowerment of people? What will challenge the helping professionals to action?

## 7 CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE

My understanding of the Foucauldian discourse during the process of this study opened new avenues for approaching familiar issues. My understanding of issues such as power and resistance eased me out of old comfortable ways of "understanding" the worlds of the people I work with – to the point of no return. Not only was I made aware of the power inherent in the discourses dominating both the former and current child care systems, but also of the power inherent in the discourses dominating the field of research

study. My understanding of these power issues invited research approaches and a methodology that encouraged collaborative and participative research.

In this study I attempt to create awareness for the power inherent in the discourses and the effects of the power on the children we work with. This study attempts to illustrate that the ways in which the children are cared for, do not stand outside the power of these discourses. It argues that because the haven has always been managed by the DRC, the care of the children resonates with the theology of the DRC. Moreover, I argue that since one cannot separate the histories of the DRC and Afrikaner nationalism and -politics, the care that the children receive also has to be understood against the larger backdrop of the Afrikaner culture. At the same time, the transformation of child and youth care is not approached in a vacuum, but should be regarded within the larger political liberation discourse.

As a therapist I did benefit from the process of deconstructing these discourses. It gave me an understanding, an appreciation of former approaches of the management board to the care of children. My often critical perceptions were replaced by a realisation that, despite the historical context of the haven, the care of the children was provided “in good faith”. I don’t think that anyone, neither M T R Smit when he removed the white children from coloured foster-homes, nor the previous child care system which estranged children from their families, nor the new child care system which has harmed children through premature reunifications, intentionally caused harm to the children. What is an important realisation though, is that even when our intentions are fiduciary of nature, we can still cause harm.

The same is true for care rendered by the helping professions such as psychology. The care we give is determined by the discourses that we have been trained in. These discourses often regard problems that children face, as “pathology” and in good faith, we treat pathology. We make decisions on behalf of children in the belief that adults, but particularly “professional” adults, know more about what children need than the children themselves. I don’t deny that some children suffer the effects of serious emotional and

psychiatric problems. However, in privileging the notion that problems = pathology, and that to help the child is to “cure” the child of the pathology, one dismisses the abilities of the child to identify solutions to his / her problems and to collaborate towards solutions. The result of such practices is that the child’s voice remains unheard, silenced, marginalised. That he / she becomes a mere pawn, a case study in the treatment approach of the professional. In an effort to become accountable in our work with children, we have to privilege therapeutic approaches that invite collaboration, that respect and empower.

The Foucauldian discourse has enabled me to view the effects of the discourse mentioned in the previous paragraphs from a different perspective. It has also made me aware that there are discourses in my own mind I have only started to deconstruct. For example, in reflection on the issue of corporal punishment against the backdrop of the Foucauldian discourse’s analysis of punishment, I became aware of how entrenched we are in patriarchal ways of thinking. How we have bought into the whole “Boetman”-discourse of “pa-het-gepraat” (your father has spoken) – so much so that we struggle to view discipline other than punitive and requital. I don’t think we have even started to address the patriarchal discourse significantly in our therapeutic approaches.

## 8 TOWARDS FINDING ETHICAL AND ACCOUNTABLE WAYS TO CARE FOR CHILDREN

As discussed in chapter seven, the ethical guidelines for the helping professions such as psychology, seem to fail to address broader issues in society. “Modernist approaches to ethics has placed the care of others in the shady background of our collective moral conscience” (Sevenhuijsen 1998:18). Ethics of care has been reduced to codes with rules that govern the behaviour of professional care givers and contribute little towards challenging or changing the policies of care. Ethics’ role has been anything but prophetic.

Ethics of care cannot but be political. Care is not confined to the family-unit or to personal relationships but “it is also situated in the formalized social and political

institutions in our society" (Sevenhuijsen 1998:137). Sevenhuijsen (1998:19) referred to the political nature of feminist ethics of care. She states that it is political in the broad sense "because it wants to break with the patterns of domination that have surrounded caring activities and moral feelings for too long and to establish new modes of being 'truly moral'". Ethics of care is also political in another sense, the "narrow sense", as it aims at transforming systems upholding traditional ways of caring to create new ways of caring. Sevenhuijsen (1998:137) argued that a political approach to care enables people to address issues of power and "to adapt our judgements about care politics to the fact that power and conflict are involved in every phase of the caring process, as well as our collective discussions about the way social institutions should care about human beings."

