

# Towards a multi-method approach to addressing violent protest action in South Africa: A practical theology perspective

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Pervasive violent strike action and protests over service delivery in South Africa call for new methodological approaches. To this end, a multi-method research approach consisting of a case study, communicative action, a multidimensional theoretical framework and its integration into African Christopraxis research is proposed. The ultimate aim is to offer a broad research framework and to encourage a multidisciplinary research approach to work in and beyond the Marikana-Wonderkop area.

## Introduction

Building on Mashabela (2017:2), I posit that African researchers should serve humanity 'from its original environment as a life place of ubuntu' through the liberation of colonial research methodologies that may contribute or have contributed to the oppression of the African people (Botman 2000:201; Mashabela 2017:2). Since 1998, Africanisation has become a core focus of contextual theological research in Southern Africa to advance social reconstruction in Africa (Williams 1998 in Mashabela 2017:1). For the purposes of this article, Africanisation is viewed as the enhancement of a human rights culture and human dignity while promoting liberation theological research in Africa (Mashabela 2017:1). Similarly, since the 1980s, a theology of reconstruction has been key in seeking progressive dialogue on issues such as 'human rights, legal reforms, nation building, economic empowerment and democracy' (Villa-Vicencio in Gathogo 2007:157): 'As a matter of fact, the concept of reconstruction is attuned to African traditional society – where rebuilding and re-examination are seen as crucial elements for the African person (Muntu)' (Gathogo 2007:159–160). A theology of reconstruction also deals with violence, the legitimate use of force, economic justice, ecology and ownership of land (Villa-Vicencio 1994:185). Hence, a holistic African reconstructive Christology challenges African theologians to promote new research methodologies (Ukachukwu in Gathogo 2015:6): 'The multi-disciplinary appeal of reconstruction makes the concept functionally useful as a thematic focus for reflection in Africa during the coming decades' (Gathogo 2007:166). Gathogo (2017:166–167), therefore, applies critical hermeneutics, liberation and salvation methods in forging contextual theology towards a theology of reconstruction within socio-political, economical, ecclesiastical, historical or geographical contexts. This article is based on the aforementioned principles.

The Africanisation of research as the core of, for instance, a theology of reconstruction in Africa is presently being advanced at the University of South Africa (Unisa).

A recent study visit to Marikana-Wonderkop by members of the Department of Practical Theology at Unisa led to the idea of using Marikana-Wonderkop as a community engagement project in the near future:

The Marikana massacre of 16 August 2012 involved the largest number of killings of South Africans by the security forces since the end of apartheid (Alexander et al. 2012; cf. Dlangamandla et al. 2013:1). ... The killing of 34 mineworkers by security forces happened at a koppie [*Wonderkop*] (a low hill) at Marikana, in the North West Province. During the strike, the koppie was regarded as sacred. It was jealously guarded from contamination and no one was allowed to wear a hat or carry a cellphone, with no women allowed (cf. Marinovich 2016:1). (Buffel & Dames 2018:2)

A further outcome was the writing and integration of a Marikana-Wonderkop case study for a new entry-level module in Practical Theology, *First Steps in an African Practical Theology*, to be launched in 2018 at Unisa. This article aims to craft a methodological path for the prospect of a

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Marikana-Wonderkop community and academic research engagement. A secondary aim is not to offer a comprehensive methodological framework, nor to rehearse existing research methodologies as an end in itself; rather, it is to integrate some of the research methodologies of certain practical theologians (Browning 1996; Hermans 2014; Dreyer 2008; Lanser-van der Velde 2000), particularly to address the current violent service delivery protests and strike action in South Africa. Firstly, the research principles of Couture (2012), Browning (1983), Brown (2012) and Schipani (2012) are applied to offer a basic framework for a multi-method approach (cf. Mason 2013:33ff.).<sup>1</sup>

## Towards a multi-method approach

Multi-method studies may help in examining complex societal challenges. Couture (2012:153), for example, calls for the development of new methodological possibilities in terms of '[t]he demands of postmodernity'. She maintains that 'practical theology as public theology in South Africa faces growing social challenges' (Couture 2012:153).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, she highlights the dynamic between practical theology and social policy. The latter is particularly essential to deal with corruption and violent service delivery protests. Moreover, practical theology should study social policy to critique 'governmental and institutional systems that do not support human well-being' (Couture 2012:153). This entails the exploration of various social sciences that can help dysfunctional social policy development issues. How we cooperate with other social sciences must receive greater consideration in future research projects. Couture (2012:154) defines this process as '*social-policy-oriented practical theology*'.<sup>3</sup> Social policy in this article resonates with those policies that promote the well-being and human flourishing of all citizens, especially the marginalised and poorest of the poor (Agbiji 2015; Swart & Horn 2012). However, Kretzschmar (2014:6) discovered that 'substantial policy agreement between government and civil society does not yet exist'. Hence, the rationale of practical theology in studying social policy is 'to promote human well-being of the marginalised, oppressed, impoverished or socially excluded persons or institutions' (Couture 2012:154). Couture further argues that the norms that practical theologians apply engender solidarity with the marginalised and vulnerable in society, undergirded by visions of love and justice. If it is to be relevant and transformative, the future role of public practical theology is to engage government policy directly and to generate activist community engagement. Practical theology should become the voice:

of those who are excluded from social policy: To meet these challenges practical theologians will develop new methods of

1. Mason (2013:33) refers to the application of 'different methods or sources to corroborate each other' in the form of methodological triangulation. She maintains that the integration of different methods or multiple methods has certain 'implications of using data from different sources, and integrating different methods, for your overall research design and for the strength of the argument you wish to construct'.

