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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: Identifying the Problem

1   The Thesis

1.1 *The Problem Illustrated:*

On a cool but sunny winter's morning in late May 2005, I pulled up my car on the verge of a major road leading south-east out of Bulawayo. I was at the tail end of a fuel queue at a small, single-pump garage. At 8:05, I was 17th in line. Fuel was expected "some time" the lady in front of me said casually without any hint of exactness. Hopefully, two colleagues and I returned at 11:15. Still no petrol. By now, word had spread in the fuel-starved city, and the queue had grown to about 70 vehicles. Ominously, several Kombi vans, colloquially known as ETs (Emergency Taxis, a supposedly temporary transport arrangement now well established after 25 years), were parked in various spots on the other side of the road. At 1:45 p.m., the petrol bowser arrived; the sight of it was a joy to behold! After several hours in the now warm sun, tired and hungry motorists were visibly encouraged. But, it was another hour before it had disgorged its load.

Then we waited yet another 90 long, agonising minutes. People were gathered around the pumps on the forecourt, obviously listening to and watching something. Arguing … shouting … hub-bub. More noise, more turmoil. But no attempt to serve customers. Tales of corruption. The delivery was supposed to be 10 000 litres, but surprisingly, only 3 000 had been put into the tanks. Where had the bulk of it gone? The Central Investigation Department (CID police) and officials of the Petroleum Marketer's Association of Zimbabwe (PMAZ) were called. There was talk of someone being arrested. The CID and PMAZ left and returned some time later. In the meantime, the queue had grown to more than 100 cars stretching back along the highway for nearly a kilometre. All sorts of vehicles had mysteriously materialised on the forecourt, completely oblivious to the vehicles already there. The manageress came down the line handing out numbered tickets and writing the numbers on the windscreens. That was supposedly to bring some semblance of order.

But, as the pouring started, at 4:15 p.m., some 1½ hours after the bowser had left, the ET drivers began their tricks of pushing in. In some places, the queue was two or even three vehicles broad; some parked at odd angles, so that road traffic was hindered. The first three vehicles were served, and then came a delay: some of the manageress's "VIPs" were being served ahead of those of us who had queued all day. But then, slowly, we started inching toward the pumps again. Suddenly, two cars ahead of me, a young ET driver, barely out of

his teens, appeared from nowhere and pushed in, supposedly behind and at the behest of his friend in another ET in front of him. This was followed seconds later by another. The tired crowd was angry; voices were raised and stones picked up. An elderly man in the car behind them tried in vain to force his way past the two ETs. The youngster was hauled out of his van and pushed around, but he stood his ground and wouldn't be deterred. He was determined to keep "his" place. A second group tried again, and a big, burly man pulled him out and a fist-fight started. A crowd quickly gathered to watch the spectacle. The underdog was giving as good as he got, to the glee of the onlookers. A cut lip and some bruises later, the bigger, older man gave up. The ETs joined ranks and parked helter-skelter preventing cars from moving forward in the proper queue. There were now two parallel lines for about 30 meters from the pump.

At 6:00 p.m., service stopped with the manageress stating that she was closing down for the night. After 10 hours in the queue, I was 10 metres from the pump with three numbered vehicles still in front of me in what used to be the original line that now stretched back for 1½ kilometres. The forecourt was awash with vehicles parked willy-nilly around the pump, grid locked. There was nothing left to do but stay the night. You dare not risk leaving to go home. Some people did leave, however, and as the ET drivers moved and organised themselves for the night, some order returned to the original queue of cars.

At 6:00 a.m. the next morning – a public holiday – with several of us having slept in our cars, the ET drivers began organising themselves in a separate queue on the other side of the forecourt. Every few minutes, another one would arrive and park behind his colleagues. The line of cars, meanwhile, had bunched up to take the places of those who had left. It was back down to about 65 vehicles. At 6:30, the manageress was seen wandering around observing the situation. We expected her to open up and start serving again. But no, there seemed to be no thought for the weary, inconvenienced, frustrated customers. The fact that customers were still waiting did not seem important at all. As 8:00 a.m. came and went, there was no sign of any movement. There was no attempt to clear the backlog and make any progress. At 8:40, a man who had tried to direct operations the day before started again. Arguing vociferously, he was adamant that the main queue of cars should be served first, but the ET drivers were having none of that. At one point, the car queue was renumbered and I became number five. But there were at least 12 other vehicles surrounding the pump. The ET drivers argued back and forth refusing to budge. Stalemate again. Eventually, the manageress called the Riot Police to come and restore order. The vehicles around the pump were so congested that, even if those at the pump itself were served, they were unable to move away for other vehicles to take their places.

At 10:45, an hour and a quarter after the Riot Police were called – and with none of them in sight – another man decided he had had enough. He was fed up that, on a public holiday, he was stuck in a petrol queue, unable to visit his family. So, he started organising the situation. There was some talk that he was either related to the manageress or had an interest in the garage. At least he seemed to have more authority than the first man. It was clear from the lack of argument from the ET drivers that his plan included them in the serving: he proposed that the cars and ETs be served alternately. Having obviously devised and communicated the plan, he pleaded for people to go back to their cars to begin the process of getting untangled and served. In the meantime, more VIP vehicles had arrived, including three hearses. Even though I was now numbered five in the car queue, it took another hour before I was served with at least ten vehicles ahead of me being attended to. People waited patiently, albeit with some frustration. Eventually, I drove away at 11:03, virtually 27 hours after first joining the queue and after a little more than three hours of actual service.

1.2 *The Problem Described*:

Sadly, this is not the first time this has happened in Zimbabwe and has not been uncommon during this current period of fuel shortages. Indeed, this scenario is repeated on a daily basis. Personally, I find it amazing, first, that despite the number of times they have done it, people seem unable to organise themselves and of having the common courtesy of accepting order. Second, I find it surprising that, after three years of such on-off fuel shortages, workable systems have not been devised to stem the chaos. Unfortunately, corruption is part of the equation and, where an ET driver is prepared to pay a bribe and a pump attendant accepts it, it is extremely difficult for logic, common sense and courtesy to come into play. However rational, civilised and courteous most people want to be, corruption makes a minority selfish, inconsiderate and rude. Normal values no longer apply. And the situation is not made any easier by the example set by political and civic leaders who arrogantly abuse their positions and refuse accountability. Indeed, the Police themselves set the tone by jumping the queue and demanding they be served – even in their private vehicles for personal use – ahead of scores of other motorists.

At one garage at Beitbridge, despite a large forecourt and driveway, the manager stands at the head of the queue, some 30 metres from the pumps, with a sjambok. It is quite clear he will not tolerate any nonsense! One car is allowed forward at a time. Not surprisingly, customers queue calmly, patiently and courteously. A sjambok does not equate to organising or efficient administration, but it communicates order very dramatically. Regrettably, we cannot administer everything we do in the same way.

Interestingly, it is not outsiders alone who express astonishment at these goings-on; how pliant – even foolish – Zimbabweans are to allow this to occur repeatedly. Zimbabweans themselves express discomfit, disgust, annoyance and anger. Almost invariably, as people strike up a conversation, they begin with a now ubiquitous declaration of how terrible the situation is, how improper, unjust and unnecessary it all is. Of course, the shortage of fuel is but one piece of the politico-economic equation that has plagued Zimbabwe for years and has been particularly acute in the last six. While it is related to the overall governance malaise, spread like a terminal cancer during the last 25 years of Independence, one clear element is the mismanagement. This is symptomatic of maladministration.

For instance, long queues meander outside a Government office block. People have been waiting since 3:00 a.m. for a chance to be picked as one the 180 lucky ones who will be served that day to begin the 10-month process of acquiring a passport. Meetings are called to discuss problems, but key participants do not arrive on time, thus keeping everyone else waiting and delaying other business. Stocks of stationery run out and are only reordered after the last item has been taken – with consequent delays for others. Motorists in a small town are forced to drive 80 kms to another, larger, town to pay their speeding tickets because no-one at the police station has bothered to order a new book of receipts. A customer at a bank asks the lady at the Enquiries Desk for simple instructions on how to do something and the response is a shrug of the shoulders, without any attempt to help at all. The manager of an engineering company twice berates his employees for slackness, unprofessionalism and indiscipline, but nothing changes. A major border post is inundated with travellers over the weekend, yet half the teller windows are unmanned and the remaining ones have queues of 30 or more people each. More delays are experienced outside with vehicle checks: More than 200 large trucks, stretching for seven kilometres, block the approach road to the Customs post. Yet, little is done to change the system.

In 2004, no less than 10 indigenous banks were put into curatorship. The Reserve Bank Governor, Dr Gideon Gono, in a two-page explanatory Note dated 2nd April, 2004 published in all local newspapers (see, for example, the supplement to *Zimbabwe Independent*), outlined the reasons. It is significant, I believe, that in each case, the underlying issues were administrative. The lack of policies and procedures – or the ignoring of such – were the key reasons for the failures, even where this involved corruption. And so we could go on.

The same is true in the Church. Meetings are arranged months in advance, and then postponed at the last minute on spurious grounds. No thought is given to other plans or arrangements already made during the rescheduled time. Or, someone is asked to do some

work in preparation for a meeting, but then fails to do what was asked and a decision cannot be made. Church services start at a given time, but people still regularly come in up to 30 minutes late – thus missing key announcements and a good section of the worship. Pastors make appointments, and then fail to keep them. Sunday School teachers and Bible study leaders consistently fail to prepare adequately for their ministry commitments. Church events fail or are only partially successful because little thought is given to key elements of preparation, planning and priorities.

In the broader context, personal experience and observation show that Africa is in political, economic and social crisis. Despite the billions of dollars in aid – both in cash and in kind – together with copious offers of expertise, the problems facing the Continent seem as intractable as ever. The question must be asked: Why? More to the point, the Christian Church, as a major part of this social fabric, is not immune to this apparent malady. Yet, with a supposedly different ethic and worldview, many of the same problems are manifest. So, again, the question must be asked: Why?

These illustrations reveal a fundamental problem: If people realise that this is not how things are supposed to be, why do they tolerate it on the one hand and, on the other, why do they not devise better ways of doing things? For the past six years in particular, Zimbabweans have been complaining about the problems of daily life; the levels of hardship and suffering have increased while standards of living and the quality of life have decreased. Professionalism and workmanship have noticeably declined, so that service delivery is often less than satisfactory. Indeed, when one does receive professional, ethical and workmanlike service, there is undue surprise and gratitude. Despite the political connotation, almost everyone is willing to admit that the "good old days" were better. Yet, very little, if anything, is done to change things. The pervasiveness of this problem raises the question of inherent causes beyond education, training and urban exposure.

In considering this issue, it seems to me that there is at least one common denominator: the specific aspect of administration keeps coming to the fore. Poor planning, poor organisation, poor leadership and poor control seem to lie at the heart of this misgovernance. That is not to say that the human sin elements of greed, corruption, arrogance and selfishness are not also part of the main problem. But these characteristics are not confined to the Shona or Ndebele peoples alone, nor do they necessarily *cause* administrative praxis. The issue I wish to focus on is what shapes such praxis in the first place? And, for the Christian, the concomitant question is what theology of administration – however poorly considered it may be – governs this praxis?

I do not believe this situation is the result of incompetence and incapacity, since disorganisation is not restricted to particular cultural groups. Nor do I think it is purely the absence of education, since there are many in Africa who have received the best education and training available in the world. That said, however, it seems that administrative quality is higher with better education and training, even to the point, on occasion, of negating normal cultural practice. Nor, it seems to me, is this primarily a matter of personality or temperament either, since it is all-too-pervasive and is not limited to individual cases.

1.2.1 *Some Sub-problems*

In looking at this main problem, there are also several sub-problems. For instance, we need to explore definitions, expectations and assumptions about administration in general. While my frustration as a Euro-African might be explained partially in terms of a cross-cultural context, that does not explain the similar frustrations of Africans themselves when "the system" fails to work properly. Thus, what – in any cultural context – is "proper", "good", "right", "effectiveness" and "efficiency"? How are these understood and defined by Shona and Ndebele peoples in particular? What are their expectations of these concepts? When these expectations are not met, what is the appropriate response? How are corrections made?

Second, there are worldview issues such as creativity, innovation, self-image or identity, leadership, relationships and community, the spirit world and time among others to consider. For instance, what influence does the rural-urban divide have on one's worldview and thus approach to administration? The rural worldview is agrarian based, while the urban is industrial. Hence, to what extent are the "typical" approaches to the five administrative factors mentioned above shaped by an agrarian background, culture and ethos as opposed to an industrial one? Is there any significance in the fact that Africa, generally, has missed out on the Industrial Revolution – with its emphasis on creativity, precision and order among other values – and seems to have skipped a 'generation' to the technological revolution? How can worldview elements be tapped to take advantage of this new context? Are there worldview issues that militate against improvement for its own sake? How does the fear of being different – and, therefore, 'outside', perhaps even rejected by, the community – inhibit creativity, inventiveness and entrepreneurship? Or are the modern equivalents of these skills merely a matter of education?

This, in turn, leads to a third category of sub-problems relating to Africa's colonial history. This is not just about the political background but also the educational and social context brought about by that colonialism. So, to what extent has the colonial philosophy inhibited creativity? How has it impacted self-image and identity? Is there a correlation, for instance, between

dependency and innovation? Has the European, imported colonial, educational approach distorted – or imposed its own – definition of efficiency and effectiveness upon the African mind? If countries like Germany and Japan, virtually destroyed by the end of World War II, can rise phoenix-like from the ashes in 40 years, why not Africa after the same period of Independence from colonialism? Indeed, to what extent is colonialism to blame for Africa's lack of development? Is administrative praxis the result of 'external' educational, political, or social phenomena? Or, as I suspect, does it have its roots in one's worldview – that is, the way one views reality?

A fourth set of sub-problems relates to the Church. If the Gospel is primarily about bringing newness and change, and if the Christian or Biblical worldview is properly understood and accepted, what role does the Church have in correcting some of these maladies? Why, after more than 150 years of the Church's presence, in the case of Zimbabwe, has there been so little apparent positive influence in this regard? Indeed, if the Church is likewise afflicted with the same problems, what has gone wrong and what needs to be corrected? To what extent is this the result of an inadequate development of an appropriately contextual theology of administration? If Pastors, for example, see no Biblical mandate for sound administration, if their theology of administration is unclear and unarticulated, how can we expect them to communicate it clearly?   Indeed, can we complain at all if, in the absence of clear expectations, there is no cogent implementation of ideas and so poor quality or, even, failure is more the norm than desired?

A fifth sub-problem relates to the consequent discoveries of applicational difficulties and what solutions and/or adjustments can be made particularly by and in the context of the Church. A related issue is the implementation of these. However, the main focus of the thesis is on identification rather than solution and so these latter elements will be mentioned rather than discussed in detail.

Thus, in seeking an answer to the question of why, this thesis will attempt to assess the link between worldview aspects and the practice of administration (including management) to ascertain what and how aspects of the former impinge on the latter. To the extent that problems can be identified, some suggestions for change (particularly in the Church context) will be made.

1.3 *The Problem in Context*

There are several presuppositions, however. The first is that every culture and worldview has an administrative process; otherwise, the group could not exist and function in ways that are considered appropriate. Second, that since some of the perceived problems are not caused

by rudeness or, even, ignorance, but stem from a clash of cultures in that administrative actions (or, in some cases, inaction) are the result of aspects of worldview that unwittingly militate against a modern system (that is, urban and technological) that requires different ideas of efficiency and effectiveness. Third, that even those terms are coloured by worldview and may be defined differently, depending on the contextual demands created by the developments of urbanisation and technological change. Hence, there is greater administrative stimulus in an urban setting than in a rural one. Time, for instance, is not so important for the latter; nor does organisation have to be as precise. Fourth, that all worldviews have both positive and negative elements and that, in a cross-cultural setting such as exists in much of Zimbabwe, a cross-fertilisation of approaches can be beneficial.

Since I will be examining this issue through my own Caucasian worldview perspective, the assessment of the Shona and Ndebele worldviews of administration will be so coloured. Likewise, suggestions to minimise the identified problems and to maximise the strengths are likely to be affected by my own worldview. I will need to constantly check the influence of my worldview with my co-researchers to reduce undue distortion. Yet, the intertwining of perceptions should enrich and buttress the positive elements of the worldviews at the points of coalescence, leading to an improved, and contextually relevant administrative praxis. Moreover, this may also result in a more clearly articulated theology of administration.

These questions will be examined, first, in general terms, and then in the context of the Church. In doing so, I will examine some of the theological aspects underpinning the key components of administration. Later, I will endeavour to assess the validity of my findings against these theological principles. Ultimately, it is hoped that answers to these and other questions will allow for the development of a pedagogical strategy that Bible schools, seminaries and theological colleges can adopt to better inculcate an improved administrative culture within their students and, eventually, in the Church, as part of a clearer, more comprehensive Christian worldview.

2. Research Approach, Positioning, Process and Errors

2.1 Research Approach

My research approach was intended to be founded upon a social constructionist model and a postfoundationalist view, using participatory action narrative from a qualitative perspective, within the field of practical theology. These terms, obviously, need some explanation.

2.1.1 Social Construction

First, I had intended my research approach to be social constructionist. By this is meant that reality – or meaning – is constructed socially; that is, the community decides what is 'real' or 'true' (and this community's 'reality' or 'truth' may well be different from the next community: each has their own definition.) This reality or truth is expressed through language and stories, from which metaphors, images or descriptions are narrated as expressions of perceived reality. It is the lived experience(s) of the community and their subsequent interpretation that shape the understanding of what is real and meaningful, and how.

Explaining this, Ganzevoort (2006: Online) says, "It is one of the core suppositions of social constructionism that discourse determines our understanding of the world, so that content and communication cannot be separated." What is real, then, comes from the people expressing themselves in ways that they understand are 'real'.

But what, after all, is a 'social construction'?

> A social construction, social construct or social concept is an institutionalized entity or artefact in a social system "invented" or "constructed" by participants in a particular culture or society that exists because people agree to behave as if it exists, or agree to follow certain conventional rules, or behave as if such agreement or rules existed. (*Wikipedia* 2007 a: Internet.)

So, what is a 'social construct'? This is an idea, a notion, a system, or an object, abstract or otherwise, that a community agrees is 'real'. The notion, for instance, that girls are supposed to become housewives or teachers and boys policemen and managers; a system of government, a recognisable ideology – such as Marxism or democracy – or the opinion that rugby can only be played 'properly' if the rules are followed.

Hence,

> Within social constructionist thought, a social construction is an idea which may appear to be natural and obvious to those who accept it, but in reality is an invention or artefact of a particular culture or society. The implication is that social constructs are in some sense human choices rather than laws resulting from divine will or nature. (*Wikipedia* 2007 b: Internet.)

Social constructionism is a product of Hegel's dialectic at the turn of the last Century and was popularised by Berger and Luckman in their ground-breaking 1966 work, *The Social Construction of Reality.* This led, in turn, to the subsequent development and strengthening of social and cultural studies. The Postmodern movement – a relativity based response to the Modernist philosophies of the Enlightenment – is also part of this revised view.

Therefore, again,

> Within the social constructionist strand of postmodernism, the concept of socially constructed reality stresses the on-going mass-building of worldviews by individuals in dialectical interaction with society at any time. The numerous

realities so formed comprise, according to this view, the imagined worlds of human social existence and activity, gradually crystallised by habit into institutions propped up by language conventions, given on-going legitimacy by mythology, religion and philosophy, maintained by therapies and socialisation, and subjectively internalised by upbringing and education to become part of the identity of social citizens. (*Wikipedia.* 2007 b: <u>Internet</u>).

Meaning, truth and reality are all defined by the context. Where my context is similar to yours, we will have similar understandings of meaning, truth and reality – and, thus, are more likely to agree. But where they vary or, even, conflict, we may well have very different views of meaning, truth and reality and we will disagree accordingly. Hence, everything becomes relative to varying degrees.

As such, my paradigm of viewing administration in terms of Planning, Organising, Leading and Controlling, all within the parameters of Time, could be said to be a social construct. Yet, my (Caucasian) way of understanding administration, as well as putting these concepts together in this way, and the Shona or Ndebele way(s) of seeing administration may be completely different. And, even if my Shona and Ndebele co-researchers agree in broad terms, the emphasis I place on each, and to what degree, may also differ from them. Thus, my sense of "reality", normality and "logic" may well differ from the Shona and Ndebele views. This, of course, has major implications for this research.

Since reality is shaped by the community and communicated in its language forms, the researcher here must be prepared to listen. How does the community define reality; what metaphors are used to describe what is "normal" and "logical"? Thus, from a research point of view, to avoid undue influence or interference, it is necessary to come to the process with a "not knowing" mentality. That is, I must approach my investigation task as if I know nothing about the subject. It is my co-researchers who must inform me; after all, I am the one with the questions and they have the answers.

Such a lack of understanding gives me as researcher the opportunity to learn. As Feito (2007: Online) points out, students in a class setting often admit to such and thus open themselves to hear new meanings. If I come with an "I'm the expert and know all this about the topic, so all you need to do is confirm my presuppositions," then I am inhibiting not just the research process but my ability to really learn the other person's sense of reality. Equally, as my co-researchers also acknowledge their lack of understanding – for example, the Shona understanding of the Ndebele and vice versa – they are open to listening and learning as well. Thus, Feito (2007: Online) suggests, there are two broad approaches: "a top-down theoretical exploration and a bottom up, data-driven research programme." Clearly, the social constructionist approach is meant to be bottom-up.

At the same time, however, I must obviously have done some prior exploration into the topic in order, first, to identify a viable research topic on the issue and, second, to be able to ask intelligent and meaningful questions. So, in our conversations, the degree to which I convey my "knowledge" of my subject should be hardly noticeable to allow my co-researchers the freedom to express themselves and their sense of reality as fully as they can. There is, therefore, a constant tension between what I do know and whether or not that filters into the dialogue and shapes the responses in inappropriate ways. Hence, questions cannot be presented with 'facts' preceding the question itself; rather the questions should be as general and open as possible to allow the respondent to answer without undue influence.   While the researcher should ask the foundational questions in ways that deliberately avoid subconscious manipulation, secondary questions that reflect some knowledge and insight of the co-researcher's context may be asked for clarification and to stimulate more detail.

Unfortunately, I was not able to follow through on a thorough application of the social constructionist approach because, first, before beginning the formal investigation, I had no idea myself, from within my own worldview, how, in principle, that impacts anything, let alone the nebulous notion of administration. Nor was I clear in my own mind what actually concretely constitutes administration. And, second, I was already aware (from general discussion) that the vagueness of the concepts equally prevented my co-researchers from readily and clearly articulating by themselves their worldviews or a 'philosophy' of administration or, even, to identify with the latter what tasks actually constitute administration. I felt that, in order to ask any meaningful questions or to have any worthwhile discussions and identify possible problem areas, I needed to find out how my own worldview 'works' with something like this and also what administration actually entails. Without working out such a framework for myself, I could not see how it would be possible to ask pertinent questions or to interact in ways that would help my co-researchers appreciate the point of my research. Hence, it was virtually impossible to come to them from a complete "not knowing" position and thus to fully avoid imposing any of my own concepts into the discourse. It was difficult for me to conceive how simply asking my co-researchers to explain, especially, their views of administration without any background to what it entails would elicit any helpful response.

Before even starting the formal enquiry, it was obvious from previous conversations with other Shona and Ndebele speakers that, while they naturally understood their cultures well enough, they found it difficult to articulate the more abstract concepts of their worldview in any worthwhile detail, let alone how it impacts the practice of administration. Similarly, the concept of administration itself, being also somewhat nebulous, is difficult for many people to define and detail with any meaningful clarity. Hence, in both cases, I knew my co-researchers would

have minimal input and success if I merely asked them what their worldviews are and what administration is. Frankly, I had no confidence that our conversations would go very far at all without some form of a framework to serve as a prompt.

Precisely because I knew my co-researchers would struggle to identify either those components of their worldview that impinge on administration, or to describe administration accurately, I felt compelled to provide a grid or framework of the latter to prompt our dialogues. This framework was based on broad definitions of administration (see Section 1.1.1 in Chapter Two) and included four key components of Planning, Organising, Leading and Controlling. All these, in turn, have been considered in the context of Time. Furthermore, since the basis of and rationale for my investigation in the first place was a series of problems which naturally fall into this framework, my aim was much more focused on behaviour and attitude than simply asking them general questions about the two concepts. Nevertheless, I took care to encourage them to express themselves as they wanted with each of these five factors. I was aware of the need to maintain integrity in allowing their voices to be heard.

For the social constructionist approach, a key element is the questioning. As noted earlier, the (main) researcher should interact with the co-researchers from a "not knowing" position so as to eliminate or minimise external influence. How the questions are framed and presented is thus an important dimension here. When I began the investigation, I had established lengthy sets of very specific questions, collated in conjunction with the five segments of the framework. After working through the process, I recognise now that this is not a typical constructionist approach. As I began the individual interviews, I quickly became aware that, while the questions addressed several legitimate issues for the interviewees, they were nevertheless mine and not theirs. I was also aware at the same time that several other questions were not legitimate for the interviewees. I became aware of this through the preliminary interviews I had prior to those with my later co-research group. Although I was aware at that early stage of the need for open questions, especially for definitions, the early interviews brought to light the need to be even more open. Thus, as I proceeded with both the individual and group discussions, I became less concerned with the specifics of my questions and tended to ask more generalised questions instead. Later still, and partly motivated by the time factor in our dialogues, I coalesced many of the original questions in the framework factors so that the interviews, particularly with the group, focused on between five and 12 questions only. This allowed the responses to be more wide-ranging, gave greater flexibility for the respondents to ponder and, in turn, to present their answers in ways that allowed them to more naturally reflect their own construction.

That said, I also recognise with hindsight that, although many of my initial questions are valid for me, that is mainly so because of my own reality; it does not follow that the same questions have either the same validity or importance for others. At the same time, my co-researchers frequently affirmed that many of the questions touched on problems and issues that were definitely of concern to them as well. Moreover, they also indicated that the variety of questions brought to their attention the significance of administration in general and the need to address specific problems more directly in particular. From that perspective, then, the questions proved helpful for them.

Now, I realise that, by approaching the exercise with a framework or grid as a prompt for our conversations, I was negating to an extent the intention of the social constructionist approach. This methodology assumes the co-researcher is invited to express their own understanding of reality using their own metaphors and narratives from their social context. Thus, to come to them with an outsider's (in this case, my Caucasian) viewpoint is to limit their ability to express reality as they see it. This point is accepted and was the source of constant concern during the whole process. I found that Rubin and Rubin (1995: 20) expressed the difficulty well: "In asking about culture, interviewers are often asking fish to describe the water in which they swim. They cannot see it, and even if they could, they cannot describe it because they have nothing to compare it to." Hence, my framework was used as a tool in an attempt to give the "fish" something to compare.

In view of all this, I would humbly suggest that, despite the limitations of my scheme, the social constructionist approach has not been ditched or derailed completely. This is so, I feel, because the grid or prompt I was forced to provide was offered as one paradigm, which my co-researchers could have chosen to reject in favour of another with which they felt more comfortable and was more appropriate for their social context. In presenting the framework, I was careful not to assume that it was automatically acceptable to them. Rather, I sought confirmation of its acceptance at each individual interview, during the successive group dialogues and again at frequent intervals during our various discussions. I also took care to ask for definitions and elaborations (especially where this impinged on culture and worldview) of each of the key concepts in the framework, both in the individual conversations and the group dialogues. Thus, I did not assume that the grid was "right" without checking. Perhaps, then, it may be more useful to label my approach as partial or limited social constructionism.

Three things emerged from this "optional intervention": (1) They individually and collectively declared – without, interestingly, any disagreement or objection at all – that it was acceptable; (2) There was no attempt, either individually or collectively, in any of the dialogues to suggest

any alternative(s), and (3) In their responses, they did not clearly allude to any other approach. This, I believe was because, although it was an external import, the framework was flexible enough to accommodate their ideas and expectations of their reality of administration. That there was repeatedly no objection, especially as we got deeper into the investigation, demonstrates, I believe, that the grid served its purpose as a prompt and allowed the co-researchers to meaningfully express – from their point of view – the dynamics and worldview as they impinge on the administrative process.

Therefore, I would proffer that, while the social constructionist approach assumes the reality of the co-researchers is entirely their own, without 'outside interference', it could be argued that the theory itself allows for this since realities may not be constructed from one social context alone. This becomes particularly apparent when it is realised that my co-researchers have been exposed to several social contexts since they live and minister in a multi-cross-cultural context. This is reflected, for example, in the multiple Shona-Ndebele-Caucasian-rural-urban-Pentecostal-Non-Pentecostal-young-old-male-female social context in which they are operating and in which the conversations took place. Each of these dynamics has intervened to influence and socially construct their respective realities.

On this basis, then, I would submit that my approach has been a refined or limited social constructionist one since, while I was not able to begin the investigation process as originally intended and had to offer an external prompt, my co-researchers still had the freedom and flexibility to explain their realities comfortably within the framework presented. I would also go so far as to suggest that our dialogues and subsequent findings actually reflect a Shona and Ndebele Christian epistemology and social reality. This is seen in the fact that the problems I identified in my questioning were stimulated by the cultural context in which we find ourselves and were either addressed in our conversations in ways that reflected cultural proclivity or were admitted as cultural difficulties. Moreover, my co-researchers did not simply answer my questions as mere responses. Rather, they had opportunity and were encouraged to discuss, reflect and inter-relate, not just with me but with each other as well – which, in turn, allowed them to express their realities in ways they felt were appropriate for them.

That said, however, it should be noted that the language used throughout our conversations, both individual and collective, was English. This is because my command of neither Shona nor Ndebele is good enough to have had such in-depth discussions. While, in a truly constructionist approach, this may well be viewed as a barrier to full expression, the barriers raised by translation would have been insurmountable (see section 1.1.4 Preparation in Chapter Four). Fortunately, all the co-researchers have received their secondary and tertiary

education in, and are fluent speakers of, English, albeit as a second language. Thus, translations were not generally necessary and on the very odd occasion when a participant had difficulty, the others helped with explanation and elucidation. I would like to think the problems connected with this were resolved satisfactorily, although it must be admitted that some limitations must have remained.

2.1.2 Postfoundationalism

Alongside this, meaning and reality are also shaped by one's understanding of and approach to authority sources. In this regard, I have attempted the research from a partly postfoundationlist viewpoint. That is a reaction to the modernist or foundationalist mind-set that began transitioning in the 1960s (see above on Social Constructionism). Postmodernism, as an alternative to Modernism, was a response to the modernist notion characterised by foundationalism. This posits that truth is fixed and universal, that there is Ultimate Truth and that everyone must accept that as reality. There is only one way. It is difficult for the foundationalist to dialogue with others because "I am right" (and, by implication, you are wrong). The obvious difficulties and extremes with this then led to an equally extreme opposite approach known as non-foundationalism. This reaction claimed that "real truth" cannot be known and that no-one has the Truth. Everything, then, is relative. Interdisciplinary dialogue is difficult here too because the relativity means there is no basis for agreement. The counter-reaction to this relativism was the subsequent development of postfoundationlism. Here, the context and stories of the community interpret truth and reality (hence social construction). Van Huysteen (1998) thus suggests this 'third way' allows for dialogue (between disciplines) because there is respect for the other's point of view. Nevertheless, one community's view may well be different from another's and, while they may talk to each other respectfully, there is still an element of relativity. Essentially, these three terms or viewpoints relate to the way one sees and accepts authority.

Speaking to the theological implications of this, Kowalski (2006: Online) comments:

> Evangelicalism has in many ways been a countercultural movement rejecting, for example, modernism's strict empiricism that disallows miracles or revelation. Only classic, theological liberals have accommodated modernism in all of its views. Postmodern epistemology has serious practical consequences as it leaves no foundation for objective beliefs – a position called "postfoundationalism." In spite of the ingenious efforts of skilled, postfoundationalist theologians to construct a theology that "has universal implications," all postfoundational thought eventually succumbs to some form of scepticism or relativism. Thus, within postmodern thought no truth or morality can be "normative." That is, no person or "scripture" can authoritatively tell postmoderns what is true or right for them. "Truth" and "morals" are found in the context of a specific community and they vary from one community to another.

I do not agree with the foundationalist (or modern) notion that there is only one explanation or view of truth (usually established as far as the Western worldview is concerned, from reason and science) and that I am the only one who is right. There are always different viewpoints, depending on where one is standing and how the situation is interpreted. At the same time, I certainly cannot accept the non-foundationalist perspective that there is no truth. Life in community cannot be lived with any sense of mutually agreed moral anchors where relativity rules. That leads inexorably to "everyone doing what is right in their own eyes" and, eventually, to anarchy (such was the case for Israel, for example, during the time of the Judges; c.f. Jud. 21:25). Having said that foundationalism is problematic, however, it is crucial to note that there must be a final arbiter, repository or explainer of Truth; otherwise, in the end, there is nothing.

It is not that the <u>substance</u> of truth cannot be known or is relative. Rather, it is the <u>interpretation</u> of that 'truth' that may differ. Thus, two people may look at a car from opposite sides. One insists it is black, the other that it is white. In reality, it is both: one half is black, the other white. The observers, then, are both right and wrong at the same time. Extreme foundationalists would have a problem in declaring what is true; non-foundationalists would have a problem because nothing is true. Postfoundationalists leaning to the latter would argue that, pluralistically, it is all right for both to be correct. Postfoundationalists leaning to the former would say while both <u>can</u> be right, in fact neither are, technically. The various interpretations of truth do not alter the facts: the car is both black and white.

The question arises then: How far do you deconstruct the foundationalist and de-deconstruct (reconstruct) the non-foundationalist? Pontius Pilate asked the all-important question: "What is truth?" (Jn. 18:38). Jesus, as the Son of God and Co-Creator, had already given the answer earlier: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father except through Me." (Jn. 14:6) Indeed, it is sobering to discover just how many times He says, "I tell you the truth …" The question and the reply are a critical issue for postmodernists. To dismiss it on the basis of non-foundationalism or extreme postfoundationalism is to miss a major point of Jesus' earthly ministry. The non-foundationalist might do so by saying, 'That's only one (Jesus') point of view – and not necessarily the right one either.' Fine, but that still begs the question, What if He *is* right? The extreme postfoundationalist may try to dismiss it too by arguing that, while acceptable, we must at least consider possible alternatives. In the end, it boils down to our final authority: either we accept Jesus and what He says because of who He is, or we do not. If the latter, we will end up calling Him either a liar or a lunatic. Are we aware of the consequences of that?

At the same time, postmodernism or postfoundationalism has an element of relativism in it which I find uncomfortable with too. Most importantly, as a Christian, I am persuaded to believe that God, as Creator, is the Source of Truth and, indeed, is the Ultimate Truth. To argue otherwise is to end up eventually denying the God we claim to worship. My theological approach, therefore, is predicated on God – not fallen man's faulty understanding – as the Final Authority. In other words, ultimate Truth must be readily recognisable, even if it is expressed in different language, while knowledge is often relative, depending on the interpretation derived from the context and its background.

Kowalski (2006: Online), writing of some of the dangers evident from an extreme postfoundationalist perspective seen, for example, in some elements of the Emerging Church Movement, expresses some of my concern at this point:

> It is not an oversimplification to say that postmodernism is hostile to the objective and exclusive claims of biblical Christianity. While Christians must be sensitive to the culture they find themselves in, and while we must contextualize our methods to reach those in that culture, we must never alter the Gospel itself to fit the prevalent worldview of any given culture. Postmodernised Christianity is a seriously compromised "Christianity."

To put it differently, Erickson (1998: 19) speaks of "hard" (or extreme) and "soft" modernism, and of "hard" and "soft" postmodernism. "Hard" postmodernism rejects any idea of objectivity and rationalism. All theories are simply worked out to justify and empower those who hold them. The required shift in thinking is labelled deconstruction; hence postmodernists have been deconstructed and, in turn, seek to deconstruct others.

Thus, I perceive myself to be postfoundationalist with a moderate dose of foundationalism. Certainly, I do not see the three 'camps' as necessarily mutually exclusive, except in the extremes; postfoundationalism fits between, and overlaps somewhat with, the other two.

2.1.3 Participatory Action

The definition of meaning and reality, determined as it is by the community in context, has implications for research methodology. Coming out of the social constructionist approach to identifying meaning, participatory action research refers to the involvement of the community or their representatives taking part directly as equal collaborators in the research – hence they are co-researchers. As Müller (2003: 7) explains, participatory action takes those being researched a step further and, by involving them directly in the process, seeks to avoid the abuse of the traditional "researcher-as-expert" asking questions of the "researched-as-object". Rather than a passive, "Tell me what you know" approach, there is an intentional interaction between the two parties to collaboratively bring about social change relating to the problem(s)

under discussion.   The co-researchers express the problem(s) in their own context(s) and styles and discuss the answers in relevant ways that are real to them rather than what may suit the researcher.

In this case, then, I am exploring the worldviews of the Shona and Ndebele peoples and, rather than getting my answers from third parties, I am relating with them directly with and to their contexts.   Moreover, I am exploring administration in a Christian ministry context, and since all my co-researchers are involved in this element of ministry, they can speak directly to it out of personal experience.   The issues raised were real, identifiable and demonstrably problematic for them and it was clear throughout that their direct involvement in the enquiry was of immediate benefit.   They affirmed this several times.

2.1.4 Narrative

Fourth, my approach will be narrative.   In other words, the research data is primarily the stories of my co-researchers that explain, justify and give contextual meaning to their reality. Through dialogue, we will explore each other's understandings of our worldviews and administration.   From this, will come explanation and justification (perhaps?) for behaviour and attitude.   This research process fits naturally with the social constructionist, participatory action approach and the need to ascertain the socially constructed insights of the people groups with whom I am working.   It assumes that my primary source material will be the stories, conversations and self-interpretations of representatives of those communities I am researching.   As Müller and Schoeman (2004: 8) note: "It entails a different 'look at' the truth, with the emphasis on the truthful process rather than the truth as such."   In the narrative approach, the stories are not merely data which is then analysed; rather the stories constitute the foundational element of the research as expressed reality that is heard.   Thus, again, both the (main) researcher and the researched act as co-participatory researchers as they share their stories with each other.   Because this interaction is obviously delicate, Müller and Schoeman (2004:11) suggest it be labelled as 'involvement' rather than 'intervention', where the latter might imply abuse.

One may ask about using written source materials instead.   Although there is a growing literature base on African and Christian worldviews to which I could refer, my specific interest – the interplay between worldview and administrative praxis – is not a topic typically considered in such literature.   Also, while much has been written on administration from a Western perspective, there is very little literature from a black African point of view.   Even less, is there literature on church administration in particular in this context and less still – if any – on Shona or Ndebele church administration.   And, since I am investigating possible links

between behaviour and attitude, this means, therefore, that my primary sources must be Shona and Ndebele Christians in ministry and that the primary data must be their interactions through dialogue and narrative.

In the course of interviewing them, I had two choices: Either, I could ask my own (Caucasian/Western-based) questions and then analyse their responses; that would give me some related information, but would not guarantee that I get the kind of information I require. Or – which is what I need – I could establish their actual attitudes and behaviour emanating from their worldviews that relate to administration and how, if at all, these are shaped by those worldviews. Hence, my aim would be better achieved, I believe, by allowing them to give their responses in the form of their personal stories or narratives. It is as they reflect and narrate these that their explanations, assumptions, expectations and overall understanding of both their worldviews and their philosophy of administration will be expressed most clearly. What constitutes meaning and reality for them – rather than me – will be articulated in ways that are contextually embedded and relevant. All the same, this will be done in conjunction with written and experiential information about their worldviews and some elements of administrative practice. Issues pertaining to the secular Shona and Ndebele worldviews *vis-à-vis* administration will then have to be extrapolated from this data to construct a recognisable philosophy of administration. Telling these stories will empower the co-researchers because the narratives allow meaning to be expressed and, hence, understanding of the problem(s) in their situations, together with an opportunity to consider and reflect on possible solutions appropriate to their contexts.

Since my field of enquiry pertains to Practical Theology (see section 2.2 below), this raises the question of how narrative research, as a component of establishing meaning, links to theology. This introduces narrative theology, which says McLaughlin (2007: Online),

> is a fairly broad term, encompassing a variety of specific approaches to theology, interpretation and application. Most generally, it is that approach to theology that finds meaning in story. Sometimes, this is coupled with a rejection of meaning derived from propositional truths (e.g., systematic theology). At other times, it is associated with the idea that we are not primarily to learn ethics from Scripture, but rather to learn to relate to God, and to play our part in the great meta-narrative of salvation. Other combinations are also common.

But he implies that Narrative Theology is typically viewed "narrowly" – that is, in terms of relating to the narratives in Scripture:

> In general, the idea that we learn theology from narrative portions of Scripture is not only sound but biblical (Luke 24:27). The Bible's stories are there to teach us truth; we are supposed to learn from those truths, and to apply these lessons to

our lives (e.g., Mark 2:23-28). We are supposed to interpret and apply these stories according to the original intentions of the authors of Scripture — this is why the stories have been preserved for us (Rom. 15:4).

Used rightly, narrative theology provides the building blocks for Systematics and for Biblical theology. We might say that systematic theology tends to default to drawing theology from more propositional literature (e.g., the New Testament letters). On the other hand, Old Testament biblical theology tends to depend primarily on narrative for its theological building blocks.

When we recognize truth in narratives, we call our recognitions "theology." When we formulate our recognitions into logical relationships, we are doing "systematic theology." When we formulate our recognitions along historical lines, we are doing "biblical theology." When we apply these recognitions to our lives, we are sometimes said to be doing "practical theology," or even simply "theology."

I would proffer that, indeed, Practical Theology is the recognitions of our lives and that, more than referring only to the Biblical narratives, Narrative Theology is also expressed – and even developed – as people articulate their own stories in relation to their walk of faith and their understanding of God as they interact with God's revealed Word. This is not to say, I should hasten to add, that people's experiences carry the same or greater weight than the authority of Scripture (contrary to those churches and groups – particularly cults – where experience and tradition are typically given greater authority). Narrative Theology, as I understand it in this sense, occurs as people theologise through their stories. (See further below, section 2.)

My primary sources or co-researchers were Christians in ministry. While exploring worldview and administration in that context, the aim was to articulate a theological approach to administration.   However, the same difficulties faced in the general discussions about worldview and administration as explained above (section 2.1.1) were also seen in the process of theologising. As outlined in Chapter Seven, I had hoped that the group would arrive at what could be considered in theological terms as a generally recognisable theological statement about administration and its praxis in Christian ministry. Although I obviously had little clear idea of the specifics or how the process would turn out eventually, the end result was nothing near what I expected. Thus, while the conclusion was semi-socially constructed (albeit within the research framework we have worked through all along), I have to admit that my methodology for this exercise was not a social constructionist approach as originally intended.   Instead, I ended up leading the group in a deliberately arranged theologising exercise. This was because I had an inkling from our earlier "theological discussions" in the individual interviews that none in the group really had a clear idea of how one's theology should shape the administrative process or, more particularly for this exercise, how to establish and articulate a theological approach to the field.

Disappointingly, this was true just as much of those with theological training as those without. This left me in the same dilemma I had with worldview and administration as concepts. How could I ensure the group would at least begin the process in a way that would allow us to arrive at an identifiable and acceptable exegetical and hermeneutical conclusion? Again, I was forced to propose a theologising process as a guide. In this case, the approach was particular rather than general; detailed rather than flexible. This, of course, immediately cuts across the social constructionist approach. At this point, naturally, I was very conscious of imposing. Furthermore, heightening this sense of imposition was that the suggested process for the exercise, albeit only one option among many, was the only one I offered. This was because, in endeavouring to encourage the group to devise their own contextually relevant approach, I wanted to minimise as much as possible my own direct involvement in the task. Unfortunately, perhaps, the absence of another option made it that much easier for the group to accept 'my' model, and so that was the one they used. Nevertheless, it certainly was not given or intended as a panacea to the task of theologising. Regrettably, my fears about the group's inability to theologise from sound exegetical and hermeneutical foundations were realised. This is detailed in Chapter Seven. It thus remains moot as to whether a socially constructed approach to theologising for this particular group in this context would have succeeded here or not. It would be good if those who follow can do better with a different approach and reach a more appropriate conclusion.

2.1.5 Qualitative

Then, in terms of research methodology, I chose the qualitative approach rather than the quantitative. This fits well with the philosophical and epistemological systems of postmodernism and social construction since much depends on context. Primarily, my methodology is qualitative since I am dealing with behaviour and attitude. I am concerned here not with a certain quantity of data that, for example, may provide the basis for analysing social trends. Rather, I am dealing with data representative of group thinking and action. Specifically, I will examine the typical attitude and consequent behaviour of the Shona and Ndebele groups. More particularly still, I will consider such issues for Christians and within the context of Christian ministry. Still more narrowly in this context, I will explore issues relating to attitude and behaviour relating to the tasks associated with administration.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2004: 147), qualitative researchers "focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings – that is, in the 'real world'. And they study these phenomena in all their complexity." So, qualitative researchers,

recognise that the issue [they are exploring] has many dimensions and layers and so they try to portray the issue in its multifaceted form. … (They believe) an objective approach to studying human events – interpersonal relationships, social structures, creative processes and so on – is neither desirable nor possible. … Furthermore, many qualitative researchers believe that there is not necessarily a single or ultimate Truth to be discovered. Instead, there may be multiple perspectives held by different individuals, with each of those perspectives having equal validity or truth.

Hence, my (religio-sociological) field of Practical Theology, together with the area of study – the twin abstracts of worldview and administration within specified people groups and in a particular working context – is better suited to a qualitative approach than a quantitative one.

In addition, within this procedure, Leedy and Ormrod (2004: 149-157) itemise five different characteristics of qualitative research: Case Studies, Ethnography, Phenomenological Study, Grounded Theory Study and Content Analysis. Of these, I believe three best fit my research aim. These are: Case Studies, Phenomenological Study and Content Analysis.

On the first, say Leedy and Ormrod (2004: 157), the purpose is to understand one person or a small group in depth and the focus is one or a few within their natural setting. The methods of data collection include observation, interviews, appropriate written documents and/or audio-visual materials while the methods of data analysis include the categorisation and interpretation of data in terms of common themes and the synthesis of the overall portrait of the case(s). I believe a case study approach is one appropriate way that best fits my needs here for two reasons. In the first instance, I will gather my primary data from interviews and the related narratives (see next section) of my co-researchers. In essence, their narratives will describe their case studies or examples or 'stories-in-setting'. I anticipate common themes being identified as we explore the respective components in their worldviews and administration. I will use their stories to learn about and elicit their understanding of their worldviews and their perspectives on administration. Second, in Chapter Six, I will use two case studies from particular members of the group as the basis for in-depth discussion to illustrate the relationship between their worldviews and their administrative praxis. Since these case studies will come from the group's own context and not from me, they will be more helpful in identifying for discussion the administrative issues involved in each. The group will be able to evaluate and comment on issues faced by their peers.

The second dimension of qualitative research I will use is phenomenological study. This, again according to Leedy and Ormrod (2004: 157), involves seeking to understand the experience(s) from the participant's point of view. Its focus is a particular phenomenon, typical experience, lived or perceived by human beings. The data is collected through in-depth,

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unstructured interviews and purposeful sampling of between five to 25 individuals. The data analysis involves a search for "meaning units" that reflect various aspects of the experience(s) and the integration of the meaning units into 'typical' experience(s). In my case, the phenomena being studied are worldview and administration in a Christian ministry context (thus, with some theological input as well). However, while the data collection is primarily from interviews, these will be structured rather than loose, although there will be an effort to be as open as possible. The need for structure was evident from the beginning (see below under "Social constructionist").

The third dimension of qualitative research in this investigation is content analysis. Leedy and Ormrod (2004: 157) say this involves identifying the specific characteristics of a body of material and that the focus is any verbal, visual or behavioural form of communication. The data collection is from the identification and possible sampling of the specific material and the coding of the material in terms of predetermined and precisely defined characteristics. The data analysis involves the tabulation of the frequency of the characteristics and descriptive or informal statistical analysis as needed to answer the research question. In my case, the fairly abstract nature of administration in the sense of determining what tasks actually constitute it demanded that I establish from my co-researchers just what in their ministry contexts comprises administration. Thus, in Chapter Three, I began the dialogues by providing a comprehensive list of attitudinal-cum-philosophical factors relating to one's mental approach to administration. The co-researchers were asked to rate the importance of these factors. The analysis of these choices then gave me confirmation of the attitudes, prejudices and biases toward administration that I was already aware of in informal prior discussions. There were some surprises in this, which we later followed up in our conversations. This data was followed by a table of administrative tasks covering a typical local church pastor's responsibilities. I asked each person to identify which tasks they had completed in the previous 72 hours. This proved particularly useful for the group because, first, it allowed them to identify specific tasks within their ministry context and, second, it highlighted a range of tasks which many of them had not considered administrative; in doing so, it allowed them to grasp more clearly the extent of administration in their ministries.

All of this was done through two primary means: observation and interviews. I have personally observed Shona and Ndebele speakers in administrative positions – both formal and informal – for a number of years now and it is from these observations that nearly all of my research questions have come. In addition to my own observations, the narrative approach to this research also allowed the rest of the team to reflect on their observations,

both of themselves and others. The stories shared in the conversations and the subsequent interactions reveal the value of this.

Moreover, because of the abstract nature of the subject material, it was essential to gather primary data from interviews, since behaviour and attitude are closely linked and cannot be evaluated apart from personal explanation. As a qualitative research technique, Rubin and Rubin (1995: 1) comment:

> Qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds. Through qualitative interviews you can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate. Through what you hear and learn, you can extend your intellectual and emotional reach across time, class, race, sex and geographical divisions.

They then speak of a "family of qualitative interviews" (1995: 5), explaining the unstructured format, where the researcher has few specific questions in mind, or the semi-structured (or focussed) format, in which the researcher guides the discussion by asking specific questions. Often there is a mixture of the two. Regardless of this mixture, they stress, qualitative interviewers do not impose a set of fixed answer categories such as 'yes'/'no' or 'agree'/'disagree'. This would not allow the researcher to find out what the interviewee actually thinks. Hence, in my case, I used a mixture, although the majority of the questions were very structured, especially at the beginning, but less so at the end. I was very careful, however, to use open questions, particularly where definitions and explanations were called for as it was essential to hear the Shona and Ndebele Christian realities. My aim in the interviews was not merely to obtain basic information (the 'what') but also to listen for underlying assumptions, expectations, perceptions, emotions and attitudes (the 'why'.) Therefore, it was necessary for me to seek answers in ways that allowed the participants to tell me what I needed to hear. Hence, "the actor's perspective [will be] the empirical point of departure. [There will be] a focus upon the real-life experience of people" (Brynard and Hanekom, 1997: 29). This leads to the next component of my research approach.

2.2 Research Positioning

Having discussed the epistemological and methodological premises of my study, it is necessary to explain my position or point of departure arising from that base. This involves three related aspects.

2.2.1 Practical Theology

First, there is my position in Practical Theology. This is shaped by my philosophy of this field. By philosophy here, I mean an underlying set of assumptions and expectations. From these, I

come to understand that general theology (that is, Systematic and Biblical, among others) is our articulation about our understanding of God; it shapes the way we respond to Him and to others. Within that context, then, it is possible to speak of a theological basis for our behaviour and, hence, a theology of that behaviour. If we may speak of "Black" or "Feminist" theology, or, even, a theology of Church or Mission (that is, formally, Ecclesiology or Missiology) then by extension, we may also speak of a theological foundation of administration, leadership, or any other dimension of practical endeavour. This theological approach to a subject gives the Christian a God-directed basis and a Biblical-based rationale for functioning the way they do.

Thus, in this sense, I see Practical Theology as much more than an academic discipline for research; theology is not to be *studied* primarily, but *done.* Nor is Practical Theology merely a field of ministry restricted to preaching, pastoral care and counselling. Indeed, in my view, Practical Theology is simply but substantively, the practical outworking of all that we do as Christians; it is expression of behaviour shaped by our understanding of God and His Word and what He wants us to do. It is a God-based rationale. As such, it is more than mere research about behaviour from a "Christian" perspective. While it may be contextually defined, it is more than "God-stories" (that is, how God is intervening in people's lives). Practical Theology takes into account God's overall intentions and purposes – as revealed in Scripture – and seeks to provide a framework, a moral and theologically based foundation for attitudes and behaviour that, ultimately, brings Him the glory He deserves. Not only that, but Practical Theology is interdisciplinary: it interacts with Biblical Studies, History, Languages as well as Systematic Theology and Ethics. Indeed, for the Christian, every human endeavour and field of study, from Accounting to Zoology, should be theologically focussed and directed. Regrettably, that this is not the case, at least in much of the professional realm, shows that the 'queen of the sciences' has been reduced to a Cinderella.

This interconnectedness is illustrated very well, for example, by Prof. John Swinton (2007: [homepage]) of the School of Practical Theology at Aberdeen University as he seeks to combine practical theology and moral theology:

> The ground for this focus [at the School] is an understanding of faith as a lived entity. We seek to think through faith not as 'belief' but as lived. Thus, the primary reference of our theologising is the life lived in all its contemporary forms. This *contrasts* with the biblical studies' focus on texts, systematics' focus on doctrines and church history's focus on the history of the Christian faith, but *relies* on these forms of enquiry in understanding what it means for faith to be lived."

Hence, Practical Theology should be understood as a multi-disciplinary, multi-dimensional field cutting across all human endeavours by providing a theological basis or rationale for human behaviour and attitude.

From a research perspective, Ganzevoort (2007: Online) adds: "It [practical theology] is not something added to empirical investigation [as if the client/patient is 'over there' being researched as an object], but is focused in the middle of the research [that is, as part and parcel of the research.]" For me, then, Practical Theology is "applied" theology: it shows how ordinary people should, can and do meaningfully relate to God in their contexts. In short, it demonstrates how our relationship with God is or can be lived out. As such, then, it should not be merely a peripheral enterprise, a despised urchin. Rather, it should be understood rightly as the fulcrum, the hub, supported by and linked to other disciplines to show how everything else relates to God and His desired outworking of human history and His divine long-term goals for eternity.

Thus, in this regard, research in Practical Theology links very well with, and can be shaped very effectively through, the social constructionist, postfoundationalist, participatory action narrative approaches. Although, from a Biblical Christian perspective, God is Ultimate Truth, each Christian must 'interpret' God and His Word through their own context and understanding. While this raises the spectre of relativity, the Scriptures provide an immediate framework from which such interpretation may come – provided, of course, the normal rules of Biblical hermeneutics are followed.

2.2.2 Postfoundationalist Practical Theology

Related to this is the notion of postfoundationalist practical theology. By this is meant practical theology as examined and practised within the framework of the postmodern or postfoundationlist view.   This follows naturally from the social constructionist approach outlined above and has been popularised by van Huysteen (1998); Müller (2003; Müller & Schoeman 2004) and Ganzevoort (1998, 1999). Indeed, says the latter,

> Critical practical theology, feminist and otherwise liberationist practical theology, narrative studies and the like are methodologically close to social constructionist approaches. In that sense, social constructionism is not a new paradigm but the reflection of age-long debates. (Ganzevoort 2007: Online)

As noted previously, practical theology is interdisciplinary and multi-faceted and thus 'dialogues' in various ways, directions and depths. So, comments Ganzevoort (2007: Online):

> But it is not simply a matter of different discourses about something – in these discourses practical theology itself takes on different meanings. The locus of conversation defines in part the shape and tasks of the discipline. In each locus

of conversation, correspondence to and difference from the other party define the identity of practical theology. In relation to the church, practical theology may stress its academic nature in its efforts to serve the community of faith. In relation to the academic realm it may focus on empirical and strategic efforts, communicating with social sciences on the one hand and other theological disciplines on the other. Obviously then, each practical theologian will develop his or her own definition of practical theology within the specific configuration of relations of the person.

Hence, in my view, practical theology is not to be restricted to academe, with research for the sake of it or, even, research <u>about</u> practical theology. For me, research <u>in</u> practical theology is about application in the field, empowerment, rationale, direction, ethic and motive. By researching administration from a Christian ministry point of view, with specific focus on the Shona and Ndebele, my aim, therefore, is to identify a contextually embedded, Biblically based rationale, ethic and motive for the praxis of administration. I believe this is a legitimate effort at theologising practically since it is the administrative practitioners themselves who will seek to articulate it in ways that are 'theologically real' to them.

2.2.3 Evangelical

However, my research position is influenced not only by my epistemological and philosophical assumptions, but also by my theological position and that of my co-researchers in that we are all Evangelicals. As such, I am more comfortable with "soft postmodernism" (see Erickson 1998:19) because it rejects the extremes of "hard modernism" and is less extreme itself. (It should be noted that I did not deliberately explore my co-researchers' understanding of social construction, postmodernism or postfoundtionalism, so I cannot speak definitively for their positions.)

In explaining the various Evangelical responses to postmodernism, Erickson (1998: 152) points out that a number of the contentions of the deconstructionists conflict with Evangelicalism as generally understood. In summing up Evangelicalism's responses to postmodernism (1998:151-157), he uses a question discussed at a conference: 'Can deconstructed [that is, postmodernised] horses even be led to water?' From an apologetics point of view, he says the question actually involves several elements: the horse, the means of leading (the haler and rope) and the water. He then outlines four possible answers. Each one depends on which elements are/should be deconstructed. The first response says that the water must also be deconstructed to suit the horse. Although he does not use the term, this seems to fit with foundationalism, since the horse is right and everything must be aligned to that. The second answer is, 'Yes, [deconstructed horses can be led to water], but we must use deconstructed rope.' In other words, the water may or may not need deconstruction to be

appealing to deconstructed horses (i.e. that the message needs to be altered). It maintains, however, that it is necessary to alter the form of leading, that is the method and the means. It is more the form or style of presentation, rather than the content, that needs to be changed. This would mean, for example, that instead of a propositional presentation [here, read foundationlist], what would be done is to make a narrative approach. Generally speaking, this approach would hold to the objectivity of truth and the relativity of knowledge, but would acknowledge that all answers are to some extent historically and socially conditioned. Again, without using the term, he seems to be describing the postfoundational, narrative position. The third response – that the horse is not really deconstructed after all – leads to the conclusion that neither the water nor the method of leading need to be changed; the same methods used in the past can still be used with postmodern horses. The fourth answer is, 'Yes, but we must first de-deconstruct the horse.' This approach says that the horse is deconstructed, but it is not possible to live on such a basis. One option – the pessimistic view – holds that the deconstructed horse must be written off, the aim being to prevent any more horses from being deconstructed. The optimistic view says deconstructed horses can be reached, but they first must be de-deconstructed. This is done so that they discover it is not possible to live on this basis. Like Erickson, I believe a mixture of the second and fourth responses is the most appropriate.

The 'horse' – in this case, the Shona and Ndebele postmodernised Christian – has been deconstructed; but how do we help it to drink the life-giving 'gospel'? The message or the means must be deconstructed and, at the same time, we must go to the horse rather than attempting to drag the horse to the water. A halter that fits snugly, together with 'logical' persuasion, will best help the horse to feel the need to taste the water. In the context of administration in Christian ministry, a theologically shaped approach to will help those responsible to better see how God expects them to do it.

To sum up, my research approach and positioning could be categorised, perhaps, as being (for this investigation) limited social constructionist, "(moderately) soft" postfoundationlist, participative action narrative from a qualitative perspective, within the domain of Evangelical practical theology.

2.3 Research Process

While I will look at worldviews and administration from a praxis point of view in the context of Christian ministry, I will explore practical theological issues in the process. But, I do not want to simply ask practical theology questions about worldview and administration. What I believe is necessary is to be able to establish what, if any, theological understanding under-girds

current administrative praxis and then attempt to articulate a theological basis or framework from which administration should be correctly practised in Christian ministry. (My suspicion at this stage is that there is very little clear theological foundation underpinning administrative praxis within the Church at large; if this is so, it would help to explain the gap between administrative praxis and theology as evidenced in the work ethic and administration factors – planning, organising, leading and controlling, together with time management – as demonstrated in the opening narratives.) Hence, one goal, having identified what factors – if any – link worldview and administration for Shona and Ndebele Christians, is to begin to develop a Biblical rationale and practical theological outworking for administration.

In addition to this, other goals are:

(1) To attempt to assess the extent to which the person's worldview governs and/or has significantly changed their praxis of administration; and

(2) To seek to establish a recognisable philosophy of administration (in line with both human and Christian worldviews, bearing in mind that much modern administration has been influenced directly and indirectly by a Western philosophy or approach, together with its underlying presuppositions emanating from that worldview).

To facilitate my prior understanding of the background, I have also referred to authors who have written on the African worldview and administration in general (both secular and Christian). The information from these supplemental co-researchers allowed me to begin asking relevant questions pertaining to the Shona, Ndebele and Christian worldviews and their possible relationship to administration. Secondary sources included foundational input from books, journals, newspaper articles and Internet items. I expected this would give me the basis of the three worldviews and administrative elements I needed to research, as well as form the basis of the material from which the necessary questions will be formed to elicit either confirmation or contradiction of possible suppositions.

In addition to the personal interviews, I have also used other real-life stories such as those gathered from newspaper and magazine articles, personal conversations and others that reflect the issues with which I have grappled. Although these are secondary sources, I have used that information to verify and explore further the insights of the interviewees. This has enabled me to get a fuller understanding of the dynamics involved.

I realised that the narratives alone would not provide all the needed information. So I sought to supplement these with content analysis (Chapter Three) to test both attitude and behaviour prior to the individual and focus group interviews. The empirical data here complemented the

narratives and main interviews, giving me deeper insight into the attitudes, perceptions and expectations about the person's approach to administration. This then provided a launch pad to raise particular questions of my primary co-researchers that led to a more specific exploration of the worldview dimensions.

The content analysis is in three parts (see Appendix 2, Chapter Three). The first section asks the respondent to grade their perception of importance of a range of factors impinging on how administration is done. It seeks to reflect attitude and behaviour. It should be possible to link these with worldview assumptions, expectations and, even, misconceptions about administration, to suggest some likely responses to various administrative tasks.

The second part of the content analysis attempts to establish with some objectivity what actually constitutes administration for these particular Christian workers. This is important because, while much has been written about administration in general, there is very little of substance as to what it actually entails. It is a multifaceted, woolly area of work that is difficult to define with precision because it includes a wide variety of tasks, many of which do not seem to be directly related to one another. So, there is need to identify actual tasks that constitute administration. That will help in clarifying not only what is done as administration but also in assessing how much time is spent on it, who with, when, where and why.

I included a range of selected tasks based on my own knowledge and experience of the kinds of work required. Initially, I had intended involving three groups – local pastors, para-church or denominational administrators and trainers – since the administrative requirements are somewhat different for each. However, for various reasons outlined later (see Chapter Four, sections 1.1.3 and 1.1.5), I ended up limiting this to pastors and related ministries.

The third element was a set of follow-up questions relating to preferences. In one sense, these are an attempt to marry the attitude questions with the tasks. In another, they are a further attempt to establish how the work is done and why it is done that way, together with personal preferences.

All of these details should provide some insight into the person's underlying philosophy of administration. In the process, therefore, I will have a somewhat objective basis (from my target group's point of view) for exploring, linking and confirming worldview issues raised in the qualitative discussions later.

Having noted some elements of the administrative praxis within a selected representation of Christian ministry settings, I will use that information as it relates to the worldview and administrative factors identified elsewhere to seek to demonstrate the co-relation between

worldview belief and practice. At the same time, having identified administrative problems or weaknesses, I will explore possible links between these and the respective worldview elements and, if feasible, will then suggest some reasons for them.

To minimise the research field, I have deliberately limited myself to an examination of Shona and Ndebele worldviews in Zimbabwe as the two main people groups in one particular country.   Further, I limited my investigations to the practitioners of administration in two primary groups, both within the context of Church or Christian ministry: the main group was pastors while a second was those involved in management training. My original intention was to seek a balance between the two, but I was not able to arrange more than one person involved in training from a Christian ministry context. I had also intended involving secular trainers in the first phase of interviews but, again, this did not materialise. The reasons for this are explained in Chapter Three.

In my initial planning, I had selected specific types of churches, on the assumption that polity or governance systems impinge on the decision-making process.   I had assumed that administrative structures, shaped by polity, would determine at least in part how administration is carried out. However, my preliminary interviews (before selecting the main group of co-researchers) revealed that polity has hardly any bearing on individual praxis. Whether one is operating within a Presbyterian or Congregational system seems to make little difference to the ways in which individuals personally carry out administrative tasks, make decisions, relate to people, organise, control or steward their time and resources.   The denominational structure and its effect on praxis is much less significant than the person's own attitudes, presuppositions, temperament and, even, social milieu.

At the same time, however, polity does seem to play a part in how or why certain, specific decisions are made and the way they are made.   For example, church politics or a bureaucratic system or both may impact a decision to appoint a particular person to a specific post.   Alternatively, church politics or bureaucracy may determine whether an individual chooses to make a decision a certain way, or not at all. Hence, while polity does impinge on the administrative process to a limited extent, it does not seem to affect the worldview factors that appear to be much more influential in general administration. Therefore, I will not pursue my investigation along polity lines as originally intended. Rather, I will focus on individuals, irrespective of denominational affiliation.

2.4 *Research Difficulties*

In this investigation, there are at least four areas for possible research difficulties (Brynard and Hanekom, 1997: 41-42). These relate to:

(1) Sampling. This is a potential problem about research validity based on the selection of data. As stated earlier, this is a qualitative enquiry about behaviour and attitude, not a quantitative one about numbers. Therefore, I will limit my analysis to a small group of selected pastors and Christian ministry leaders. I believe this group will suffice to provide the information I need since, by its nature, worldview is a set of assumptions and beliefs commonly held among and which identify a particular people-group; the task here is to explore and confirm the worldview, not to test the extent of its acceptance.

With that, I began my conversational investigation on the assumption that my research group should include a mixture of both rural and urban ministry leaders. This was because I was expecting a fundamental difference in viewpoint. To that end, my first individual interview was with a rural pastor. However, I immediately faced two related problems: On the one hand, there was the very obvious and significant factor that, not being able to speak Ndebele fluently, I needed to have the discussion translated. In the process, I became aware of the need for my respondent to be sufficiently familiar with key concepts of administration such that he was adequately able to think and then to articulate his answers. Unfortunately, for several questions, I did not come away with confidence that he had done so. Related to that, on the other hand, was the fact that both my questions and the answers had to be translated. I was thus unable to check whether nuances and specific emphases were communicated correctly (even though I had confidence in my translator understanding them.)

A second problem with rural interviewees was logistical. There are obvious difficulties in contacting rural folk and arranging mutually acceptable appointments. On top of that, such arrangements must also include the translator and his schedule. To co-ordinate this would have been problematic for a variety of reasons (one, for instance, being the availability of fuel) and very time consuming. I therefore decided not to go that route, but instead to choose some pastors who have rural connections in their ministries. (See Chapter Three for profiles of my co-researchers.) In addition, I also realised that, even where my co-researchers are urban based, they would still have at least an awareness of rural thinking. My research group later confirmed these two points.

(2) The problems of imprecise or technical vocabulary. As stated earlier, many are unclear as to what actually constitutes administration. I should be able to minimise this by using alternative words or phrases and likely examples familiar to my co-researchers to help them understand the terminology or concepts. Issues of worldview should not be problematic since these can be verbalised in ways that are easily identifiable rather than with technical jargon.

(3) Respondent bias. As part of their worldview (see Chapter Six), the people-groups I am working with sometimes tend to proffer answers they feel are what are wanted rather than their actual views. This can be minimised to some extent by probing deeper and by cross-reference to other sources for confirmation and clarification. The interview technique will also militate against this problem as I will not be concerned primarily with short, information-related answers but, rather, meaning-and-explanation-related answers. This should allow me to go beyond the superficial, quick-answer response. The group dialogues are also likely to minimise this because of the interaction between themselves rather than with me directly.

(4) Analyst and Researcher bias. As stated elsewhere, my own assumptions, expectations and insights from experience are likely to factor in to my presentation of questions and interpretation of responses. This is a double danger both because of the ambivalent nature of the subject and by virtue of working cross-culturally, which requires added explanation of terms and concepts. I will endeavour to reduce the risks here by constantly cross-checking my own views, assumptions, expectations and feelings with the co-researchers.

Bearing in mind that most formally trained administrators and/or managers have probably been influenced by the Western worldview, it will be necessary to attempt to assess the extent of this influence in negating the indigenous worldview elements that, otherwise, would have affected the administrative praxis. In addition, an attempt will be made to assess those elements of the Shona and Ndebele worldviews that positively impact the administrative process in a modern setting, with a view to establishing how they may be used more advantageously. This exercise will also be done bearing in mind the Church context and the centrality of theology behind any Church administrative praxis.

Because of the socio-historico-political background of Zimbabwe, we have a four-fold split in the church: Rural and urban, high-density and low-density.[1] These differences reflect varied levels of sophistication, education, leadership, competence, resources and expertise, as even standards of living can have a bearing on the administrative process. I expected to show that the way administration is done in a (less sophisticated) rural church is likely to be different from an urban one. However, in my preliminary investigation, I found little fundamental difference in terms of worldview influence between administration in high-density and low-density settings. Rather, any difference in philosophy and approach seems more affected by sophistication levels – that is, education, training, income and expectations – than

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[1] These demographic terms, applied to urban and peri-urban suburbs, were an attempt to change negative colonial terminology. They relate, as the names suggest, to the larger properties (formerly owned by whites) but now part of the middle and upper classes and to those smaller properties still exclusively inhabited by blacks but at the lower end of the economic spectrum. Typically, they are on opposite sides of the city or town. Some of both are now "middle density" areas.

demographics. I shall explore this further and now expect the dichotomy to be two-way rather than four-way as originally anticipated.

Since this enquiry is to be conducted primarily in the context of the Church – and specifically Christian ministry – it will also be necessary to identify and suggest the theological basis for administration. This I hope to do as the basis of the foundational assumptions behind "Christian" administration (or, more correctly, administration in a Christian context). This is important, since for the Christian administrator, one's Biblical and theological foundations should shape attitudes, approaches and praxis in ministry. Moreover, where there are obvious dichotomies between a human worldview and a Biblical one, it should be possible to show why an adjustment from one to the other is necessary for those involved in ministry.

The primary source material garnered through questionnaires (Chapter Three), interviews (both individual and focus group; Chapters Four to Seven), and observation (throughout) will be measured in several ways: (1) Rating scales, to measure (a) the quality of understanding and/or insight of the respondent to administrative issues within their context and in the light of their worldview in relation to their administrative praxis and (b) the quality of administrative performance; (2) Attitude scales, to measure positive or negative views toward administration factors and practice; and (3) Comparison and contrast of one respondent's views against another's, as well as their respective quality of work.

The secondary source material in books, journals, newspapers and so on, apart from providing a basis of information for the interviews, will be used to shape the questioning of and to confirm, clarify and critique the interactions with the primary sources. This information will be measured against the respondent's views and practice to assess complicity with a view or a practice in contradiction to it.

3. <u>Summary</u>

In summary, the main problem focuses on seeking an answer to the question of why systems in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular do not work the way they might be expected to. The underlying assumption here is that the fundamental issue is related to worldview and that some worldview factors impinge negatively on one's appreciation and use of time, planning, organising, leading and controlling. If, indeed, this is a worldview issue, then the same would apply as much in the Church context as it does in the secular realm. That being the case, what does a Biblically based theological approach to administration say for the Christian and administrative enterprise? Can these findings then be used to improve the quality of "service delivery" in the context of Christian ministry?

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Apart from seeking answers to questions on worldview, there are three primary goals: (1) To assess the extent to which the interviewee's worldview governs and/or has significantly changed their praxis of administration. Related to this, I also wish to establish the extent to which the person's current approach to administration has been influenced by a Western philosophy of administration and its underlying presuppositions; (2) To highlight problems relating to administrative praxis arising from the identified worldview factors and thus to suggest some solutions to those difficulties; and (3) To establish a recognisable philosophy of and theological approach to administration. The assumption here is that, for the Christian, a theological foundation is crucial to God-honouring behaviour and attitude; as such, this should provide the impetus for any necessary change. If the hypothesis is correct, one part of the solution to social change in this area will involve theological reflection and training. Thus, there will be an attempt to propose training courses for Bible and theological colleges.

Second, my approach to finding answers to this and related questions will be based on social constructionist and postfoundational epistemologies expressed through narrative and using a qualitative research design. That is, meaning and reality are socially constructed and contextually defined and articulated, using primary co-researchers for live stories in individual and group dialogue.   Part of the context relates to Christians in vocational ministry. Thus, my enquiry centres on the Shona and Ndebele peoples of Zimbabwe in the Christian context, with specific focus on the field of administration and their theological understanding thereof.

The study will begin in Chapter Two with an exploration of the nature of administration in general, then in the context of the Shona and Ndebele, as well as in the context of Christian ministry praxis. The dialogues will begin in Chapter Three with a values and task analysis, then move through individual conversations in Chapter Four to group interactions in Chapter Five, both of which will discuss the philosophical foundations of administration as well as its praxis. That should point the way to some issues and problems commonly experienced in the administrative enterprise and, if the thesis is correct, highlight some worldview factors as common linkages. Chapter Six, with two case studies, will then examine in more detail the worldview factors so far identified, while Chapter Seven will discuss a possible contextual theological rationale, ethic and motive for administration and its praxis. Chapter Eight will summarise the identified issues, suggest some solutions to strengthening administrative praxis, particularly in the Christian ministry context and present some proposed training courses to strengthen this aspect in Bible college curricula. This latter input is intended to round out the social constructionist aim of prompting change from within the community.