

**THE EXPERIENTIAL WORLD OF  
ADOLESCENT LEARNERS WITH  
HOMOSEXUAL PARENTS**

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**THE EXPERIENTIAL WORLD OF ADOLESCENT LEARNERS WITH HOMOSEXUAL  
PARENTS**

by

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submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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**NOVEMBER 2008**

**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that

**THE EXPERIENTIAL WORLD OF ADOLESCENT LEARNERS WITH HOMOSEXUAL PARENTS**

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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DATE

## SUMMARY

This study examined the experiential world of adolescents in the middle and late phases of adolescent development with homosexual parents. A comprehensive literature review was conducted to explore homosexual parenting and societal reactions to this phenomenon. Thereafter, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory of child development was highlighted followed by a synopsis comprising different dimensions of the development of adolescents in the middle and late phases of adolescent development. The empirical investigation was carried out through qualitative research methodology. In-depth case studies selected by purposeful sampling were carried out with three adolescents, each of whom had a homosexual father. Although the qualitative data is not generalisable, the findings of the case studies revealed similarities in the life worlds of the adolescents. The participants were affected by the discovery of their father's homosexuality, but they chose to accept their father's sexual orientation and sought a relationship with him. Finally, recommendations for practice were made.

Key words: adolescents, homosexual, gay, lesbian, case studies, personality, interview.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

DECLARATION	p 3
SUMMARY	p 4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	p 5

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW**

1.1 GENERAL AWARENESS	p 10
1.2 ACTUALITY OF THE PROBLEM	p 11
1.3 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE INVESTIGATION	p 13
1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT	p 16
1.4.1 Sub-problems	
1.5 RESEARCH AIMS	p 16
1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW	p 17
1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN	p 17
1.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY	p 20
1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	p 20
1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION	p 21
1.11 CONCLUSION	p 21

### **CHAPTER 2**

#### **HOMOSEXUAL PARENTS**

2.1 INTRODUCTION	p 22
2.2 DEFINING HOMOSEXUALITY	p 22
2.3 THE RIGHTS OF HOMOSEXUAL PERSONS IN SOUTH AFRICA	p 23
2.4 HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT	p 24
2.5 SOCIETAL REACTIONS TO HOMOSEXUALITY	p 26
2.6 HOMOSEXUAL PARENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA	p 29
2.6.1 Societal reactions to homosexual parents	
2.6.2 Children's reactions to their homosexual parents	

2.6.3 Societal reactions towards the children of homosexual parents

**2.7 FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE REGARDING HOMOSEXUAL PARENTS' ABILITY TO PARENT** p 34

**2.8 CONCLUSION** p 39

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **ADOLESCENCE**

**3.1 INTRODUCTION** p 40

**3.2 DEFINING ADOLESCENCE** p 40

**3.3 BRONFENBRENNER'S BIO-ECOLOGICAL THEORY OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT** p 41

3.3.1 The microsystem

3.3.2 The mesosystem

3.3.3 The exosystem

3.3.4 The macrosystem

3.3.5 The chronosystem

**3.4 ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT DURING MIDDLE TO LATE ADOLESCENCE** p 44

3.4.1 Physical development (including sexual development)

3.4.2 Cognitive development

3.4.3 Emotional development

3.4.4 Social and personality development

3.4.5 Moral development

3.4.6 Conative development

**3.5 WHAT IMPACT DOES THE ADOLESCENT'S LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT HAVE ON HIS OR HER UNDERSTANDING, ACCEPTANCE AND HANDLING OF A HOMOSEXUAL PARENT?** p 56

**3.6 CONCLUSION** p 58

### **CHAPTER 4**

#### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

**4.1 INTRODUCTION** p 59

**4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH** p 59

4.2.1 Case studies	
4.2.1.1 Case study design types	
4.2.1.2 Choice of a case study design for the present study	
4.2.1.3 Interviews	
4.2.1.3.a Types of interviews	
4.2.1.3.b Motivation for the use of semi-structured interviews	
4.2.1.3.c Data collection	
4.2.3.1.d Data analysis	
4.2.3.2 High School Personality Questionnaire	
4.2.3.2.a Motivation for the inclusion of the HSPQ	
4.2.3.2.b Data collection	
4.2.3.2.c Data analysis	
4.2.3.3 Projection media – Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank (ISB)	
4.2.3.3.a Motivation for the use of the ISB	
4.2.3.3.b Data collection	
4.2.3.3.c Data analysis	
<b>4.3 CONCLUSION</b>	p 72
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	
<b>PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA</b>	
<b>5.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	p 73
<b>5.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH</b>	p 73
5.2.1 Case studies	
5.2.2 Concluding summary	
<b>5.3 CONCLUSION</b>	p 128
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	
<b>OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
<b>6.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	p 129
<b>6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION</b>	p 129
<b>6.3 SYNTHESIS AND SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS</b>	p 130
6.3.1 Main findings and concluding summary of the literature study	



6.3.2 Main findings and concluding summary of the empirical investigation	
<b>6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	p 146
<b>6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH</b>	p 147
<b>6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY</b>	p 148
<b>6.7 CONCLUSION</b>	p 148
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	p 150
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	
Table 3.1 Summary of Kohlberg's stages of moral development	p 54
Table 4.1 Fourteen primary HSPQ factors	p 69
<b>ANNEXURES</b>	
Annexure A: Letter of request to parents	p 157

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

#### 1.1 GENERAL AWARENESS

A few years ago, I came across a statement which asserted that the psychological well-being of adolescents with homosexual parents would be undermined by their parents' sexual orientation. I decided to research this statement a little more closely.

A literature search indicated numerous studies, which focus on the young children of gay and lesbian parents. The majority of these studies were conducted to reduce discrimination against homosexual parents in custody cases. Fewer studies have been conducted which focus on the adolescent children of homosexual parents. Most of the latter were conducted to ascertain whether the adolescents' sexual identities were influenced by their parent's homosexuality. Thus, both of these types of studies set out to either prove or disprove that children are negatively affected by this "deviant" subculture. Simply put, the question has been one of right versus wrong, with many conflicting conclusions. I came across very few international studies that attempted to understand how the adolescents themselves experience having a homosexual parent.

Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristofferson and Brewaeys (2002:237-251) also found in their analysis that the studies that have been carried out to date centre on families with young children. They point out that very little is known about the psychological well-being of school age-children. In their study of children of lesbian parents conceived by donor insemination they state: "At this age [school-age] children start to interact more with peers. Peers are therefore likely to form a central part of their immediate social context. These children also have the ability to comprehend that their family structure does not correspond to what the greater society portrays as a family. The awareness that same-sex relationships are not generally accepted frequently occurs at the age of seven and intensifies during puberty and the early teenage years. Most important to note is that very little is known about the opinions of the children themselves about growing up in a lesbian DI [donor insemination] family. Only in one study was information gathered from

young adults. However, these children had grown up in lesbian post-divorce families” (Vanfraussen et al 2002:237-251).

This led me to wonder about the experience of adolescents with homosexual parents in South Africa. Despite the fact that gay marriages have been legalised in South Africa and that the South African Constitution outlaws discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, South African society is largely still homophobic (Nicol 2005:72-85). In my own community it is commonly assumed that children raised by homosexual parents will have developmental abnormalities, experience sexual confusion, gender disorders, stigma and social discrimination.