On a second level there needs to be an invitation for collaboration with those voices that have been previously ignored, the children who, in both the previous and in the new system, seem to remain the victims of the power discourses which the government, the DRC and the professions who work with children, bought into. How do we find new ways of thinking *with* children, and not about them? How do we create ethical ways of working with children? In my opinion it is possible by inviting collaboration and participation on different levels, by reflecting from various fields. The first level is between the various disciplines. Traditionally, when helping children, the children are sent from one professional to the next, from one discipline to the next. With regard to the care of the child-in-need, the boundaries that exist between pastoral care, social work, child and youth care and psychology frustrate and prevent collaboration rather than facilitate it. If one approaches the child from one discipline, one loses knowledge that arises from critical reflection from other disciplines. On the other hand, if one invites collaboration of the disciplines, one profits from the richness of four different perspectives.

The children's interests (as determined by others), enjoy care which excludes the children's authority. There is little collaboration with the children regarding their own care. The voices of the "non-professionals", such as the parents of the children and the child care workers who have had little participation in designing the care provided to the

children in the past, yet who know the needs of the children better than most, need to be listened to. These voices need to be liberated from the silence in which the “professionals” have kept them. This does not mean that the voices of the professionals be swept off the table, as was done by the Department of Welfare during the transformation process, for they too can offer valuable participation. The care of the children-in-need, needs to broaden its field of reflection and collaboration. By doing so, issues of power will be addressed. For if the power inherent in the designing and executing of the care of the children remains in the hands of a small group of people, white Afrikaans-speaking members of the DRC, resistance and critical reflection will be unlikely, collaboration impossible. Collaboration allows for power to be deconstructed between adults and children, men and women, blacks and whites, ministers and members of the congregation, therapists and clients. Only then can we claim to work towards benefiting the child, centring their interests.

I want to conclude this chapter and this study with the words of the one of the Consultants. In a letter she expressed the meaning of being a Consultant for her. If one child, on one occasion, had the opportunity to be heard and this opportunity left her with the experience that she shares here, can you imagine the effects on the children if all hundred of them at the haven, and all the thousands all over our country, were truly being listened to – truly being heard? And once they had been heard, something substantial was done. If the children’s experiences were being listened to but nothing changed, can you imagine what they then will feel?

Dear [reader],

The Consultant-group means that I am being listened to  
 and to know that you are being listened to  
 Feels as if  
 an illness has been healed.

To be in a children's home  
has always felt  
as if I've had a lump in my throat.  
Because I've said what I've felt -  
no-one has listened or heard.

I feel like screaming  
if I tell someone something -  
and they don't listen.

But with the Consultants,  
you say your say  
There, you are asked questions about your questions  
and commentary is delivered on what you say.  
When you walk away from there, when you leave there,  
it feels as if  
a big weight has been lifted off your shoulders,  
You have to see it in the person's attitude, eyes and disposition  
that the person is interested in you  
and what you have to say.

(Sheriva)

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Addendum A:      **Consent form for the guardian of the children of the haven****CONSENT**

I hereby grant permission that the children of the Children's Haven M T R Smit participate in your research project.

I understand and give consent that the children will participate in therapeutic conversations regarding their experiences of Project Go and the children's haven either individually or in groups. These conversations will take place at your practice and we agree to transport the children to and from your practice. I also agree to the following:

1. the children's participation is voluntary and that each child, prior to each conversation, will be asked to give his / her verbal consent.
2. each child is free to refuse participation at any time during the process of the research. You will not enter into any conversation with any child against his / her will.
3. all personal information supplied by the children will be treated as confidential and it will not be used for any purposes other than this research project. Information regarding the children will be reported on anonymously and their identities will be protected as far as possible.
4. the therapeutic conversations can be audiotaped, transcribed and be kept in your safe keeping until at least 6 years after the completion of this research project.
5. the children will receive no monetary or other remuneration for their participation in this research project.

.....  
Signature of the principal of the Children's

.....  
Date

Haven M T R Smit,

Ms. C. Watson

Addendum B: Consent form for child care worker**CONSENT**

I hereby state that I have read the information document regarding your research project and that I understand the contents thereof. Questions that I had regarding the research project, have been answered by you and I understand that I may ask questions at any time during the process of the research. I also understand the following:

1. my participation in the research project is completely voluntary.
2. I am free to withdraw participation at any time during the process of the research knowing that such withdrawal will not be to my disadvantage in any way.
3. all personal information offered by me will be treated as confidential and it will not be used for any purposes other than this research project. Information regarding me will be reported on anonymously and my identity will be protected as far as possible.
4. our conversations can be audio taped, transcribed and be kept in your safekeeping until at least 6 years after the completion of this research project.
5. I shall receive no monetary or other remuneration for my participation in this research project.

Finally I give my consent to be a participant in your research project.

.....  
Signature of the child care worker

.....  
Date