2. Compare Tracy (1981:61), for instance.

3. Practical theology views human flourishing by divine-human relations. This goal makes method in social-policy-oriented practical theology flexible and elusive, often attending more to criteria than to actual interrelationships of thought (Couture 2012:154). Couture's (2012) concern about a lack of attention 'to actual interrelationships of thought' is addressed by the contribution of Lanser-van der Velde (2000) from page 10 to 12.

influencing social policy by which they represent the suffering and flourishing of ordinary people to the policy-making world. (Couture 2012:154)

How are we to build new methods to impact social policy and social reconstruction, and which methods would be the most appropriate for this task? For instance, how should Couture's (2012:153) concern about the dysfunctionality of and between governmental and institutional policies and systems that do not support marginalised communities be addressed?

The answers to these questions may lie in Browning's (1983:61) notion of public theology. He defines practical theology as public theology 'by articulating praxis criteria of *human transformation and an explicitly theological ethic*' (1983:61).<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is the task of practical theology to reflect on implicit theories and to transform insufferable human conditions and establish explicit theological ethical praxes. The hermeneutical aim of practical theology is not limited to the study of theory in 'praxis for the faithful'; it also relates to or '[justifies] this praxis for the unbeliever, secular and pluralistic society' (Browning 1983:14–15). The task of practical theology is to clarify our ultimate goals, theory and methodology in terms of social, cultural and psychological challenges that complicate or enable human well-being (Browning 1983:15). Hence, practical theology focuses on a hermeneutics of the moral praxis of the Christian and public community while also undertaking a critical reflection thereof. Browning's (1983:16) five dimensions of practical theological thought and action for interpretative and critical reflection are of particular value in this article. His interrelated dimensions of practical thought and action, for instance, may help to interpret the moral praxis of communities rife with corruption and violent service delivery protests; namely the metaphorical, obligational, tendency-need, contextual and rule-role communicational perspectives of human thought and action (Browning 1983:16).

These five dimensions are discussed in more detail later in this article. Here, reference to their purpose will suffice. The first aspect clarifies the questions 'what metaphors are used by a community to symbolise its concrete context of experience?' and 'how do these metaphors influence practical theological thought and action?' The second aspect helps to clarify the dominant and general principles of human obligation. Thirdly, 'what are the human tendencies and needs that the community addresses?' and 'do studying methods and principles interrelate with these needs?' Fourthly, 'what are the cultural, social and psychological forces that influence practical action?' Fifthly, 'what are the concrete actions or rules, roles and patterns of communication that emerge from our judgements about the outcome of the first four aspects?' (Browning 1983:17). These five dimensions can be used to interpret the practical life of a particular community and to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of

4. All our experiences – all praxis – is theory-laden. The first task is to clarify the actual theories with which the practical theologian enters the realm of praxis (Browning 1983:61).

various disciplines that reflect on the practical life of a community. The same five dimensions can be used to guide critical evaluation and reflection on human actions and practices (Browning 1983:17).

The method of hermeneutics undergirds the function of practical theological reflection and action. Brown (2012:112), for her part, posits that hermeneutical theory serves both as 'an informing perspective and a rich methodological resource'. Practical theology, as a field of theological inquiry and practice, seeks to critically discern and respond to the transforming activity of God within the living text of human action (Brown 2012:112). The contextual nature of practical theology focuses its hermeneutical task on historical, social, economic and political challenges that shape human action and actors (Brown 2012:113). New methods of interpretation are essential for our understanding of complex communities and specific sociocultural dynamics (Brown 2012:119). Practical theology, for instance, incorporates methods of inquiry and interpretation from gender studies, ethnography, sociology and poststructuralist discourse theory to clarify the influence of gender, race and class on the reconstruction of human communities and lives and to reveal hidden histories, hidden wounds and hidden possibilities. Practical theology is social reconstruction comprised of power-laden practices (Brown 2012:119).

Schipani's research method is of particular interest. He applies the case study methodology (CSM) to reflect on concrete living realities and human experience (Schipani 2012:98), hence its relevance to dealing with violent strike action and protests over service delivery in South Africa. Furthermore, CSM contributes to critical and constructive reflection on social and ecclesial practice. It supports the study, analysis and evaluation of different forms of faith experience, formation, transformation, theory building and application or demonstration of theory. The goal is to provide more insight by focusing intensely on a particular case that can be approached from diverse perspectives. CSM provides an empirically grounded, patterned, disciplined and praxis-focused way of doing practical theology. It fosters the development of the skills of analysis, discernment (hermeneutics) and decision-making, self-knowledge and awareness (Schipani 2012:99). The CSM is a way of integrating contextualised real-life situations or practices with academic reflective practices (Schipani 2012:99). It provides large and complex perspectives of reality 'without artificially extracting particular elements to study patterns of interaction and change so as to predict action on the part of the persons or groups' (Schipani 2012:100). Practices are empirically grounded and contextually situated; they are hermeneutical in character, fundamentally evaluative and normative, and pragmatically and strategically oriented. These practices resonate with practical theology with its descriptive, interpretive, normative and pragmatic-strategic tasks (Schipani 2012:100).