Why focus on adolescent children specifically? Historically this group have largely been neglected. They are more capable of introspection than younger children and have an increased ability to analyse and express their thoughts and emotions. Adolescence is also known for being a particularly sensitive time, in which adolescents are often acutely aware of being “different” in any aspect and generally strive to be as similar as possible to the other adolescents in their peer group. Mwamwenda (2004:66) explains: “Conformity with peers give adolescents a sense of belonging, which is important to them. There is room for innovation, but this must conform with the basic structure or meet the approval of peers. Adolescents tend to be idealistic and look for perfection in themselves, society and its institutions and others, including parents and older folk”. He also talks about the phenomenon of adolescent egocentrism when he says: “Adolescents feel that they are special and that no one else in the world feels as they do. They are convinced that everyone looks at them critically all the time” (2004:65).

## **1.2 ACTUALITY OF THE PROBLEM**

Fitzgerald (1999:57-74) feels that it is important to study homosexual families, as they constitute a fairly large population that contributes to the wide diversity of current family forms. She points out that homosexual families are “intricately connected to our society as a whole, resisting the dominant culture that takes a negative view of lesbians and gays”. She concurs with other commentators that heterosexism underlies the limited information accumulated to date about homosexual families and the impact of their sexual orientation on family life. She claims that many of the existing sociological works

treat homosexuality as deviant; they focus on sexual behaviour and attitudes and ignore the family relations and family context of homosexual persons. She says: "This distortion ... is not harmless or valuefree. Our silence as family researchers on this issue contributes to a general climate of intolerance and to maintenance of the status quo" (Fitzgerald 1999:57-74).

Patterson (2006:241-243) advocates the study of lesbian and gay-parented families as she feels they allow researchers to address theoretical questions that have previously remained difficult or impossible to answer. These studies are also valuable because they contribute "to public debate and legal decision making, as well as to theoretical understanding of human development".

Since homosexual couples and the families they form exist outside of traditionally defined family and parenting roles based on gender, they have the advantage of redefining and reinventing their own meanings for the concepts, *family* or *parents* (Bigner 1996:370-403).

As mentioned earlier, previous studies which have focused on the children of gay and lesbian parents have often reached conflicting conclusions. In a study done by Kirkpatrick, Roy and Smith, no differences were found between the children of heterosexual parents and those of homosexual parents. Cameron (2005:396-407) reacted to this study and suggested that Kirkpatrick et al ignored a "considerable body of clinical literature which showed that children with homosexual parents had considerable social and psychological difficulties". He also suggests that Kirkpatrick ignored children in her own study who reported social and psychological problems.

Cameron points out that the results of Kirkpatrick et al's study was influential in the 2004 decision of the American Psychological Association (APA) to pass a resolution declaring the equivalency of homosexuality, with its president, Dianne Halpern declaring that "children raised by homosexuals are just as mentally healthy as those with heterosexual parents". Yet Cameron (2005:369-407) argues that the three studies by Kirkpatrick et al "contained so many flaws that it could be charged that they sought to reach a predetermined conclusion...Some of the published works had to disregard their own results in order to conclude that homosexuals were fit parents".

In the light of these conflicting conclusions, I endeavoured to understand this phenomenon from the adolescents' perspectives by investigating their unique experiential worlds, without preconceived notions of the possible findings.

### **1.3 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE INVESTIGATION**

#### 1.3.1 Adolescence:

Mamwenda's (2004:65) view of changes occurring in adolescence is similar to the view held by Hauser (1991) who argued that that adolescence can be disturbing for both youth and their families since various tensions and dilemmas may surface in new and sometimes unexpected ways. "Established family patterns may shift under the influence of cognitive, biological, and social changes. Cognitive transformations are especially salient, as many adolescents are beginning to think more abstractly and to delight in logical analysis, which open the way to intricate reflections and challenging questions regarding family relationships and traditions" (Hauser 1991:4). Hauser points to the reciprocal nature of the parent-adolescent relationship, stating, "There is growing consensus regarding the significance of family ties, parental models, and reciprocal influences. Not only do families affect adolescent development, but aspects of adolescent development (for example, puberty, cognitive changes) affect the life of the family. Current studies tend to focus on family diversity, the contributions of families on adolescent development, and the impacts of adolescent development upon families" (1991:17).

In a study of children born or adopted into gay-affirmative families, Martin (1993:207) states that homosexual parents seem particularly concerned that their teenagers would have intense struggles due to being raised in non-traditional families. However, there are not yet enough children born or adopted into gay-affirmative families who have grown to adulthood for such a study to have a representative sample. In South Africa gay parenting is largely still regarded as a non-traditional family form.

### 1.3.2 Heterosexism / Homophobic environment

Ariel and McPherson (2000:421-432) state that due to the pernicious effects of discrimination (which can result in loss of employment, loss of child custody, ostracism or anti-gay violence) many lesbians and gay men now choose to remain invisible. They also remind us that even despite encouraging research findings and positive social changes taking place, the tension between the prejudiced, and sometimes even threatening, outside world and the inside world of a homosexual family, can be very powerful. They (2000:421-432) state that stress of varying degrees can be encountered in the attempts to create warm, intimate and loving home environments.

Fitzgerald (1999:57-74) reports that children with lesbian mothers more often report emotional responses to stress than do children of heterosexual parents. However, she cautions us to keep in mind that children with lesbian mothers may actually encounter more stressful events and conditions than do children with heterosexual mothers as a result of heterosexist, homophobic, and/or other aspects of their environment. Moreover, their more frequent reports of emotional responses to such stress might simply reflect the more stressful nature of their experience as opposed to poor parenting by lesbian parents.

Patterson (2006:241-243) reminds us that “the fact that children of lesbian mothers generally develop in healthy ways should not be taken to suggest that they encounter no challenges. Many investigators have remarked upon the fact that children of lesbian and gay parents may encounter anti-gay sentiments in their daily lives”.

### 1.3.3 Peer-group teasing:

According to Golombok (2000), being disliked or rejected by peers will affect children’s self-esteem and emotional development and their social development (Vanfraussen et al 2002:237-251).

Ariel and McPherson (2002:421-432) point out that although incidents of peer-group teasing are indeed reported by children with homosexual parents, research on

relationships have revealed an otherwise normal and healthy picture of relationships with peers.

Fitzgerald (1999:57-74) notes similar findings: "Children from lesbian families were more likely to remember peer group teasing about their own sexuality, but do not differ from heterosexual counterparts on the proportion who had experienced peer stigma due to their family backgrounds or mothers' lifestyles ... these children also reported being affected by feelings that their parents' homosexuality must be kept a secret due to being afraid of teasing and name calling by peers".

Bigner (1996:370-403) points to the value that peer-group teasing may hold for children's social development: "Although children of gay fathers can expect to experience conflicts and harassment at times from other children, this can become a learning experience about human nature and how to deal with irrationality in others. Children of gay fathers can learn the importance of tolerance and the need to recognise individual differences in others". He also points out that children of gay fathers might harbour the fear that their peers will assume that they are gay as well. "Research indicates that this fear is unfounded, since children of gay fathers learn how to manage and control how they wish to be perceived by their peers". This is accomplished through the use of several strategies. First, *boundary controls* (controlling parents' behaviour or others' contact with the parents) may be used. Second, children of gay fathers may use non-disclosure (refusal to share parents' homosexuality or denial) as a means of controlling public knowledge of their father's sexuality. Third, children of gay fathers may use selective disclosure (selective sharing of personal information).

After conducting the preliminary literature study, the following questions came to mind: How will the stress of attempting to create a warm, loving, home environment by homosexual parents, apart from the threatening, prejudiced outside world, impact on the experiential world of adolescents? Can we then expect that South African adolescents with homosexual parents will also experience intense struggles as a result of this non-traditional family form? How will they experience being raised in non-traditional families? What impact will an adolescent's development have on a homosexual family? What effects do the challenges of encountering anti-gay sentiments have on adolescents with homosexual parents? How will adolescents perceive teasing from their peer group?

How will this teasing affect adolescents' self-esteem, emotional development and social development? Do adolescents make use of social control strategies to manage and control how they are viewed by peers? How does the use of these social control strategies affect them? Does being raised by a homosexual parent have an effect on the adolescent's ego, self-concept, emotions, thoughts, involvement, identity, self-concept, self-actualisation, self-talk or even on their sexual identity? And if so, what effect does it have? Finally, if children of homosexual parents experience emotional stress, is it because of their parents' homosexuality or is it because of the social response to their parents' homosexuality? Some of these questions were incorporated into the semi-structured interviews conducted.

#### **1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The problem statement for this study is as follows: What is the nature of the experiential world of adolescent learners with homosexual parents in South Africa?

##### 1.4.1 Sub-problems

The sub-problems for this investigation are as follows:

How can homosexuality be defined and described in the South African context?

What does the Constitution of South Africa state regarding the rights of homosexual persons in South-Africa?

What is the occurrence of homosexual relationships in South Africa?

What are some societal reactions to homosexual persons and, more specifically, to homosexual parents?

What are children's reactions to their homosexual parents?

How does society react towards the children of homosexual parents?

What does the literature say regarding homosexual parents' ability to parent?

How can adolescence be defined?

What are the developmental stages and tasks of the adolescents in the case studies?

How can the adolescents' developmental stages and tasks be integrated with the relations theory?

What impact do the adolescent's cognitive, emotional and social levels of development have on their understanding, acceptance and handling of their homosexual parents?



## **1.5 RESEARCH AIMS**

The research aims for this investigation are as follows:

To investigate how homosexuality is defined and described in the South African context.

To investigate what the Constitution of South Africa states concerning the rights of homosexual persons in South Africa.

To investigate the occurrence of homosexual relationships in South Africa.

To investigate the occurrence of adolescent children with homosexual parents in South Africa.

To investigate the reaction of the community to homosexual persons and, more specifically, to homosexual parents.

To understand the developmental levels of the adolescents in the case studies.

To understand the needs of the adolescents at their specific developmental levels.

To investigate what the adolescent's attitudes toward homosexuality are.

To understand what impact the adolescent's physical, cognitive, emotional and social levels of development have on their understanding, acceptance and handling of their homosexual parents.

## **1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Data was collected through the use of documentation (such as journal articles, appropriate books, magazine articles, newspaper and media reports and information available on the internet) and three in-depth case studies (which included informal observation, interviews, projective and personality tests).

## **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN**

### Demarcation

The empirical investigation of this study was based on the qualitative research method. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:15) describe qualitative research in the following way: it assumes that multiple realities are constructed through individual and collective perceptions or views of the same situation, it is concerned with understanding social phenomena from the participant's perspective and there is greater flexibility in both the strategies and the research process as compared to quantitative research. In order to study the adolescents learners' experiential worlds from the subjective perspectives of the individuals involved (because the complexities, richness and diversity of their lives

could only be captured by incorporating the context in which they operate, as well as their frame of reference) three in-depth case studies were done. Data collection methods included a review of the literature and case studies.

The experiential world of adolescent learners with homosexual parents should be studied from and structured according to a theoretical premise which includes psycho-educational criteria in order for it to be studied meaningfully.

It is generally accepted that bias and subjectivity from the side of the researcher could be present during a research project and influence the research data, more so with qualitative than with quantitative research. The use of multiple methods to study one research question is called *triangulation*. The term suggests that a researcher can get a clearer picture of the social reality being studied by viewing it from several perspectives. For the purposes of this study and to address possible bias from the side of the researcher, three qualitative research methods were used, namely interviews, sentence completion and personality tests.

#### Case studies

In-depth case studies of three adolescent children with homosexual parents were carried out for the purpose of ascertaining the nature of their experiential worlds.

#### Selection of respondents

The minimum criteria for participants' inclusion in the sample were: they were South African adolescents between the ages of 16 and 18 years old; and all have at least one parent living openly as a homosexual. All three participants in the case studies live with the heterosexual parent, who is the custodial parent, in a divorced home. The homosexual parent is the non-custodial parent and in all cases the child has varying degrees of contact with him.

Bailey (1982:95) points out that the use of routine sampling procedure is impractical in the study of so-called "deviant subcultures" where many respondents may not be visible. Nicol (2005:72-85) states that South African society can largely still be considered homophobic and, as such, the parameters of the homosexual population cannot be known (since gay and lesbian individuals are largely part of hidden populations) and

neither a random nor a representative sample can thus be drawn. Use was made of a purposive sampling method (Neuman 2000:196), also known as snowball sampling, in which each successive participant is named by a preceding individual and each participant is asked to suggest others who fit the profile or have the required attribute. For the purpose of this study, I contacted friends, acquaintances and colleagues who might be likely to know adolescent children with a homosexual parent. I described the proposed research and solicited their help in finding eligible adolescents.

### Data collection

#### (i) Interviews

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:443) describe a semi-structured interview as a conversation with a goal. "The researcher may use a general interview guide or protocol, but not a set of specific questions worded precisely the same for every interview. Rather, there are a few general questions, with considerable latitude to pursue a wide range of topics". It was decided to make use of interviews as it allowed the interviewees to shape the content of the interview by focusing on topics of importance or interest to them. The data was collected by tape recording the interviews, reviewing them and typing transcriptions of the recorded interviews. The data was analysed through the use of qualitative analysis strategies in which categories and patterns emerging from the data were used to select, categorise, compare, synthesise and interpret to provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interest (the experiential world of adolescent learners with homosexual parents).

#### (ii) Sentence completion

The Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank was administered individually to the adolescent case studies and interpreted qualitatively by the researcher. This test was selected as it has previously been found that testees are inclined to project themselves through their completion of the sentences revealing aspects of their personality and problem areas. The test consists of 40 incomplete sentences and it can be directed at various avenues such as relationships, interests or personality. There is no time limit for the test, although the time taken may be a valuable factor in the evaluation for the testee (Van den Aardweg 1999:186). The testees were given copies of the test and asked to complete the sentences. It was explained that their answers would not be deemed to be either right or wrong and that there was no time limit for the completion of the test. They

were encouraged to write the first thing that came to mind for each sentence and not to ponder over the answers for too long in order to retain the projective value of the test.

### (iii) Personality test

The High School Personality Questionnaire (HSPQ) was developed in the USA by Raymond B. Cattell of the University of Illinois and Mary D.L. Cattell of the Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, Illinois. It was adapted for use in the South African context by the Institute for Psychometric Research of the Human Sciences Research Council and was standardised for youths between the ages of 13 and 18 years of age. (Du Toit & Madge 1984:25). The questionnaire measures primary personality traits such as ego-strength, tension, warmth and conscientiousness (Van den Aardweg 1999:171). Form A was administered individually to the testees as per the recommended guidelines of the HSPQ manual (Du Toit & Madge 1984:4). It was explained to the testees that there was no time limit for the completion of the questionnaires and that their answers could not be deemed either right or wrong. Testees were supplied with the required test booklet, an answer sheet, an HB-pencil and an eraser and were instructed in the correct method of completing the answer sheets. The questionnaires were scored manually with the use of the required masks and norm tables. The results were interpreted according to the guidelines given in the test manual (Du Toit & Madge 1984:8-41).

## **1.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

In order to maintain validity and reliability during the interviews, clarification of complicated or seemingly contradictory statements were continually sought from the adolescent learners in the case studies. To maintain validity and reliability during the projection test and the personality test, the instructions for the implementations of these tests were followed as closely as possible.

## **1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

It should be noted that a 'typical' homosexual parent does not occur. Great care was taken to avoid stereotyping the homosexual men or their children. All names were changed and great care was taken to ensure the anonymity of the adolescent learners in the case studies to protect them from any harm as a result of this study. Parental consent was obtained for each participant in the study.

## **1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION**

Chapter 1: Introductory interview

Chapter 2: Homosexual parents and their children in the South Africa context

Chapter 3: Adolescents: their physical, cognitive, emotional and social developmental levels and how these may impact on their understanding, acceptance and handling of homosexuality.

Chapter 4: Research design

Chapter 5: Interpretation of results

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

## **1.11 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the actuality of the study was discussed. The research aims, preliminary literature investigation, research design, validity and reliability, ethical considerations and organisation of the dissertation were also discussed. It was found that few investigations into the experiential world of adolescents with homosexual parents have been done. Even less is known about the experiential world of these adolescents in South Africa. The preliminary literature investigation indicated that international studies regarding the psychological well-being of children with homosexual parents have shown conflicting results. Children of homosexual parents are prone to peer-group teasing, but otherwise they have normal and healthy relationships with peers and this teasing may even hold some value in furthering their social development. I have posed the question: What is the experiential world of adolescent learners with homosexual parents in the South African context? In the next chapter the phenomenon of homosexual parents will be discussed in more detail.

## CHAPTER 2

### HOMOSEXUAL PARENTS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the actuality of the proposed problem statement was discussed. The research aims, preliminary literature investigation, research design, validity and reliability, ethical considerations and study programme were presented. In this chapter the phenomenon of homosexual parent families is discussed in detail.

The terms *gay* and *lesbian* have been used interchangeably with the term *homosexual* in this chapter. The focus of this study is on the experiential world of adolescents with homosexual parents. No distinction has been made between lesbian women or gay men as parents. Where either group is discussed, it has been assumed that the discussion is relevant to the other group.

#### 2.2 DEFINING HOMOSEXUALITY

According to Theunick (2000:9), the term homosexuality, at the most fundamental level, refers to same-sex desire and same-sex sexual behaviour. But he feels that focussing exclusively on these two aspects of homosexuality fails to capture the social meanings created to make sense of such behaviour and desire. Theunick (2000:9) describes two dominant discourses in the West that have emerged around such psychological and behavioural phenomena. The one is a medico-legal discourse of regulation and oppression, first described by Foucault in 1976, that constructs the person with same-sex desires as a certain type who succumbs to a sexual failing, rendering him or her an object of examination, regulation and in need of a cure. "The other is an affirmative social movement discourse that constructed the person as inherently homosexual, and developed the concept of a gay community that constitutes an oppressed minority whose members require equal civil rights" (Weeks & Altman in Theunick 2000:9).

Shively and De Cecco (in Theunick 2000:41) have taken a similar multi-dimensional view of homosexuality and describe a person's sexual identity in terms of a number of dimensions. These include 1) a person's biological sexual appearance that shapes their view of self as anatomically male or female; 2) a person's gender identity that reflects his or her basic conviction of being male or female; 3) social sex-role that reflects a person's perception of self as masculine or feminine in accordance with its culturally ascribed characteristics; 4) a person's sexual orientation that defines his or her affectional and physical preference for same-sex or opposite sex sexual partners. This dimension is further divided into whether this preference exists on a behavioural and/or fantasy level. Regarding the sexual orientation component, Klein (in Theunick 2000:41) adds a person's social preference, lifestyle and self-identification as defining dimensions of sexual orientation. He also adds the dimension of time, that is, how this orientation changes throughout the lifespan.

### **2.3 THE RIGHTS OF HOMOSEXUAL PERSONS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

In South Africa homosexuals do not have a special section in the Bill of Rights dedicated to their rights; instead, the relevant part of section nine of the Constitution entitled "Equality" prohibits the unfair discrimination against anyone on one or more grounds, one of which is sexual orientation.

South Africa's post-apartheid constitution was the first in the world to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation. On 1 December 2006 South Africa made history by becoming the fifth country in the world, and the first country in Africa, to legalise same-sex marriage. There are currently three laws that provide for the status of marriage in South Africa: the Marriage Act (Act 25 of 1961); the Customary Marriages Act (Act 120 of 1998), which provides for the civil registration of marriages solemnised according to the traditions of indigenous tribes; and the Civil Union Act (Act 17 of 2006). A person who is a marriage officer in terms of the Marriage Act, and who has an objection of conscience, religion or belief to marrying same-sex couples, may object to the government in writing, after which he or she will be granted exemption from having to perform such marriages.

Previously the age of consent to partake in sexual activity for lesbians and gay men was nineteen, but just more than a year after the legalisation of same-sex marriages in South Africa, an equal age of consent was achieved. Since 1 January 2008, the age of consent in South Africa is 16, regardless of sexual orientation and all sexual offences are described in gender-neutral terms.

The rights of homosexual persons in South Africa are also recognised by statutes such as the Domestic Violence Act of 1999, the Rental Housing Act of 1999, the Employment Equity Act of 1998, the Medical Schemes Act of 1998 and the Labour Relations Act of 1995.

According to Tatchell, it was thanks to the work of organisations such as the Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists (OLGA), Lesbian and Gay Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) and later the National Coalition of Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE) that constitutional rights for homosexuals in South Africa were finally won (Tatchell 2005:140-147).

## **2.4 HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

Theunick (2000:39) posits that South Africa is characterised by an advanced legal position but an underdeveloped gay cultural separatism compared to other countries, like the United States (US). As mentioned, the South African National Constitution, which came into effect in February 1997, contains an Equality Clause that explicitly ensures the protection of people from discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation. This constitutional protection is being used with widespread and increasing success to fight discrimination and ensure equality under the law. Gay liberation was carried in great part by black liberation. Theunick argues that “...the new democracy provided a window of political opportunity to advance the view of gay people as a minority with the need for constitutional protection to guarantee them equal under civil rights. The process of ensuring constitutional protection had to be a largely top-down enterprise, orchestrated by the NCGLE [National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality], by virtue of the short time span in which to do it. Political and law reform has thereby happened without a concomitant unification and community building amongst South African gays and lesbians” (Theunick 2000:39). He illustrates this point further by



pointing out that there has been no development of a gay ghetto of the likes of Soho in London, Greenwich Village in New York or Castro District in San Francisco, in South African cities. When compared with the overseas counterparts it becomes apparent that in South Africa, very few nightclubs, social groups, gay counselling and social services exist for homosexual adults and the few that do exist are almost always unavailable to homosexual youth.

According to Theunick (2000:39), "South-Africa has partaken of the mainstreaming of the gay image as an available identity and its increasing social acceptance. Yet the establishment of widely available gay services and increasing social opportunities for engaging as a gay person are still in their infancy. At one level the burden of oppression has been alleviated disproportionately to elsewhere through law reform, yet the development of gay visibility, and affirmative gay social structures has not matched these advances as in first world countries such as the USA, England and Australia. This provides a unique tension in oppression and liberation. On the one hand an unprecedented freedom of protection, but on the other a lack of grass roots change in social support and visibility".

Gevisser (in Theunick 2000:40) points out that exclusive homosexuality or gayness has in recent history become more visible in black communities, as evidenced by the counter-proclamations that homosexuality is un-African. According to Antonio (in Theunick 2000:40), it is the practice of exclusive lifelong homosexuality assumed as an identity and as an equivalent to a heterosexual model, and not same-sex sexual practices, that is foreign to African cultures. "Anti-gay African discourse labels homosexuality as a spin-off of apartheid capitalism. This may indicate a differential experience in the struggle for being gay between blacks and whites. Social services for gay people of colour are however still lacking more so than for whites. White gays also have the added benefit of greater access to monetary resources. The commercialisation of the gay image in the gay SA media is therefore also largely white. Having the power of more disposable income (pink money), experiencing the self mirrored and reaffirmed through media, and enjoying the freedom of greater individualism, the white gay person may be a freer agent to exercise his identity, feel more effective in self-assertion, and consequently be less oppressed" (Theunick 2000:40).

In van Zyl's interviews with gender activists in Cape Town throughout the early 1990's, it became apparent that a correlation exists between the degree of homophobia and whether one lives in a rural or an urban setting. Respondents felt that attitudes in city centres like Cape Town are more positive and affirming whereas rural areas are more conservative. The same correlation was also found to exist in terms of religion, for instance, the Christian and Muslim faith's condemnation of homosexual acts (Van Zyl 2005: 98-116).

Yet, Prof J Cock, professor of sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand, believes that there are indications that a more inclusive, public and assertive gay identity is emerging in South Africa, albeit in scattered and embryonic forms. She uses the annual Johannesburg Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade to prove her point: "The 12<sup>th</sup> Gay and Lesbian Pride Event that took place in Johannesburg in October 2001 involved some 25 000 people, according to the organisers. This is in strong contrast to the first march in 1990, organised by GLOW, when 800 marchers were provided with paper bags to put over their heads" (Cock 2005:188-209).

## **2.5 SOCIETAL REACTIONS TO HOMOSEXUALITY**

Cultural beliefs regarding attitudes to homosexuality have changed with the passage of time. In the time of Plato, for example, it was customary for an older man to act as a mentor and teacher to a younger boy, but, according to Bantjes (2004), sex was also part of this relationship. "Christianity ... saw homosexuality as a great evil and consequently propounded a belief that for a man to have sex with another man is a sin. This resulted in a common attitude that equated homosexuality not only with evil, but with being somehow less of a man" (Bantjes 2004:70).

Connell states that Freud proposed the inherent bi-sexuality of both men and women. He hypothesised that humans are constitutionally bisexual and that masculine and feminine currents exist in everyone. Between the 1930's and 1960's, however, psychoanalytic thinking about masculinity moved away from Freud's idea and writers stressed the concepts of mental health, gender orthodoxy, conventional heterosexuality, and marriage. Thus, the course toward adult heterosexuality in men was no longer appreciated for its complex and precarious construction, but was increasingly seen as an

unproblematic natural developmental path, any deviation from which was framed as pathological (Connell in Bantjes 2004:24).

Bantjes found that in some cultures there is a belief that as a man it is not enough just to be sexually active, to be a man one must be heterosexually active. As such homosexuality is seen as unmanly in some cultures. As a participant in Bantjes' (2004:93) study put it: as a man "...you have to be known to be strong ... I think a lot of people in this world – like homosexuals – suffer because it is not what people expect you to be". In his research Bantjes (2004:114) found that participants often draw a distinction between their own personal beliefs and their perception of society's beliefs. While participants believe that society is unaccepting of gay men, they generally express a personal view that homophobia is wrong and that gay men should be treated with more respect by society. Some view gay relationships as unnatural on the grounds that humans are biologically designed to be heterosexual and to procreate. This perception that a gay lifestyle undermines the family unit and threatens the survival of the species because it does not result in procreation, further adds to homophobic attitudes in society. The participants in Bantjes' study also expressed the belief that a boy who is gay will not be accepted by his peers and will become socially isolated. The participants acknowledged that they would not like to be seen with a person who is gay because individuals assume that if one spends time with people who are gay then one is gay by association. Yet the participants also seemed to contradict this point by expressing the belief that a gay man can clearly be identified by the way he walks, talks and dresses and that, compared with men who are straight, gay men are "emotionally more expressive, more sensitive, effeminate, fashion conscious and concerned about their appearance" (Bantjes 2004:115). It was also posited that men who are straight feel uncomfortable, scared and unsafe when in the company of men who are gay. "In discussing the anxiety that men who are straight feel when confronted with men who are gay, participants acknowledge that the reaction is something akin to stranger anxiety and results from a lack of exposure to and understanding of gay individuals (Bantjes 2004:116).

Regarding family members' reactions, Strommen (1990:9-34) explains that "family members often feel as if there has been a 'death in the family' when a loved one is found to be homosexual. The family may react as if the member is lost to them, and they

express angry, ambivalent feelings toward the ‘new’ homosexual person who has taken his old place”. Strommen also explains how demographic variables such as age and gender can be useful as predictors of family members’ reactions to the news that a person is gay. He has found that younger children do not react to homosexuality with the same strong visceral negativism of adults. He suggests that this may be due to their not having internalised societal prejudices, not having a clear understanding of sexuality and its relationship to social identity, or both. However, children show increasingly negative, adult-like reactions as they get older, with adolescents demonstrating attitudes very similar to that of adults. Older adults, again, may react differently than younger or middle-aged adults. It is thought that life experiences give older adults extra insight or wisdom into personal relationships, social values, and decision-making. “This extra insight and knowledge of social bonds and their vicissitudes may well moderate the reactions of older persons to homosexuality in the family. There is abundant evidence that heterosexuals react more negatively to homosexuals of their own sex than those of the opposite sex. This fact means that one’s same-sex family members are the ones likely to demonstrate the most difficult reactions. Men have a special problem in this regard: there is a notable tendency for men to react more harshly than women towards homosexual persons of both sexes, but especially towards gay men” (Strommen 1990:9-34).

Morgan and Wieringa warn that even though South African gays’ and lesbians’ rights have been achieved at the national level, it may not immediately reduce homophobia at the community level. They argue that consciousness raising at the community level will always remain crucial (Morgan & Wieringa 2005:22).

Just as negative as the effects of societal homophobia on homosexual persons, are the effects of the internalised homophobia of homosexual persons themselves. Ricketts and Achtenbach describe this phenomena: “Homophobia has been defined in different ways: as either analogous to other phobias or possessing negative attitudes toward homosexuality; usually there is a combination of both feelings, which need to be dealt with. Essentially [homosexual persons] have internalised the negative attitudes and assumptions which society and their family culture have instilled. Internalised homophobia makes consideration of a [homosexual] identity extremely threatening to the individual’s identity and self-esteem” (Sophie in Coleman 1990:119-135).

## 2.6 HOMOSEXUAL PARENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

A 1990 estimate revealed that approximately 20 to 25 % of self-identified gay men in the US are fathers. While approximately 10% of all American males are predominantly homosexual in orientation, the actual number of gay men who are parents cannot be accurately estimated since many are still married or are “closeted” for other reasons. Gottman reminds us that, since gays are an invisible population, most are unavailable for study and hence any statistics on homosexuality are, at best, only a rough estimate. The same study estimated that in 1990 there were well over 1.5 million lesbian mothers and one million gay fathers in America and at least six million children were estimated to have gay or lesbian parents. Through modern methods of conception such as artificial insemination, these numbers are sure to have increased (Gottman 1990:177-196).

How do South Africa statistics compare?

### 2.6.1 Societal reactions to homosexual parents

Achtenberg and Ricketts (1990:83-118) feel that the issue of homosexuality and children is extremely volatile and that homophobia is widespread in the child-welfare system. Bigner (1996:370-403) proposes that the dilemmas experienced by homosexual men who become parents reflect the dilemmas faced by society about homosexuality that are manifested in heterosexist and homophobic attitudes. He feels that homophobia inhibits gay fathers from learning how to function as fully congruent human beings at developmentally appropriate times in their lives. It also contributes to denial and secrecy during marriage and to a series of extremely painful transitions for all members in a family where a parent is gay.

Strommen describes the widespread misconception that homosexuality constitutes a threat to children as a social prejudice. “This notion persists despite well-documented evidence that it is false. Fear for the safety of children, unfortunately, is a source of strong, irrational reaction on the part of the public. The notion that homosexuality is incompatible with children or child-rearing may contribute to the image of homosexuals as ‘family-less’. Children are a major defining feature of the family. By characterising

children as endangered by homosexuals, homosexuals are dissociated from any loving, positive relationship with them” (Strommen 1990:9-34).

Homosexual parents not only receive negative societal reaction from heterosexuals, but are often also rejected by other homosexuals. The man who is both gay and a father is often described by researchers as being a victim of divided personal identity. Such individuals are often described as marginal beings who are challenged by having ties to the cultural world of both heterosexuals and gays. Two polar extremes need to be reconciled in order for the process of identity development for the gay father to take place. “Since each identity (heterosexual and homosexual) essentially is unacceptable by the opposite culture, the task for these gay men is to integrate both identities into the cognitive class called *gay father*. This process involves the man’s disclosure of his gay identity to nongays and his father identity to gays, thus forming close liaisons with persons who positively sanction both identities. This process is referred to as *integrative sanctioning*. It also involves the father’s distancing himself from others who are not tolerant. At the same time, identity development is enhanced by participation in a gay lifestyle” (Bigner & Bozett 1990:155-175).

Bigner and Bozett (1990:155-175) believe the term *gay father* is contradictory in nature since the word gay has the connotation of homosexuality while the word father implies heterosexuality. Determining how both may be applied simultaneously to an individual who has a same-sex orientation, and who is also a parent can be rather problematic. Our understanding of this individual is complicated by the fact that the idea of a gay father also is contradictory to the stereotypical image of a gay man. This stereotype emphasises that gays are anti-family in their lifestyle and orientation to group living.

Once again the problem of internalised homophobia tends to crop up for homosexual persons, this time in their role as parents. Pies (1990:137-154) describes how, for lesbian women, the decision to parent is often a carefully orchestrated undertaking, with focussed attention to the personal, social, psychological, ethical and practical considerations. She describes how lesbian women often question their right to have and raise children and point out how these doubts illustrate the internalised homophobia that many lesbians live with every day of their lives. Pies further describes internalised homophobia as being made up of the criticisms and doubts that homosexual people

have about themselves, their lifestyle and their peers. "Society has traditionally viewed lesbians in terms of their sexuality, rather than on the basis of their particular personal qualities, skills and capabilities. Judgments about their ability to be 'good' parents have been obscured by deep-seated prejudice against and ignorance about homosexuality. It is as if sexuality is the yardstick by which one's skill as a potential parent is measured. As a result, there is a prevailing societal attitude that lesbians would not be 'good' parents. Because of this lesbians often believe they must be more than simply 'ordinary' mothers. Lesbians must be reminded repeatedly that they have a reproductive right to have children. And, at the same time, they must be reminded that they do not have to be 'perfect' mothers" (Pies 1990:137-154).

#### 2.6.2 Children's reactions to their homosexual parents

Strommen (1990:9-34) asserts that much of the research conducted has demonstrated no harmful effects on children of having or living with a homosexual parent. Patterson (2006:241-243) also found few differences in adjustment between adolescents living with same-sex parents and those living with opposite sex parents. Strommen's research regarding these children's perceptions of homosexual identity and how they feel their parents' homosexuality affects them presents some intriguing findings. According to him more than half of these children have an initially negative or uncertain reaction to parental disclosure. However, the majority of both gay mothers and fathers report that they are open with their children about their homosexuality, and that disclosure improved their emotional relationships with their children in the long-term. Age does, however, play a role in children's reaction to their parent's homosexuality. Younger children do not seem to experience the feelings of estrangement that older relatives do, because they do not yet have an idea of what homosexuality is or of its implications for personal identity. However, his research suggests that older children, especially adolescents, are at least aware of the social stigma of homosexuality. According to Strommen a minority of these children fear what he calls 'identity contamination' (being abused by others because their parent is homosexual). Some adolescents express resentment toward their parents for this social difficulty, while others blame society. He feels that this problem will often result in homosexual parents advising their children to practise discretion with their peers (Strommen 1990:9-34).

Bigner and Bozett have found that most children of both sexes usually respond positively to a homosexual parent's disclosure, regardless of the age of the child or the means of disclosure. They explain the reasons for the children's acceptance in several ways: gay fathers tend to teach their children to be accepting of variations in human behaviour; it is improbable that children of gay fathers would begin to perceive their fathers in a negative manner so abruptly after having a long history of loving experiences with them, the disclosure may help to relieve family tensions in these homes since the children would be less likely after the disclosure to blame themselves for their parent's marital difficulties. They note, however, that almost all children who reject their father as being gay continue to accept him in his caregiving role as their father (Bigner & Bozett 1990:155-175).

Gottman (1990:177-196), on the other hand, asserts that the child's initial reaction to news of a father's homosexuality or bisexuality was age-dependent. She found that positive responses declined in number abruptly when children were informed of father's homosexuality in their teens as opposed to earlier. Yet, when informed in post-teen years, positive responses again increased. A trough-like effect thus emerged, signifying that adolescence is the most difficult time for children to initially deal with paternal homosexuality. She found further that children might have also undergone discomfort during adolescence despite being informed earlier. This seems to be explained by the fact that adolescence is a time of such high peer affiliation needs and individual sexual identity development. However, she was surprised to find that children who learned of their father's homosexuality as teens often reported feeling closer to their gay or bisexual father. It thus appears that an initial crisis can engender growth of the parent-child relationship (Gottman 1990:177-196).

Bigner also suggests that children prior to their attaining puberty accept disclosure more easily. Because of the sexual identity issues and peer pressures that are occurring developmentally at this time, disclosure to adolescent children may be more problematic. Same-sex adolescent children are also reported to experience greater difficulty in handling their father's disclosure than opposite sex children. This is possibly due to the fears of some same sex children that they may also be gay and the greater sensitivity to homophobic attitudes of other males their age (Bigner 1996:370-403).



Some children of gay fathers attempt to control information regarding their parent's homosexuality as well as the image projected by their homosexual parent to their peer group. According to Bigner and Bozett, factors that determine the degree and extent to which children use these controlling strategies include: Obtrusiveness (how discernable the child thinks the parent's homosexuality is) and mutuality (the degree of identification the child has with the parent). Other important factors include the child's age (in general, as children grow older, they rely less on using image management controls) as well as whether he or she lives with the homosexual parent. "The less obtrusive the child believes the father's homosexuality to be and the more feelings of mutuality or connectedness the child has with the father, the less the child will use controlling strategies. Additionally, older children who live independently of their gay father employ controlling strategies less often" (Bigner & Bozett 1990:155-175).

### 2.6.3 Societal reactions towards the children of homosexual parents

Researchers suggest that it is not unusual for children of homosexual parents to experience bigotry and discrimination when other children become aware of their father's sexual orientation. Gartrell, Deck, Rodas, Peyser and Banks (in Patterson 2006:241-243), in a study of the 10-year old children born to lesbian mothers, reported that a substantial minority of these children had encountered anti-gay sentiments among their peers. These children reported feeling angry, upset and saddened by their peers' reactions.

Vanfraussen et al (2002:237-251) point out that child welfare organisations often raise the concern that children with homosexual parents will be stigmatised because of their non-traditional family structure. They have found that, compared with children from heterosexual families, children with homosexual parents are not more likely to be teased but they are more prone to family-related teasing incidents. Children with homosexual parents have reported the felt need to have contact with other children from homosexual families. "The reasons they most frequently cited were the following: you feel less of an exception, they understand you better and they do not tend to laugh at you" (Vanfraussen et al 2002:237-251).

Despite these negative societal reactions Vanfraussen et al (2002:237-251) have found that children with homosexual parents' global evaluation of themselves as a person is as

positive as that of children who are growing up in a heterosexual context. Their findings also reveal that these children feel as much accepted by their peers as do children from heterosexual families (Vanfraussen et al 2002:237-251).

## **2.7 FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE REGARDING HOMOSEXUAL PARENTS' ABILITY TO PARENT**

Achtenberg and Ricketts (1990) point out that homosexual parents continue to encounter negative beliefs among social workers, psychologists, family court mediators, attorneys, judges, and others. Some of these negative beliefs include: same-sex couples assume exaggerated male and female roles; lesbians and especially gay men are sexually perverted and will engage in sexual activity in front of children; lesbian or gay parents or their friends or partners will molest children; the children of homosexual parents will be confused in their gender identity and will probably become homosexual themselves; and children will be harmed by witnessing affectionate behaviour between two persons of the same sex (Achtenberg & Ricketts 1990:83-118). But Bigner (1996:370-403) asserts that homosexual parents are in many respects no different from heterosexual parents. Their uniqueness in society places them at the cutting edge of efforts to reinvent notions of family and functional family structures. "Based on research that is scientifically sound, we know that homosexual parents are effective, highly committed, and do no harm to the welfare and developmental progress of their children. Gay father families help us broaden our thinking about homosexuality, men's roles in parenting, and the diverse sociocultural context of parenting" (Bigner 1996:370-403).

Achtenberg and Ricketts (1990:83-118) feel that although children with homosexual parents might find that having a gay or lesbian parent is not the easiest part of growing up, it is not necessarily the hardest. They also claim that parents' ability to be open about their homosexuality will ensure that children do not feel the need to shoulder the 'terrible secret' of their parents' homosexuality. They point out that almost all children experience being different from others in one way or another and assert that this experience can be valuable or traumatising or, occasionally, both. They use children who live in divorced, bi-racial, or single-parent families as well as children whose families are culturally, ethnically, religiously, or physically different from those of classmates and neighbours to illustrate this point. "There can be no question that such children will be

teased by playmates. Teasing is what children do. Does this mean that child-welfare policy must be set at a level no higher than the social interactions of children?"

Clearly assessing the impact on children of being raised by gay or lesbian foster or adoptive parents requires a complex and compassionate approach. Perhaps, however, there should be more to that approach than the suggestion that victims must change or that the oppressed must be denied opportunities. Perhaps, in fact, fostering respect for diversity can come to be seen as an important task for government, social welfare organisations, schools, churches, and, indeed, for society itself (Achtenberg & Ricketts 1990:83-118).

Achtenberg and Ricketts (1990:83-118) indicate that, in a comparative study of the children of lesbian mothers with the children of heterosexual mothers, a clear correlation has been found between the child's self-concept and self-esteem and the mother's self-esteem. No correlation had been found with the mother's sexual orientation. They thus conclude that child rearing style is more a product of the mother's attitudes, values, and personality characteristics than of her sexual orientation. In a 1981 study Hoeffler (in Coleman 1990:119-135) investigated parent-child relationships among lesbian mothers and eliminated the popular myth that lesbian mothers are less tolerant of cross-gender play and more supportive of girls developing male interests. "No study found lesbian mothers who hoped their children would be homosexual, but lesbian mothers were more inclined to not hold sexist views and ambitions for their children, and stated that they had no preference as to their children's eventual adult sexual orientation" (Coleman 1990:119-135). Concern about children's development was expressed by both groups of mothers and both groups turned to professionals for help (equally often). "The evidence has been clear in lesbian mother studies that there is no support for the notion that a lesbian mother's sexual orientation has any damaging consequences to the child's development. In my clinical experience, the factors of disturbed childhood development relate to the parent's personality characteristics, their manner of parenting, and the modelling of intimacy in the parental relationship. If there are negative effects on the children, these have more to do with the open displays of discord within the parental relationship, the neglect of the children's needs because of this conflict and fears of the parental units separating. When talking to children of homosexual parents, one quickly realises that the main trauma of growing up with a homosexual parent lies not with the

parent's homosexuality, but rather with the threat of dissolution of the marital relationship" (Coleman 1990:119-135).

Mitchell (1996:343-357) reports that children of two-mother families are less aggressive and hostile, more aware of their feelings (both positive and negative), and regard themselves and are regarded by others as a bit more likeable compared to children from heterosexual families. "An abundance of mothering, then, appears to foster traits that most mental health professionals would like to see more of in *all* children"

Mitchell (1996:343-357) points out that although the lesbian family is usually headed by a dual-career couple that bring two incomes to the family, the quantity of the child's experience with an involved parent is not in jeopardy because both partners are, and expect to be, full partners, sharing parenting tasks and time (unlike most heterosexual dual-career couples). Two-mother lesbian families also model effective functioning in their non-hierarchical, flexible process. Partners assume equal responsibility for housework and child-care and thus do not appear to experience the alienation from one another that often accompanies the skewed role balances of most heterosexual couples as they pass through the transition to parenthood. "Recently, feminist analysis of the family has helped family therapists to become more aware of the heterosexual couple relationship as a locus of women's oppression" (Mitchell 1996:343-357). "Although there has been considerable speculation in the clinical literature that the two women in the lesbian couple compete for the mother role, these women reported very few feelings of competition about parenting" (Mitchell 1996:343-357).

Pies (1990:137-154) asserts that it is not uncommon for lesbians considering parenthood to ask themselves many of the same probing and difficult questions that others ask, such as: Is it 'fair' to bring a child into the world and raise it in a lesbian family? Will the children of lesbians be discriminated against on the basis of the mother's sexual preference? Do children need male role models in the home on a daily basis in order to develop healthy identities? "There are no right or wrong answers to these questions ... As we learn more it becomes apparent that children raised by lesbians have an equally good chance of developing into healthy, happy human beings as do children raised in heterosexual homes" (Pies 1990:137-154).

Bigner (1996:370-403) states that despite the heavy cultural conditioning that shapes our ideas of parenting roles, reliance on gender norms to determine who does what and how in child rearing is largely absent in homosexual couples. "Because there are two same-sex adults in homosexual families, there may be a greater attempt to organise androgynous coparenting roles and responsibilities" (Bigner 1996:370-403). But he warns that such arrangements are accomplished with some difficulty: "The difficulties may come from the way males are socialised for fatherhood. For example, in comparison with heterosexual couples, two gay men coparenting children may agree in principle that both should be equally involved with the children, sharing responsibilities and adjusting schedules and career plans accordingly. Logistically, however, it may be difficult to manage this egalitarian structure because males have been socialised to equate personal success in adulthood with success in work roles. For a man to remain home, assume primary parenting responsibilities, and not be involved in work outside may be considered suicidal to his career goals. A gay father who assumes primary parenting responsibilities (a role usually assumed by women in heterosexual marriages) may have to compromise his career – a sacrifice for which he has not been socialised and for which he probably has no models or support" (Bigner 1996:370-403).

Bigner (1996:370-403) feels that, because homosexual couples and the families they form exist outside of traditionally defined family and parenting roles based on gender, they have the unique advantage of redefining and reinventing their own meanings of the words *family* and *parents*. Bigner suggests that homosexual parents may be more effective in their parenting role than heterosexual parents. In a comparative study of homosexual fathers with heterosexual fathers Scallen (in Bigner & Bozett 1990:155-175) using the Eversoll Father Role Questionnaire found that gay fathers were more endorsing of paternal nurturance, less endorsing of economic providing as a main ingredient of fathering behaviour, and somewhat less traditional in their overall approach to parenting. "Other research has found that: (1) most gay fathers have positive relationships with their children; (2) the father's sexual orientation is of little importance in the overall parent/child relationship; and (3) gay fathers try harder to create stable home lives and positive relationships than what would be expected among traditional heterosexual parents" (Bigner & Bozett 1990:155-175). Several studies have examined specific parenting behaviours of gay fathers and have found no differences between heterosexual and homosexual fathers in problem-solving, providing recreation for

children, encouraging their autonomy, handling problems relating to child rearing, having relatively serious problems with children or having generally positive relationships with children (Bigner & Bozett 1990:155-175). Gay fathers are reported to have greater satisfaction with their first child and fewer disagreements with partners over discipline of children. When homosexual fathers are compared with heterosexual fathers in their responses to the Iowa Behaviour Scale, the homosexual fathers are found to be more strict and to consistently emphasise the importance of setting limits on children's behaviour. Homosexual parents also report going to greater lengths than heterosexual fathers in promoting cognitive skills of children by explaining rules and regulations. As such, they may place greater emphasis on verbal communication with children.

Homosexual fathers tend to have a more authoritative parenting style and to be rather strict with their children. Bigner and Bozett (1990:155-175) report that homosexual fathers are generally found to be more sensitive and responsive to the perceived needs of their children than heterosexual fathers. Homosexual fathers also appear to go to extra lengths to act as a resource for activities with children. They express the same levels of intimacy toward their children than heterosexual fathers and differ only from heterosexual fathers in the aspect that they appear less willing to be demonstrative toward their partner in their children's presence. "Several explanations can be suggested that address the differences and similarities in parenting behaviour of gay and nongay fathers. First, gay fathers may feel additional pressures to be more proficient at their parenting role than nongay fathers. Factors that might motivate them to be "better" fathers could include: (1) stronger feelings of guilt about their role in fathering children, based on an increased sensitivity about their sexuality; and (2) sensitivity to the belief that they are in the "spotlight" or expected to perform better due to a fear that visitation or custody decisions could be challenged because of their sexual orientation. Second, these findings suggest that gay fathers may be less conventional and more androgynous than nongay fathers. As such, they may incorporate a greater degree and combination of expressive role functions than more traditionally sex-orientated nongay fathers. These expressive role functions are found more conventionally in the traditional female mothering role. The cultural stereotype of the father role among traditional males is that they: (1) generally are not interested in children nor in childrearing issues; (2) view the occupational role as their primary parenting identity; (3) are less competent caregivers than women; and (4) are less nurturant than women toward children. It is possible that

nongay fathers adopt this as their parenting style while gay fathers may demonstrate a blending of the qualities traditionally associated with both mother and father role images” (Bigner & Bozett 1990:155-175).

Patterson (1996:420-437) suggests that regardless of actual stress levels, children of lesbian mothers may be more conscious of their affective states in general or more willing to report their experiences of negative emotional states as compared to children in heterosexual families. If, as some have suggested, children raised by two women have more experience with the naming of feelings and with verbal discussion of feelings in general, then they might exhibit increased openness to the expression of negative as well as positive feelings. In this view, the greater tendency of lesbian mothers’ children to admit feeling angry, upset, or scared might be attributed not as much to differences in experiences of stress as to greater awareness and expression of emotional experience of all kinds” (Patterson 1996:420-437).

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the term homosexuality was defined and the rights of homosexual persons in South Africa was explored. Homosexuality was explored in the South African context and societal reactions to homosexual persons, homosexual parents and to the children of homosexual parents, as well as the reactions of these children to their homosexual parents, was investigated. Moreover, the literature regarding homosexual parents’ ability to parent was reviewed. In the next chapter adolescence will be defined and Urie Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological system theory will be discussed as it relates to the way in which adolescents experience themselves in their environment. The developmental stages for the group of adolescents in this study will be discussed and related to their handling of homosexuality.

## CHAPTER 3

### ADOLESCENCE

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the term homosexuality was defined and the rights of homosexual persons in South Africa and homosexuality in the South African context were explored. Societal reactions to homosexual persons, homosexual parents and to the children of homosexual parents was investigated. The reactions of these children to their homosexual parents were also investigated and the literature regarding homosexual parents' ability to parent was reviewed. In this chapter adolescence will be defined and Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system theory will be discussed as it relates to child development. The developmental stages for the group of adolescents in this study will be discussed and related to their handling of homosexuality and typical adolescent-family interactions will be reviewed.

#### 3.2 DEFINING ADOLESCENCE

Steyn (2006:5) describes adolescence as a transitional period in which individuals experience major physical, cognitive and socio-affective changes towards maturity. She also proposes that adolescence be regarded as a process during which the attitudes and values necessary for effective participation in society are achieved.

The term *adolescent* originates from the Latin word *adolescere*, which means to grow in maturity (Geysers in Steyn 2006:6). Although several definitions of the term *adolescence* exist, it is generally referred to as that period of life beginning with puberty and ending with completed growth and physical maturity. Most definitions of adolescence emphasise biological maturity. For instance, Kazdin (in Steyn 2006:6) suggests that the changes of puberty include physical growth to adult height and weight, as well as the biological growth of internal and external organs related to reproductive functioning.



Although Corsini and Statt (in Steyn 2006:6) agree that adolescence is the period of life beginning with puberty and ending with completed growth and physical maturity, they also look beyond these biological changes that take place during puberty and include other major changes, such as changes in sexual characteristics, body image, sexual interest, career development, intellectual development and the development of self-concept, that occur at varying rates throughout puberty.

For the purpose of this study the adolescent is defined as the person in the developmental stage that occurs between childhood and adolescence, that is, between the ages of 12 and 25 years of age. The adolescent phase of development can be divided into three stages, namely: early adolescence, which usually includes children between the ages of 10 and 14, middle adolescence (15-17 years) and late adolescence (18-22 years). For the purposes of this study, the researcher interviewed adolescents in the middle and late adolescent stages (i.e. children between 16 and 18 years of age). The decision to interview adolescents in these stages of development was based on this group's increased ability to think abstractly, their increased ability to process information (Sigel & Cocking in Rice, 1992:232) and their increased capacity to formulate elegant generalisations and of advancing more inclusive laws (Rice 1992:205-206).

### **3.3 BRONFENBRENNER'S BIO-ECOLOGICAL THEORY OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

In order to study the experiential world of adolescents with homosexual parents from a psycho-educational perspective, it was decided to use Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory as the basis for the empirical investigation of this research as it seems to offer the most differential and complete account of contextual influences on children's development.

This theory was previously known as the ecological systems theory. But since the child's biological dispositions join with environmental forces to mould development, Bronfenbrenner recently decided to characterise his perspective as a bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Evans 2000:115-125).

Bronfenbrenner offered a conceptualisation of the child's ecology as a multi-layered set of nested and interconnecting environmental systems all of which influence the

developing child, but with various degrees of directness (Van Breda 2006:57). These environmental systems may be grouped into a series of systems extending beyond the adolescent. The adolescent is at the centre of the systems (Rice 1992:79). The five systems in Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. A discussion of each system will now follow:

### 3.3.1 The microsystem

The most immediate influences are within the microsystem and include those with whom the adolescent has immediate contact. According to Rice (1992:79) the immediate family is the primary microsystem for most adolescents, followed by friends and school. Health services, religious groups, neighbourhood playgroups, and various social groups to which the adolescent belongs are other components which make up the microsystem. In order to understand child development at this level, it is important to keep in mind that all relationships are bi-directional. Thus, the child in Bronfenbrenner's theory must be viewed as an active force, and not merely a passive recipient of other's attention and actions, as the child exerts an influence on those around him or her and on the relationship he or she has with others (Van Breda 2006:58). