

**Applying Collective Narrative Practices in Local Churches: A Study
exploring to what extent Narrative Practices can facilitate re-authoring
conversations around the church's role in development**

By

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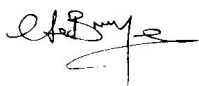
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DECLARATION

I, Kym Elizabeth Bishop, hereby declare that the research presented under the title, “Applying Collective Narrative Practices in Local Churches: A Study exploring to what extent Narrative Practices can facilitate re-authoring conversations around the church’s role in development”, is my original work, except where otherwise indicated.

This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. It does not contain other persons’ data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless materials are specifically acknowledged as originating from other sources. It also does not contain other persons’ writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, the wording has been changed while preserving the general meaning and the information has been referenced. In the case of verbal quotations these have been placed inside quotation marks and referenced. The thesis does not contain information copied from the Internet unless specifically acknowledged as such with the source provided in detail.

Kym Elizabeth Bishop



Dr. C. Le Bruyns

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family, Michael, James, Thomas and Anna, whose stories make my own far more interesting.

And to the team at Mpower, who inspired me to embark on this journey.

And to Tanya and Belinda, friends taken too soon, whose passion and compassion live on in the lives they touched – including mine.

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And I acknowledge God, whose love expressed in Jesus, found me and sent me.

Abstract

Emerging from the struggle many churches seem to experience in engaging with issues of injustice, and the role of the church in the development discourse, this research aims to investigate to what extent Narrative Practices, when applied in local church congregations, can facilitate new conversations around what it means to be the church in society today. In order to address this question, this research first explores the Narrative Approach. Asking what Collective Narrative Practices local congregations can participate in that would give space for new stories around the church's role in society brings into focus the specific contribution of Narrative Practices to communities and groups. The research then moves on to investigate the unique contributions of theology to the development discourse and our understanding of The Church. With the purpose of the research being to explore the possible relationship that exists between Narrative Practices, Theology and Development praxis within the local church, establishing the foundational theory that would inform the practical application of Narrative Practices in local church contexts is the primary focus. This study has revealed four key areas of intersection that exist between Narrative, Theology and Development: conscientization, a de-centred approach, hope and active/responsible citizenship. It is the finding of this research that Narrative Practices have the potential to be a powerful tool for analysing social contexts, encouraging new ways of reflecting theologically on development, and the church's role in development, and moving people to new kinds of action, when the map of Narrative Practice that is designed takes into account these intersections. The significance of these findings, and of the research, is the potential Narrative Practices hold for enabling new conversations around the role of the church in development.

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1. Introduction

This research will investigate to what extent Collective Narrative Practices when applied in local church congregations, can facilitate re-authoring conversations around the church's identity with regard to and role in social development. This investigation will look specifically into the potential Collective Narrative Practices hold for initiating new dialogue within local Methodist Church congregations, and the role these congregations can play in social development in their local communities.

1.1 Brief motivation and background

Collective Narrative Practices have been emerging as a significant tool in helping communities who have experienced trauma respond to the challenges they face (Denborough, 2008, Reynolds, 2013, Pederson, 2015). As these practices have been developed and applied in a wide range of contexts, it is starting to emerge that, more than just helping people respond to trauma, Collective Narrative Practices are enabling new dialogue around issues of identity and dominant social discourses. Part of my experience as a minister in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa has been the inability of many local churches to engage effectively with issues of social justice. And so, this research would like to further explore the potential Collective Narrative Practices hold in facilitating conversations around issues of identity and dominant social justice discourses within the context of a local church congregation. This investigation will look specifically at the potential for re-authoring conversations in the area of the church's identity and role in social transformation, when Collective Narrative Practices are applied. Since its beginning, the church has been involved in caring for the poor (Acts 2:45) and God's preferential option for the poor is a primary feature of the Christian faith (Boff, 1987:50). And yet, many congregations have struggled with what it means to be the church (our identity) as well as the role we could be playing in working for justice and change (social development) (Van Wyngaard, 2011). Therefore, I would like to explore to what extent Collective Narrative Practices could help local congregations begin to rethink their role in social development in local communities.

David Denborough, in his book *Collective Narrative Practice* (2008) discusses how many people want to engage with issues of poverty and social injustice in order to help bring about social transformation, but they look for solutions to problems in the wrong places, and when they cannot find solutions in the places they expect to find them, they become convinced that broader change is not possible, giving in to what he calls “neo-liberal fatalism and the politics of despair” (Denborough, 2008: X). In my work as an ordained minister in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, and particularly in the economically privileged community in which I am now stationed, I have often encountered this despair amongst sincere church members, who question whether broader social transformation could ever happen, and what role the local church can play, if any, in facilitating any kind of honest engagement with social justice and development issues. My own experience of the church’s inability to effectively engage with poverty and injustice, as well as my experiences with narrative therapy as a tool for an individual development process, led me to question whether narrative practices applied collectively, could open up possibilities for local churches to begin to think in new ways about the role of the church in social transformation.

1.2 Key Terms

As it explores which Collective Narrative Practices can be applied to local church congregations, and how these practices could facilitate new dialogue around issues of development, social justice and the church’s role in transformation, this research will deal with three key concepts: 1) Narrative Therapy and Collective Narrative Practice; 2) Development as it relates to the contribution theology makes and 3) The Role of the Church in social development. These concepts will be reflected on briefly in this chapter for purposes of introducing the research question, and then dealt with later in more depth in the following chapters.

1.2.1 Narrative Therapy and Collective Narrative Practice

Narrative therapy refers to an approach initially developed by Michael White and David Epston, (Epston, White, 1990) but which has been used by therapists and counsellors for over thirty years (Swart, 2013:1). The Narrative Approach is a particular approach to therapeutic conversations that takes into account dominant social discourses (discourse theory) and power structures (a post-structuralist

understanding of power) in order to work together with people to address problems with which individuals and communities struggle (Morkel, 2012a:64). The post-structuralist understanding of power as applied in Narrative Therapy recognises that 'language does not reflect social reality, but language constitutes social reality for us' (Morkel, 2012a: 69) making the stories we tell and the way we describe the reality we experience, deeply significant. Narrative Therapy, therefore, removes the therapist from the position of being the expert (Morgan, 2002:85) and invites the participants into a participatory conversation, taking seriously their own experience, knowledge and context (Morkel, 2012a:64). In understanding how the taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs in a particular society (discourses) inform and sustain problem narratives, Narrative Therapy seeks to unpack accepted social discourses and, together with the participants, re-author a new, alternative story (Swart, 2013:1). Swart describes re-authoring conversations as invitations to become both agents and authors of our stories (Swart, 2013:6). Re-authoring conversations, then, are the process through which people are invited to give voice to the previously unspoken stories that shape their lives and role in the world¹. Narrative Therapy uses techniques called 'maps'² (White, 2007) to shape and guide therapeutic conversations towards re-authoring the alternate story. Collective Narrative Practice uses the same principles of Narrative Therapy, but asks how narrative approaches can be applied to groups, where one-on-one counselling is not possible or appropriate (Denborough, 2008:1). Denborough notes that Collective Narrative Practice is concerned with recognising *collective* language, interactions and intentions in order to collectively re-author an alternate story (Denborough, 2008:23).

Mention needs to be made here of Narrative theology. The task of this research is not to get into the various merits and critiques of this post-liberal approach, but it is worth mentioning the shared values of Narrative Theology and Narrative Therapy. Emerging from the work of Lindbeck and Frei, Narrative Theology is an approach to scripture that looks to the meaning in the story, and rather than trying to create

1 The process of re-authoring conversations will be explored further in chapter two of this research.

2 In this research, 'maps' refers to the term 'Maps of Narrative Practice' (as used in Narrative Therapy and first coined by Michael White), which rather than being a ready-prepared destination, represent techniques for implementing Narrative Practices that can be used to guide and scaffold conversations. Michael White outlines Maps of Narrative Practice in his 2007 book of the same name.

meaning relative to a set of 'universal criteria' (Slater, 2014:619), the task of the Christian theologian is what Houston calls 'self-description' (Houston, 2016:165). While the similarities between this and the Narrative Approach (where meaning is found in the stories we tell about ourselves and the cultural language we use in the telling) are evident, and one must keep cognisant of the influence of Narrative Theology in the potential application of Narrative Practices, the focus of this research is very specifically Narrative Therapy, and its potential application in the Collective within a local church, in the context of conversations about development.

1.2.2 Development and Theology

While the history of development, and the progression of 'human agency in the making of history' (de Gruchy, 2002:11) is a worthwhile investigation, this research is looking specifically to the contribution theology makes to understanding development praxis³. So, rather than understanding development purely as equating 'human progress with growth in the market value of economic output' (Korten, 1990:3), this research will be exploring Korten's definition of development as

'a process by which members of society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilize and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations.' (Korten, 1990:67)

It is with this definition of development in mind, that this research will unpack the contribution of theology to development. Along with this, as this research explores ideas around social development, and the role of the church in social development, social development in this research is to be understood according to de Gruchy's definition where 'social development means social, cultural, religious, ecological, economic and political activities that consciously seek to enhance the self-identified livelihoods of the poor' (de Gruchy, 2005:25).

³Elize Morkel discusses praxis as being the continued activity of integrating action and reflection, with the intentional aim of participating in the transformation of political and social patterns and processes (Morkel, 2012:27). It is with this understanding in mind that this research will investigate the contribution of theology to the process of reflecting on development action with the intention of participating in transformational action.

1.2.3 The Role of the Church

For this research, the church refers to the communities of believers that make up local congregations who gather for worship. And more specifically, as we unpack the potential practical application of a Collective Narrative Approach in local Methodist congregations, this research will look at the Methodist Church's foundations of social justice, investigating why it is necessary to facilitate new dialogue around the church's role in development.

With this in mind, the research will look to the possibility of applying Narrative Practices to identify dominant social justice narratives within the local church congregation, and seek to answer the research question of what Collective Narrative Practices can be applied to local congregations and to what extent these practices can enable new dialogue around issues of development. As Boff & Boff note, theological reflection on development praxis should not end in the production of 'theological works and centres of study and research' (Boff & Boff, 1987:19) but rather liberation theology is found and done where the people of God gather for worship (Boff & Boff, 1987:20). So, in looking at the identity and role of the church in development, it is to uncover courses of action and development praxis that can enable the local church to be the 'sign and instrument of liberation' (Boff & Boff, 1987:59) in its community.

1.3 Literature review

Narrative Therapy emerged as a tool for Clinical Psychologists and counsellors over 30 years ago, when Michael White and David Epston published their work *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (Swart, 2013:1). Since then, Narrative Practitioners have been exploring how stories, when brought into the context of therapy, reveal the meaning given to particular events (Morgan, 2000:11) and lead to 'thin conclusions' (Morgan, 2000:13) about people's identities. As Narrative Practices have developed over time, and 'maps' of narrative practice used in a variety of contexts to help people re-think how they view the relationship between themselves and their problems (White, 2007:9), many scholars and practitioners have begun to record how effective Narrative Practices are when used with a group of people, particularly a group who have experience trauma and one-on-one therapy is not possible as an option

(Denborough,2008:1).

However, because this is still a relatively new area in the field of Narrative Therapy, most of the literature around the ability of Collective Narrative Practices to help groups of people re-think issues of identity and their relationship to their problems has been in the form of case studies and papers presented at Narrative Conferences and in recent journals. In her article for *Family Process* Elize Morkel, a leading Narrative Practitioner in South Africa, has described Narrative Practices as a 'participatory approach to healing' (Morkel, 2011). This article highlights some of the key theoretical features of Narrative Practices. What has been interesting, is reading the case studies where these frameworks and methodologies have been applied in various group contexts. Van Greunen's paper on community work in diverse South African contexts, and the challenges and opportunities for Narrative Practices (Van Greunen, 2015) as well as Jeanne Haley and Phelo Muyanga's paper on Narrative Practices generating change within a local South African High School (Haley, 2015) were particularly helpful in seeing the practical application of Collective Narrative Practice methodologies. As this research is concerned with the ability Collective Narrative Practices have to help local churches rethink issues of identity and their role in social transformation, it has been helpful to read the examples of practical applications of Collective Narrative Practices. Where the literature has been lacking has been in the specific context of the local church, or other faith communities, in the area of development. I hope to make a contribution through my research in this area of applying Collective Narrative Practices in local faith communities, particularly within local church congregations.

Part of the purpose of this study is also to research whether Collective Narrative Practices, when applied within the context of a local church, can help churches rethink what it means to be the church engaging with issues of social justice. Much of the literature I have read on development and social transformation has emphasised the need to rethink how we understand development itself as concept, as well as the role different agencies can and should play in transformation. Korten's works on generations of voluntary development actions (Korten 1990, 114) builds a helpful foundation for understanding how the roles of churches and voluntary community organisations have changed, or should change. Korten's '4th Generation'

theory of a people-centred development vision (Korten, 1990:124) has parallels with the participatory methodologies of Collective Narrative Practice, and his discussion on presenting an alternate vision that would mobilise people to action (Korten, 1990:127) presents many possibilities for the church. In their discussion, 'Who is Driving Development?' Mathie and Cunningham explore the transformative potential of Asset-Based Community Development (Mathie and Cunningham, 2005) and in doing so, reveal key similarities between uncovering community assets and the framework in Narrative of re-authoring conversations and discovering unique outcomes (Morgan, 2000:72).

In exploring Narrative Practices, and investigating and analysing the potential for their application within the context of a local church, the work of feminist and liberation theologians have proven helpful in the way they have informed and shaped my thinking, approach and praxis. According to Denise Ackermann, the work of feminist theology is to examine 'patriarchal traditions and the biased interpretations of scripture' (Ackermann, 2009:270) so that the discriminating and oppressive practices that have resulted (particularly in the church) can be recognised and re-constructed to be inclusive and affirming for all people, but especially for women (Ackermann, 2009:270). Recognising and challenging oppressive practices and traditions is one area where feminist theology and the Narrative Approach overlap. In her letter to Dirkie Smit on his ability to make difficult theological concepts accessible to 'ordinary' newspaper readers, Ackermann discusses the value of critical theory as a tool within feminist theology for recognising 'untruth and oppression' within traditions (Ackermann, 2011:4). Like other feminist biblical scholars, such as Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza who also acknowledges the value critical theory holds for challenging traditions and theologies that participate in oppression (Ackermann, 2011:4), Ackermann looks to critical theory as a lens through which 'oppressive ideologies, male-dominated theologies and church traditions and practices that are exclusionary' can be analysed (Ackerman, 2011:7). This tool, key in feminist theology, parallels with the Narrative Approach of naming taken-for-granted ideas and belief so that their influence and effect can be recognised, and new-stories re-authored and thickened.

In the same way, an investigation into liberation theology also offered insight into the possibilities for a new way of being church in the area of social justice. Emerging in the 1960s across Latin America, liberation theology was birthed in the action and reflection of Christians working against poverty (Cooper, 2013:2). In her book on the re-emergence of Liberation Theology, Thia Cooper discusses liberation theology as both action and reflection, that aims to 'liberate marginalised people from oppression', believing that faith should liberate people to act justly (Cooper, 2013 :1). As discussed by Berryman, liberation theology is an 'attempt to read the bible and key Christian doctrines with the eyes of the poor' (Berryman, 1987: 4). A significant feature of liberation theology is that liberation theology is only authentic when it is the oppressed themselves who are able to rise up and take the lead in their own liberation (Gutierrez, 1988:174). The work of liberation theologians such as Leonardo and Clodovus Boff on being Christian in a world of destitution (1987), Gustavo Gutierrez' writing on liberation and development (1973) and Juan Luis Segundo's discussion on the ongoing hermeneutical cycle (1976) challenge existing discourses and point practically to new ways of understanding faith and praxis.

In her book *Controversies in Political Theology* (2007) Thia Cooper acknowledges the gap that exists between liberation theology and development in asking if churches should be working for development or Liberation (Cooper, 2007). Cooper explores how churches, in trying to understand their role within the development movement, developed unhelpful ways of engaging with the poor, and how liberation theology, critical of this kind of development, worked for justice and liberation from oppressive systems rather than charity (Cooper, 2007).

However theology, specifically the early Liberation theology movement and the church, have not always been readily accepted as participants in the development discourse (Fretheim, 2011). Generally, the development discourse and theological reflection on development praxis were addressed in separate academic circles, and it is quite recently that the 'links and tensions' between theology and development are being rediscovered (Fretheim, 2011:303). This may be due in part to what some scholars refer to as the 'criticism, revision and revival of liberation theology' and the emergence of development theology (Fretheim, 2011:309). There is a growing recognition that brands of liberation theology, such as Le Bruyns' understanding of

'Kairos Theology' which explores public theology as being both contextual and responsible (Le Bruyns, 2015), are beginning to ask the right questions. However, tensions between the two circles remain. Amartya Sen's work on *Development as Freedom* (1999) has contributed to understanding development as more than just economic gains, but rather, looks to the ability to choose as well as the means to live well holistically, as a significant factor in determining well-being (Naha, 2016). While this seems to sit well with theologians, (Klaasen, 2014) there are mixed responses from economists, who see Sen's broadening of the development agenda to include political, social and institutional reforms as flawed, particularly the ideas of market exchange as being 'natural and intrinsically valuable', his analysis and understanding of the challenges facing democracies and his interpretation of 'reasoned social progress' (Sandbrook, 2000).

In a similar way, another struggle that appears to be facing theology in the development sphere is what Naudè discusses as the need for a new way of doing theology in the public sphere (Naudè, 2014:459). In South Africa, the transition to democracy, and particularly the economic challenges that have come with this transition, have presented a 'methodological challenge' to theological reflection (Naudè, 2014:459). Many theologians seem good at extracting broad, general biblical principles, but are not so good at identifying specific supporting action that can be applied in helpful ways in current contexts (Naudè, 2014:462). Along with this, de Gruchy observes the challenges facing the church when it comes to theology and development in post-Apartheid South Africa, because of the speed with which the context changed (de Gruchy, 2008:10).

And so, much of the literature is asking some good, but challenging, questions about the role of the church in development, in economics and in the public sphere (Naudè, 2014, Fretheim, 2011, de Wet, 2014). Scholars are asking, and I agree, can theology, and the church, retain a public voice (Wright, 2015) that contributes meaningfully to the development discourse and its practical application? Can theology and the church hold significance and relevance beyond their 'ecclesiastical domain' (Le Bruyns, 2015:462) and have an intentional, public role that works for a common good? There seems to be much work to be done in rethinking the prophetic role of the church, which is seen to be one voice among many (de Wet, 2014:2).

What the literature has made clear is that through a thorough and current understanding of both Collective Narrative Practices and development trends, practices and theories, the potential for Collective Narrative Practice to contribute to the field of development is promising. What I have also learned through my reading is the church in my context has a long way to go in becoming a helpful agent for change in our local community. I hope that my research can make a contribution in the area of churches rethinking their role in social transformation through the application of Collective Narrative Practices.

1.4 Research question

The key question this research will address is, to what extent Collective Narrative Practices can facilitate re-authoring conversations around the local church's identity and role in social development.

Is it possible for some of the principles of Narrative Practice, as outlined by other Narrative Practitioners as their 'Maps of Narrative Practice', to be applied to a local church congregation? And when applied, will these Narrative Practices enable local church congregations to begin new dialogue about who they are as a church, what it means to be the church in the world, what they understand about development and their role in social transformation, and what might be possible for their church in their community in terms of development?

1.5 Sub-questions

The sub-questions with which this research will engage in order to deal with the question of whether Narrative Practices can help local church congregations think differently about development and their role in it are:

1.5.1 What Collective Narrative Practices can local congregations participate in that would give space for alternate stories around church identity and social transformation to emerge?

Here, the question is looking specifically at *what* practices or 'maps' can be used in the context of a local church that would allow new dialogue and re-

authoring conversations to emerge. Through this, the research will unpack some of the perspectives and principles foundational to Narrative Therapy and Collective Narrative practices, in order to establish whether these practices can be used within the context of a local church.

1.5.2 What are the unique and particular contributions of Collective Narrative Practice and Theology to the work of Development within the local Church?

This question aims to research the potential intersections between Collective Narrative Practice, Theology and Development and the extent to which the overlap could impact on how local congregations understand their identity and role in local communities. In addressing this question, the lenses of Collective Narrative Practice and Theology will be used to gain a deeper understanding of Development, and what tools local churches can use to engage with the particular challenges of their local communities.

1.5.3 How would participating in Collective Narrative Practices as a congregation make a re-authoring conversation around the church's role in social change possible?

This question looks at the 'how' – how can we apply these maps, and in what ways do these practices enable new and ongoing dialogue around how the church sees itself with regard to its role in development and social justice.

1.6 Objectives of my research

The objectives of this study are:

- a. To evaluate current approaches to Collective Narrative Practice, in order to explore the possibility for these practices to allow new conversations to emerge in the development dialogue within local churches. And then to suggest a strategy of collective narrative approaches (maps) that could facilitate a greater understanding of both dominant and alternate social justice narratives within a local church.

- b. To explore the contribution both Collective Narrative Practices and Theology can make to development, and in what ways this relationship could impact the local church's understanding of its identity and role in social development.
- c. To evaluate to what extent Narrative Therapy and Collective Narrative Practices help members of local churches think differently about the role of their church in development and social transformation.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This research will apply a narrative methodology as its framework. Drawing influence from both the narrative approach and certain aspects of liberation theology, the research will fit into a three-part framework when it comes to investigating the potential application of Collective Narrative Practice within a local congregation. This being: the social analysis, the hermeneutical analysis, and the practical application.

The social analysis is about understanding the context, exploring different theories and systems around poverty, asking questions that challenge accepted social discourses of why the poor are poor (Boff, 1987:24) and why the church engages as it does with development issues. This first step is also the starting point in the Narrative Approach as much of the work of Narrative Therapy begins with placing the problem within its context, and understanding and challenging the social discourses around the problem, and the individual or group's relationship to the problem. This will give us a social/contextual framework as a starting point.

Within this understanding, Denborough's Characteristics of Collective Narrative Practice (2008) will provide the structure within which this research assesses the principles and approaches of Collective Narrative practice, and what practices or maps could be used in local churches in order to help congregations challenge their own assumptions regarding poverty, development and the role of their church in their local communities.

The Hermeneutical Analysis will examine issues of development in the light of faith, theology and the role of the church as agents for change in a world of injustice (Boff, 1987:32). This will enable a theological lens through which to investigate the

application of Narrative Practices in a local church. As the Narrative Approach looks to re-author an alternate story, so our hermeneutical analysis can explore a new vision of what could be possible as we seek to understand God's plan for the poor (Boff, 1987:24).

Within this structure, this research will use both Korten and de Gruchy's definitions of development as well as Korten's Generational Theories of Development, (Korten, 1990) and Lategan's Three Publics (Swart, 2004) to understand the contribution of Theology as well as Collective Narrative Practice to Development, and to what extent this impacts the local church's identity and role in development.

The Practical Application, will explore practical courses of action to overcome injustice (Boff, 1987:24). This third lens moves the study from theory into practice, and asks the questions 'what?' and 'how?' What Collective Narrative Practices can be applied to local churches and how will they facilitate re-authoring conversations?

Here, we will use Kaethe Weingarten's "Characteristics of Reasonable Hope" (2010) to understand the practical implications of the role of the church in development, and to what extent Collective Narrative Practices can open the way for new conversations of the church's role in Development.

1.8 Research Methods

1.8.1 Research Design

This research will look at to what extent Collective Narrative Practices, when applied within the context of a local church, open the way for new dialogue around the congregation's understanding of the role of the church in development. In order to answer this question, this research will follow the following steps:

1. The research will investigate Narrative Therapy, and specifically Collective Narrative Practice, as it has been applied to local communities.
2. The second step will involve engaging with the question of development, focusing on the contribution of both theology and Narrative to development, and understanding the role of the church in development.

3. The third step will be to reflect on the potential contribution of Collective Narrative Practice to the local church generally. But then to also examine Narrative's contribution to the local church specifically in the area of the church and development through specifically designed maps of Narrative Practice.
4. The research will then evaluate to what extent these specific Narrative practices make new dialogue around development possible.

1.8.2 Methodologies

Having looked at the overall structure, we turn now to the specific methodologies and tools that will be used to address each step in this research. This research will be a literary research, using non-empirical research tools. The reasons for this are twofold:

1. The purpose and objectives of this research are to explore the possible relationship that could exist between Narrative Practices, Theology, Development and the local Church. This research hopes to lay a solid foundation of unpacking and exploring this potential through engaging with the different concepts and literature first, and then through this establishing which Narrative maps and tools could be applied in the context of the local congregation⁴. The work of establishing the foundational theory behind the application of the practices is a key part of the application. To not fully explore the themes, overlaps and points of intersection between the various disciplines of Narrative, Theology and Development would hinder the ability to both design appropriate maps and apply them practically within a local church context. Moving into empirical research would, I feel, make the scope of this research too broad in order to do it adequate justice.
2. Narrative work is a journey that seeks to challenge dominant social discourses, and to empower individuals and groups to re-author new stories based on values and intentions. Assessing the emergence of new values, and new understanding of identities, and how these new stories can be applied in

⁴ It is worth remembering that the Maps of Narrative Practice referred to here are not predetermined courses of action, but rather guides for implementing a Narrative Approach that can facilitate a conversation around dominant social discourses, and collective hoped-for futures, which can lead to practical action that emerges from the group itself, taking on its own form and identity through the dialogue.

the local church when it comes to development is not a small thing, and would take this research outside of its scope of aims and objectives. It is possible to do justice to the Narrative Process within the scope of this study. The work of applying Collective Narrative Practices within the local church has potential to be a further, separate research project.

The tools I propose to use to gather data for this research are:

1. To critically engage with literature in the field of Narrative Therapy and Collective Narrative Practice, including papers presented at recent Narrative Therapy Conferences, where the principles of Collective Narrative Practice have been practically applied in a range of local communities. This will produce the data of the principles of Collective Narrative Practice and how Collective Narrative Practice is already being applied in other groups.
2. To conduct a literary research on the concept of Development, and gain a deeper understanding of what is meant by development. This will enable me to produce data around the contribution of theology to the development discourse and the different conversations around the role of the church in development.
3. The third tool is a critical reflection on the potential contribution of Collective Narrative Practice to the local church's conversations on development, and the church's role in development. The aim of this step is to identify the areas of intersection between Narrative Practices and theology and development, and from these overlaps that emerge through the research, design a strategy (in the form of maps) for implementing Collective Narrative practices within local church congregations, specifically my own Methodist Congregation. It is the purpose of this research to explore the possibility of designing maps that are in keeping with the principles of Collective Narrative Practice, and that will enable local congregations to engage with ideas of church identity and development. The production of the maps themselves will contribute to answering the research questions as to what Collective Narrative Practices can be applied in local churches that will enable local congregations to engage in conversations around development discourses.

4. The final step is to address to what extent these specific Narrative practices make *new* dialogue possible. This will happen through the evaluation of and reflection on the maps that are designed through the process of this research. Having a framework through which congregations can move will enable an evaluation of to what extent Narrative Practices can make re-authoring conversations possible, and so answer the research question of to what extent can collective narrative practices facilitate re-authoring conversations in local churches around the church's identity and role in development.

1.9 Anticipated problems

There is a growing wealth of literature on Collective Narrative Practices, and their application in local communities, and there is a large body of literature and debate on development, theology and the role of the church, but there is very little literature and research done on Collective Narrative Practice in relation to theology and development, and their application in the context of a local church. Faithfully connecting Narrative Practices with Development Theory in light of a Theological framework will be a challenge. Because of this, designing the strategy and the measure for applying collective narrative practice, and whether or not these practices will allow for re-authoring conversations could present some obstacles to the research. The task of applying Collective Narrative Practices and evaluating their potential for re-authoring conversations is the topic of further study. So the challenge here is staying within the frame of this research question – which is a thorough investigation into the disciplines of Collective Narrative Practices and Theology and Development in order to identify where and how these disciplines converge and overlap, so that we can uncover what narrative practices can be applied to local churches and to what extent these strategies can help churches engage with social development. It is in first establishing this theoretical grounding that the practical application can become the topic of another study. Furthermore, the strategy that emerges needs to be appropriate to the context in which it was designed, however for the purposes of a wider contribution to this field of research, it also needs to be something that can be adapted and applied elsewhere. This will require an awareness of the church that is broader than just my own local congregation.

1.10 Outline of chapters

Chapter One of this research will give an introduction to the research, including a brief motivation and background to the research question. It will unpack some key terms, as well as provide a brief literature review as an overview to the topic. It will look in detail at the research question, the sub-questions and the objectives of the research and then move onto the theoretical frameworks and research methods. The chapter will close with identifying some anticipated potential problems, a chapter outline and a conclusion.

Chapter Two will research Narrative Practices, beginning with an introduction to the chapter, and an introduction to scholarly thinking on Narrative Therapy. It will then unpack Narrative Therapy and Collective Narrative Practice, looking specifically at Narrative's contribution to communities and groups. The Chapter will end with identifying some of the principles of Collective Narrative Practice using Denborough's framework of 10 Characteristics of Collective Narrative Practice (Denborough, 2008), and how they have been applied to local communities through evaluating papers presented at recent Narrative Therapy Conferences. This section will represent the first part of the framework – the Social Analysis. The chapter will close with a conclusion.

Chapter Three will research concepts of Development. Beginning with an introduction to the chapter and some key writers and thinkers in the area of development, it will explore how we can understand the particular contribution of theology to the development discourse, and how we can understand development in light of our faith, providing the Hermeneutical Analysis of the framework. This chapter will also explore social development and the church, unpacking who we mean by Church, and the values of justice foundational to the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. This chapter will use Korten's definition of development and framework of Generational Development as well as Lategan's Framework of the Three Publics. This chapter, too, will close with a conclusion.

Chapter Four will begin to bring together the threads, researching the potential relationship that exists between Narrative Practices, Theology, Social Development

and the Local Church. The chapter will explore the potential contribution of Collective Narrative Practices and Theology to social development as well as to the local church. This Chapter is the third step in the Framework, the Practical Application, as the theory moves to praxis, and the potential maps of Collective Narrative Practice within a local church congregation begin to emerge. The chapter will close with a conclusion.

Chapter Five will be a detailed outline suggesting the possible application of Maps of Narrative Practice. This section is the 'how' and will discuss what maps could be applied in a local church and how.

Chapter Six, as the concluding chapter, will look at the findings of the research and an evaluation thereof. In this chapter, we will assess the limitations and challenges of the research as well as the implications and practical recommendations of the findings, specifically for the local Methodist church congregations, but also potentially for other church congregations in other contexts. The Chapter will address unresolved issues, as well as potential for further application of the maps and the potential for further research. This chapter will close this research with a conclusion.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an introduction to the topic, a look at the research question, sub question and objectives. It has given a brief overview of the literature, as well as some key terms and concepts to be used in this research. The chapter also outlined the frameworks as well as research methodology, and explored some anticipated problems and challenges. It then looked ahead at what the research will cover in each chapter, outlining the frameworks used in each section.

Chapter two will now explore Narrative Therapy, and Collective Narrative Practice.

2. Narrative Practices

2.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This research will look at to what extent Collective Narrative Practices, when applied within the context of a local church, open the way for new dialogue around the congregation's understanding of the role of the church in development. In order to answer this key question, the research will investigate Narrative Therapy, and specifically Collective Narrative Practice, as it has been applied to local communities. This research will be asking if it is possible for some of the principles of Narrative Practice, as outlined by other Narrative Practitioners as their 'Maps of Narrative Practice', to be applied to a local church congregation. And when applied, will these Narrative Practices enable local church congregations to begin new dialogue about who they are as a church, what it means to be the church in the world, what they understand about development and their role in social justice issues, and what might be possible for their church in their community in terms of development.

In order to address these questions around Narrative Practices, and consequently the main research question, this chapter will critically engage with the literature in the field of Narrative Therapy and Collective Narrative Practice. It will examine the Narrative Approach, including its foundational principles and assumptions, and then move to exploring concepts like the Problem Story, the Alternate Narrative and the Re-Authoring Process. We will then examine current 'maps' of Narrative Practice.

The chapter will then move onto looking at Collective Narrative Practice, and the narrative process within a community and organisation. Here, the research will explore the contribution of Collective Narrative Practice to communities and groups, and the relationship these practices have with social movements. This section will also outline some of the maps of Collective Narrative Practice and the application of the principles of Collective Narrative Practice. Using the framework of Denborough's Ten Themes for Collective Narrative Practice (Denborough, 2008:198) this section will unpack how these themes and principles are currently being applied in local communities. From here, the maps of Collective Narrative Practice that could potentially be used in a local church context will begin to emerge.

This chapter will introduce the first part of the framework, the Social Analysis, as the chapter researches how Narrative Practices locate problem stories within their contexts. The chapter will then conclude with a summary of its findings, and lead into the next chapter.

2.2 Unpacking the Narrative Approach

The following section looks to understanding where and how Narrative Therapy is situated within scholarly thinking. In understanding what principles, assumptions and foundations inform Narrative as an approach, one can be more faithful in extracting principles for applying Narrative Practices in other contexts and situations. While Narrative may seem relatively new as a therapeutic approach, (Appelt, 2006:35) it has a growing field of literature as well as a growing body of research that is moving Narrative approaches into place alongside other, more widely recognised and researched therapeutic approaches (Appelt, 2006:36). My own experience has affirmed the observation made in much of the literature that, while research into Narrative approaches is growing, it has received only 'modest attention' (Hilker, 2005:16). I have studied pastoral theology and counselling in various contexts through my training in ministry for over ten years, but it was only recently, and only by chance, that I came across and was exposed to Narrative as therapeutic approach.

In engaging with the literature available on the Narrative Approach, there are four key features of the Narrative Approach that scholars⁵ repeatedly identify as being foundational to Narrative Therapy: Narrative as Post-Structuralist, Narrative as Metaphor, Narrative as De-Centred, and Narrative as De-constructed.

2.2.1 Narrative as Post-Structuralist

In reviewing White and Epston's seminal work on Narrative Therapy, *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (1990), Pare and Sawatzky note the most distinguishing element of White and Epston's approach is their "deliberate and self-conscious reliance on a constructivist perspective throughout their work" (1993:289). The post-

⁵ Appelt, 2006; Bird, 2001; Brown, 2006; Denborough, 2008; de Vries, 2004; du Plessis, 2002; Epston, White, 1990, 1997, 2007; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Morgan, 2000; Morkel, 2012; Pare, Sawatzky, 1993; Swart, 2015

structuralist/social constructivist approach argues that meaning and identity are socially or contextually constructed (de Vries, 2004:10). A Narrative Approach then, as developed by David Epston and Michael White, uses interpretive methods, rather than looking for underlying structure which determines behaviour (Epston & White, 1990). According to the founders of this approach, it is the meaning members give to events that determines their behaviour (Epston, White, 1990:3). De Vries also discusses how the post-structuralist nature of the Narrative Approach means there are no external positions of certainty (De Vries, 2004:11) and Narrative seeks to be a 'respectful, non-blaming approach' (Morgan, 2000:1) to gathering stories and gaining insight into their meaning (de Vries, 2004:12).

2.2.2 Narrative as Metaphor

The second feature scholars identify as being foundational to Narrative is the use of the story metaphor (Bird, 2001). Appelt discusses how, because people's lives and identities are socially constructed, the stories we tell about ourselves and our lives are influenced by the cultural and historical context in which they occur (Appelt, 2006:32). This is affirmed by Bird in her presentation *Do No Harm* (2001) where she unpacks the role language plays in defining meaning. In presenting a paper on The Narrative Approach, and the Narrative Metaphor, Elize Morkel discussed how the Narrative approach is based on the idea that we tell stories in order to make meaning of our lives, and Narrative practices engage participants in the telling of their stories in order to find meaning which enables them to take action. (Morkel, 2012c). Because our lives are multi-storied, there are many ways of making meaning, and it is our stories that have a meaning-making function (Morkel, 2009). Remembering the post-structuralist foundation and the interpretive emphasis of the Narrative Approach, the focus in the Narrative Metaphor is on the 'social construction of people's realities' (Appelt, 2006:33). We tell our stories from 'our understanding and the meaning we have created' (Swart, 2013:24). Learning to give new meaning to previously unvoiced stories may make space for new, alternate stories to emerge, resulting in new action, and new thinking about who we are and the stories we tell about ourselves (Swart, 2013:25).

2.2.3 Narrative as De-Centred

The De-centred position of the therapist is a third foundational feature of the Narrative Approach that scholars and Narrative Practitioners alike identify, in that the narratives are 'authored by participants' (Brown, 2006:735). White calls it an 'ethic of collaboration' (White, 1997:198). This emphasis on the participant's own knowledges and involvement in 'mapping the journey' (Morgan, 1990) stems from an awareness of the potential for power imbalance in therapeutic relationships, as well as from the thoughts and writings of Michel Foucault⁶, who viewed language as an 'instrument of power' and that 'people have power in society in direct proportion to their ability to participate in the various discourses that shape our society' (Freedman & Combs, 1996:38-39). Denborough, in his particular emphasis on Narrative in community work, recognises that rather than bringing our own ideas, the role of the therapist is to create a space in which people's own 'initiatives and healing knowledges are noticed' (Denborough, 2008:198). Freedman and Combs discuss the position of the therapist as being one of 'not-knowing' and asking curious questions not from a position of 'pre-understanding' or to get a particular answer' (Freedman & Combs, 1996:45). So, as post-structuralist, rather than looking to underlying structures, the Narrative Approach engages the multiple storied metaphor that makes up people's lives, placing people as story-tellers and experts on their own lives, at the centre.

2.2.4 Narrative as De-constructed

The fourth foundation is the de-constructing nature of the Narrative Approach. Swart identifies taken-for-granted-beliefs as being those ideas that people in positions of authority have told us are 'the way things are.' (Swart, 2013:31). In discussing Foucault's concept of the 'normalizing gaze' in his 1977 book *Discipline and Punish*, Swart looks at how the taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs contribute to our problem stories (Swart, 2013:34). The Narrative Approach seeks to de-construct the taken-for-granted beliefs and ideas, recognising that reality is constructed within a particular context (du Plessis, 2002:77). This is done through 'scaffolding' (Appelt, 2006: 35) the conversation with curious questions to help participants engage critically with

⁶ According to White, the work of philosopher Michel Foucault was particularly influential in the development of the Narrative Approach, with Foucault's writings on how 'dividing practices' 'objectification' and 'normalising judgement' lead many people to see their problems as their true identities (White, 2007:25).

their taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs that are informing their stories and shaping their identities. It is when meaning is transformed through deconstruction that alternate stories can emerge (White, 1991:27). Nicole Dickson, in presenting a paper on Narrative and pastoral care practices in the local church helpfully describes deconstruction in the following way:

'I consider one of the most liberating practices of Narrative to be the challenging of dominant discourse through deconstruction. Deconstruction is a way of 'undoing' systems of meanings by questioning that which is 'taken for granted'. By taking apart and considering some of the dominant discourses we grow understanding around their influence in a person's life.' (Dickson, 2015)

2.3 Critiques of the Narrative Approach

Some critiques of Narrative therapy from among scholars include concerns over the reluctance to 'label people through a diagnosis' (Appelt, 2006:47). Along with this, the idea that the Narrative Process takes time and unfolds over time without a 'pre-determined goal' (White, 2002) may leave people feeling uncertain. This is certainly true in my own experience of people who come seeking help in the form of counselling – people like articulated goals and boundaries. Add to this the de-centralised placed of the therapist/counsellor, and the boundaries become very 'stretched' (Smith, 2003:303). Another challenge facing the Narrative Approach is many therapists and counsellors may attempt to use Narrative practices outside of the framework within which they were developed (Appelt, 2006: 48) which exposes them to the risk of no longer reflecting the post-structuralist, de-constructed foundations from which they were developed. For example, White's book, *Maps of Narrative Practice* (2007) can be used by anyone to apply Narrative Practices in a range of context, without them having the necessary foundational understanding of the Narrative Approach. A final critique is around the very specific jargon that comes with the Narrative Approach – terms and phrases that many seem unnecessary, that seem to make understanding the Narrative Approach more complicated than necessary (White, 1997: ix). With these foundational principles and helpful critiques in mind, we look now at understanding Narrative Therapy as praxis and unpacking some of the jargon and terminology specific to Narrative as we explore Narrative Practices.

2.4 Understanding Narrative Therapy: What is Narrative Therapy?

We turn now to some specific Narrative Practices found within the Narrative approach. It is on these practices that 'maps' of Narrative Practice have been developed and used in a range of contexts. The hope of this research is that, from these Narrative Practices, maps can emerge that will be used within a local church congregation, that will enable the local church to give voice to a new, alternate story with regards to its identity and role in development.

2.4.1 Introduction to the Narrative Approach

Alice Morgan explains Narrative Therapy as a 'respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling and community work, which centres people as the experts in their own lives' (Morgan, 1990:1). It views problems as being contextually located and emerging from social constructs, which become the stories we tell ourselves.

2.4.2 The Problem Story

Many people seeking counselling come with what is known as a problem-story, a problem-dominated story or a problem saturated story. Narrative practitioners would see this problem story as a thin description of the person's reality, having limited hope or thin conclusions about who they are (Swart, 2013:2). Problem stories hold power in people's lives, because of the taken-for-granted assumption that that is how things are and will always be, or that the problem lies within the person themselves. And until they are 'fixed' the problem will always dominate their story. Part of the work of Narrative is in externalising conversations and naming the problem. In Narrative, the belief is 'the person is not the problem, the problem is the problem' (Morgan, 1990) and once the problem can be identified and named, it can begin to be seen as separate from the person.

2.4.3 The Effects of the Problem Story

The problem story can often reveal itself as complacency in our lives, a way of living that assumes 'that's just the way it is' (Swart, 2013:4). Thin descriptions lead us to believe that the influence or the effect of the problem is not to be questioned (Swart, 2013:24). This often isolates people from others, who believe the problem is caused

by a deficiency in themselves, leading to what White calls a broken down sense of identity and community (Swart, 2013:36).

2.4.4 Challenging the Discourses

The work of Narrative is to ask questions that begin to challenge the discourses that keep the problem stories in power in the lives of people. This is done through certain narrative practices, such as externalising language, landscape of action and identity questions, identifying unique outcomes, and re-authoring an alternate story.

2.4.5 The Alternate Narrative

The alternate stories are rich descriptions of new stories, which emerge as seeds from the problem-saturated story. White calls these seeds 'unique outcomes, or sparkling moments' (White, 1991:29). Thickening these events, and giving meaning to them, create new, not-yet-told stories as they speak of new knowledges and skills (Swart, 2013:44).

2.4.6 The Re-Authoring Process

After identifying the beginnings of the alternate story, clients begin to identify what kind of relationship they would like to have with this new story (Swart, 2013:44). Again, narrative practices are used to thicken the story, and explore the influence and effect the new story could have. These re-authoring conversations take place in a number of ways, using a variety of 'maps' which we will look at now.

2.5 Maps of Narrative Practice

In his book *Maps of Narrative Practice* (2007), Michael White outlines a number of 'maps' that can be used to guide therapeutic conversations, using the Narrative Approach. White notes that these are not the 'right' guides to Narrative work, neither should they be used to 'police' conversations, but rather they offer ways for people to explore their own lives (White, 2007:5). As this research aims to describe an approach to Narrative practices in the local church, and develop maps that enable congregations to think in new ways about their identity and role in development, it is important to have a sense of these maps as used in Narrative conversations.

2.5.1 Externalising Conversations

White's first map, which he names the '*statement of position map*' is found in the externalizing conversation (White, 2007:9). Many people believe the problems they face are a direct result of some internal aspect of their identity, which affects their ability to deal effectively with these challenges (White, 2007:9). Externalising conversations objectify the problem, helping people recognise their own identity as being separate from the problem – 'the problem becomes the problem, not the person (and) the problem ceases to represent the truth about people's identities.'(White, 2007:9). When this happens, new options for dealing with problems become available (White, 2007:26). Key to this is the idea that externalising the problem enables the person to take responsibility for dealing with problems by clearly defining the person's relationship to the problem (White, 2007:26). The '*statement of position map*' includes four categories of questioning (White, 2007:38): a) defining and naming the problem because no problem presents in the same way for two people (White, 2007:40-42); b) mapping the effects of the problem, and naming the places where the problem has influence (White, 2007:43-44); c) evaluating the effect of the problem on the person's life and activities, and how people feel about the influence the problem is having on their lives (White, 2007:44-48); and d) justifying the evaluation, understanding why the person feels the way they do about the effects of the problem (White, 2007:48-54).

2.5.2 Re-Authoring Conversations

The *re-authoring conversations map* invites people to tell their stories by including some of the usually un-told events of their lives, that often present an 'alternate' storyline (White, 2007:61). These previously un-told stories are named 'unique outcomes' and are the starting point for re-authoring conversations (White, 2007:61). The re-authoring conversation happens through what White calls 'landscape of action' and 'landscape of identity' questions which invite the person to consider events (action) and the meanings they give to them (identity), richly developing new, alternate story-lines, revealing skills and knowledges for dealing with problems that are already present (White, 2007:61-83).

2.5.3 Re-Membering Conversations

The '*re-membering conversations*' map is based on the idea that rather than our lives and identities being based around a core self, identity is found in community (White, 2007). White uses the metaphor of an 'association of life' (White, 2007:129), where membership is made up of the significant figures who have shaped us and influenced our lives. Re-membering conversations are an opportunity for a person to think through those who are 'members' of their life association and to allow some voices to speak louder and other voices to be silenced (White, 2007:129). Through a series of curious questions, the person is invited to consider what contribution significant figures have made to the person's life, and how another might give witness to that person's identity (White, 2007:136-139).

2.5.4 Definitional Ceremonies

White describes how definitional ceremonies can play a key part in helping people develop rich stories about their lives. White explains how 'definitional ceremonies provide people with the option of telling or performing the stories of their lives before an audience of carefully chosen outsider-witnesses' (White, 2007:165). The outsider-witnesses then respond, not with an evaluation of the re-telling, but with reflecting on those aspects of the story that they were drawn to, that resonated with them and that inspired them (White, 2007:165-166). There are three stages in the ceremony: a) the telling of the story by the person for whom the ceremony is for; b) the re-telling of the story by the people invited to be outsider-witnesses; and c) the re-telling of the outsider witnesses' retelling, done by the person for whom the ceremony is for (White, 2007:185). This telling, witnessing and retelling allow the person to 'appear on their own terms' in the eyes of others, have their identity acknowledge and authenticated by others, and give back to others through their story (White, 2007:184).

2.6 Narrative's Contribution to Communities and Groups

In the introduction to his book, *Collective Narrative Practice* (2008), David Denborough describes a challenge presented to him by the Brazilian Educator and activist, Paulo Freire. Freire's work involved challenging understandings of education to include a process where learners understand the world differently and as a result

live out wider social change (Denborough, 2008:ix). The influence of Freire's work can be seen throughout the Narrative Approach, and particularly in the application of Collective Narrative Practices, in Freire's call for the oppressed to not only liberate themselves, but their oppressors as well (Freire, 1968). According to Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), "the oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power; cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves" (Freire, 1968). This speaks of change that is much broader than what affects one group of people, but includes the whole of society. It was after a conversation with Freire that Denborough began asking questions of how we can 'conceive of our work in ways that believe in the hope of broader social change' (Denborough, 2008:xi). The book on Collective Narrative Practices, and Denborough's work using Narrative in groups who have experienced trauma, is his response to this challenge and to what he calls 'neo-liberal fatalism and the politics of despair' (Denborough, 2008:x). Narrative Practices, it seems, hold great potential for addressing issues of collective identity and hold great hope for broader social change through local communities. This section will look at some of the principles of Collective Narrative Practice, how these Collective Practices can affect the collective identity of a group and the potential contribution of Narrative to communities.

2.6.1 The Communal Story

Chenè Swart, a South African Narrative Practitioner who uses the Narrative Approach in her work in organisations says the aims of Collective Narrative Practice remain the same as those of individual Narrative Therapy, which include using Narrative Practices to facilitate the re-authoring of an alternative story (Swart, 2013:81). In Collective Narrative Practice, however, it is the stories of a group, community or collective that are told and re-authored. Denborough also notes that in Collective Narrative Practice, one remains interested in noticing language, interactions and intentions, as one would be in individual therapy, but in this case it is the collective speech patterns, interactions and intentions because they affect more than just the individual (Denborough, 2008:23). From my reading, learning and engaging with the different examples of Collective Narrative Work, Collective Narrative Practice can take two forms.

a. An Individual Solution No Longer Remains Personal

The first happens when an individual, through externalising and naming a problem, discovers a unique outcome and begins to thicken an alternate story. That story then becomes a contribution to broader social change, and much of the healing happens because an individual is enabled to participate in helping others who have a similar problem story. Denborough relates this form of Collective Narrative Practice in his book when he tells the story of Paul – a man in prison for rape, who was sexually abused as a child. As part of their Narrative journey, Paul wrote a letter to others in prison, who were starting to talk about their experiences of abuse. Denborough explains how in his work with Paul he did not ‘impose a collective orientation’ (Denborough, 2008:23) but rather began to notice and respond to the invitation to link Paul’s experiences to broader collectives and enabled him to make a contribution to the social issue that affected his life and the lives of so many others (Denborough, 2008:23).

b. A Collective Story A Group Tells About Itself

The second form of Collective Narrative Practice involves working with groups, and telling and re-telling the collective story the group tells about itself. So instead of inviting a community of concern to be a part of the process, it is the community of concern that is telling their story. In his book *Change Across Cultures* (2002) Bradshaw identifies the need to address the deeper assumptions of a community, rather than focusing on superficial behaviours, if one wants to participate in genuine transformation (Bradshaw, 2002). And du Plessis, in her research into Narrative processes in community work, describes how communities construct and develop their own realities from the stories essential to their culture (du Plessis, 2002:76-77). So in this form, Narrative Practices work with the taken-for-granted beliefs and ideas of the collective, in order to collaborate with the group to give voice to a new story.

So, the principles, foundations and assumption of the Narrative Approach are not just used in the context of individual therapy for the sake of an individual’s healing. But the re-authoring of a new story and a new kind of identity can happen in a group and for a group too.

2.6.2 The Narrative Process for Communities and Organisations

In her work on a participatory approach to healing (2011), Morkel provides a helpful framework for understanding how the Narrative Process could work in communities and groups. Morkel identifies ten themes of the participatory approach that I understand to characterise the Narrative Process in communities and organisations:

1. *The Personal is the Professional is the Political* – our personal experiences inform our professional responses which become our political action
2. *Participate with the Other* – listening for voices we usually silence because they are different from us
3. *Participate with People* – the collaborative work of listening for the preferred story lines
4. *Participate with Awareness* – of the broader impact of social injustice
5. *Participate in Voicing* – being part of speaking and hearing the stories that have been silenced
6. *Participating with our Bodies* – being physically present to others
7. *Participating together with Others* – inviting others to be part of the work
8. *Participating in Social Transformation* – empowered to take a stand against injustice
9. *Participating in Inter-relatedness* – recognising our connection to each other
10. *Participating in Restitution* – working to restore what has been lost.

In both her article (2011) and her presentation on the participatory approach (2012c), Morkel uses these themes as being both motivation and means for therapists to engage in Narrative Approaches. However, I have come to see these themes of the participatory approach to provide a framework for applying Narrative Practices to groups and organisations, because they move us from our western, individual perspective of self-understanding (Morkel, 2012c:13) to taking part in wider society with and for the benefit of others. Through a commitment to participate in and respond to broader social issues as a community, we can participate in a collective journey of healing and restoration.

2.6.3 Collective Narrative Practice and the Social Movement

In chapter ten of his book *Collective Narrative Practice* (2008), Denborough deals in depth with the possibility of social movements emerging from Collective Narrative Practices. He recognises how, as counsellors and community workers, 'stories of hardship find their way to us', and how often these stories of hardship and struggle are linked to broader social injustices such as violence, racism, and poverty (Denborough, 2008:192). Denborough asks how we can receive these stories while at the same time enabling sustainable, meaningful, relevant local action to deal with some of these broader injustices (Denborough, 2008:192).

I was particularly drawn to and challenged by this area of the work in Elize Morkel's 2012 paper on *A Participatory Approach to Healing and Transformation* where she discusses the responsibility therapists have to help address the social injustices which are at the root of many of the problems participants in the narrative process face (Morkel, 2012c:5). Morkel says

'If therapists are not involved in addressing and transforming social injustices we are in fact simply helping people to be better adjusted in a society whose fundamental values and assumptions remain unquestioned. This leaves people to identify themselves as the problem and does not change anything in terms of empowering them to take a stand and work with others to challenge the injustices.'
(Morkel, 2012c:5)

Denborough's means to address these calls to social action is found in the approach of Collective Narrative Practices, which take the externalising approach of Narrative Therapy one step further. Through the process of applying Collective Narrative Practices, says Denborough, it is possible to externalise the problems people are facing and enable possibilities for collective contributions to those challenges (Denborough, 2008:192). So once the problem is externalised, it is placed in the social realm, and Collective Narrative Practices can ensure the solution does not remain personal but rather opportunities are created to contribute to a 'social movement' (Denborough, 2008:192). Denborough goes on to explain his experience of social movements as being when people take action not only on their own behalf, but on behalf of others, 'future generations, past generations, and other people with whom participants are identified' (Denborough, 2008:193). And it is not that we go

about the work intending to impose a grand plan on participants, but rather that, as we begin to describe new stories of local skills and knowledges in dealing with struggles, ways begin to emerge of how this local knowledge can contribute to social movements in ways that resonate with those who are most effected (Denborough, 2008:193).

Scot Cooper refers to this as the 'ripple effect' (Cooper, 2011:12) and his article looks at how the Narrative Processes that began with local groups have gone on to impact entire communities. Similarly, work done by Denborough *et al.* on *Linking Stories and Initiatives* (Denborough, D; Koolmatrie, C; Mununggirritj, M; Marika, D; Dhurrkay, W; Yunupingu, M, 2006) describes how initiatives of one community were described in such a way through Narrative means so as to be recognised by other communities experiencing similar struggles (Denborough *et al*, 2006). Denborough's hope is that Collective Narrative Practices can play a role in sparking and sustaining social movements, as groups begin to contribute to other groups, as local skills of responding to challenges are unearthed, documented, shared and witnessed and as new identities and possibilities that are more than just personal begin to emerge (Denborough, 2008:194).

2.6.4 The Contribution of Collective Narrative Practices to Communities and groups

There are a number of significant contributions Collective Narrative Practices can make to communities and groups.

a. Increased Awareness

The first, taken from Denborough's framework for conditions that make social movements possible (Denborough, 2008:195) is the potential for *increased awareness* of communities and groups of a number of factors:

- i. Increased Awareness of Agency – the power they have to make decisions regarding their lives.
- ii. Increases Awareness of Local knowledge and skills – the skills and abilities they as a group are already using to deal with challenges.

- iii. Increased Awareness of Shared knowledge and skills – the power that working with others holds for change.
- iv. Increased Awareness of Broader social issues and discourses that contribute to their challenges and problems.

b. Reasonable Hope

Kaete Weingarten discusses the idea that 'Reasonable Hope' is a far more helpful variant of hope, which often sets up standards and expectations that are unrealistic (Weingarten, 2010:7). Reasonable Hope, however, is focusing on that which is within reach, rather than just focusing on that which we may want but will never get (Weingarten, 2010:7), with reasonable hope being the actions we take rather than the feelings we may or may not be able to summon (Weingarten, 2010:7). According to Weingarten, Reasonable Hope

'softens the polarity between hope and despair ...and hopeful and hopeless and allows more people to place themselves in the category of hopeful'. (Weingarten, 2010:7)

Collective Narrative Practices are all about Reasonable Hope which makes space for multiple stories, because it maintains that the future is open, uncertain and yet something which we are able to influence (Weingarten, 2010:8). This approach proposes that there are multiple pathways to a variety of goals for our lives (Weingarten, 2010:9) and in doing so accommodates and makes room for doubt, contradiction and even despair without leaving people vulnerable to feeling hopeless (Weingarten, 2010:10).

Stories of hardship and suffering often leave individuals and groups, as well as the therapists and community workers who journey with them, overwhelmed by hopelessness, and even apathetic in an effort to cope with the hopelessness (Weingarten, 2010:11). Collective Narrative Practices, in applying the principles of Reasonable Hope through an openness to multiple stories and ways of being, as practised in the Narrative Approach offers communities and groups a way forward in the midst of even the most severe challenges.

c. Witness Positions

Collective Narrative Practices also make it possible for communities and groups to acknowledge and then move through what Weingarten calls the 'Witness Positions Grid' (Weingarten, 2010:11).

Morkel, in discussing her own story of moving through the witness positions grid, explains how there are 'four witness positions that arise from the intersection of two dimensions: awareness and empowerment' (Morkel, 2012a:4). The first position is when one is unaware of social injustices, and unempowered to work for any kind of change. Position two on the grid happens when one is empowered through context and circumstances, but still unaware of the need for broader change. Position three is being aware of the need for change, but dis-empowered and unable to bring about any kind of change. And four is the place of being both aware and empowered (Morkel, 2012a:4-14). According to Morkel, people move around the grid as their positions of awareness and empowerment change (Morkel, 2012a:4). The contribution of Collective Narrative Practices to communities and groups is the potential the Narrative Approach hold in assisting communities and groups to move through the witness positions grid from a place of being unaware and dis-empowered, unaware and empowered, aware and dis-empowered to being aware and empowered. Through telling stories and sharing the knowledges and skills groups have for facing challenges, movement through the grid becomes possible as groups become both aware and empowered.

d. Compassionate Witnessing

Weingarten talks about compassionate witnessing as 'recognising and expressing a common bond' even while acknowledging people as different from ourselves (Weingarten, 2003:2). Often, experiencing people as different can lead to a range of negative emotions, including dehumanizing them as 'other' (Weingarten, 2003:3). Just because people belong to the same community or group, does not mean that they see themselves as being the same, or even that they share the same stories. The Narrative Map of definitional ceremonies, particularly outsider-witness practices, makes space for this kind of compassionate witnessing, and offers communities and groups space to hear each other's stories with a new shared humanity, and to witness collective pain in such a way as to humanize the other by remembering what

the other wants us to remember (Weingarten, 2003:11-19). This has the potential to significantly influence communities and groups whose stories may have kept them apart. It could also allow space for forgiveness and reconciliation as sharing and witnessing stories leads to reconciling action.

2.7 Maps of Collective Narrative Practice

The four maps of Narrative Practice outlined in the previous section remain appropriate for Collective Narrative Practice. The key question, though, is how were the maps transferred and re-applied from being used with individuals to being used in the context of a community or group. Once we can identify how the maps are applied collectively in a range of group contexts, we are in a better position to answer the research question of to what extent these maps can be applied in the context of a local church, and in what ways they will need to be re-structured in order to deal with the issues of the local church's identity and role in development. The best way to examine the application of these maps is to look at a framework for applying the Principles of Collective Narrative Practice in a range of contexts.

2.7.1 Applying Principles of Collective Narrative Practice: Denborough's Ten Themes

The practical applications of the Narrative Approach, as outlined by Denborough in his book *Collective Narrative Practice* (2008), have been shaped by ten themes (Denborough, 2008:200). According to Denborough, these themes have been made accessible to anyone who is seeking to adapt Collective Narrative Practices to their own contexts. The ten themes are:

1. The Communal Story – The stories shared by individuals and groups represent not only individual experience, but also the effects of broader social issues.
2. The Communal Response – No matter how difficult the problem facing individuals and groups, people are responding to the situations they are in, already taking action to reduce the impact and care for others.
3. Communal Knowledge – Rather than outsiders bringing initiatives to work within communities, the work is to create a space where people's own existing knowledges and skills are noticed, and those stories thickened.

4. Communal Witnessing – Once the new stories are voiced, the work involves including others who may share a similar experience or be affected by a similar social issue.
5. Communal Contribution – Enabling those who are facing challenges to make a meaningful contribution to the lives of others who share a similar struggle. This can result in an increased sense of shared responsibility and agency.
6. Communal Connecting – There is particular significance in the sharing and witnessing that happens across generations, when the skills of younger generations continue the legacy of older generations.
7. Communal Social Action – People’s response to challenges are often forms of local social action. When these responses are linked, further action can be taken.
8. Communal Culture – Remembering and describing skills and knowledges through local cultural practices can reconnect dislocated communities.
9. Communal Diversity – Rather than trying to make everyone the same, the work remembers that we are different and diverse and that adds depth and value.
10. Communal Legacy – This work comes with a long-view time line, aiming to generate possibilities for social change and increase personal and collective agency.

The investigation of this research is how these ten themes can be used to re-shape the maps of Collective Narrative Practice, so that the Narrative Approach can be used in the context of a local church, to open new conversations about the church’s identity and role in development.

2.7.2 Application of Maps in Collective Contexts

In order to best address the research question, we look now at the ways others have used these themes to shape the maps of Narrative Practice used within a range of contexts. In the following section, I will look at papers presented at Narrative Conferences on Narrative work done in local South African communities. In all the papers reviewed for this research, externalising conversations played a key role in being able to name and identify the problems being faced, as well as map the effects of the problem in the life of the community. In *Celebrating Honesty* (Morkel, 2001) it

was through being able to identify the problem as being their 'bad name for stealing', that a group of young boys who were in trouble at school for stealing, were able to participate in a journey to 'retrieve their good names for honesty' (Morkel, 2001:4). Van Greunen made use of re-authoring conversations to help the counsellors he mentors to give voice to new, alternate stories (Van Greunen, 2015:17) In the same way, Dickson discussed her use of the landscape of action and identity questions as being helpful in providing a space for people to hear new possibilities for their own stories (Dickson, 2015:7). Morkel spoke of the value of re-remembering conversations when using Narrative in the context of those living with cancer as participants take charge of whose voices they allow to give meaning to their lives (Morkel, 2009). The honesty meetings and honesty celebrations of those boys who were working to retrieve their good names for honesty (Morkel, 2001: 6-8) are a wonderful example of definitional ceremonies and outsider witness practices, and of maps of Narrative Practice being used in a collective setting.

2.8 Narrative Therapy as Social Analysis

The framework for this research is a three step process of Social Analysis, Hermeneutical Analysis and Practical Application, influenced by the work of Boff and Boff, in their *Introduction to Liberation Theology* (1987). As the possibilities of applying Collective Narrative Practices in a local church context to facilitate new dialogue around development are explored, a contextual understanding, a hermeneutical approach and a practical application will be used to address the research question. We begin with the idea of Social Analysis, which looks to understand both the problem and the context within which the problem is located. This involves asking questions about both the context and the problem. The Narrative Approach, when applied in the context of a local church to facilitate conversations around development, would begin with identifying dominant discourses within the congregation around issues of poverty and development as a means to both understanding the context and naming the problem. Boff and Boff (1987) discuss common discourses for understanding why people are poor, naming 'poverty as vice' (the direct fault of individual laziness, ignorance or wickedness); 'poverty as backwardness' (the result of lack of progress) and 'poverty as oppression' (economic exploitation) as three common discourses (Boff & Boff, 1987:26-27). These discourses influence the way people engage with the poor – viewing them as objects

to be pitied, passive objects for whom action is taken by others or seeing the poor as subjects rather than objects (Boff & Boff, 1987:26-27). Understanding the discourses around poverty and development, and how these taken-for-granted beliefs and ideas affect the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves and others parallels with the work of the Narrative Approach, particularly the Collective Narrative Approach. Beginning a new conversation around development and a community's role in development would begin with the work of the social contextual analysis, identifying current and dominant discourses within the context with a view to naming the problem. Collective Narrative Practices provide a unique and collaborative platform in which to do this work.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the foundations and principles of Narrative Therapy, and how these shape Collective Narrative Practice when the Narrative Approach is used in communities and groups. In doing this, we have identified some of the maps of applying the Narrative Approach as well as key themes that shape Collective Narrative Practice. We have seen the potential contribution of Narrative Approach to communities and groups and how Narrative is a tool for analysing social context. From these explorations, the maps of Narrative Practice that could be used in a local church context are beginning to emerge.

We turn now to look at the second part of the research question, which is around the questions of development, the church and the contribution of theology to the development discourse, to enable us to address the question of to what extent maps of Narrative practice, when applied in a local church context, can open up new conversations around the church's identity and role in development.

3. Development, Theology, the Church and Collective Narrative Practice

3.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The key question in this research is to what extent narrative practices can enable new conversations within local churches, but these conversations are specifically in the area of development: how churches see themselves and their role within the development discourse. In order to answer this question, in the previous chapter this research investigated the principles of Collective Narrative practice. We turn now in this chapter to the development discourse.

In this chapter we will research the unique and particular contributions of Theology to the work of Development within the local Church, and in doing so prepare the way for this research to explore the potential contributions of and intersections between Collective Narrative Practice, Theology and Development and the extent to which the overlap could impact on how local congregations understand their identity and role in social transformation.

The chapter will begin with unpacking the concept of development through engaging with the literature. Because the scope of 'development' as a concept is so broad, the focus for this research's discussion on development will be limited to a brief overview of the development discourse, to allow for a greater focus on the contribution of both theology and Narrative to development, and understanding the role of the church in development. Here, the chapter will use the frameworks of Korten and de Gruchy's definitions of Development and Swart's discussion on Lategan's Three Publics to explore theology and development, and the church in development.

This chapter also explores the second mediation in the Meta-Framework: the Hermeneutical Mediation, looking at development from a faith perspective, and enabling a theological lens through which to investigate the application of Narrative Practices in a local church when it comes to the development discourse. This chapter will close with a concluding summary of its findings.

3.2 The Development Movement

The following section is a brief overview of the development movement. Samuels, in his overview and appraisal of the development movement, qualifies the development movement as ‘activities addressing poverty in low income, developing countries of the third world, and also the analyses, strategies and models that shape such development activities.’ (Samuel, 1996:12). This overview will use Samuel’s understanding of the development movement, as well as Samuel’s chronological framework in order to engage with a range of development literature and highlight some of the development theories emerging with each decade.

In engaging with the literature, it is clear that development as a concept is both vast and complicated, and there are many different theories on and approaches to development that have emerged as contexts have changed. The purpose of this section is to gain a deeper understanding of development as a concept, the process through which this movement has gone as well as the arguments of some of the key thinkers. This will move us closer to identifying the contribution of theology and the role of the church in this movement, which will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter, and to answering the research question of the potential contribution of Collective Narrative Practices to the development discourse within the local church.

In the 1950s, Non-governmental and church organisations in Europe and the United States became actively involved in post-World War II relief initiatives (Samuels, 1996:12). This soon led to initiatives to address poverty in Third World countries, resulting in the development movement being shaped, from early on, by the countries and agencies who financed development projects and programmes rather than the organisations who participated in the movement (Samuels, 1996:12). The goal of development in the 1950s was to increase production to enable developing countries to reach the economic growth levels of the West as quickly as possible (Samuels, 1996:12).

The 1960s continued this goal with an emphasis on industrialization (Samuels, 1996:13). But also emerging in the 1960s was the idea of ‘community development’

– a theory which maintained that local communities should have input in development projects (Samuels, 1996:13). This model of community development was based on unhelpful assumptions about the transference of western values and ideas into developing countries and it soon became clear that these development models of industrialization and community development were failing (Samuels, 1996:13). Slowly, questions around the causes of underdevelopment and the role developed countries played in them were beginning to emerge as were theories on the need to change social and political structures, dependency theories and the reality of development models being mutually beneficial for both developed and underdeveloped countries (Samuels, 1996:13).

The 1970s saw the development movement responding to some of these challenges by redefining the goals of development (Samuels, 1996:13). Basic needs, integrated development, social and political reform and fairer trade agreements became the focus for secular agencies (Samuels, 1996:13). Evangelical agencies, while continuing to respond with emergency relief and welfare programmes, were faced with questions around the role of Christian mission in social action. The Lausanne Congress in 1974 put the 'economic and social plight of the poor' firmly on the Christian agenda (Samuels, 1996:14). Liberation Theology emerged as a challenging foundation for reflection on the relationship between evangelism and social concerns and significant thinking emerged on the theological justification for involvement in the work of development (Samuels, 1996:14).

By the 1980s, it was clear the gap between the rich and poor was growing wider and that a different approach was needed (Samuels, 1996:14). As Samuels summarises, 'the focus on communities and micro-activities did not produce overall change so the emphasis shifted to the macro and policy reform' (1996:14). Third world debt and state spending came into focus for secular development groups, while other, generally Christian based agencies saw the effect decreased welfare was having on the poor so continued in their funded project efforts of education, health and childcare, as well as job creation and enterprise development, even though it had become clear that these efforts would not affect a broader change (Samuels, 1996:14-15). The 1980s also saw environmental issues appearing on the

development agenda, as the effects of industrialisation began to become clearer (Samuels, 1996:15).

Environmental issues remained a focus through the 1990s, with declining natural resources, food security and sustainability coming to the fore (Samuels, 1996:15-16). Another feature of the development movement in the 90s is the privatisation of development activity due to a market under pressure (Samuels, 1996:15). Samuels notes that while secular development agencies and activists came to terms in the 90s with the reality of the market and economic policies, Christian development agencies continued to focus on community development models without addressing wider issues of poverty (Samuels, 1996:15).

In post-apartheid South Africa, a range of economic development policies have been implemented, from the reconstruction development plan of 1994, and thereafter programmes like the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Plan, the New Growth Plan, and most recently the National Development Plan. The recurring aims of these policies have been 'poverty reduction, creation of employment and establishing a more equal society' (Naudé, 2014:446). The success or failure of these various policies at achieving the stated aims has not been easy to quantify, but much of the data reveals the economic situation in our country has worsened for most people (Naudé, 2014:456).

In September of 2000, the United Nations Millennium Declaration was signed, revealing the good intentions of many nations to participate in development. Yet, for all the good intentions of the UN and many nations, 'development has not happened' (de Gruchy, 2002:8) and there is a growing recognition of the failure of development as a binary concept that equates development with economic growth (de Gruchy, 2002:15) and the recognition that, when it comes to development, there must be more. Also under review, through a growing collection of literature such as Lupton's book *Toxic Charity* (2011), is the traditional model of 'helping' through relief and welfare programmes implemented by local church congregations. Lupton writes about how churches and charities 'hurt those they help' (2011) and offers some suggestions on how to reverse it.

From this overview, one can see there are many threads to the development debate that could be explored and unpacked. For the purposes of this research, and this specific research question, two key factors have emerged from this overview, which have been expounded by the literature, and my own critical reflection on the literature.

The first is the particular contribution of theology to the development debate. This particular aspect will be developed further later on in this chapter, but it is worth referring to it briefly here in this section, as a key aspect of the engagement with the literature.

De Gruchy makes a compelling case for the particular contribution of theology to the development debate. Much of his writing on the development discourse affirms the unique contribution theology, as a critical reflective discipline, makes to development (de Gruchy, 2005). In the same way, Myers, in his book *Walking with the Poor* (1999), discusses how our perspectives shape our approach to development (Myers, 1999:93). He asks the question of what followers of Jesus bring to the development conversation, and how our faith brings new understandings to both poverty and economic privilege (Myers, 1999:110). Much of this work finds its roots in the work of the early liberation theologians, such as Gutierrez, who sees the work of Christ and his followers as the work of liberation from unjust systems and structures that have contributed to poverty (Gutierrez, 1973:34-36), and Boff and Boff who explore how liberation theology moves people from an awareness of injustice, to faith that reflects on liberating practices, but ultimately are moved to action on behalf of the poor and oppressed (Boff and Boff, 1987:1-20). Interesting work done by Julio de Santa Ana unpacks the influence of Dietrich Bonhoeffer on liberation theology, who called for the church to recognise the influence of the changing world on issues of faith, and to reconnect faith with the world in all spheres of life (de Santa Anna, 1976 :190). Swart also makes a compelling case for the unique contribution of theology to the development discourse. In a paper titled *The Third Public: The Hermeneutical Key to the Theological Debate on Church and Development* (2004), Swart uses Lategan's framework of Three Publics (Academia, the Church and Society at Large) to discuss how there is at present place for a different type of theological discourse within the

third public, but it would require a completely new way of doing theology and thinking about development and in doing so would challenge the ongoing theological debates of the role of the church in development praxis (Swart, 2004). This is affirmed by the works of scholars such as Naudè (2014), de Wet (2014), Wright (2015), Fretheim (2011) and Le Bruyns (2015) who all call for a rethinking of how we do theology when it comes to development, and what role theology and the church can and should play in the public sphere.

This leads us to the second, key factor that has emerged from the overview of the development movement, that of the question of *what the church should be doing regarding its development praxis*. Much of the literature revealed a gap between the theological discourse on development, and the actual practice of local development agencies, particularly the church. Swart, in his paper on the Three Publics (2004), says it is the way we do theology that should inform our practices, and the challenge is a hermeneutical one, where churches are empowered to play an effective role in development because of the way they interpret their faith (Swart, 2004:485-490). The question that none of the scholars and theologians could agree on, is what is the role of the church in development?

The work of Richard Dickinson, particularly in his book *Line and Plumb* (1968) maintains the value of the project approach at community level, while emphasizing the relational perspective of development work, and the value of conscientising people regarding changing attitudes and thinking about what development looks like (Dickinson, 1968:ch V). Charles Elliot, on the other hand, in his book *The Development Debate* (1971) discusses how community development projects emerged from the same paternalistic ideologies as the work of the missionaries, and perpetuate unhelpful and inadequate understanding of development and relationship between poor and privileged. Elliot sees the role of the church as educating, encouraging effective responses to the facts of the situation and then mobilising people into an effective political force that works for broader change at a structural or policy level (Elliot, 1971:120-121). Many scholars seem to sit on either side of the fence – either affirming the value of community level development projects, developing models such as Asset Based Community Development, or advocating for churches to be more involved the work of broader structural change. Thacker, for

instance, writes strongly in favour of the church re-prioritizing its development focus, away from community level projects to issues of structural injustice (Thacker, 2015). Sugden, however, discusses something termed 'transformational development' which discusses the role of the church in local communities in facilitating the values of the Kingdom of God. This process is focused on people and connected to communities through local action (Sugden, 2003).

Swart, in his book *The Churches and the Development Debate* (2006) gives a helpful comparison of the two approaches developed by Elliot (working for broader structural change) and Dickinson (the value of relational, local community projects) but turns to the work of David Korten for a way forward. Korten has identified four Generations of involvement in the work of development: a) relief and welfare, b) community development, c) sustainable systems development and d) people's movements (Korten, 1990:ch 10). This fourth generation of people's movements has become known as an alternative development paradigm, where people, aware and committed to the values and ideas of new social movements and a new mobilising vision, become agents of development (Korten, 1990). The critical first step in this alternative approach to development is thinking in new ways about development and the role of agencies (in this case the church) in the work of development.

In his work on the role of personhood in development, Klaasen uses the contribution of Amartya Sen to development to evaluate the 'missionary role' of the church in development (Klaasen, 2014). The question that has continually been raised in my mind is, does the church have a relevant role to play in the public sphere with regard to development? Does the prophetic voice of the church still have a message to bring in post-apartheid South Africa when it comes to economic policies, or, now that the evil of Apartheid has been defeated, is the church to return to a role of private piety for individual members? As Le Bruyns discusses, and I agree, the Christian faith is in its nature inherently public and the church should have an intentionally public role (Le Bruyns, 2015:462) needing to navigate the tensions that exist between the public and the private so that the church can continue to work for the continuing transformation of society (de Wet, 2014:6-8). My experience as a minister within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa is that the church is falling short in the way it

participates in theological reflection on development, and engages with development action.

And this is the key point that emerges through engaging with the development movement and tracing its history. Both in the contribution of theology to the development debate and questions around the role of the church in the work of development, the common factor is the need for new and creative thinking within local church congregations around development – what it means, why we do it and what it looks like. That is part of the contribution this research could make – a strategy for enabling and empowering local church congregations to think in new ways about development and the role of the church in development praxis.

With this in mind, we look now at the second step in the framework: the hermeneutical analysis. What is it that makes Christian development Christian? Why should followers of Jesus engage with development issues at all?

3.3 The Hermeneutical Analysis

For Boff and Boff, the crucial second step in doing liberation theology is faith that reflects on liberating practices (Boff, Boff, 1987:6). In their *Introduction to Liberation Theology*, the authors ask some challenging questions around what it means to be Christians in a world of destitution. They believe the answers to these challenges lie in making ‘common cause with the poor and working out the Gospel of Liberation’ (Boff, Boff, 1987:7). This means asking questions around God’s plans, hopes and dreams for the poor and seeking answers in the Word of God from the perspective of the poor, seeing oppression and liberation in light of our faith in God (Boff, Boff 1987:32). Solidarity with the poor is one of the key themes of liberation theology, taking seriously God’s preference for and solidarity with the poor (Boff, Boff, 1987:43), Jesus’ teaching on the Kingdom of God (Boff, Boff, 1987:52) and the role of the church as both a sign and instrument of liberation (Boff, Boff, 1987:59). The value of this second step in the framework is the unique and particular contribution of theology, not just to the development debate (although it does add significant value there too) but to the way it informs and shapes our actions in the work of development. And this is the hermeneutical lens – interpreting faith and scripture in a way that shapes our praxis.

3.4 Theology and Development

What then is the contribution of theology to development? How can and does our faith as followers of Jesus shape and inform our response to poverty and injustice? Two helpful frameworks for exploring theology and development in light of the value of the hermeneutical lens are the work of Steve de Gruchy on *Integrating Mission and Development* (2005) and Swart's discussion on the *Third Public as the Hermeneutical Key to the Theological Debate on the Church and Development* (2004).

3.4.1 De Gruchy on Mission and Development

Steve de Gruchy has written much on the particular contribution of theology to the development discourse. In one article, *Integrating Mission and Development* (2005), de Gruchy helpfully identifies ten theological theses, ten foundational pillars for why the church as a community of Christian people, should be involved in development (de Gruchy, 2005:25). It is de Gruchy's observation that many evangelical churches have struggled to see the importance of the call given to followers of Jesus to engage in making a difference in a world of 'poverty, violence and environmental degradation' so there exists a need to articulate reasons why Christians should be involved in the work of development (de Gruchy, 2005:24). Emerging from this need to articulate why Christians should be involved in development is the term 'Integral Mission' which describes what others refer to as 'Christian development or transformation' (de Gruchy, 2005:24). Integral Mission proposes that evangelism and social action work are not done alongside each other, but rather that 'our proclamation of the gospel has social consequences' and our 'social involvement has evangelistic consequences' (de Gruchy, 2005:24). De Gruchy, in referring to the work of an organisation called the Micah Network on Integral Mission, discusses how 'the most appropriate theological way to respond to the many challenges of social development is to rethink our understanding of mission' (de Gruchy, 2005:24). It is from this point of departure that de Gruchy discusses his ten theses for why Christians should be involved in the work of development, with development being 'social, cultural, religious, ecological, economic and political activities that consciously seek to enhance the self-identified livelihoods of the poor' (de Gruchy, 2005:25). The ten theses affirm the need for us to allow our theology to shape our actions – how we think about God and God's

redemptive work through Jesus can shape and inform our actions in the world, including how we participate in development. So, de Gruchy's ten reasons why Christians should participate in development are:

1. There is a direct relationship between who God is and how God acts in the world. Scripture tells us God is love and so acts in loving ways.
2. God is active in the world in the work of 'creating and sustaining Shalom, and restoring it when it is absent.'
3. Jesus is the incarnation of God's work for Shalom, particularly in the lives of those who suffer.
4. Jesus came to proclaim the Kingdom of God, manifesting Shalom. But the reign of God is not yet fully established on earth, this will only happen at the end of history.
5. The task of the church is to participate in the work of God in the world.
6. This participation is both inclusive and ecumenical.
7. This participation is also spiritual work, even when it concerns areas of life the world has labelled not spiritual.
8. This work of the church takes seriously the issues of today, in light of what is to come – the coming Kingdom of God.
9. While this participation is a collective task, it requires personal conviction and commitment.
10. The task of the church draws the church into the work of development – those activities that consciously seek to enhance the self-identified livelihoods of the poor.

A significant contribution of theology to development is the hermeneutical lens and the potential reflecting on faith and scripture has to inform and shape our actions, making how we think about God, what we think about development and how we interpret our faith in the light of development a key part of the development discourse and an important part of doing theology. However, the challenge to theology that looks to engage with the development discourse is the temptation for theological reflection to remain broad, generalized biblical principles, without it ever coming to

grips with specific and relevant supporting action. I agree with Naudè's critique that we are used to the prophetic and narrative means of reflecting theologically on development, but are less able to engage in the technical aspects of policy discourse (Naudè, 2014:461). So if the contribution of theology is the potential it holds to shape our actions, how are we to be moved to action? Are de Gruchy's reasons *why* Christians should engage with development enough to move followers of Jesus into action?

3.4.2 Swart and the Three Publics

According to Swart, at the time of his writing (2004), there was a deficiency in theological thinking regarding the strategic role of churches in addressing the problems of poverty and underdevelopment in South Africa – there had not been sufficient thinking around the 'mode of involvement or discourse required' in order to be effective in addressing issues of poverty and development (Swart, 2004:475). In his discussion, Swart uses a paper published by Bernard Lategan, 'Taking the Third Public Seriously', in order to emphasize the point that the struggle to adequately address issues of poverty and development by churches arose from a 'prevailing structural deficiency' (Swart, 2004:476). What he means by this is, churches were still limiting their role in the development movement to project-centred efforts, and that there was a gap between our own critical thinking and theological reflection on the development discourse, and the actual actions taken by local agencies to deal with poverty and underdevelopment (Swart, 2004:476). The struggle of churches to effectively engage with issues of poverty and development has also been my experience as a minister in a Methodist congregation. Swart argues that a key way in which churches can deal effectively and authentically with problems of poverty and underdevelopment in our society is through a different type of theological discourse within the Third Public (Swart, 2004:479) – allowing a new way of doing theology to inform our development discourse and, as a result, re-shape our actions. Swart writes,

'a theology of development – in other words, a theology whose task is to empower the churches towards an effective role in development – could not be devised from the traditional ways of doing theology.'
(Swart, 2004:483)

We need a new way of doing theology, if the church is to make a meaningful, authentic contribution to development – both the discourse on development and development praxis.

Characteristics of this new way of doing theology are, according to Swart, a) a willingness to give up the 'privileged position' of theology and move beyond the concern of the validity of truth claims (Swart, 2004:479), b) a new form of language where the central concern is not the 'preservation of theology' (Swart,2004:479), c) for theology to become 'policy specific' and become part of specific action, and d) for theology to take on participatory characteristics of being non-prescriptive, inclusive, interactive and above all, serving for the sake of the other (Swart, 2004:480). What will be discussed later in this chapter are the emerging parallels between these characteristics of a new way of doing theology, and Collective Narrative Practices, and the contribution both make to development. It is worth noting here though, the challenge that this poses to how the church has understood its public role. More recently, in an inaugural lecture delivered by Swart on the *Revival of a Kairos Consciousness* (2013), Swart recognizes the potential religion and religious traditions have to be 'catalysts of social change' in South Africa today particularly when it comes to the role of main-line in affecting broader social change (Swart, 2013). While academics and theologians may recognise the need for the kind of changes Swart suggests, many ordinary congregation members, and even church leaders, battle to make this kind of transition into a new way of prophetic action for the church. De Wet argues that the political changes in South Africa from 1994 have 'caught church leaders off guard regarding a new vision for the prophetic role in the renewal of society' (de Wet, 2014:1). Can the church be taken seriously in the public sphere if she does not find new ways of navigating the tensions that exist between private and public?

3.5 The Church and Development

Having referred often to the role of 'the church' in the work of development and the work of God in the world, and raised the questions of whether or not the church still has a relevant, authentic role to play within this sphere, it is important to gain clarity on who is meant by 'the Church'.

3.5.1 Who is the Church?

Richardson captures some of the difficulty in answering this question, when he points out how the concept of church conjures up such varied images in people's minds that it is a problematic term, particularly in today's context of post-Christendom (Richardson, 2009:137). Peterson affirms this in identifying the real crisis facing the church today as one of identity – who the church is, not necessarily what the church should be doing (Peterson, 2012:24). Peterson looks at three theological paradigms for understanding who the church is: Church as word-event; communion and *Missio Dei* (Peterson, 2012:24). According to Richardson, the church's self-understanding is never fixed and final, but dynamic, requiring constant review as it evolves, making 'the task of interpreting the church to itself...never complete' (Richardson, 2009:139). Having said that, there are some helpful frameworks scholars have used to define what we mean by church in various discourses.

A helpful framework for understanding what we mean by 'the Church' is Dirkie Smit's typology of identifying six forms of church⁷ (Koopman, 2007:284). The first four are concerned with church as institution and includes worship services, local congregations, denominations and ecumenical bodies (Koopman, 2007:284). The other two forms deal with the church as organism, referring to individual Christians in their daily lives and in their voluntary actions (Koopman, 2007:284). Foster, in his work on the *Church and Hope* (2015), has unpacked and simplified Smit's typology to identify three forms of the church. These being:

1. *The Local Congregation*, which for many is the primary understanding of the term church, 'a localized community of Christians, organized around regular, common worship' (Foster, 2015).
2. *The Institutional, Denominational and Ecumenical Church*, which refers to the institutional structures of denominations, collective groupings and ecumenical bodies – like the Methodist Church, Evangelical church or World Council of Churches (Foster, 2015).

⁷ Smit's original work on the six forms of church can be found in "Oor die kerk as 'n unieke samelewingsverband." In *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, Jaargang 36/2

3. *Church as Individual Believers*, involved in living out their faith each day in their own particular way, but each contributing to the work of God in the word (Foster, 2015).

Foster goes on to identify how Korten's generations of intervention each have a place within the different forms of the church. The first and second generations of relief and community projects usually find expression in the local congregation. The third generation strategy of policy and structural reform happen best within the institutional, denominational and ecumenical church, while the fourth generation is seen in the network connections of individual believers who mobilize actions to work for social justice (Foster, 2015).

While these forms are helpful for understanding who we mean when we refer to 'the church', and gaining clarity on the potential role of the church in development, it is Richardson's understanding of the church as a community of faith that is narratively constituted (Richardson, 2009) this is most helpful for this research. Richardson discusses how the church is more than an institution, and more than the sum of its individual members, and should be described and understood primarily as a community of faith, because it is made up of persons-in-community (Richardson, 2009:138). And as a community of faith that is narratively constituted it is 'a community that remembers and embodies in its communal life the story of Jesus Christ' (Richardson, 2009:144) So, being the church then means being a particular kind of community, which finds its identity in the narrative of Jesus, 'the Jesus who served the poor and outcast, and healed the sick' (Richardson, 2009:145-152) and is faithful to its central narrative through remembering the broken body of Jesus in the Eucharist, and risking its own body on behalf of others (Richardson, 2009:145-146).

3.5.2 Why the Church?

If the church can be understood as a narratively constituted community of faith, seeking to embody in its communal life the story of Jesus (Richardson, 2009:144), why then should the church in this form be involved in the work of development? We have discussed the motivation for Christian's to participate in the work of God in the world, why should this happen as a collective, and not on an individual basis, according to each person's own appropriate response? The previous section on

theology and development has begun to answer this question, but it may be helpful to unpack this further here.

De Gruchy, in an essay that also looks at the work of Dirkie Smit on Church and Politics, discusses the legacy of 'ecclesiological tension' (de Gruchy, 2007:357) left to us by the Kairos Document and the Belhar Confession, which share a common purpose in their rejection of apartheid but have a different understanding of the church, and as a result how, and more importantly, why, the church should engage with the world (de Gruchy, 2007). Through unpacking the contributions of each of these documents, de Gruchy identified three elements crucial for genuine, authentic church theology (de Gruchy, 2007:362), which help us understand why the church as a community of faith should concern itself with development. Firstly, de Gruchy says 'engagement with socio-economic and political realities of life is fundamental to being church, and not an add-on extra' (de Gruchy, 2007:362). De Gruchy links this with Smit's thinking on the contribution of the church as shaping the vision of moral society. Secondly, de Gruchy sees the role of the church in nurturing 'disciples, friends, saints and prophets' which Smit discusses as building the integrity of a moral people (de Gruchy, 2007:363). Thirdly, the church has the task of social analysis and engagement, which Smit calls engaging in deeds of social justice (de Gruchy, 2007:363).

The church, as a narratively constituted community of faith, embodies in its communal life the story of Jesus through engaging as a collective with social, economic and political realities, nurturing collective responses (whether at a local or institutional level) to these realities, consistent with its central narrative and then moving the collective body to action in various ways, as the broken body of Jesus in the world.

Ericson, in her research on reconciliation between men and women in post-apartheid South Africa, discusses the work of reconciliation initiatives that give people the opportunity to tell their stories, and hear the stories and experiences of others (Ericson, 2007:27). A key part of this process is creating what she refers to as "safe spaces" - places where people feel 'safe enough to be challenged' (Ericson, 2007:27). The question she explores is whether or not it is possible for churches to

become “safe spaces” where the sharing of stories can lead to healing and reconciliation (Ericson, 2007:28). In her argument she highlights two challenges facing the church in becoming a safe place: that of the culture of silence where people would rather not speak up in order to preserve the peace, and the tendency for men to retain power and control through continued stereotyped gender roles within the church (Ericson, 2007:61). Her reason for raising these limitations facing the church is to allow new voices to be heard that not only challenge existing practices, but also give voice to alternate ways of doing things (Ericson, 2007:62), that offer a re-authored story. The potential of the church to be a safe space where discourses can be challenged can be part of the church’s collective response.

3.5.3 The Church in Development

The development movement within the ecumenical sphere has gone through many transitions. There are varying schools of thought on the influence of both liberation theology and the emergence of a ‘theology of development’ on the development discourse within ecumenical circles (Swart, 2004:481). Scholars trace the shifts in churches’ practical and theological focuses from a theology of revolution to the theology of development, where development is understood to combine demands for social change with a richer concept of more than just social change (Swart, 2004:481). This saw churches beginning to engage with the ‘existential and structural issues of poverty’ and commit pro-actively to the cause of development (Swart, 2004:482-483). Yet, the struggle was, and still is, not whether the churches should be involved in development, but rather, how - what the churches actual, practical involvement in development looks like. As mentioned previously in the overview of the development movement, there was, and still is, differing schools of thought regarding the practical role of the church in development. From the work of the missionaries in building schools and hospitals, to community development projects and programmes, to advocacy, to people’s movements, it is hard to define the church’s involvement in the work of development as being one thing. What I can do, is look at my own church’s journey with mission and development, and give a brief overview and analysis of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa’s engagement with development.

3.5.4 The Methodist Church of Southern Africa and Development

The purpose of this research is to investigate the possibility of applying collective narrative practices within the context of a local church to facilitate new dialogue around development. We have looked in the previous section at understanding who we mean by local church generally, we look now specifically at the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) – the church in which I am ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament. The reason for giving a brief overview of this context is our understanding of faith and its practical expression in the world will be formed and influenced not only by scripture, but also through ‘the people, traditions, struggles and insights through which we came to faith’ (Storey, 2004:12). According to Storey, there are no ‘generic Christians’ (Storey, 2004:12). In a paper presented at the Mission Congress of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Mokgothu proposed that the way we understand God, the world and the church will impact our understanding of our missional calling and task (Mokgothu, 2016). Any exploration into Narrative Practices and their application must take context into account, recognizing existing dialogues and discourses.

As Storey discusses in his book on *Re-visioning a Wesleyan Heritage for South Africa*, there is far more to being Methodist than a warmed heart (Storey, 2004:14). Throughout its history in Southern Africa, the MCSA has been built on a ministry of empowerment (Storey, 2004:24, Millard, 2005). The insistence in the denomination’s formative years in this country that no church building could be built without an accompanying school has established a cultural context that values education (Storey, 2004:24). In the 1970s, the Renewal Commission worked hard for structural changes within the MCSA that promoted a greater equality – stipend parity; racially integrated circuits and the ordination of women are some of the advances made by the commission (Storey, 2004:25). Obedience 81 was a crucial response to Apartheid in South Africa, with the Wesleyan heritage playing a significant role in the decision to take a stand firmly against the evil of the regime (Storey, 2004:25). In the 1990s, the MCSA continued its work towards transformation through its “Journey to a New Land” – a convocation held to work for change in the MCSA, and broader society (Storey, 2004:25). It is the inspiration of Wesley’s work and teachings that gave rise to this culture of social justice action within the Methodist Church.

The teaching of Wesley sought to move believers from an inward-looking faith, to a faith in Jesus that found practical expression in the way people lived their lives (Storey, 2004:37), a transformation from individual holiness to social holiness (Mogoba, 2005:150). A significant feature of the Methodist class meeting – the small group designed by Wesley to help people grow as disciples of Jesus – was to hold others accountable for how they lived their faith both privately and publicly, through both acts of piety and works of mercy (Storey, 2004:38). Wesley taught that followers of Jesus cannot withdraw from their responsibility to the poor, and Wesley is noted as having a ‘preferential option’ for the poor (Storey, 2004:40). Storey notes how Wesley reflected on his faith in light of his praxis – he spent time with the poor, sharing life and faith with them, and in doing so, grew in his understanding of what it meant to love our neighbour (Storey, 2004:40). Wesley saw being with the poor as a means of grace, including ‘works of mercy’ on the list along with prayer, studying the scriptures and sharing Holy Communion (Storey, 2004:41). The poor took priority in Wesley’s understanding of ministry and in how followers of Jesus would give expression to their faith (Storey, 2004:42). But more than just engaging with the poor, Wesley took on some of the oppressive structures that created poverty and worked for economic transformation in the lives of people as much as their spiritual transformation (Storey, 2004:43, Magoba, 2005). In Storey’s view, anyone who calls themselves Methodists ought to “be one who has taken an intentional option to stand with the poor and marginalised of society, against the principalities and powers that hold all such in bondage” (Storey, 2004:45).

There are many who say the implications of Wesley’s teachings on social holiness and the work of the church in society were ‘softened’ after his death, and the focus shifted onto the kind of theology less likely to offend ‘more affluent Methodists’ (Storey, 2004:15). There was a shift in Methodism, away from standing with the poor to what Theodore Jennings calls ‘a preferential option for the middle class’ (Storey, 2004:46). For example, after Wesley’s death the General Rules for people called Methodists were changed, so that the first duty of a leader was no longer to collect money ‘towards the relief of the poor’ but rather ‘towards the support of the gospel’ (Storey, 2004:46). In the same way, the class meeting has lost much of its original intention and purpose (Nyobole, 2005). It is the observation of Nyobole that very few

Methodist churches in Southern Africa hold true to the original intention of the class meeting, designed by Wesley to be a place where people met together for the purpose of both individual and social transformation, becoming a place where people could stand against the evils of the day and practice 'responsible citizenship' (Nyobole, 2005:159).

There have been varying opinions on Wesley's view on social activism, with some saying his actions made him a political activist, and others saying you cannot overlook his support of established order of his day. (Grassow, 2005:87). Wesley's understanding of the economic climate of his day, and the oppressive systems that resulted have much relevance to our own contemporary economic situation (Vermeulen, 2005:174), but Methodist churches in Southern Africa today no longer embrace Wesley's teaching on social holiness, and scholars are asking if the Methodist Church has abandoned its calling to be with the poor, choosing instead to be with the middle-class rich (Vermeulen, 2005).

Vermeulen identifies the challenge to people called Methodists as being to allow Wesley's economic ethic based on ministry to the poor to ask some difficult questions, such as, how do we respond to the growing gap that exists between the rich and poor, the imbalance of corrupt political power and the unjust trade practices between developed and developing countries (Vermeulen, 2005:175)? To phrase it narratively, what are the discourses that exist and what are the stories we tell about ourselves, about rich and poor in our country, and our role as Methodists in standing with the poor?

It remains the calling of people called Methodist to live out Wesley's preferential option for the poor, not because the poor are more or less sinful than the rich, but because 'they are more sinned against than anyone in the world' (Storey, 2004:71). Mogoba sees Wesley's focus on the poor and his "holding individual and social holiness together" as speaking directly into our situation today and as having 'fresh relevance' in South Africa, with poverty being what Mogoba calls South Africa's number one social problem (Mogoba, 2005:151).

According to Vermeulen, “our Wesleyan heritage demands that we decide on which side of the wealth-poverty equation to locate ourselves and that we take our manner of engagement with the poor seriously” (Vermeulen, 2005:189). Vermeulen believes our Wesleyan heritage is able to influence public policy in South Africa on behalf of the poor, as well as re-awaken holiness steeped in social justice, that speaks loudly against injustice in our country (Vermeulen, 2005:175). Too often, people see Wesley’s social action as license to participate in social justice work without questioning the systems and context that have given rise to poverty and injustice. It was Mosala who challenged Methodism in this country in 1989 to ‘take seriously the discourses of struggle of oppressed people’ (Mosala, 1989). More recently, Mokgothu has re-issued this challenge to the Methodist people at the Mission Congress of 2016, in saying the Methodist Church of Southern Africa today is ill-prepared to face the challenges of our current economic context (Mokgothu, 2016).

In light of its heritage, the MCSA has potential to be an agent for broader social in Southern Africa today. What is clear from my own experience in my local church context, is struggle facing Methodist churches to live out Wesley’s teachings in practical ways, and the gap that then results between understanding what it means to be part of a Methodist Church and the praxis of local churches when it comes to development.

3.6 Conclusion

In looking at a brief overview of the development movement, this chapter has identified two factors in the development discourse key to this research: that of the particular contribution of theology to the development debate, and the question of what the church should be doing practically in the field of development. There is a need for new and creative thinking around what development means for followers of Jesus, and what development looks like for the Church. This chapter went on to explore who is meant by ‘the church’ and why the church should be involved in the practical work of development. In exploring the role of the church in development work, this chapter identified the specific role of and challenges facing the of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, as the particular context from which this research emerges.

We turn now to exploring the potential contributions and overlapping principles of development and Collective Narrative Practices, as we seek to answer the question to what extent Collective Narrative Practices can facilitate and make possible these new and much needed discussions around development within the local church.

4. An Inter-Disciplinary Approach to Collective Narrative Practices

4.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The question this research seeks to address is, to what extent Collective Narrative Practices can facilitate new, re-authoring conversations around the church's understanding of and role in development. So far, this research has explored Narrative Therapy, and the principles of Collective Narrative Practice, as well as the debate around the development discourse, identifying the need for new and creative thinking around development and the church's role in development, particularly from a faith perspective.

In this chapter, we will explore the potential contribution of Narrative Practices to Development, and particularly to Theology and Development. Just as part of the contribution of theology to development is a particular kind of thinking (about God, others and self) that informs and shapes our actions, so we ask questions around the role Narrative Practices can play in challenging assumption-based thinking on development and the actions that result in local church congregations.

This chapter will explore the themes of mission and development, and Collective Narrative Practices, looking to identify and analyse common values, and points of intersection between the different disciplines (theology, development, narrative practices). From this investigation, one can identify courses of action that can be shaped by shared foundational beliefs.

This chapter will also explore the third step in the framework – the Practical Application of how one puts into practice the foundations and principles that have emerged from the theological reflections on development praxis. It is from these points of intersection and overlap that the strategy (maps) of how Collective Narrative Practices can be applied within the context of a local congregation will emerge. Once we have identified the maps of Narrative Practices that can be used within local church congregations, we begin to evaluate the potential they hold for facilitating new

conversations around the church's understanding of and role in development. The chapter will conclude with a summary of its findings.

4.2 Re-Authoring the Story

4.2.1 Re-Authoring the Development Discourse with the Local Congregation

Like the contribution of Theology to development, this research is looking to discover if the role Collective Narrative Practices play in development praxis in local congregations is in the potential it holds in **re-authoring the development discourse within the local congregation**. Just as theological reflection involves examining our understanding of development, and the role of the church within development through unpacking our understanding of God and what that says about our relationship with all of creation, and how our actions are formed and shaped as a result of that thinking and reflecting (de Gruchy, 2005), so too Narrative Practices move people to re-author the stories of their lives by examining those stories that shape what we do and why we do it, because of the meaning we assign to particular events (Swart, 2013). When we re-author new or different stories, our actions are influenced and become informed by the new way we think, the language we use and the meaning we assign to events and circumstances. By applying Collective Narrative Practices within the context of a local congregation, these practices create a space for taken for granted assumptions and beliefs regarding poverty, justice, development and mission to be named and identified and new stories begin to emerge around what development might mean and look like for followers of Jesus within the context of the local church – the potential is for local church congregations to engage meaningfully with 'discourses of struggle' (Mosala, 1989). In beginning conversations to re-author those stories, the challenge lies in the doing of development, with informed actions based no longer on assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs.

4.2.2 Shared Themes of Mission and Development and Collective Narrative Practice

For both theological reflection on development praxis and Narrative Therapy, the way we think informs our actions (de Gruchy, 2005, Swart, 2013). For this reason, the foundational values and beliefs of development from a faith perspective and Narrative Practices are key in shaping the way these two discourses are applied in praxis. From the chapter on Narrative Practices and the research into the development discourse, there are some significant shared founding values and principles found in both theology and development and Collective Narrative Practices. Naming these shared values is important for identifying the areas of overlap between the fields, and developing an interdisciplinary approach, recognising how each can be practically applied in local contexts.

The Ten Themes of Mission and Development (de Gruchy, 2005), identified by de Gruchy and discussed in chapter three ascertain that how we think about God, and interpret our faith in light of our social context will shape how we 'do development' within that context and within our communities.

In the same way, the Ten Themes of Collective Narrative Practice (Denborough, 2008) discussed in chapter two reveal how the meanings we give to our stories shape our actions, which affect contexts broader than just our own personal lives.

4.2.3 Contribution of Collective Narrative Practices and Development to communities and groups

As identified in chapter two, Collective Narrative Practices make significant contributions to communities and groups in their ability to create awareness around taken for granted ideas, beliefs and assumptions through naming problem stories (Denborough, 2008). This *increased awareness* is also in the power communities' have to use their existing knowledges and skills to make decisions regarding their own lives, address the challenges they face and make changes that contribute to broader social change (Denborough, 2008). The *Reasonable Hope* (2010) concept discussed in chapter two offers communities a way forward through leaving space for

multiple stories as the focus shifts away from 'what still needs to be done' to 'look how far we have come' (Weingarten, 2010). The *witness positions grid* (Morkel, 2012a) opens the way for people within a community context to move from being unaware and dis-empowered, to being aware and empowered, enabling people to work for change. It is the process of *compassionate witnessing* (Weingarten, 2003) that allows stories to be heard and shared, owned, named and retold, allowing communities to tell their own stories in their own ways, and have their stories heard and affirmed by others.

If one unpacks Korten's definition of development, the overlap with the contributions of Collective Narrative Practices makes a convincing argument for the contribution of Narrative Practices to the development discourse. According to Korten, development is 'a process by which members of society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilize and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations.' (Korten,1990:3). Bringing Collective Narrative Practices and Development together, one might say the *process* is one of *increased awareness* by the people, where through the *reasonable hope* of *increased capacities* to mobilise and manage resources, people become *aware and empowered* to produce *sustainable and justly distributed improvements* to their quality of life, according to their *own stories*, hopes and *aspirations*.

While one can begin to identify and affirm the contribution of Collective Narrative Practices to the development discourse, the focus of our questions remains: to what extent these practices can move local church congregations in thinking in new ways about development and their role its practical application.

4.3 The Practical Application

4.3.1 A New Response

According to Boff and Boff, liberation theology cannot remain in the academic institutions, but needs to find its application in the response - the process of reflecting on context, finding the hermeneutical response, then living it out through practical application and action (Boff and Boff, 1987).

Part of the contribution of theology to the development discourse, as explored in chapter three, is the struggle churches have in engaging effectively with the issues that arise from development, like poverty and injustice, and moving from reflecting to relevant, specific action (Vermeulen, 2005). In the same way, Collective Narrative Practices look to move people to a new kind of action that emerges from a new kind of story. Just as we need a new way of doing theology, **we need a new way of responding to and applying our new story.**

The framework of a new way of doing theology as presented by Swart (2004) in chapter three overlaps with the foundations of Narrative Practices, as discussed in chapter two. Just as the new theology required for new thinking about development must give up its privileged position in society, so narrative practices have a de-centred approach, making the 'other' the expert. Just as the new theology uses new language that is concerned about more than self-preservation, so Narrative places significant emphasis on the way we use language to construct our reality and the Narrative Metaphor is central. The new theology needs to be policy and action specific, just as narrative seeks to identify and specifically name and de-construct taken for granted ideas and beliefs that inform actions. And the new Theology is participatory and inclusive, just as Narrative practices, from the post-structuralist framework which sees reality as a social construction, seeks respectful, non-blaming ways in which to gather and hear the stories of others.

Through this research, Narrative Practices emerge as a tool for finding a way forward in the practical application of development praxis. Collective Narrative Practices, when applied in a local church context, can assist people through the process of social and hermeneutical analysis, with new actions emerging in response to new ways of thinking. What neither Narrative nor Theology can do is determine what the response will be, only that there needs to be one.

4.3.2 The Church

In chapter three, we explored who we mean by 'the church', and examined the different forms of the church – the community of faith who gather for worship, the

institution as a broader body, and the individual believers living out their faith in their daily contexts (Foster, 2015). All three forms of church as identified by Foster have a vital role to play in the application of development praxis, but the roles will look different. In this research, we are looking at the extent to which Narrative Practices, when applied within the context of the local congregation that gathers for worship, will facilitate new conversations around what development looks like for followers of Jesus, as a community of faith. What has emerged through the research is that one cannot pre-determine what the response of the community of faith will look like. What has been helpful is to use Richardson's definition of church as a narratively constituted community of faith that embodies in its communal life the story of Jesus through engaging as a collective in social realities and nurturing collective responses (Richardson, 2009). With this in mind, one can see the potential for applying Narrative Practices in this context.

As a narratively constituted community of faith embodying the story of Jesus in its communal life (Richardson, 2009), the Narrative Practices of re-authoring and re-remembering conversations create the space for the stories of the church and its members to be told and heard, as well as the story of Jesus to be re-spoken and heard once again. One can see how these practices can give space for the faith stories of individuals and a community to emerge. The question this research is investigating, is will these practices allow space for stories arising from the development discourse from a faith perspective and the voice of Jesus within this discourse to emerge, in such a way that will re-author new stories and shape new actions?

The church as community of faith that engages collectively with social realities and nurtures collective responses (Richardson, 2009) may find the Narrative Practices of externalising conversations and definitional ceremonies helpful. For the community to be able to tell its own story and name the challenges it is facing, and then engage in practices that give space for new stories would be life-giving for the church. The question again though, is can these practices facilitate this process with specific reference to the church's role in development? Can the stories named, told and heard be those of the poor, and the ceremonies participated in, be those of the other,

so that the church (in all of its forms) begins to participate in new ways in the life of the broader community?

4.4 Intersections between Narrative Practices, and Theology and Development

If we are to examine to what extent Narrative Practices can facilitate re-authoring conversations in local churches about the role churches can play in development, then it is from the points of intersection and overlap between Narrative, Development and Theology that the foundations for applying Collective Narrative Practices (maps) will emerge. The four significant areas of overlap that have emerged through this research are in the role of conscientization, the phenomenon of hope, the de-centred shift away from 'the expert' to 'the people' and the invitation to be responsible and active citizens for the common good.

4.4.1 Conscientization

Most scholarly discussion in the development discourse recognises the need for people's participation in development in some form or another (Freire, 1968, Boff, 1987, Balcomb, 2012). Following the history of the development discourse (as outlined in chapter three) revealed how unhelpful and ineffective a top-down approach to development was. But in order for there to be significant participation in and ownership of development practices, there must be a new awareness of both the 'rights and capacities' of people (Klaasen, 2015:333). The process of conscientization is one that is emphasised in many ways and forms in both the debate on development praxis and theological reflection, most influentially by liberation theologians such as Gutierrez (1973) and Boff (1987) and but also by scholars such as Korten (1990) and Sen (1999) in their works on development models. It is the process of conscientization which empowers people to recognise, understand and then name their own context and challenges and then discover the 'corporate power' they hold to act on their hopes for their preferred future (Klaasen, 2015:333).

The act of recognising, understanding and naming a problem story that is located within a specific context is a foundational Narrative Practice, based on the post-structuralist understanding that realities are socially constructed, and that problems are separate from people (Epston, White, 1990). The Narrative Practice of naming problem stories through externalising conversations (White, 2007) is very much a process of conscientization, and an important starting place for discovering dominant narratives that could lead to re-authoring conversations. So any attempt at applying Collective Narrative Practices needs to involve the work of externalising conversations.

4.4.2 Hope

However we understand and interpret the phenomenon of hope – whether as a negative illusion, or a shining light of what could be – hope holds significant power to shape how we act in the present because of what we believe about the future (Palm, 2013:105). If the church is to have a relevant, meaningful role within the public discourse on development, many Christians will need to re-examine their relationship with hope, and what exactly it is we hope for. Our hope cannot simply be an abstract, religious hope, used to cover over our tough questions about poverty and injustice with an unnamed hope-for-the-future. Rather we are to rediscover a contextual hope that can ‘speak meaningfully into the time and place within which we are situated’, withstand disappointments and live with uncertainty (Palm, 2013:110-112)

This is the kind of hope embodied in Narrative Practices through re-authoring conversations, and discovering and giving voice to alternate stories. Elize Morkel discusses her journey with hope and hopelessness through using Kaete Weingarten’s witness positions grid (Morkel, 2012a:4-14). On the grid, it is when one is in a position of being aware (of injustice) but unempowered (unable to change anything) that one feels most hopeless (Morkel, 2012a:4). This is often the situation that many Christians and church communities find themselves in, aware of the devastation of poverty, but unable to affect any meaningful change. The result is hopelessness. Narrative practices look to move people through the witness positions grid, to a place of hope, being both aware (conscientized) and empowered

(able to take relevant action for change). As feminist theologian Denise Ackerman puts it, hope involves action, and 'we have to make our hopes become reality' (Palm, 2013;119). Applying Collective Narrative Practices would need to give space for new stories that speak of hope.

4.4.3 De-Centred

In an article for the Mail & Guardian newspaper in February 2016, Imraan Buccus notes how more and more people are talking about 'bottom-up development' and traces many of the problems of post-Apartheid South Africa to a 'lack of commitment to meaningful, participatory, bottom-up development' (Buccus, 2016). Buccus discusses how, in spite of being equipped in terms of our legislative policy and constitution, groups affected by poverty and injustice are seldom given opportunity to participate in policy proposals (Buccus, 2016). People's movements that try to access information and contribute to discussions are ignored or actively repressed (Buccus, 2016). Evidence of the efficacy of bottom up approaches to development is growing around the world, and those wanting to participate meaningfully in development need to let go of and move away from autocratic, top-down approaches (Buccus, 2016).

Korten's work on people-centred development as an alternative to growth-centred development (Korten, 1990 ch 7) is one that needs to be taken seriously. According to Korten, development policies that continue to ignore affected communities and give priority to the interests of those who control the power, and structure society for the benefit of the few will never lead to a just, sustainable world (Korten, 1990). For Freire, this concept is expressed in his work on the significance of dialogue, and the critically important role the 'insights, perspectives, rituals and symbols of the poor' play in contributing to the vision for the future that they are seeking (de Gruchy, 2003:72). Influential thinker and economist Amartya Sen also argues for development that goes beyond economics, to include rights and freedoms, and that this can only happen if preferences for action are shaped by all people through an inclusive contribution at a 'values and priorities' level (de Gruchy, 2003:74). Basically, development that is just and sustainable is de-centred, being shaped and influenced at a grass-roots level by those who are most affected by the policies that result.

De-centred collaboration is another foundational feature of narrative that is emphasised by its founders White and Epston (Combs & Friedman, 2009:348). The focus shifts away from a central source of knowledge, to allowing the many stories of all participants to add value to the group and shape the outcome.

Some churches may struggle to align a de-centred approach with the idea of an all-powerful, omnipotent God, who holds all the power. But Migliore in his book *The Power of God and the gods of Power* challenges this understanding of God (and God's power) by examining the biblical witness of the liberating, healing and reconciling power of Christ on the cross, and the Trinitarian understanding of God whose power is shared, transforming, just and inclusive (Migliore, 2008). It is from this perspective that churches are better able to let go of a top down approach to faith and church. This perspective also opens possibilities for new ways of serving in communities, where participation is shared and power looks different. Applying Collective Narrative Practices would involve giving space for inclusion and participation, allowing many others to share knowledge and skill.

4.4.4 Responsible/Active Citizens

In a publication produced by the Good Governance Learning Network on the State of Local Governance, Mirjam van Donk explores the idea of active citizenship, noting that while it has wide appeal, it is also open-ended and ambiguous (van Donk, 2013: 17). She notes that while South Africa has an 'active and vocal citizenry' much of the government's action has reduced the incentive for South Africans to be 'direct participants in their own development' (van Donk, 2013:10). While active citizenship is widely recognised as a key driver in development, local communities struggle for recognition, agency and responsive leadership largely due to prejudicial attitudes that limit people's ability to see marginalised groups as active citizens (van Donk, 2013:16). The view that people need to have reached a particular level of development or education before they can be regarded as active citizens is a dominant view in South Africa, which often allows the state to dismiss protest action as unhelpful, excluding it as an expression of agency (van Donk, 2013:14). What then does it mean to be both a responsible and active citizen, as well as a

responsible and active community of faith, who participate meaningfully in society, and engage in public discourse for the greater good?

With the thirtieth anniversary of the Kairos Document remembered in 2015, much of the theology of that challenge is also being remembered, particularly how the document challenged the church in South Africa to consider how its theology and expression of faith shaped its presence and witness in society (Foster, 2016:65). In the same way, Le Bruyns asserts that a 'Kairos consciousness needs to be regained' (Le Bruyns, 2015 :467) where ordinary people are reconnected once again in a participatory democracy. Le Bruyns also notes how, while the concept of 'active citizenship' has become an important way in a wide range of programmes and institutions of talking about the responsibility all people hold in working together for a better future, it is neither simple nor uncontested (Le Bruyns, 2015:468). Le Bruyns goes on to explore the role that public theology (and by extension the church) can play in responsible citizenship in its vision for change, it's potential to engage critically with a wide range of sectors, and the power it holds to both resist and reconstruct as it seeks to contribute to re-building life together (Le Bruyns, 2015:469-476).

This research has already noted that the Methodist church has much work to do in engaging effectively once more in the area of development. And there is much work that can be done at a local level in educating and encouraging people to participate meaningfully in building a hoped-for future together. In a study done on citizen participation, the perception of students regarding the role of government and citizens in creating sustainable democracy was examined with the findings showing the need for citizens to educate themselves regarding democracy and their role in it (Lues, 2014). This kind of self-awareness is a process through which people must intentionally journey. Narrative Practices look to empower people through self-awareness that leads to action, linking the stories of individuals with the stories of others (Denborough, 2008). The action that is taken is together with others, for the sake of the greater good. Narrative Practices that are looking to facilitate new conversations around the church's role in development must include space for recognising agency, and lead to action that allows people and groups to participate

responsibly and meaningfully within their communities as responsible and active citizens.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has identified and explored the interdisciplinary approach through the overlaps and intersections that have emerged between theology, development and narrative practices. These areas of overlap are a critical part of the research, as they will determine the shape and form that the application of Collective Narrative Practices in local churches will take, and to what extent these practices will facilitate new conversations around the church's role in development.

Firstly, this chapter recognised the potential contribution of Collective Narrative Practices to development in the possibility for re-authoring the development discourse within local congregations by identifying and challenging dominant, potentially unhelpful development narratives. The shared themes of mission, development and narrative practices as identified in the values of increased awareness, reasonable hope, movement through the witness positions grid and compassionate witnessing lay a the foundation for shaping a new kind of action that emerges from new ways of thinking about development. The practical application is a new way of responding, which is a new way of doing theology, a new way of telling the story of the church, and a new way of being the church in a broken world.

From this reflection, a framework for the four, foundational intersections between theology, development and narrative were identified. These four components are critical to all three disciplines, and must be present if collective narrative practices are to be applied in a local church in order to facilitate new conversations around development. These components are conscientization, hope, a de-centred approach and active citizenship.

With these points of intersection and overlap between theology, development and Narrative Practices in mind, we turn now to suggesting a strategy for applying Collective Narrative Practices within the context of a local church congregation, to evaluate to what extent these maps can facilitate new conversations on issues arising from the development debate.

5. Applying Maps of Narrative Practice in a Local Church

5.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This research is looking to answer the question of to what extent Collective Narrative Practices can facilitate new conversations in local churches around the question of the role of the church in the work of development. Thus far, we have examined Narrative Therapy, and the principles of Collective Narrative Practice. We have explored the development discourse, with a specific focus on the contribution of theology to development, and how understanding the role of the church and the heritage of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa can shape our actions in development work. We then critiqued the fields of Narrative and the work of the church in development in looking at the ways the principles of Narrative Practice and the theological reflections on development praxis overlap. It is through this critique and areas of overlap that the possibilities for applying Narrative Practices in the local church in order to begin conversations around the role of the church's role in development begin to emerge as an interdisciplinary approach. The question of to what extent these practices make new conversations around development through the local church possible will be addressed in this chapter through the work of designing the maps of Narrative Practice. These maps will be adapted from Collective Narrative work done in other contexts in order to apply them to the local church context. They will also be adapted according to the data that has emerged through this research into and critique of the role of the church in development. It is through designing these maps, and then reflecting on and evaluating them as a theoretical process emerging from the research done that I will analyse the research question of the extent to which Collective Narrative Practices can facilitate re-authoring conversations around the role and work of the church in development.

The suggested strategy when practically implemented (remembering that the practical implementation is not the scope or objective of this study) will involve inviting members of the local Methodist congregations in which I minister to participate in a seven week process involving Collective Narrative Practices. I will specifically invite those who form part of the core leadership teams, and those currently involved in church community projects, as well as issue a general invitation

to the broader congregation to participate. The size of the group will be limited to twelve people, in order to preserve manageable group dynamics. The conditions for joining the group will be that participants must be available to meet once a week, every week for seven weeks, for a three hour session. Applicants must be willing to participate fully in the sessions, and be willing to share from their own life experiences. Involvement in and an interest in social justice, development and the local church would be a necessary requirement.

The maps that follow are a suggested process, while still leaving certain questions and sections unspecified. This is because the Narrative Process cannot be pre-determined. It is structured, but it needs to be allowed to be directed by those participating in the group. Many of the specific questions will emerge from the stories, reflections and discussions during group time.

Two practices that will be included as a feature of each session are, firstly, what Jane Polkinghorne has termed 'Novel Practices' (Polkinghorne, 2001:34) and then secondly co-creating a group document as part of the process. Polkinghorne uses her experience of being part of a reading group to explore how Narrative Practices can be used to facilitate conversations around books (Polkinghorne 2001). I would adapt this practice by making a range of material in a range of formats available to the group for the duration of the process, and ask participants to engage with one piece each week. Examples of material would be chapters from books, TedTalks and other video clips, poetry, or music that touches on and explores some of the potential themes that will be covered through the process. Each week, one member of the group will be interviewed by myself as the facilitator on their engagement with their chosen material for the week. The group document will be used to summarize and consolidate thoughts and ideas, as well as record significant moments in the process into a document that can be shared with others and used by members of the groups to re-visit the journey. Therapeutic documents are a feature of Narrative Practices, important for conveying the range of skills and knowledges present in the group and for recording meanings and ideas of participants (Strauven, 2016:5). Documents are also a valuable help in making the new stories a lasting part of the communal narrative (Freedman & Combs, 2009:355).

What follows is the suggested strategy I have designed in the form of seven sessions, using the maps outlined by Michael White (2007) as well as the areas of intersection identified through this research, through the principles of Collective Narrative Practices and the critique and engagement with theological reflection on the work of development through the church.

5.2 Sessions One and Two: Underlying Theory

5.2.1 Conscientization: Externalising Conversations

The map used to facilitate externalising conversations is called the 'Statement of Positions map' (Muller, 2013) and there are certain stages with particular kinds of questions that are used to enable people to identify and name particular problems or challenges, and then locate that problem or challenge in a context outside of themselves (Muller, 2013). Here, the foundational understanding is 'the person is not the problem, the problem is the problem' (Muller, 2013). The stages in externalising conversations include naming the problem, mapping the effects of the problem, evaluating the effects of the problem and then justifying that evaluation (Muller, 2013). According to Freedman and Combs, externalising supports social justice in the ways it guards against the marginalization that can occur when people's identities are confined to the labels others give them (Freedman & Combs, 2012:1040). So part of the process of externalising is allowing participants to identify and name challenges as they tell their stories.

5.2.2 Social Analysis: The Problem in Context

The process of applying these specifically adapted Collective Narrative practices begins with the social analysis and the work of locating the problem within a context. Just as we will be analysing the social context of issues arising from development, the first two sessions in this process will look to locate the challenges and struggles facing the church's work in development in context too. Externalising conversations are a Narrative tool and technique for locating problems in context, so it is at this point that the various disciplines come together.

5.3 Session One: Introduction to the Process

5.3.1 Welcome, Introductions and Ice-Breaker

The purpose of the welcome, introductions and ice breaker is to help everyone in the group get to know each other and begin to feel relaxed, as well as to begin to introduce some of the tools and methodologies that will be used in the process. I would do a welcome, and give each person in the group the chance to introduce themselves to the group. For the ice-breaker, group members will be asked (in advance of the meeting) to bring with them one item that represents or symbolizes something significant about themselves or their lives. Group members would use that item to tell part of their story of who they are. This will have the dual purpose of helping people begin to share their stories and communicate their values in a non-threatening way, as well as introduce the concept of metaphor that plays a large role in the Narrative process.

5.3.2 Group Values

After the introductions, I will facilitate a brainstorming session on some of the foundational values of the group. Asking people to name and list their expectations of what it means to participate in the group lays a helpful foundation for group interaction, and can be a useful tool to refer back to should group dynamics begin to get difficult. Values such as respect, non-judgement, speaking while others listen and confidentiality are some of the kinds of values I would like to draw out of the group. These values will be listed on a large sheet of paper, and be visible to the group during each session. Asking the group to identify and name the values important to them, rather than my providing a list of expectations, implies that the group members already possess the skills, and knowledge of values required to enable a group process to work effectively. The list the group co-authors could also form part of the final document, should the group choose to include it.

5.3.3 Bible Study – Noah’s Ark

The third aspect to the session will take the form of a facilitated bible study on the story of Noah’s Ark (Genesis 6-9). The purpose of the facilitated group bible study is to introduce a faith lens from the beginning, and to create awareness that our theology, and the way we think about and understand God can inform and shape our

actions. Using the well-known story of Noah's Ark continues the use of both metaphor and story-telling as tools and concepts that will be applied and carried through in the weeks ahead.

The bible study will be in the form of asking curious questions of the passage. Curious questions are a technique in Narrative Therapy of asking questions that enable people to tell their stories. The framework for the questions will follow Alan Storey's framework⁸ of asking what does the passage tell us about God, about ourselves and about our relationship between God and Creation?

Introduction

What scholars tell us about OT narratives is that if we are to understand the individual stories, like Noah and his ark, we need to place them within the bigger, greater story of God's work to redeem his people, and all creation. (Fee, Stuart:1994) And every individual story points to this bigger story of God at work in the world. So it is, that the OT stories were not always meant to teach us history, they were meant to teach us about God, and about ourselves and about the work God is doing in us and in the world. So, today, I am going to ask you to let go of your concerns about whether or not the story of Noah's Ark actually happened that way, and explore again the truth of what this Spirit-Inspired age-old story tells us about God, about ourselves, and about God at work in the world.

The Story

Next would follow a group re-telling of the story through asking the group what they know of the story of Noah and how the events play out. This would happen in a facilitated conversation using landscape of action questions that deal with the events of the story in a sequence, across time organized according to a particular theme (Carey & Russell, 2003:2). We would then read the story from the book of Genesis.

⁸ I learned about this framework from Rev Alan Storey during a conversation with him in 2010 in Johannesburg.

What Does the Story Teach us About God?

Again, through a facilitated conversation, we would then address landscape of identity questions that look to understanding how the events affect our understanding of identity (Carey and Russell, 2003:6). Questions like, given that there were other flood stories existing in other communities (Fee, Stuart: 1994) what is unique about this flood story, what does this story reveal to us about God, how does it affect our understandings of concepts like sin, evil, justice, punishment. The purpose of this part of the discussion is to open group members to possibilities for challenging dominant discourses and taken for granted ideas and beliefs regarding how things are.

What Does the Story Teach us About Ourselves?

In this conversation, the focus would be on the value of stories and metaphors for revealing the meaning we give to certain events. Questions would be asked around our experiences of, like Noah, going against society's opinions and expectations in 'building boats' and what those boats could be for members of the group, the responsibilities we carry in caring for 'animals on our boat', the storms of life that sometimes threaten to overwhelm us, or that wash away life as we know it, seasons of waiting, like Noah, for the water to subside so we can find our feet on dry land, signs of life and hope that are like the dove and the leaf and disembarking from what we have known to a new place we never intended to go.

This conversation would give members of the group opportunity to share their stories, to begin to experience some of the Narrative methodologies and tools and to begin to explore how they might use story and metaphor to name, map affects and evaluate effects as we will be doing in the next session in the specific area of the church in development.

What Does the Story Teach us About the Relationship between God and Creation.

This conversation will look to justifying our evaluations – why do we respond as we do and what do our understandings of events and stories say about what we value and our identities? This would be an opportunity to summarize some of the

conversations and key themes that have emerged from the group. This would also be an opportunity to introduce collective metaphors and understandings, for the relationship with God is not individual, but between God and creation as a whole. This conversation would lead us into the next section of understanding the Church.

5.3.4 The Church: Who Are We?

Members of the group will be asked to break away in smaller groups of three, and come up with a metaphor that symbolizes or represents the church. They will depict the metaphor graphically through a picture and then explain their chosen metaphor and picture to the wider group. As Stock et al discuss in their work on using drawing in group work, using drawing and painting as a tools to represent stories and ideas 'open up important ways of externalisation based on familiar activities' (Stock et al, 2012:161). It would be emphasized that no one metaphor is right while the others are wrong, but that all are okay, because all form part of the multi-storied understanding that makes up how we think of and relate to the Church. The purpose of this exercise is to begin to name some of the things we value about being the church. The pictures that emerge from the small group times could be included in the final document if the group decides to use and include them.

5.3.5 Novel Practice

The final part of this session will be the reading group interview. Participants will have been asked to engage with a range of material in preparation for the first session, and one person invited to be interviewed. I will ask the person questions about what stood out for them in the material, and why, and in what ways, if any, the material changed their perceptions and understandings on any issues. This will give people an understanding of what the interviews will entail so they will feel less anxious about volunteering to be interviewed, and understand what reading/engaging with material can contribute to the group. It also emphasizes that the group members have knowledges and skills to contribute, rather than me as the leader being the source of 'right information'. Thirdly, this exercise lays the foundations for the outsider witness practices that will form a critical part of the process later on.

5.3.6 Closing

The session will close with a debriefing, and an opportunity for members to reflect on any part of the session that stood out for them. Participants will be offered the chance to write/draw/depict their reflections in a format that could be included in the final document the group authors. We will then discuss next week's session, and how the members can prepare for the session.

5.4 Session Two: Naming and Situating the Problem Story in Context

This session will aim to uncover dominant problem narratives through a focus on the work of naming the problem in the area of the church's involvement in development, with specific attention to the process of externalising the problem. We will look to locate the problem in a context, both generally and specifically, as we begin the conversation around the church's role in development. As the problem is named, and the dominant development discourses of this context identified, the effects of the problem will be mapped, evaluated and justified.

5.4.1 Welcome and Ice-Breaker

In welcoming the group, it is a chance to help people feel relaxed and at ease. The ice breaker will involve participants bringing with them to the session an item that represents for them something of their church's involvement in community work. This will facilitate an opportunity for people to share their stories of how and in what ways they have experienced the church participating in community development work. It can open up opportunities for members to begin to share their values and struggles in the area of the church's involvement in development in their context. It will also begin a conversation around how we understand terms like development, community development and the church's involvement in the work of development.

5.4.2 Defining Moments

In this part of the session, I will facilitate a conversation around what participants identify as defining moments for them in the area of the church's participation in the work of development. Participants will begin by placing themselves along a time-line of association, identifying how long they have been associated with the church, and

how long they understand the church to have been involved in development work in local communities. The conversation will move to defining moments participants have experienced. This will give opportunity for group members to share stories around the roles they have played in community work, as well as how they see and understand the church's role in development work in local communities. It can also provide opportunity for participants to begin to identify and name their hopes and dreams as well as the aspects of the church's involvement in development work they value most. This reminds the group that each member holds experience, skills, and knowledges in the area of the church's involvement in development, and that they are the experts in their experience of the role the church plays in development.

5.4.3 Storms and Waves

From a conversation on defining moments, we will move to a conversation around the storms and waves that have hindered group members' hopes and dreams for community work, as well as the times and situations they have felt overwhelmed, or flooded, by some of the challenges facing the church in the work of development. I will ask curious questions around how their actions/inactions, and the actions/inactions of the church have hindered their plans, hopes and dreams in the area of the church's work in development. These questions will take the form of questions like, looking back over the past five years, what are some of the biggest challenges this church has faced in doing the work of development in this place, what would you say are some of the challenges this church is facing now in doing the work of development in this place, how have the actions/inactions of yourself/the congregation/the wider community contributed to some of these challenges? Through this conversation, I would ask the group members to begin to name some of the struggles and challenges they face in engaging with development through the local church. Some examples of these struggles could be personal experiences of feeling hopeless/feeling overwhelmed, they could be collective struggles of funding/finance limitations or lack of volunteers or broader social struggles like poverty/HIV/unemployment. It will be up to the group to determine what emerges.

5.4.4 Role Play

The session will then move into a role play. This section will be based on a tool known as Narrative Theatre, which was pioneered by Dr Yvonne Sliep and used very

effectively by Narrative practitioners in contexts dealing primarily with HIV and domestic violence (Sliep, 2004). The foundation of Narrative Theatre lies in concepts found in both Narrative Therapy and Forum Theatre (Sliep, 2004:309). In Forum Theatre, it is the audience that generates the scene, and generates discussion based on the action of the characters (Sliep, 2004:309). Meaning is unpacked through both the actors' role play and the audience's participation in and commentary on what is being portrayed 'on-stage' (Sliep, 2004:310). In this way, Narrative Theatre becomes a 'democratic tool that can facilitate dialogue on many different levels' (Sliep, 2004:310). Like Narrative Therapy, Narrative Theatre sees individual actions as being situated within a cultural and sociological context (Sliep, 2004:311) and so is a helpful tool in identifying and recognising the context in which problems are located. Narrative Theatre also draws on Freire's work of 'conscientization...central to which is an awareness of social, political and historical contexts' (Sliep, 2004:311). This brings together the tools of Narrative Practices with some of the hopes of liberation theology, in creating awareness of the contexts out of which challenges and struggles arise. Thirdly, Narrative Theatre aims to 'promote social cohesions and social responsibility' (Sliep, 2004:312) as it encourages people to think beyond the individual to their roles and responsibility within the broader collective, as well as the potential contribution groups can make to broader social issues.

Through this tool of Narrative Theatre, I would invite the group members to participate in a role play, and in doing so, facilitate a process in which members begin to name the problems, and dominant problem narratives as well as being to see the problem as separate from themselves as people – an important part of the work of Narrative Practices (Sliep, 2004:309).

Participants will be invited to take on the characters of some of the challenges they have named, such as poverty, apathy or hopelessness. They will determine a context in which these characters will have a conversation and then audience members and myself will interview/interact with the characters as we unpack some of these problems, as well as the contexts in which they thrive. The purpose of this role play is to participate in the work of conscientization, in helping members identify and name some of the dominant problems and challenges facing the church in doing the

work of development. This will be the work of the first Mediation, as identified by Boff and Boff, the socio-analytical mediation, where the tough questions around why the poor are the poor are asked (Boff & Boff, 1987:22). It is hoped that through the externalising method of role play, common discourses for understanding why people are poor, such as 'poverty as vice' (the direct fault of individual laziness, ignorance or wickedness); 'poverty as backwardness' (the result of lack of progress) and 'poverty as oppression' (economic exploitation) (Boff & Boff, 1987:26-27) will be given space to be recognised as 'problematic identity conclusions' (Carey & Russell, 2003:1) and unpacked and engaged with as such because these discourses influence the way people engage with the poor and with the role of the church in development. Where significant moments occur, these portions of dialogue will be either transcribed as dialogue, or summarized by the group and kept as an option to include in the final document.

5.4.5 Interview

After the role play, a group member will be interviewed by myself on their engagement with the material they selected for the week. It will be an opportunity for that participant to share some of their story and experience, their skills and knowledges, and remind the group of the principles of Collective Narrative Practice that the stories shared by individuals and groups represent not only individual experience, but also the effects of broader social issues which can enable those who are facing challenges to make a meaningful contribution to the lives of others who share a similar struggle. This can result in an increased sense of shared responsibility and agency (Denborough, 2008:200). This interview also continues to grow the group in experiencing outsider witness groups, which will form a significant part of the process later on.

5.4.6 Closing

The session will close with a debriefing, and an opportunity for members to reflect on any part of the session that stood out for them. Participants will be offered the chance to write/draw/depict their reflections in a format that could be included in the final document the group authors. We will then discuss next week's session, and how the members can prepare for the session.

5.5 Session Three: Underlying Theory

5.5.1 Hope: Re-Authoring Conversations

A Re-Authoring conversation is the 'co-creation of alternative story-lines of identity' (Carey & Russell, 2003:2) and it is founded on the understanding that a single story is not a complete picture of any person's experience. This means there will always be other story-lines that can be created from the events that make up our lives and experiences (Carey & Russell, 2003:2). The alternative story lines are not invented, but rather are an interpretation of events into a theme that speak of the existing knowledges, skills and capacities already existing within people (Carey & Russell, 2003:2). Re-Authoring conversations are those that enable people to name and 'thicken' the alternate stories and so give voice to other possibilities within their contexts and life experiences, as well as the ways in which these stories can contribute to broader social issues and a greater common good. There are a number of tools one can use to help people participate in re-authoring conversations, as alternate story lines begin to emerge and be developed. This will be the focus of the next three sessions.

5.5.2 Hermeneutical Analysis: God's Voice, a faith perspective

Through Narrative Practices, the group will be encouraged to address questions around God's voice in the work of the church in development, and plans, hopes and dreams for the poor. It is also through hearing the voice of the poor, and allowing their voice to speak into our understanding of development work that we might get a greater sense of God's perspective, as solidarity with the poor is one of the key themes of liberation theology, which takes seriously God's preference for and solidarity with the poor (Boff and Boff, 1987:43), Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God (Boff and Boff, 1987:52) and the role of the church as both a sign and instrument of liberation (Boff and Boff, 1987:59). It is our theology, our faith in and understanding of God and God's work in the world that has the greatest potential to shape our actions and inform our work as the church in development. In remembering practices we are seeking to apply the hermeneutical lens of liberation theology: hearing the voices of God and others as we interpret faith and scripture in a way that shapes our development work as a local church community of faith.

5.6 Session Three: Identifying Alternative Storylines

5.6.1 Welcome and Ice-Breaker

I will welcome the group to help people reconnect with each other and disconnect from the cares and concerns of the week. The ice-breaker will involve group members bringing with them something that represents or symbolizes a sadness or challenge that has emerged for them from the previous week's conversations. This aims to pick up from the previous session of naming problem stories, as we move forward to identifying shining moments and thickening alternate possibilities.

5.6.2 Bible Study: Jesus Walks on Water

The Bible study in this session will focus on the story from Matthew 14:22-33 of Jesus walking on water, and inviting Peter to do the same. It is a story that, like the story of Noah, holds great potential for metaphor, engages our story-telling abilities and is also an opportunity to keep the faith perspective in our minds as we continue the conversations. As people of faith, our theology informs our action, and so theological reflection must form a central part of this process.

Like the study in Session One, this bible study will be a theological reflection in the form of asking curious questions of the passage that revolve around what the passage reveals to us about God, about ourselves and about the relationship between God and Creation.

Introduction

We would begin with a group re-telling of the story through asking the group what they know of the story of Jesus and Peter walking on water in the gospels and how the events play out. This would happen in a facilitated conversation using landscape of action questions that deal with the events of the story in a sequence. We would then read the story from the book of Matthew 14:22-33.

What Does the Story Teach us About God?

Again, through a facilitated conversation, we would then address landscape of identity questions that look to understanding how the events affect our understanding

of identity (Carey and Russell, 2003:6). Questions like, what does it say to you about God that the disciples were going to 'the other side', what do Jesus moments of solitude and interaction with the crowds tell you, what does Jesus' call to Peter to come out onto the water say to you, and how do the various commands Jesus gives to the disciples in this story shape your picture of God? The purpose of this part of the discussion is to open group members to possibilities for alternate voices and alternate stories to begin to be spoken.

What Does the Story Teach us About Ourselves?

In this conversation, the focus would be on the shining moments and resulting values that emerge from the reflection on the passage. Questions would be asked around the moments of courage, resilience, faith and doubt revealed in the story and around group members' experiences of having to practice faith, step out of the boat, hold on to Jesus and be okay with doubts and uncertainties because of the acceptance of Jesus. The metaphors of the boat, the waves, the storm and going somewhere new can be carried on here from the previous reflection on Noah's ark, allowing the themes and stories to be developed and thickened, and giving space for alternate story-lines and themes to emerge.

This conversation would give members of the group opportunity as they share their stories, to begin to identify shining moments in their experience of the church's work in development, and some of the skills, knowledges, capacities and opportunities that already exist within the church for hopeful action going forward.

What Does the Story Teach us About the Relationship between God and Creation.

This conversation will look to justifying our evaluations – why do we respond as we do and what do our understandings of events and stories say about what we value and our identities? We would discuss aspects such as why particular values are important, and what this says about the group as a community of faith. This would be an opportunity to summarize some of the conversations and key themes that have emerged from the group reflections. This would also be an opportunity to further develop collective metaphors and understandings, as the group begins to connect

their individual experiences with the experiences of others, and the church as a community of faith. This will lead us into the next section of how individual stories and experiences are shared by people other than just ourselves and can lead to shared responsibility and action for a cause other than just our own.

5.6.3 Hero Book Activity: Shining Moments

Participants will be invited to draw a picture of a time when they felt the church community overcame, even in some small way, some of the challenges to development work identified through the role play in Session Two. This activity is adapted from a programme called *Making a Hero (active citizen) Book* (Morgan, 2009) which uses Narrative tools and techniques to help young people recognise and overcome challenges in their lives to reach their goals. The book encourages participants to draw an actual moment in time, marked with a day and date, when 'things felt...more hopeful' (Morgan, 2009:47). In the same way, group members will be asked to think of and draw an actual moment they consider to be a hopeful moment with regard to their experience of the church's involvement in the work of development. Group members will then share these moments with each other in a process of telling and retelling. In pairs, participants will share their moments with another, who will then retell the story to the wider group. This is another opportunity to participate in a form of outsider witness practices, and give participants a chance to hear their moments of 'walking on water' retold. These pictures could be included in the final document the group will collaborate on in the final session.

5.6.4 Creating a Tree of Life

From the individual stories of shining moments, the group will then work collectively on a Tree of Life. The Tree of Life is a Narrative Practice which invites people to talk about their lives 'in ways that make them stronger' (Wingard, 2001). Also originally developed for a community context through work being done with children who had lost parents to HIV/AIDS, the Tree of Life aims to help participants acknowledge their dreams and believe in their abilities to reach those dreams (Georgia *et al.* 2009).

In their document outlining the Tree of Life process they facilitated, Georgia *et al.* explain The Tree of Life as an exercise based on the idea of using the tree as a

metaphor to tell stories about one's life. As Denborough affirms, Collective Narrative Practice methodologies often emerge from and build on the everyday, ordinary aspects of daily life (Denborough, 2015:98) In the Tree of Life, participants are invited to think of a tree, its roots, trunk, branches, leaves, etc., and imagine that each part of the Tree represents something about their life (Georgia *et al.* 2009). Participants are invited to draw a tree where the roots of the tree describe where they come from, their family history, names of people who have had significant influence in their lives. The Ground represents where participants live now and something of what daily life looks like. The trunk is a place to identify skills and abilities while the branches are to express hopes, dreams and aspirations for life. The leaves symbolize significant people in participants lives and fruit on the tree symbolize gifts that have been given – either material or intangible (Georgia *et al.* 2009).

The group will be invited to participate in this process, but to create a tree of life for their local church community from the perspective of its role in development – its historical roots and significant influences; something of the life of the church now in its grounding; the skills and abilities identified in the trunk, and the hopes and dreams of the community communicated in the branches. The leaves will be for significant people within the life of the church and the fruit the gifts that have been given to the church by anyone the participants identify. This process hopes to reaffirm the strengths and abilities, as well as the values, hopes and dreams of the church community in the area of the church's involvement in the work of development. This tree could also be included in the final document.

5.6.5 Interview

From here we will move into an interview with another participant based on the material they have engaged with during the week. Once again, it is an opportunity for a group member to share their story and experiences, a chance for the group to participate in outsider witness practices and to further develop a sense of share responsibility leading to shared action.

5.6.6 Closing

The session will close with a debriefing, and an opportunity for members to reflect on any part of the session that stood out for them. Participants will be offered the chance to write/draw/depict their reflections in a format that could be included in the final document the group authors. We will then discuss next week's session, and how the members can prepare for the session.

5.7 Sessions Four and Five: Underlying Theory

5.7.1 De-Centred: Re-Membering

The term 're-membering' first used by Barbara Myerhof to describe a special kind of remembering where one acknowledges the people who belong to our life stories (Carey & Russell, 2002:1). Michael White the adapted this process of re-membering and included it in his Narrative work (Carey & Russell, 2002:2) from which concepts like a Team of Life and Club of Life have evolved. Re-membering recognises that there are people who have played a role in shaping us and our stories and identities and there are some voices to whom we give more space to speak than others (Carey & Russell, 2002:2). Through the Narrative Practice of Re-membering, people are invited to think intentionally about which people and which voices are given authority to speak in their lives and shape their understanding of themselves. Through accepting agency regarding whose voices have influence in our lives, we place ourselves within the space of our preferred identity alongside significant others who will provide support for actions that emerge from who we understand ourselves to be (Carey & Russell, 2002: 3). Through the processes of re-membering, these sessions will aim to give space to the group to identify which voices have been given a dominant voice in the story of their church's work in development, as well as an opportunity to hear other voices and add those voices to the understanding of the church in the work of development.

5.8 Session Four: Voices of Hope

5.8.1 Welcome and Introduction and Ice-Breaker

The session will begin with welcoming the group and welcoming the visitors who will join us for the session. This session will take the form of outsider-witness groups,

and will follow the format of telling, retelling and retelling the retelling, as described by White in his Maps of Narrative Practice (White, 2007). Particular people who have been connected with the church community (but are not necessarily members of the church community) through the church's involvement in development work in the local community will be invited to participate in the process by telling their stories. These people could include our community worker, and participants in the church's community development programmes. To begin the session, and to help everyone feel relaxed about sharing their stories, group members will be asked to bring with them one item that represents for them their family or where they are from.

5.8.2 Outsider Witness: Telling, Re-Telling and Re-Telling of the Re-Telling

We will then participate in the process of hearing another's story. The guests invited to be part of the group will engage in a facilitated conversation with myself, while the members of the group listen as the person tells his/her story, including their connection with the church. Then, the group will participate in a facilitated conversation with me about what they heard – a form of retelling the story.

This process will allow opportunity for new voices to be heard and given space to influence how the group members see and understand themselves and the church in its work in development. It will allow space for a new perspective on some of the issues and challenges that have emerged through the process so far as previously untold stories are given voice, and allow new voices to speak into the journey as the group seeks to hear the voice of God.

5.8.3 Debriefing

This process will end with a debriefing, allowing space for participants to share their reflections on the process. These reflections can be formatted for inclusion in the document, should the group choose to include them. Part of this debriefing will include the interview, as another perspective is offered on material that the group is engaging with.

5.8.4 Closing

The session will close with a discussion on next week's session, and how the members can prepare for the session.

5.9 Session Five: Legacy

5.9.1 Welcome and Ice-Breaker

I will welcome the group, and as an ice-breaker group members will have been asked in advance to bring one item that for them represents a hopeful aspect of the future of the church's work in development.

5.9.2 Bible Study: Moses

We will then participate in a facilitated conversation around the story of Moses as a baby from Exodus 2:1-10, who was placed in a basket by his mother and found by the Pharaoh's daughter. We will follow the same framework of asking questions of the passage, and what it tells us about God, about ourselves and about the relationship between God and creation.

Introduction

We will begin with a group re-telling of the story through asking the group what they know of the story of Moses, particularly the story of Moses as a baby. This would happen in a facilitated conversation using landscape of action questions that deal not only with the events of the story in a sequence, but also with some of the contextual reality surrounding the situation of the Israelites in Egypt at that time. We would then read the story from the book of Exodus 2:1-10.

What Does the Story Teach us About God?

Again, through a facilitated conversation, we would then address landscape of identity questions that look to understanding how the events affect our understanding of identity (Carey and Russell, 2003:6). Questions like, given what we know about the role Moses played in the life of the nation of Israel, where do you see God at work in this story, how does your understanding of the relationship God has with God's people shape your picture of God, what might this passage teach us about

God and God's purposes? The purpose of this part of the discussion is to open group members to the concept of legacy as something that is happening now that influences what could be possible in the future. This conversation will also continue to keep open the possibilities for alternate voices and alternate stories to begin to be spoken.

What Does the Story Teach us About Ourselves?

In this conversation, the focus would be on the shining moments and resulting values that emerge from the reflection on the passage. Questions would be asked around the multi-storied moments of courage, resilience, faith and doubt revealed in the story and around group members' experiences of having to make difficult decisions under tough conditions, having to take action for the sake of someone other than themselves, and how their actions have enabled a certain kind of legacy to be set in motion. The metaphors of the political turmoil, Moses' makeshift boat, the action of his mother, his being set on the river then rescued by an unlikely person, and the way God used Moses in the life of his people can be explored and developed, and linked with previous themes from scripture that have emerged, allowing the themes and stories to be developed and thickened.

This conversation would give members of the group opportunity as they share their stories, to thicken shining moments in their experience of the church's work in development, and some of the skills, knowledges, capacities and opportunities that already exist within the church for hopeful action going forward.

What Does the Story Teach us About the Relationship Between God and Creation.

This conversation will look to justifying our evaluations – why do we respond as we do and what do our understandings of events and stories say about what we value and our identity as a community of faith known as the church? We would discuss aspects such as why particular values are important, and what this says about the church's work in development. This would be an opportunity to summarize some of the conversations and key themes that have emerged from the group reflections. This would also be an opportunity to further develop collective metaphors and

understandings, as the group begins to connect their individual experiences with the experiences of others, and the church as a community of faith. It is at this stage that the group would be encouraged to think about the kinds of actions they could begin to take and be involved in that would give expression to some of the values and themes they have identified. This will remind the group of how individual stories and experiences are shared by people other than just ourselves and can lead to shared responsibility and action for a cause other than just our own. It is also at this stage in the process that some themes of power, privilege and dominance can be explored. Raheim eloquently notes that, unless we examine power dynamics and our place within these systems, we fail to notice how we unknowingly impose our ways of doing things onto others (Raheim, 2016:3).

5.9.3 Legacy: Our Story-in-the-Making

We will then move into a conversation around the idea of legacy as a 'story-in-the-making' (Hancock & Epston, 2013:46), where the 'sought after future' of the church's role in development, as developed and thickened through the conversations on shining moments, is 'remembered into the present' as well as passed on to those who will follow after (Hancock & Epston, 2013:46). This conversation will take the form of a 'Narrative Enquiry Approach' (Hancock & Epston, 2013:47) where people are invited to 'tell the stories that deeply matter' (Hancock & Epston, 2013:48) and in doing so orient the church towards a preferred, 'sough-after; future' (Hancock & Epston, 2013:48).

This conversation, inspired by a strategic planning workshop run by Frances Hancock with a small community organisation (Hancock, 2013), will explore questions that deal with collective ability to plan strategically for a desired future. We will ask questions around the participants' previous experiences of planning strategically to reach a goal, reminding the group of the skills and knowledges that already exist. I would then invite participants to role play by describing the church to another in a way that would draw attention to the way the church has made a difference in the lives of people, groups and communities in the specific area of its involvement in development work (Hancock & Epston, 2013:50). From here, I will invite participants to identify one defining moment that will give insight on the legacy

of the church's involvement in the work of development that they would want to see carried on into the future, and then through the process of hearing the stories of these defining moments, to give the legacy a name (Hancock & Epston, 2013:51). As Hancock notes, 'to name or characterise something is to bring it into being through language' (Hancock & Epston, 2013:51). Through the reflections on legacy, the group will be encouraged to consider how the desired legacy motivates, shapes and informs actions of the present. The purpose of this conversation is to expand the themes of collective action that emerge from the shared desire for a particular future for the church's role in the work of development. There is scope here for conversations around the role of the church in development, different models of doing development, and what the local church doing development work could look like. These ideas for action can emerge from the shared values and dreams that have emerged from the stories, and be shaped and informed by a particular way of identity thinking: about God, ourselves and the church as a community of faith. This part of the session will conclude with the group writing a letter to their church community, as well as to other churches that share similar struggles, about the legacy they hope to leave and why. This will help move their individual experiences further into the collective. The letters can also be included in the group's document.

5.9.4 Interview

The final part of this session will be the interview. I will ask the person questions about what stood out for them in the material they engaged with, and why, and in what ways, if any, the material changed their perceptions and understandings on any issues.

5.9.5 Closing

The session will close with a debriefing, and an opportunity for members to reflect on any part of the session that stood out for them. Participants will be offered the chance to write/draw/depict their reflections in a format that could be included in the final document the group authors. We will then discuss next week's session, and how the members can prepare for the session.

5.10 Sessions Six and Seven: Underlying Theory

5.10.1 Active Citizenship: Definitional Ceremonies

Michael White explains a definitional ceremony as a process that 'guides the structuring of forums in which certain persons have the opportunity to engage in a telling of some of the significant stories of their lives...stories that are...relevant to matters of identity' (White, 2000:5). While we have participated in various definitional ceremonies in various ways, the final two sessions will focus on these ceremonies as ways of linking stories with the lives of others, continuing the rich descriptions of new ways of being the church involved in development and giving practical expressions to preferred ways of being the church involved in development (White, 2005:6-7). The definitional ceremonies in the last two sessions will take the form of an outsider witness group, where participants have opportunities to share the story of their journey, and a closing ceremony of working collaboratively on the group document.

5.10.2 Practical Application

It is here that we further the develop the collective call to action that emerges from the journey of naming, identifying alternate stories, giving space to new voices and verbalising a hoped-for future. It is hoped that this process will invite participants and churches as a whole into new kinds of action because people are beginning to tell new kinds of stories about what it means to be the church involved in the work of development. It is hoped that this process will now lead the group members to begin to ask 'what now' questions as a new way of responding and applying their stories.

It is also as we begin to think in terms of practical response, that we remember the post-structuralist stance of narrative, which positions people as experts in their own lives (White, 1997). In his work on De-Colonising our Lives, Akinyela discusses how Freire described experiences as being either an experience of oppression or an experience of liberation (Akinyela, 2002:38). When a group leader imposes their own meaning, ideas and consequent actions on a group, Akinyela identifies that as an oppressive experience (Akinyela, 2002:38) leading ultimately to oppressive action. When others are given the freedom to be the experts in their own lives, making meaning from their experiences and recognising action that can emerge in response is what Akinyela would identify as an experience of liberation that would result in

further actions of liberation (Akinyela, 2002:38). So it is that the practical response must emerge from the work of the group. It is this that holds the power to begin what Korten describes as a people's movement.

5.11 Session Six: Outsider Witness Groups

5.11.1 Welcome, Introduction and Ice-Breaker

I will welcome the group, as well as the visitors who have joined us for the session. This session will take the form of an outsider witness group, and so a community of care will be gathered for the process. White is specific in pointing out how important 'audience identification and recruitment is' (White, 2009:7) so the process of inviting outsiders to be part of the process will need to be a careful one. The Community of Care (audience) will consist of significant people in the lives of the group members, in both a personal capacity as well as in the context of their place within the church community. People such as spouses, home group leaders, and significant members of the congregation will be invited to be part of the outsider witness ceremony. During the welcome and introduction, I will re-explain the process and how people can participate.

5.11.2 Outsider Witness Ceremony with Community of Care

The process begins with a facilitated group conversation led by myself with the participants of the original group. In this conversation I will invite members of the group to tell their stories of the journey they have been on over the past six weeks, some of the problem stories identified as well as new stories and preferred identities that have emerged. While the journey will be a personal one for participants, I will encourage the conversation to stay within the realm of the collective identity of the church's role in development.

After this telling, the audience will then engage in a re-telling through a facilitated conversation that I direct. The group members then become an audience to the re-telling. Usually, the re-telling reveals significant insights that add to the stories of the group, and links the stories of the group with the lives of those who have been invited to listen and re-tell (White, 2009:6).

The final stage is another re-telling, where the community of care return to being an audience and the group participants re-tell what they have heard. It is hoped that this process will enable the new ways of thinking spoken by the group to be acknowledged and authenticated through the responses of others (White, 2009:11). It also allows significant people to be re-remembered and their voices included in the shape of actions going forward (White, 2009:12).

5.11.3 Letters to Participants

After the ceremony, I will invite the audience members to write a letter to the group, sharing some of their experiences of the process. These letters can be included in the final document.

5.11.4 Interview

There will be no interview in this session, as the telling and re-tellings can include the ways groups members have engaged with the group material.

5.11.5 Closing

We will close the session by thanking the community of care, and discussing preparations for next week's final session.

5.12 Session Seven: Closing

5.12.1 Welcome and Ice-Breaker

I will welcome the group, and outline the plan for our final session together, which will involve a final bible study reflection and collating the group document.

5.12.2 Bible Study: Jesus Calms the Storm

We will then participate in a facilitated conversation around the story of Jesus calming the storm, found in Matthew 8:18-27. We will follow the same framework of asking questions of the passage, and what it tells us about God, about ourselves and about the relationship between God and creation.

Introduction

We will begin with a group re-telling of the story through asking the group what they know of the story of Jesus calming the storm. This would happen in a facilitated conversation using landscape of action questions that deal with the events of the story in a sequence. We would then read the story from the book of Matthew 8:18-27.

What Does the Story Teach us About God?

Again, through a facilitated conversation, we would then address landscape of identity questions that look to understanding how the events affect our understanding of identity (Carey and Russell, 2003:6). Questions around the themes of travelling to a new place, new understandings of discipleship and what it looks like to follow Jesus, the metaphor of being in a boat going somewhere and being caught in a storm, Jesus responses of sleeping in the boat and then calming the wind and waves can be used to explore what this passage teaches us about God, and how these reflections might give new insight into the nature and character of God. The purpose of this part of the discussion is to open group members to the hopeful possibilities of doing something new as part of our discipleship, because we are open to God saying and doing new things.

What Does the Story Teach us About Ourselves?

In this conversation, the experience of the group members can be shared as they reflect on what the stories reveals about humanity. The focus would be on the multi-storied nature of our lives, the moments of storm and calm, of work and rest, of calling and courage, and of invitation and faith. It will be an opportunity to consolidate some of the themes that have been developed through our theological reflections and how these themes add to the stories of our own lives.

This conversation would give members of the group opportunity as they share their stories, to consolidate thinking around some of the responses of the church in areas of development, and the preferred action that can emerge as a result because of the skills, knowledges and capacities that already exist.

What Does the Story Teach us About the Relationship Between God and Creation.

This conversation will look to justifying our evaluations – why do we respond as we do and what do our understandings of events and stories say about what we value and our identity as a community of faith known as the church? We would discuss aspects such as why particular values are important, and what this says about the church's work in development. Again, this would be an opportunity to summarize some of the conversations and key themes that have emerged from the group reflections. This would also be another opportunity to further develop collective metaphors and understandings, as the group continues to connect their individual experiences with the experiences of others, and the church as a community of faith. It is at this stage that the group would be encouraged to think in terms of concrete actions as they consider the way forward from this process.

5.12.3 Collating the Group Document

We would then move through the process of collating the group document. All the documents created over the past seven weeks will be available for inclusion, as well as any other documents, drawings, letters or reflections that have emerged as a part of the process. The group will collectively decide what should be included, in what order and why. This document will be collated and compiled, with the members of the group listed as its authors. The document will be copied and made available to the members of the group, as well as a copy kept at the church for congregation members to look through.

5.12.4 Closing Ceremony – an Interview with the facilitator

The closing ceremony will involve the group interviewing me, as the group facilitator. During the week they will have had the opportunity to prepare questions for reflection, and they will facilitate a conversation where I, as the group facilitator, am invited to share my thoughts, reflections and stories on the process.

5.12.5 Closing

The session will close and the members thanked for being part of the process. We will share in a meal together to end off the journey.

5.13 Conclusion

These are the seven maps that I have adapted from Narrative Practices in light of the research done here on Narrative Therapy as well as on the development discourse and the role of the church in development. These Narrative Practices can be understood as the practical application of the foundational theories of Narrative Therapy within the context of a local church community. The purpose of these maps is to be able to apply Collective Narrative Practices within the context of a local church congregation . The maps have aimed to move a group of participants who are members of a local church congregation through a process of externalising conversations, re-authoring conversations, re-membering opportunities and definitional ceremonies. The purpose is for these experiences of Collective Narrative Practice to enable new conversations around issues arising from the role of the church in the work of development. The following chapter will conclude this research through a reflection on and evaluation of the maps, in order to answer this research's question of the extent to which Collective Narrative Practices can facilitate re-authoring conversations around the church's identity and role in development work.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The focus of this research has been an investigation into Collective Narrative Practices, in order to examine the extent to which these practices can facilitate re-authoring conversations around the local church's role in development. We have unpacked and examined some of the foundations of Narrative Therapy, and looked specifically at the principles of Collective Narrative Practice and their contribution to groups and communities, as well as the broader contribution of these foundations and principles to development. In doing so, the focus of this research has been on the contribution of Narrative Therapy and the emerging Narrative Practices and their potential to create space for new conversations within a local church congregation. In investigating the development discourse, we have traced the journey of development and looked at the specific contribution of theology to the development discourse as well as how our thinking about God and faith informs our understanding of development and our role as a community of followers of Jesus within this movement. We also examined the question of who we mean by church, and what we mean we talk about the church's role in development.

From here, this research explores the areas of overlap and points of intersection between Narrative Practices, Theology and Development and in identifying the specific shared values, establishes an interdisciplinary approach to identify what maps of Narrative Practice emerge. It is these maps that will be used to apply Collective Narrative Practices in local church contexts, with the aim of facilitating re-authoring conversations around the church's role in development. Suggested maps are outlined, taking into account the shared principles and values of the three disciplines, looking to bring these together in a practically applied series of workshops, facilitated in the context of a local Methodist church congregation.

We turn now to the final chapter of this research, which will include a summary of the main points and findings of the research, an evaluation of these findings in light of the research question and other research done in this field. We will then address some of the challenges facing this research as we engage critically with these findings and

their implications for a broader field. The chapter will close with some recommendations for practical application and the potential contribution of this research to a range of contexts, and a final conclusion.

6.2 The Purpose of the Research: The Research Question

The purpose of the research is to explore the application of Collective Narrative Practices in the context of a community of faith, in order to facilitate dialogue around the church's role in development. Narrative Practices are being used in a number of contexts as a tool to enable groups to uncover dominant discourses, engage with issues of identity and preferred identity, and discover a means of action to address the challenges and struggles they face that allow for a greater contribution to broader social issues. Having encountered the potential Narrative Practices hold for enabling groups of people to think in new ways and be moved to new kinds of actions, I began this research to discover if Narrative Practices could be applied to a community of faith within the context of a local church congregation, specifically the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. And when applied, could these practices facilitate new dialogue around the role of local congregations in development?

The mission of the church throughout scripture includes ministry to the poor. The Old Testament law is concerned with justice, gives direct instruction regarding fair practices and how the people of Israel are to engage with the poor, and reveals what many scholars see as God's preferential option for the poor (Fee, Stuart: 1994). The New Testament continues this approach in Jesus' teaching and engagement with both religious leaders and those who are regarded as materially poor, and in the early church's mandate to care for the poor through sharing resources. Throughout its history, the church has been involved in caring for the poor and oppressed, and the Methodist Church specifically, founded upon the teachings of John Wesley, has an emphasis on standing in solidarity with the poor.

While the church largely may have good intentions, my own experience as a minister in a range of local church congregations and contexts has revealed significant misunderstandings and a range of interpretations around what it means for the church to be active in the world in the work of development. The result has been

either a focus on evangelizing (saving souls for heaven, rather than for a better life on earth), or church development work that is limited to local community projects that often deal in unhelpful, unsustainable methods of helping, that lead ultimately to a deep sense of despair and being completely overwhelmed by the extent of poverty and the inability of any form of local action to affect a lasting change and make a significant difference in the bigger picture.

It is from this personal experience of local churches' struggles with what it means to be the church active in the world, and what the church can and should do when it comes to development, that I began to ask how local churches can begin to think in new ways about development, and the role of the church in that development work. It is the tools provided through Narrative Therapy and the Narrative Practices that emerge from an understanding of the application of Narrative Therapy that have provided the focus for this research. And so this research question has brought together the three threads of Narrative Practices, theological reflection and the development discourses, in order to explore if Collective Narrative Practices can be applied to local churches in order to enable communities of faith to engage in new ways with issues that arise from the development discourse. The research design has followed this framework, in investigating firstly the principles of Narrative Therapy and Collective Narrative Practice, and then engaging with the development discourse with a particular focus on theological engagement with development and understanding the church in development. The final step was the design of the maps of Narrative Practice that emerged from the research, for it is this practical application of these intentionally adapted maps that will facilitate re-authoring conversations around the church's role in development.

6.3 Summary of my Findings

This research used a three part framework of Social Analysis, Hermeneutical Analysis and Practical Application to address the research question. A summary of the findings of this research are as follows:

6.3.1 Narrative Practices have the potential to be a powerful tool for analysing social contexts.

Taking a post-structuralist approach, Narrative locates problems within a particular context, using metaphor to understand the meaning we give the stories we tell. This gives the Narrative Approach a universal relevance in that the tools can be applied in many, varied contexts. Being de-centred, the one telling the story is the expert in his/her own life and collaborates with others to de-construct taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs, allowing space for new stories to emerge.

6.3.2 Narrative Practices have the potential to encourage new ways of reflecting theologically on development, and the church's role in development.

Questions around the church's ability to engage meaningfully in the public sphere, the role of the church in the development discourse and the shift in the Methodist focus away from engaging with the poor have revealed the need for a new way of doing theology, and of thinking theologically about the church's role in development. The contribution of Narrative Practices to groups and communities of increased awareness of local and shared knowledges, of broader social issues and of agency, as well as the concepts of reasonable hope, and compassionate witnessing all look to challenging dominant discourses, and taken for granted ways of doing things, so that new stories and new ways of being and doing can emerge. When these practices are applied from a faith perspective, new ways of understanding the work of God and the role of the church in the world are given space to emerge. The research of scholars and theologians explored through this investigation has discussed the need for a new model of theological engagement. The Hermeneutical Analysis, looked to theological reflection to shape and inform our actions.

6.3.3 Narrative Practices have potential to move people to new kinds of action.

This research has explored the gap that seems to exist between the current theological reflection on development praxis and the development discourse, and the actual practices of local churches. The development movement has changed over

the decades, with significant contributions being made by theologians, economist and development scholars alike, with new ways of thinking about development and its application and affects emerging and taking shape. However, theological reflection does not seem to have translated into practical action at the local church level, and many members of local church congregations are either stuck in outdated and unhelpful ways of engaging with poor communities and development issues, or have withdrawn from any form of social engagement because of the overwhelming sense of hopelessness and despair that things will never change. This has certainly been my experience in ministry in local congregations. Development theories, such as the work of Korten (1990) and Sen (1999), and the theological reflection and engagement with these works on themes such as public theology and the re-emergence of liberation theology have revealed the need for development to be more than economic growth, and to become the work of the people, all people. Narrative Practices, and particularly Collective Narrative Practices, affirm the value of people's movements to bring about broader social change. Shared stories reveal broader social issues, to which there can be a shared response that draws on shared knowledge and skill of those affected. Including and enabling all people to make a contribution become forms of local social action, that leave a legacy, a new story, for those who are to come. The work of analysing contexts and thinking theologically bears fruit in the way it is applied through practical action.

6.3.4 Narrative Practices, applied in the context of a local church in order to facilitate re-authoring conversations around development need to include the following four elements:

- a. Conscientization through externalising conversations: locating problems outside of people but within a social context.
- b. Hope through re-authoring conversations: giving space for new stories to emerge that tell of new ways of being and doing as a community of faith who believe in and follow Jesus
- c. De-centred approach through re-remembering conversations: allowing other voices to speak in new ways, and so re-shape our thinking and doing

d. Agency as active citizens through definitional ceremonies: enabling the new stories to be spoken to communities of concern, in order to mobilize the broader community to action.

6.4 Answering the Research Question: Evaluation of the Findings

These four elements bring together the three disciplines that have shaped this research: Narrative Practices, Development and Theology. And it is these elements that have emerged as the areas of overlap and points of intersection between the three disciplines. So it is with these in mind that the maps of Narrative Practice are adapted and a strategy designed and suggested for applying Collective Narrative Practices in a local church context to facilitate new dialogue around the church's role in development. It is these four themes and the adapted Maps of Narrative Practice that have emerged as the answer to the research question: The extent to which Narrative Practices open up new conversations about the church and development is in the way members of local congregations are made aware of issues (conscientized) relating to development, justice and poverty through sharing stories; the hope they can give voice to through speaking new stories; the inclusion of other voices (de-centred) that can give rich descriptions of alternate narratives in shared skills and knowledge; and the agency each person, and the community of faith as a whole has to become active citizens working for a common good.

When examined in the light of other research done in the fields of both Narrative Practices and Theology and Development, there are some points worth noting. While Narrative Practices may be a helpful tool for analysing social contexts, they are not the only tool. And while Narrative Practices have the potential to encourage new ways of thinking theologically about development, it is still the people participating in the process that must be willing to do the work. No matter how refreshing the practices may seem, or how great the potential they appear to have, there still needs to be a willingness on the part of the people to journey honestly through the process of participating in Narrative Practices, and a willingness to have old ways of thinking and doing critically examined, and potentially re-shaped. Doing things in new ways is not something that has come easily to local church congregations, so just because the tool is useful, that does not mean people will want to use it. It is also worth noting that even though Narrative Practices look to move people to new kinds of action, one

cannot predict or pre-determine the kind of actions that will emerge from the process. The nature of both Narrative Therapy and people's movements is that they emerge spontaneously and naturally from a process that cannot be contrived or scripted. What the practical action will be that comes out of the application of Narrative Practices in local congregations is something that cannot be predicted or predetermined. Where this research offers a new or possibly unique contribution is the bringing together of the three disciplines of Narrative, Theology and Development, and the four themes that have emerged that make it possible for Narrative Practices to be applied in a local church congregation around the subject of the church's role in development. I have learnt that these four themes have a role to play within local congregations in enabling people and communities of faith to engage meaningfully and honestly with the church's role in development, and so move through Kaete Weingarten's 'Witness Positions Grid'. Without conscientization, asking tough questions of dominant narratives and increased awareness of social context, and socio-political contributions to the challenges of both poverty and development, people will only ever remain in positions of being unaware and unempowered. Without including the knowledge, skills, voices and stories of others (de-centring), people may be empowered, but unaware of how to engage helpfully with the development discourse. Without hope, without a sure and solid motivation for why and how to join with God in the work God is doing in the world for all people, but especially the poor and marginalized (a hermeneutical lens), people will remain unempowered to address the injustices of which they have become aware (a despairing place to be!). It is when these themes come together, where awareness meets empowerment that people find themselves active citizens, taking their place in the story.

6.5 Limitations and Challenges of the Research

The most obvious and significant limitation and challenge of this research is that it remains a theory that has yet to be practically applied. While the maps have been clearly designed and outlined, based on the four themes, they remain a theory that can only be evaluated in theory. The reasons for doing this research via non-empirical means was outlined in chapter one, and those reasons remain valid: in order to do justice to the process of Narrative Therapy and the scope of this research, a thorough investigation such as this had to be done first before the maps

could be detailed and applied. The journey of practically applying these maps in the context of a local church congregation is a process that will be unpredictable in the specific action they yield. This research can claim though that through the application of these maps of Collective Narrative Practices, the themes of conscientization, hope, a de-centred approach and agency will create space for analysis of the social context, a hermeneutical analysis of theology and development and potential for practical action.

So in answering the research question, the extent to which Narrative Practices open up new conversations about the church and development is in the way members of local congregations are made aware of issues (conscientized) relating to development, justice and poverty through sharing stories; the hope they can give voice to through speaking new stories; the inclusion of other voices (de-centred) that can give rich descriptions of alternate narratives in shared skills and knowledge; and the agency each person, and the community of faith as a whole has to become active citizens working for a common good. How these shifting attitudes are measured will be seen in the practical action that emerges from the process and evolves over time within the life of the church. It is here that an empirical research study would begin.

A second challenge this research faces is the possibility of applying these maps in contexts other than and broader than my own. They have been designed based on certain assumptions made from reflecting on my own context: that of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Not having reflected critically on other contexts, congregations and denominations, it may not be a simple thing to apply them in the context of another church. However, that being said, the four themes that have emerged in the findings of this research are applicable and relevant across a range of church contexts. The process of applying Narrative Practices begins with locating problems and stories within their context, whatever that context might be. It would be the particular details of how these themes would find expression in the practical sessions that would need to be thought through and adapted accordingly, after adequate preparation has been done in understanding the context. For example, finding the right audience for outsider witness practices is a significant step in the application of this Narrative Practice, and one that requires relationship with the community. Also, the material to be read/viewed/engaged with by the participants in

preparation for the interview in each session will need to be reviewed in order to make sure it is appropriate and contextual.

The third challenge arising from this research is the feasibility of applying maps of narrative practice by those without foundational knowledge of Narrative Therapy, and its principles. Narrative practitioners are hesitant to hand out maps and techniques to those who are not narratively trained, as the skills of facilitating these conversations are based on understanding the motivation behind why and how questions are asked and stories told. The temptation is for people to simply use the maps as a template, without fully recognising the techniques used, such as naming and externalising language, re-membering and re-authoring conversations and the telling, re-telling and re-tellings of the re-tellings of outsider witness practices.

In the same way, the development discourse and understanding development is not a simple issue. Engaging with issues arising from development, without being fully immersed in the development debate and emerging theories or models for development may only result in continuing unhelpful ideas about the church in the work of development. One also needs a certain familiarity with theological reflection, and the contribution of theology to the development debate if one is to facilitate new dialogue around these issues. Whether or not the maps, designed as they are from this research and the four themes, are enough for church pastors or lay leaders unfamiliar with Narrative, theology or development to use them to facilitate re-authoring conversations is a challenge and limitation of this process.

6.6 Implications of Findings

The four findings that have emerged through this research have certain implications for local churches wanting to engage with development, using Narrative Practices as a tool. My experience of the church's involvement in development work in post-Apartheid South Africa has been that it has struggled to find its place, its feet and its voice. While many local congregations seem to be involved in first and second generation welfare and community programmes, there is very little meaningful interaction and contribution on any of the other levels, and very little awareness from local church members of the fact that the work of development can and perhaps should to look different. So perhaps a significant implication of these findings is in the area of what the church should doing when it comes to development.

What these findings mean for local congregations wanting to engage with development is there is a need for local congregations to do the work of context analysis – to do the Narrative work of identifying and naming the problems and challenges and then locating them in a specific context, and to also critically engage from a development perspective with questions around why the poor are the poor, and how taken-for-granted systems and structures contribute. It is also necessary to do the work of reflecting theologically on both God's and our role in this, and what the contextual issues say regarding our response as followers of Jesus. The first implication for local congregations is there is work to be done in understanding context.

The second implication for local congregations is the idea that theological reflection on development and the role of the church in development is not something to be left to the academics, scholars and other 'professionals'. Narrative provides a means through which all people can begin to recognise and name dominant discourses, unhelpful attitudes, perspectives and stories that have plagued the church for generations regarding its understanding of development and the role of the church. Ordinary followers of Jesus, seeking to live out their faith in the context of their daily lives need also to hear that they too can discover a new way of doing theology, because there needs to be a new way of responding as a church to issues of poverty and injustice. The Narrative Practices that challenge taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs in which dominant discourses are rooted can allow new stories of new ways of thinking about God and the role of the church to be voiced. Space needs to be given for different ways of being the church in the public sphere, which include different models of theology and development.

These findings also mean the church's practical action can look different from what previously held perceptions dictated church community work should look like. The question of what the church should be doing when it comes to development is broad and complicated. Narrative's multi-storied approach implies there is space for more than one model of engaging with development, and social justice issues. Korten's different generations of involvement in development do not have to be on an either-or basis, but rather these findings reveal there is both space and need for engagement

on all of the levels. And because the journey and process will look different for each context, and the action that emerges will be a product of that journey, no one can define or dictate what the church active in the world should or shouldn't be. Members of local congregations can use the resources they have access to in many ways, joining with God in the work God is doing in the world in ways that may be surprising. The practical action of the church at work in development can and must be multi-storied.

The fourth implication of these findings is if churches are serious about critically engaging with the church's role in development work through using Narrative, then the four themes of conscientization, hope, de-centred approach and agency must feature in the process, regardless of the context of the church. There must be a commitment from local congregations to increasing their awareness, re-thinking their relationship with hope, including the voices and knowledges of the other and those outside their circle and critically engaging with what it means to be responsible, active citizens working for the common good. These four themes bring together the disciplines of Narrative, Development and Theology and form the foundation of this process.

6.7 Recommendations and Practical Application

So much of the literature around theology and development stressed the need for praxis – that reflections do not remain theories that line the halls of academia, but that they find expression, take root and bear fruit in the communities from which they emerge. In the same way, this research must find a practical application in my context. And so here are some recommendations for my local church community, the denomination in which I minister and the broader church as a whole.

6.7.1 Implementation of Narrative Practices to facilitate new conversations

In order to bridge the gap that exists between the reflections on theology and development and the actual action of local congregations, I recommend local church congregations look to implementing opportunities for narrative conversations, such as the ones outlined in this research. Either through workshops, within the context of

small group bible studies, in the women's groups and interest groups and for those involved in church community programmes, there is specific and intentional work that needs to be done on awareness, theological reflection and engaging with the development discourse. Leaders and ministers in local congregations can invite and encourage members to participate in these conversations.

As an example of this, and as a first step toward implementing Narrative Practices to facilitate new conversations around development, I have included a reflection on a workshop session (see appendix one), where I designed a map of Narrative Practices to facilitate a conversation around the role of the church in society, in light of the higher education funding crisis South Africa was facing at the time, known as the Fees Must Fall movement and revealed in student protest on university campuses. The map was designed taking the findings of this research into consideration, but is not a full implementation of the process outlined in this research. It is simply a first step to emerge from the findings of this research.

For my own faith community, I would like to implement the seven sessions outlined in this research by inviting my church leaders and those involved in our church community programmes to be a part of this process. Through their journey, and the sharing of their stories, the congregation as a whole can be invited into something new. I would also offer to my Circuit, and District, to facilitate Narrative Conversations with other colleagues and ministers wanting to engage with development issues, thus beginning to implement Narrative Practices and conversations in a broader context.

6.7.2 A Critical Evaluation of my Congregation's, Circuit's and Denomination's involvement in development

I recommend a thorough investigation into and critique of my own church's as well as my broader denomination's involvement in the work of development. Through this exploration, I recommend opening the conversation to a multi-storied approach to involvement in development. Through evaluating how we are involved in development, we can identify and encourage different ways of participating in the different generations of development work and theological reflection, and the different ways we can be and should be participating in the public discourse. While relief aid

and community projects have a place, policy advocacy and supporting people's movements are also key places in which the church (both local and broader) can contribute. Until we know what we are doing, and open the conversation to what we should be doing, we will never know what we can be doing.

6.7.3 Be intentional in including the voice of the Other

I recommend that my local congregation, my circuit and my denomination look to find intentional ways of hearing and including the voice of the other in its discourse, and reflections on theology and development. The church brings together a wide range of people, from diverse contexts, with diverse experiences and many different stories to tell. The voices of the marginalized, the oppressed and the poor are seldom given space to be heard. Listening to the stories of others, and especially those normally excluded, and listening Narratively with the purpose of identifying shining moments of hope and resilience can result in shared skills, knowledges and experiences being included as churches look to form a new response and role in the public sphere.

6.7.4 Encourage Agency

I recommend that my congregation and denomination reflect critically and honestly with how we are doing as a church in the area of public theology. How seriously is our voice taken, as one voice among many? Do we speak with authority earned from our participation within the community, or do we assume authority because of our status as a church? And what are we doing to engage meaningfully with what it means for followers of Jesus to be responsible citizens, participating in the world? We need to find our public voice, but earn our right to speak on behalf of others through joining with people. When we begin to tell our stories, and discover our stories are shared, that is when our response, and our agency as active citizens, moves beyond looking after our own interests, and individual stories and challenges cease to be just personal but become a contribution to broader social change. This can also be how a community re-shapes the story it tells about itself, and how the church can join with the social movements that emerge through Narrative Practices, rediscovering its voice in the public discourse.

6.8 My Contribution

I began this research looking to analyse ways in which local churches could begin to think differently about development. My experience within the local church has been one of struggle to find meaningful ways, for myself and those I minister to, to engage with justice issues in light of our faith in and beliefs about Jesus. I have experienced hopelessness along with the members of my congregation at the despair many people find themselves in, and I have found myself surprised by hope in the most unexpected ways and circumstances as I have encountered people who are working for a greater, common good. Always I have asked, what can and should the church be doing to engage meaningfully with the development discourse, and so join with God in the work God is doing in the world? The contribution I perceive this research will make follows the three strands that have been interwoven throughout this investigation.

In the Narrative Community, this research will contribute to the ongoing work of Narrative Practices in communities and groups working for social justice. It will help Narrative Practices find a greater audience within faith communities. Narrative Practices can be adapted to be used in a range of ways in a range of contexts, this research raises awareness of the role Narrative Practices can play in faith communities to encourage new ways of telling and re-telling our stories, as communities of faith seek to embody and tell the story of Jesus.

In the Development Discourse this research will contribute to the ongoing discussion of the role of the church in the work of development, and the potential of the church to contribute in significant ways in local communities. Through the application of Narrative Practices, new kinds of action will emerge that will encourage and lead to responsible and active citizens who make meaningful contributions (in the work of reflecting and in practical action) to the development discourse.

Regarding *Theological Reflection* this research will encourage further discussions on new ways of doing theology in today's context. And the role of the church in both reflection and praxis will continue to be engaged with meaningfully, so that churches

will begin thinking in new ways about development and the role of their church in that work.

When it comes to the contribution of this research to my community, I intend to implement the adapted maps outlined in this investigation, in order to open new conversations about development. Through the new stories, new reflections, and new voices that emerge from the application of these Narrative Practices within my local community, new kinds of action will be seen to be possible and local churches will rediscover hope as they join with God in the work God is doing in the world.

I would also contribute to my denomination, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, by equipping colleagues and leaders with skills to implement some Narrative Practices, to open new kinds of conversations in other communities.

The application of these adapted maps of Narrative Practices, both in my local community and in other churches open possibilities for further research into the ways in which Narrative Practices re-author conversations and enable and empower people to be moved to take action on broader social issues affecting their communities. It will be a topic for further study to see the kinds of action that emerges from different contexts when Narrative Practices are applied for development conversations.

6.9 Conclusion

This research has explored the question of the extent to which Collective Narrative Practices, when applied within the context of a local church congregation, facilitate new conversations around development, and the church's role in that work. Through investigating Narrative Therapy, Theology and Development, some key themes emerged that brought these three disciplines together and enabled the design of a strategy to implement Collective Narrative Practices in a local church with the purpose of talking about development and the church's response to the issues that arise.

This research explored these themes of conscientizing, and the need for increased awareness of local church members of the development discourse, theological

reflection, and their potential contribution as a community of faith; hope, where we find our hope and how we can give voice to that hope through alternate stories; the criticality of a de-centred approach – to both the process of sharing stories and being involved in the work of development; and the value of agency in our role as active and responsible citizens and followers of Christ.

This research has found that Narrative Practices enable context analysis, creating awareness of justice issues and enabling the challenges facing churches wanting to engage with development work to be named. Narrative Practices also enable new way of reflecting theologically on the church's role in development, challenging many of the assumptions upon which church development work has been based. And Narrative Practices can move people to new kinds of action when stories are told, re-told, heard, shared and alternate stories and action given space to be voiced.

Acknowledging the limitations of this research, what has emerged is the potential contribution of Narrative Practices to communities of faith, and to the development discourse. What has also emerged is the potential applying this strategy could hold for opening new dialogue around development work in faith communities, and the further research possibilities that could emerge from this.

The strands of Narrative Practices, Development and Theology will continue to weave together, providing practical, hopeful ways in which the church can look to join with God in the work that God is doing in the world, reclaim her voice in the public sphere, and rediscover her hope as she continues to reflect theologically on her calling in this time and place.

7. Appendix One

Applying Collective Narrative Practices to facilitate a conversation with a local church small group around the role of the church in the world today, with particular reference to the Fees Must Fall Movement

Introduction

On Wednesday, 28th September 2016, a group of 17 people met in the Upper Room at the Umhlali Methodist Church (UMC) for the final week of a four week course. Those who gathered are members of UMC, and of small groups that meet weekly in people's homes for fellowship and bible study. During the month of September, the small groups came together to participate in a combined learning programme called 'Spring Training'. The broad theme for Spring Training was 'Everyday Theology' and it aimed to address some current, contextual issues in light of faith. The topics for the four weeks of Spring Training included: Faith and Politics, Theology and Technology, Christians and Diversity and the Role of the Church in Society Today.

In preparation for facilitating the final session, which took place on 28th September 2016, I planned a programme (a map) using various Narrative techniques and practices. Rather than using the traditional model of a session of prepared input, I used a map of Narrative Practices in the hopes of facilitating a conversation that would open up new ways of thinking and lead to new kinds of action around a difficult question. The topic for the evening was The Role of the Church in Society Today. At the time of the session, universities around the country were experiencing protest action as part of the Fees Must Fall Movement – a people's movement working for equitable access to higher education for all people, and calling on government and universities to improve and increase funding of higher education. The question of what role the church should be playing in society, found specific and particular relevance in light of the situation at universities at the time.

The Map

In compiling the map of Narrative Practices to be used in facilitating this particular conversation around the role of the church in society, with particular reference to the Fees Must Fall movement, I took into account the findings of the research regarding

the aspects of Narrative practices, Theology and Development that intersect. For this reason, the map included

1. Conscientization : externalising conversations that would create awareness of the context of the challenges facing the role of the church in society today, as well as the context of the Fees Must Fall Movement
2. De-centred Approach: creating non-judging spaces for difference voices to be heard and opinions expressed, so that we can learn from each other
3. Hope: through exploring the calling of the church as the Body of Christ
4. Active/Responsible Citizens: looking forward to new kinds of action

Welcome

The session began with a welcome, and explanation that the format for the evening would not follow the traditional model of prepared input, but that we would be having a conversation around what it means to be the church in the world today, especially in light of what is happening in the Universities at the moment: what, if anything, should the church be doing?

Ice Breaker

As a means of breaking the ice, helping people relax, and also getting people to sit in groups of four with people they did not normally sit with, each person was given one piece of a four-piece puzzle, and instructed to find the rest of the puzzle and find a seat at a table together.

Once every one was seated around tables in groups of four, it was explained the reason for using puzzle pieces was that everyone has something to contribute to the discussion. Everyone's input adds to the picture, and without it the picture cannot be complete. Each person's thoughts and ideas are valued and welcome.

Group Values

We then, as a large group, named some of the values we would appreciate being present in our small group discussions. The groups named the following as their group values:

- Don't interrupt when someone else is speaking

- Respect others' opinions: it is ok if they are different from yours
- Consensus is not necessary: it's ok to disagree
- Be aware of tone
- Don't take it personally
- Be aware of Time
- Allow everyone who wants to, space to speak
- Non-Judgement

These values were recorded on a flip chart, and made visible to the big group for the duration of the session.

Get to Know your Group

In their small groups, they were given space to introduce themselves, and say how long they had been a part of UMC

The Church

In their small groups, they were asked to draw a picture/image that represents what it means for them to be the church, and give that church a name. The purpose of this exercise was to begin to name some of the things they value about the church.

Once each group had drawn a picture, they presented their picture and reasons to the bigger group. After each presentation, the bigger group named the values they had heard being identified by the small group. These values were recorded on a flip chart for everyone to see.

Some of the pictures that were drawn included:

- People who look different holding hands
- Many hands reaching outward
- Someone standing on a rock below a cross
- A heart with hands reaching out

- A church building, with a strong foundation, a bible and an arm extending outward

Some of the names that emerged where:

- The Church of Caring Community
- The Church of Helping Hands
- The Church of the Body of Christ
- The Church of Love
- The Church of Foundational Living

Some of the values identified and named by the big group were:

- Reaching out to others
- Support to the community
- Learning and thinking
- Unity
- Caring
- Sharing
- The work and teaching of Jesus
- Walking the talk

I then asked the small groups to consider their pictures, and thinking specifically of the role of the church within the world today, especially in light of the Fees Must Fall Movement, would they change their picture at all, and why?

Here, many of the groups struggled to think in concrete terms of what to change, how and why . The feedback conversation I facilitated through asking curious questions about the pictures, vales, names, and struggle to identify what to change, revealed people have an awareness of the role of the church as a caring community, but for the first time realized they see the church as a caring community for those who are part of the church community, or those who fit into traditional profiles of people the church helps, which were named as 'the poor'. The idea of the church as a caring community, reaching out to protesting students, to university staff, to government was new and difficult to align with their previously held idea of the role of the church.

This was a key moment in the conversation, as people became aware that their ideas and assumptions were being unpacked, and people became aware of the possibility of a different kind of roles for the church in society.

The book of Acts

We then turned to scripture, and looked at the story of Paul's journey to Rome, and the storm and the shipwreck that took him to the Island of Malta, as found in Acts chapters 27 and 28. I gave a summary of the story and some context. We then discussed the metaphors of the church as a boat, on its way to Rome to declare to Caesar that Jesus is Lord, and the storm that blew it off course as some of the challenges facing the early Church. There was space for conversation and sharing, so everyone had a sense of the story and the metaphors.

Our Storm

The small groups were then asked to discuss the following questions, with reference to the church they had drawn and named:

- What are some of the winds/waves/storms that blow {your ship} off course?
- What are some of the challenges and struggles that make it difficult to be [your name]?
- What is the effect of the storm on the work of the church? How long has it had an influence? Are there other areas it might affect and influence? How do you feel about this?

- Give the storm a name?

This conversation was to begin to recognise and name some of the obstacles that make it hard for us to see the church as having a role in society today. The small groups shared their thoughts with the bigger group, and I facilitated the conversations using curious questions.

The names of the storms included:

- The Storm of Apathy
- The storm of Discomfort
- The Storm of Fear
- The Storm of Despair
- The Storm of No Compass

This was a difficult part in the conversation. The groups seemed almost physically overwhelmed by the enormity of the storms the church faces, and the more the conversation progressed, the greater the sense of hopelessness that entered the discussions. It also revealed to the groups how great a role the storms play in preventing the church from having a role in society – then the storms get too tough, the church seems to retreat into the sanctuary. It was a difficult moment to name and recognise this.

Shining Moments

Individuals were then invited to share with their small group and think of and name a moment when the sun broke through the storm, a moment when they were aware of the church fulfilling its mission in some way.

After time for discussion in the small groups, I then opened the space for people to share their shining moments with the bigger group, and asked the group to name some of the values they heard expressed in these stories. These values were written on a flip chart for people to see.

The values that were identified were:

- The ministry of presence – special things happen when the church is with the community
- How big the church can be – it is not limited to one congregation or denomination
- The inclusion, welcome of the UMC community, and how this culture of inclusion has always been part of its history
- The role and presence UMC has within its local community
- The church standing together for what is right.

We then moved into a profound time within the conversation, where people expressed their discomfort with some of these values. One brave soul said:

'I know that I am supposed to stand for what is right, but I don't want to. And I know it is wrong that I don't want to. But that is just how I feel. I don't know that the church should be protesting in the streets with students.'

While another participant said:

'Is it the place of the church to be involved with things like this?' (referring to the Fees Must Fall Movement)

This was a turning point in the conversation, as this comment allowed open and honest conversation about the role of the church in society today, and in the current context of student protests. People could recognise the conflict between what they know the church should do, what the church does do, and what they feel comfortable with the church doing. People were honest about their struggles to reconcile their conflicts about the role of the church in the world and in their lives. It was a difficult, but important part of the conversation. My struggle was to allow people to share without passing my own judgement on their journey.

Tree of Life

We then participated as one big group in drawing a Tree of Life. We took the full list of values named from the shining moments, and placed them onto the Tree of Life. I explained the concept behind a Tree of Life, as a means to thicken an alternate story, and a reminder of things that already exist within us as a community.

The Roots represent our historical influence, the Ground our life now, the Trunk our Skills and abilities, the Branches our hopes and dreams and the Leaves significant people.

One person commented on the fruit of a tree, as existing for the sake of others, to feed and nourish others. This led us into the next section on legacy.

Legacy

I spoke about the idea of fruit as being a gift we offer to others, and the idea of legacy as being what we want to leave behind for those who follow after us. I facilitated a conversation with the big group, using the following kinds of questions:

- What are the fruit we would hope would grow from this tree?
- What does this tell us about the legacy we would want to leave?
- What are we hoping for?
- What are the kinds of actions we and the church can begin to take now, that would mean we are planting the seeds of this fruit?

The discussion here, while still heavy from the sense of this topic not having a simple, easy resolution, was hopeful and helpful. Some of the ideas for action that emerged were:

- To read more widely (not just settled for one perspective) around the Fees Must Fall Movement
- To continue the conversation in their own small groups around what it means to be the church in the world today
- To consider getting involved in different kinds of visible action

- To find out where our church (the Methodist Church) stands on certain issues (like the issue of Fees Must Fall and higher education).

Closing

I then gave a final space for any further comments and thoughts, as a chance to debrief. I invited everyone to stay for a cup of tea or coffee, and was available for question or discussion. We closed in prayer.

My Reflection

This was not an easy conversation to facilitate. I found switching from the 'teacher-tell' format of 'giving information' to the Narrative approach of facilitating a conversation a difficult transition to make, and I felt much less in control of the outcomes of the session: I had no idea how people would respond, and if this would be a helpful and hopeful process, leading to new kinds of action. What I did discover, was the session was far richer and deeper, far more challenging, and engage more people in new and fuller ways than if I had been the only one presenting content. People really were moved to think in new ways about previously taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs, and many assumptions were challenged. And yet, this was done in a non-judgemental, non-confrontational way that seemed to inspire people about the possibilities that exist as a church, and that their hope for 'something more' for the church in the world today is not unfounded. I believe the application of Narrative practices within local church contexts has much potential for new kinds of conversations leading to new kinds of action.

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