From the different – yet similar – research methods already outlined, the principles of these methods will be combined with similar scholastic research in search of a way to integrate

it in a multi-method methodological framework. Multi-method research is characterised by fluidity and flexibility of different research methods and data sources (Mason 2013:61). When integrating these different methods and data sources, the following principles should be considered:

1. Research questions should be approached from different perspectives and conceptualised in various ways in terms of various research methods and data sources.
2. Methodological triangulation engenders corroboration between each of the different research methods and data sources concerning comparable data and perspectives on the same phenomenon.
3. Different perspectives of the same phenomenon should be explored by answering different research questions using different methods and sources.
4. The same research question should be answered in different ways and from different perspectives (Mason 2013:33).

Moreover, the need to determine the logic or strategy for the integration of the different methods or data sources is important, namely: (1) whether the different methods or sources will produce similar or complementary results; (2) whether different forms of data will require the same or complementary units of analysis; (3) seeking consistent ontological integration with complementarity as a key principle – the nature of social entities and phenomena (Mason 2013:34–35). Lastly, a theory for each of the methods and/or data sets should underpin the integration of the different research methods and data sources (Mason 2013:35). These principles are essential for multi-method research. Principles 1 and/or 4, as well as a, b and c, are of special importance for this article.

## Multi-method methodological framework

Therefore, multi-method research in this article aims to engender a theology of reconstruction.<sup>5</sup> A multi-method methodology can be characterised with a theology of reconstruction as an all-inclusive theology<sup>6</sup> or multidisciplinary approach<sup>7</sup> (Mugambi in Gathogo 2007:166). In attaining our aim, we must first motivate our choice of different research methods and the principles at play between the different methods below. These methods were randomly selected with no preconceived objectives. They serve as indicators in designing multi-method research approaches for collaborative research initiatives.

5. According to Gathogo (2007:166), this reconstruction paradigm thus implies what Valentin Dedji [2003:5] regards as 'enabling theologians as well as Christians in places of public responsibility to contribute to the urgent reconstruction task, from perspectives informed by Christian faith and critique'.

6. It is crucial to acknowledge that an all-inclusive approach calls for the practitioners of theology (of reconstruction) to put more emphasis on developmental issues that concern the society of faith where it is being articulated. This therefore means that theology in Africa will have to put more emphasis on repairing environmental degradation, reconciliation, healing domestic violence, solving gender disparities, and using the power of love, hence building a sustainable society (Gathogo 2007:166).

7. This means that the theology of reconstruction will have to borrow heavily from other related disciplines, especially on matters that concern the development of the people of Africa. This means that theology will have to institute dialogue with social sciences such as Sociology, Anthropology, and the environmental sciences among others (Gathogo 2007:166).

The multi-method approach in this article resonates with a definition of collaborative research coined in collaborative partnerships as 'a relationship between a group of people working together to foster social reconstruction' (Ebersöhn, Ferreira & Beukes 2012:456). The need for collaborative or team research is currently emerging in the discipline of Practical Theology at Unisa. As a participatory methodology it promotes integrated African social research, educational activities and action – as social transformation or reconstruction. 'It is characterised by shared ownership of a research project, community-based analysis of social problems and an orientation towards community action' (Ebersöhn et al. 2012:456–457).

As expounded by the aforementioned scholars, the following example of a multi-method approach may help to deal with dysfunctional governmental and institutional policies and the complex challenges of violent service delivery protest and strike action:

1. case study method – as a hermeneutical lens to help with the understanding and interpretation of the main research question concerning violent strike and protest action and dysfunctional policy systems
2. communicative or hermeneutical action – as transactional action to promote the reconstruction of and liberation from dysfunctional and oppressive systems
3. multidimensional approach – as a theoretical framework to inform and mobilise society and institutions towards the reconstruction of society and the well-being of humanity
4. African Christopraxis research – as reconstructive reflection and action to promote sustainable systems and society through concrete, informed and innovative processes of reconstruction and liberation.

The link or boundaries between the different methods may become blurred as a result of the main research question but are highly fluid and flexible, based on functional multidisciplinary reconstructive research (Gathogo 2007:166). However, the core theory that links the different methods in the following can be defined as the development of a hermeneutic to explore the meaning of the case study by applying transactional action to reconstruct dysfunctional practices and liberate oppressive people by informing and mobilising society and institutions through practice-oriented research towards human well-being.

### Phase 1: The case study method – a hermeneutical lens

A theology of reconstruction ought to utilise a hermeneutical key of liberation and reconstruction refined by a reading of African theology from what Bediako calls 'the hermeneutic of identity' (Gathogo 2007:167).

The Marikana-Wonderkop massacre in South Africa, as a case study or 'hermeneutic of identity', can help to illustrate how concrete living realities such as violent strike action

can be addressed (Meylahn 2014; Schipani 2012:98; Swart 2013:2). The Marikana-Wonderkop massacre in South Africa's recent past confronts practical theology with a very concrete and practical challenge. The tragic story of Mambush, the man in the green blanket, (see Figure 1) during the Marikana-Wonderkop turmoil could highlight a correlation with the three publics (role players) in the Good Samaritan parable and signifies a rare symbol of leadership courage, vision, mission and calling, as well as service for the common good of humanity (Gibson 2011:138). A comparison between Mugambi's (in Gathogo 2015:6) notion of the good African guest with the Good Samaritan, is of particular interest:

In building on African reconstructive Christology, Jesse Mugambi (1995:90), sees Christ as the African guest, who in the New Testament, is portrayed as one who is always at home with all peoples, cultures and languages. His uniqueness, above other ordinary guests in the African context, is seen in his emphasis on the need to rise above ethnic, racial, class and hierarchical barriers. As a good African guest, Christ brings gifts. One of the best gifts He brought is reconciliation between humanity and the maker – God; and even reconciliation between Jews and gentiles, blacks and whites, men and women, rich and poor, and so forth. (Gathogo 2015:6)

The realities of the Marikana-Wonderkop strike action and the consequent institutionalised violence practices provide a stark contrast to actions of security, political, business and church leaders in neatly dressed suits or armed paraphernalia at the time (Duncan 2016). The aforementioned leadership actions and institutionalised practices necessitate a complete reconstruction of society in terms of Mugambi's (in Gathogo 2015:6) perspective of an African reconstructive Christology:

Mambush – a rock-drill operator with no official rank – emerged from the mass of black workers as a rebel leader demanding justice, while some of those who once spearheaded the fight against repression acted as a shield protecting privilege, exploitation and extreme violence. It is a story about power changing hands and changing colour but failing, finally, to change the lives of those in whose name that power is held. (Davies 2015:2)



Source: Davies, N., 2015, 'The savage truth behind the Marikana massacre', *Mail & Guardian*, 22 May, viewed 12 April 2016, from <http://tinyurl.com/jxaa6uw>

**FIGURE 1:** The image of the man in the green blanket' [*Mambush*] will always be associated with the Marikana tragedy. This graffiti is by Tokolos Stencil (Delwyn Verasamy, M&G). (Davies 2015:2)

This case study poses a difficult challenge to practical theology.<sup>8</sup> It prompts critical questions such as ‘what can we learn from the life narrative of Mambush?’, ‘what are the socio-economic conditions that ignited his agency for activism?’, ‘how should we reconstruct the life narrative of Mambush?’ or, ‘how can it be operationalised to mobilise a work ethic or servant leadership ethic that can foster the transformation of inhuman employment structures, policies and living conditions?’ These are not simple academic questions to be explored with intellectual expertise (Meylahn 2014:4). These questions go to the core of the real living conditions of poverty-stricken communities. The different concepts and theories of the case study as already accentuated will be applied henceforth to demonstrate how a multi-method approach can deal with these issues in a more integrated and holistic manner (Schipani 2012:99–100).

Practical theologians are presented with a hermeneutical challenge, not only to explain and interpret violent industrial strike action or events such as in Marikana-Wonderkop but to deconstruct and reconstruct hegemonic systems and institutions for social and economic transformation (Brown 2012:113, 119; Meylahn 2014:4ff.). The complexity of the story of Mambush can, for instance, also be characterised by employing the five dimensions of Browning’s (1983) theory of practical reason. Mambush demonstrated a vision of justice; an obligation to show leadership; a tendency-need to act for the suffering needs of his fellow workers; an environmental-social stance to protest against the awful living conditions of his community; and a fight against the rule-roles of the Lonmin mine hierarchy and government’s instruments of power (cf. Ries & Hendriks 2013:6; Alexander 2013). This case study calls for an appropriate response, especially to engender transformative communication and hermeneutical action towards social policy-oriented practical theology.

## Phase 2: Communicative or hermeneutical action – as transactional action

This section focuses on the questions ‘how could communicative action prevent institutionalised violence against the marginalised and powerless?’ and ‘how can communicative action facilitate change or human flourishing?’ – particularly in terms of the next theories in the aforementioned case study: ‘*power changing hands and changing colour but failing to change the lives of those in whose name that power is held*’ and ‘*a rebel leader demanding justice*’ (Davies 2015:2). The argument developed in this article centres around a key principle: the role of hermeneutics or critical reflection and communicative actions (Firet 1986; Heitink 1993:115, 129; Pieterse 2001; Yun 2012:4). Lanser-van der Velde (2000:27, 38ff.), for her part, refines communicative and hermeneutical actions to change concrete situations.<sup>9</sup>

8. It raises the question whether our new political freedom attained the decolonialisation of the country: ‘Decolonisation involves more than eradicating the lines of force – police stations, army barracks and border checkpoints – that keep the zones apart; it requires fundamental social and economic change, that is to say, a fundamental reorganisation of the aspects of control and an examination of the limits to such a reorganisation’ (Gibson 2011:138).

9. I have discussed her approach elsewhere (Dames 2005) and reflect on it briefly here for the purposes of this article.

The theory of communicative action focuses on public discourse, other than Pieterse’s (2001) theory of communicative action, which focuses only on the hermeneutics of preaching (Yun 2012:4). Communicative acts have a distinct influence on the recipient subject. The moment one person establishes communication with another, intersubjectivity is established. The potential of intersubjectivity is, in fact, at the heart of the theory of communicative acts (Lanser-van der Velde 2000:28–29). If we communicate within a transformative shared praxeology, creativity or change may result in new situations between people or communities (Groome 1980:184). Intersubjectivity resonates with interpersonal relational and communicative dynamics or critical reciprocal engagements between human and social systems (Brown 2012:113; Freire 1972:110; Gibson 2011:137; Lanser-van der Velde 2000:29; Van der Ven 1998:30). The ‘neighbourly claim’, or the ethic of the Good Samaritan, in terms of violence, discrimination and alienation, is a case in point (Eurich 2015:3ff.; Firet 1968:203ff.). This brings us to the question of human justice in terms of divine justice (Dreyer 2002:88), particularly with reference to ‘the establishment and maintenance of right relationships or ‘righteousness’, from a liberation theology perspective’ (Lebacqz 1986 in Dreyer 2002:88). Dreyer (2002:88–89) therefore locates ‘God’s preferential option for the poor and oppressed’ within a human justice perspective in terms of concrete situations of injustice. He maintains that human justice is inspired by divine justice. The dignity of the poor should be served, with the ultimate aim being their liberation in Christ, and secondly, the alleviation or eradication of material poverty by attaining human well-being (Pieterse 2001:114; Swart 2013:8). Hence, from a liberation theology perspective, communicative acts can foster change between people, lead to the actualisation of normative traditions and also offer empirical and critical insight into reality (Freire 1972:116). Through communication, our humanity and our world are renewed or changed (Freire 1972:170).

In light of the preceding discussion, it is clear that violent situations can be transformed through human and divine justice by means of ‘revolutionary’ communicative acts (Freire 1972:40; Lanser-van der Velde 2000:50–51).

This can be defined as ‘transactional dialogical enactments’ (cf. Lanser-van der Velde 2002:130–131). Transactional dialogical enactment should function within continuity and contextuality. It should, in addition, point to continuous and relational communicative change (Dewey 1938:33ff.). We and our living environment continually influence each other. The same change should hold true for the theory about ‘power changing hands and changing colour but failing to change the lives of those in whose name that power is held’ (Davies 2015:2). Life is thus subject to continual change, determined reciprocally through transactional experiences (Lanser-van der Velde 2000:49). New situations reorient old habits and practices and the renewing of habits or practices leads to alternative ways to act (Dewey 1951:26–29; cf. Browning 1996:6). The re-orientation of habits or practices – that is, a change in their context and implicit or explicit meaning – can

be defined as transaction (cf. Van der Ven 1998:28, 30). The act of communication creates new meaning and experience in and through transactional and intersubjective ways (Dewey 1916:6, 11; 1938:46). Dysfunctional policies and violent situations can lead to either destructive acts (as in the case of Mambush, anger, violence, corruption) or positive results (for instance the Good Samaritan) (Dewey 1951:29).

A lack of freedom and the possibility of choice in suppressive situations impact growth, change and creativity. For example, the case study of the Marikana-Wonderkop massacre and its aftermath provides an illustration of suppressive conditions (Chinguno 2013; Davies 2015). The realisation of transformational policy-oriented practices and living conditions in the transaction between vulnerable communities and powerful institutional practices engenders change and new meaning (cf. Couture 2012:154; Gathogo 2007:169; Lanser-van der Velde 2000:46). Therefore, communication is a transformative act that reconstructs old habits or practices and interpretations, in a meaningful way, into new possibilities. The conditions and practices that engender the theory about 'power changing hands and changing colour but failing to change the lives of those in whose name that power is held' (Davies 2015:2) need redress. Communication, viewed from the liberation theology standpoint, has 'an interpretive priority to the victims of oppression', as mentioned (Dreyer 2002:89). Moreover, the African storytelling methodology is particularly significant for a theology of reconstruction within African indigenous religion. It facilitates communication that:

links the history of a people from their origins to the present. It is also one of the major forms of informal education in Africa, and is indispensable as a means of illustrating an important message in the context of Africa. (Gathogo 2007:167)

Any involvement in societal challenges also has to do with revolutionary public discourse or African storytelling, and the ethical-moral formation of leaders and citizens (Gathogo 2007:157; Gutiérrez 2014:17). It is for this reason that we opt for Gathogo's (2007) storytelling, Lanser-van der Velde's (2000) transactional communicative action and Browning's (1996:1-4) practical reasoning methodologies. We believe that Browning's (1996) methodology holds the key to a multidimensional theoretical framework for a practice-oriented hermeneutical tool to inform and reconstruct the role of the church, society, academia, business, media, politics and labour.

### Phase 3: A multidimensional approach – as theoretical framework

This section focuses on the questions 'how should we interpret and analyse concepts and theories embedded in the Marikana-Wonderkop case study?' and 'how should the emerging gaps, cracks or vacuums in the Marikana-Wonderkop case study be informed by a multidimensional approach?' particularly in terms of the next theories in the aforementioned case study:

Mambush – a rock-drill operator with no official rank – emerged from the mass of black workers; former oppressed leaders

became the oppressors protecting privilege, exploitation and extreme violence; power changing hands and changing colour but failing to change the lives of those in whose name that power is held. (Davies 2015:2)

Redress of the aforementioned challenges, through practical reasoning, remains a daunting task for the actual implementation of policy in South Africa because of a lack of 'commitment and ability of governmental officials' (Kretzschmar 2014:6). Could communicative or hermeneutical action help to address the latter challenge?

Communicative or hermeneutical theory is always embedded in practice and relates to practical reasoning on the part of human beings (Browning 1996:9; Hermans 2014:2). The practice-theory-practice dynamic closes the gap between abstract theories and concrete practical religious and public actions (Browning 1996:9). It is for this reason that Browning (1996:9) challenges religious and/or political institutions to (re)define their mission and agency in the contexts of severe crises, such as the violent industrial strike action in Marikana-Wonderkop (Bradshaw & Haines 2014; Browning 1996:10; Chinguno 2013; Couture 2012:154; Davies 2015; Marinovich 2016). Practical theology engenders the reconstruction of human action or experience within interpretive and re-interpretive ontological contexts for practical reasons (Browning 1996:11).

I have referred to five dimensions of practical reason in the section headed 'Towards a multi-method approach' that provide a hermeneutical tool to reflect on, for instance, the Marikana-Wonderkop massacre (Davies 2015:2; cf. Browning 1996:x). Dreyer's (2008) theoretical framework of practical theology in terms of human well-being may prove instrumental for a multidimensional approach towards social policy-oriented practices. Dreyer draws on Browning's multidimensional model of practical reason (Dreyer 2008:7) and also extends it 'from a specific category of human action, namely practical moral thinking or practical reason, to human action in general' (Dreyer 2008:10) (cf. Hermans 2014:1).

For this reason, we concur with Dreyer's (2008:10) notion of 'an integrative and interdisciplinary conceptual framework' in which to view human well-being. Furthermore, Dreyer (2008:11) redefines Browning's five dimensions with the concepts *visional*; *ethical*; *ecological*; *motivational*; and *practical*. This brings us to the question: How can these five dimensions inform a broad conceptual framework to combat violent institutional practices? Secondly, how do they inform a practice-oriented policy change approach?

Dreyer (2008:11) holds that there is always an implicit *visional dimension* in human action. Our vision of social justice, for example, should relate to God's vision of social justice (Groome 1980:193ff.), including the notions of 'well-being, quality of life, happiness, human flourishing and the common good' (Browning 1983:61; Dreyer 2008:11). Such a vision can be realised if the inability of South African governmental officials to implement social policies is redressed with

the assistance of all stakeholders (Kretzschmar 2014:6). Our notion of humanity relates to how we understand ourselves, others, our lives, our environments, our purposes and ideals in life (Dreyer 2008:11). Life narrative research<sup>10</sup> can also help to reconstruct the tragic life story of Mambush – a rock-drill operator with no official rank who emerged from the mass of black workers – to gain insight into his vision for better employment conditions and human well-being (cf. Lange & Dyll-Myklebust 2015). The visional dimension relates, therefore, to a normative perspective of life and informs a new humanity.

The *ethical dimension* presupposes implicit and explicit principles and practices of ethics, morality and values in social policy-oriented practices to redress *privilege, exploitation and extreme violence*, and *power* (cf. Browning 1983:61). Values such as *social justice* that engender well-being and decent employment conditions are a theological and ethical imperative (Dreyer 2008:11). Manala (2014:253–254), for example, maintains that servant leadership focuses on serving ‘the other’. It is for this reason that the African philosophy of *ubuntu* can play a role in sensitising African leaders to embrace their obligation to serve their people (Magezi 2015:2; Manala 2014:261). Contextual *social policy-oriented research* can help to reconstruct unjust employment practices and poor service delivery by promoting social justice in South Africa, especially in relation to former oppressed leaders who became the oppressors, failing to change the lives of those in whose name that power is held.

The *obligation dimension* refers to ‘the tension between love and justice’ and affluence and poverty (Ricoeur in Dreyer 2008:16) – especially in terms of *the oppressors protecting privilege, exploitation and extreme violence*, and *power issues*. Service is conceived of ‘from the point of view of the one who serves, never from the point of view of the ones being served’, in terms of the Christian servanthood model (Johnson in Swart 2013:11). The problem lies in the agency of those receiving Christian service having no moral agency, no power, no creativity of their own – only need (Johnson in Swart 2013:11). The reconstruction of dysfunctional social policy to address the suffering needs of the marginalised in society is of the essence (cf. Couture 2012:153; Kretzschmar 2014).

The *ecological dimension* focuses on the pervasive existential, social and ecological issues that influence and complicate human action, motivation and basic human needs (Browning 1983:14–17; Swart 2013:11–12). The ultimate failure to change the lives of those in whose name that power is held requires critical action and reflection. The well-being of society ultimately depends on the nature or need of the *ubuntu* neighbourhood in the community (Yun 2012:4). Different social structures (such as business, communities, housing, government and labour) constitute, secure and provide a primary foundation for human needs. Dreyer (2008:12) holds that a flaw in one of these foundations may lead to, for instance, ‘[h]igher workloads, greater job insecurity and

higher unemployment [which] impact negatively on the motivational dimension’. Work conditions, violence, crime, housing and ecological factors impact on both the quality and the living conditions of local communities. Working in a highly polluted environment, as does the local community of the Marikana-Wonderkop mine workers, negatively affects marginalised communities (Dreyer 2008:12). The quality of living and employment conditions can, consequently, be affected by diverse contextual, economic and demographic structural factors (Dreyer 2008:16). We concur that the living conditions of the Marikana-Wonderkop workers (Alexander 2013; Breckenridge 2014; Rafapa 2014) correlate with Dreyer’s comment: ‘without access to clean water, clean air, affordable housing, health services, employment, education, security, and so forth, it is not possible to attain human well-being’ (Dreyer 2008:16–17; cf. Agbiji 2015; Swart & Horn 2012). Practice-oriented social policy research can therefore help in the reconstruction of dysfunctional institutional and social structures, to transform the working and living conditions of poor communities (cf. Balcomb 2016).

The *motivational dimension* relates to human needs (spiritual, material, physical, social and psychological), the struggle to realise these and the fulfilment of these needs in relation to quality employment and living (Dreyer 2008:12, 17). To address these human needs, appropriate social policy-oriented community practices that stimulate the social and cultural motivation of people in the community are required (Couture 2012:153; Yun 2012:4). The reconstruction of poor service delivery practices, and the mobilising of the church to be a servant to the community and to serve the holistic needs of human beings, are crucial (Yun 2012:4). Mambush – a rock-drill operator with no official rank – serves as an example of selfless service or leadership.

The *practical dimension* is the most concrete dimension and deals with various institutions, policies and processes (Dreyer 2008:13). The reconstruction of social policy development – to mobilise communities to advance the common good of all – is critical. This dimension, in sync with the first four, can be developed in practice-oriented community ‘programmes of service delivery, community development, and job creation, social policies, poverty reduction, developmental and land reform programmes’ (Dreyer 2008:13, 17; cf. Adogame 2016; Couture 2012:154; Hermans 2014; Ogbonnaya 2016). The development of new emerging labour leaders from the mass of black workers is envisioned. The reality and practices of former oppressed leaders who became the oppressors protecting privilege, exploitation and extreme violence (when power changed hands and changed colour but failed to change the lives of those in whose name that power is held) require transformational value and skills training to redress the legacies of apartheid-like hierarchical practices.

Social policies that do not embody all five of the practical reasoning dimensions (visional, ethical, obligation, ecological, motivational and practical) may prove impractical or irrelevant to address hierarchical institutional violence or dysfunctional policy implementation. For this reason,

10. See Hermans and Koerts (2013).

it becomes critical to forge new community-based social policy-oriented practices (cf. Kretzschmar 2014). To this end, a contextual practice-oriented approach is proposed. Because of a lack of space, it is not possible to integrate the aforementioned five dimensions into the next section. While this matter does need future elaboration, the reader may, however, make the necessary correlations for now. The idea is to develop the preceding theoretical framework into five integrated research approaches. The dissemination of such research could result in community-based workshops, academic and leadership-wide reflexive conferences, developmental community projects and the like (cf. Balcomb 2016).

#### Phase 4: African Christopraxis research – as reconstructive reflection and action

This section focuses on the questions: ‘how can we promote the conscientisation of the voiceless and marginalised in oppressive or repressive living conditions?’; ‘how should the life narrative of Mambush be recounted as a learning experience for leaders today?’; ‘how should we analyse and interpret brutal police action, the role of police line management, the state, mine bosses, the church, etc., in the Marikana-Wonderkop case study?’; and ‘how should theory inform and shape innovative or preventative initiatives by both the police and affected communities to curb violent strike action or service delivery protests?’ Moreover, ‘how should policy agreement and consistency by government and stakeholders be realised for an effective strategy to be developed and implemented?’ (cf. Kretzschmar 2014:6). These questions relate, particularly, in terms of the concepts and/or theories concerned with the aforementioned case study and listed here:

Mambush demanding justice; reversed oppression; shield protecting privilege, exploitation and extreme violence; power changing hands and changing colour; failing to change the lives of those in whose name that power is held. (Davies 2015:2)

Complex existential challenges – such as violent service delivery or strike action and dysfunctional government and institutional policies – call for critical questions and reflection on the implicit and explicit meaning of the ‘theory-laden’ practices, characterised as they are by crisis episodes or events (Heitink 1993:15ff). Contextual and continuum shifts from ‘moments of consolidated practice to moments of deconstruction to new tentative reconstructions and consolidation’ are critical if we are to deal with new and complex crisis situations such as Marikana-Wonderkop (Browning 1996:6; Hermans 2014:2–3; Keifert 2006:21ff.).

In a similar sense and from an African perspective, based on Ukachukwu’s insights, Gathogo (2015:1–2) applies reconstructive hermeneutics to promote ‘theory-laden’ practices through renewal, rebirth, restoration and reconciliation as the reinterpretation of Christology in an African context – particularly towards spiritual and social well-being in modern-day situations within anthropological, existential and personal realities. His Christological perspective functions within a historical, secular and political perspective in terms of concrete practical problems in socio-economic and political realities such as Marikana-Wonderkop (Gathogo 2015:2).

Such an African Christopraxis<sup>11</sup> perspective, which values human action above abstract theory, presents Christ as the answer to the liberation and cultural struggles in Africa as ‘a life place of ubuntu’ (Gathogo 2015:4; Mashabela 2017:2). ‘Liberation Christologies in Africa are more inclined to cultural and religious values and less prone to secular and Marxist ideologies’ (Wachege 1992 in Gathogo 2015:5). Inculturation, reconciliation, liberation and reconstruction Christologies characterise and shape African Christology in a profound way (Gathogo 2015:5). In the light of an African Christopraxis of reconstruction, it is impossible to resonate with Hermans’ notion that the goal of practice-oriented research should come from the professional practice and that the research results contribute directly to the professional practice (Andriessen 2014 in Hermans & Schoeman 2015:27). A Christopraxis approach offers rich liberational and reconstructive ontologies and symbolic meaning to violent living conditions.

Hermans (2014:1) maintains that practical theology builds theological theory on practical reasoning, both in Christian or religious individual and collective actions. Hence, human actions require hermeneutical analysis to illuminate their symbolic meaning for self-understanding and social reconstruction and liberation, undergirded by an African ‘community of knowledge’ with a particular and/or diverse cultural or faith ‘background knowledge of the self, others and the world’ (Brown 2012:119; Browning 1983:16–17; Gathogo 2015:5; Hermans 2014:2). Therefore, the current service delivery issues, or the current issues of systemic corruption in South Africa, require the development of new social policy theory and the reconstruction of related practices (cf. Hermans 2014:12).

Pervasive violent strike action and service delivery protests could come about as a consequence of a lack of knowledge of ethics, morality or spirituality; values or practices; social justice and social policy development and implementation regarding how to serve humanity from a perspective of existential reality (cf. Hermans 2014:12). African Christopraxis research is about transforming the actual living conditions of humans. Gathogo’s (2007:159–160) notions of rebuilding and re-examining the African person-in-context (*ubuntu-muntu*) towards its renewal, rebirth, restoration and reconciliation as the reinterpretation of Christology in an African context is of particular significance (Gathogo 2015:1–2). An African Christopraxis approach goes beyond mere academic work.

The plight of vulnerable communities ravaged by violence can be transformed through transferable knowledge, by applying both a multiple case study and/or communicative action methodology (Hermans 2014:13). The latter can help to raise better awareness of the role and outcome of policy matters. Secondly, knowledge development can also foster change in a specific context through intervention processes (cf. Brown 2012:112).<sup>12</sup>

11. Christopraxis is the historical concretisation of God’s action (divine praxeology) and human action (human praxeology) from the perspective of the poor (Botman 2000:208–109). See also Dames (2017:4–5).

12. [A] knowledge stream of theory development and a practice stream of change. The knowledge stream aims to generate transferable knowledge; the practice stream aims to transform a situation from the actual towards the desired’ (Hermans 2014:13).



Hence, a social-policy practice-oriented methodology informed by African Christopraxis, for example, should generate transferable knowledge and practice-oriented research through transactional communication action by analysing relevant case studies of institutional and social violence (cf. Hermans 2014:13). By applying a multi-method approach to social justice we may be able to deal effectively with socially and institutionally constructed violent situations (Hermans 2014:13–14). Furthermore, the development and implementation of an effective strategy for sustainable policy consensus and consistency by government and stakeholders could be promoted (cf. Kretzschmar 2014:6). To achieve this, we need to build multidisciplinary research approaches consisting of at least psychologists, sociologists, communication scientists, health scientists and African cultural scientists, as well as African philosophers, theologians and educational scientists. The very idea is daunting, but it is also a long-overdue reality that no academic in Africa can afford to disregard. The verdict is out: African academics need to engage in the prospect of serving our people.

## Conclusion

It has already been noted in this article that intersubjective transactional communicative actions are a prerequisite for social transformation. The ultimate role of practical theology is to develop public practical reasoning and to deconstruct and reconstruct dysfunctional theories and practices of systemic violence – all this for the ultimate reconstruction of poor living and employment practices and thereby for the complete transformation of society. A multi-method approach can help to reconstruct dysfunctional social structures and practices and mobilise new life-giving practices, along with contextual practice-oriented intervention and progressive programme designs, reconstructed and liberated by an African Christopraxis approach.

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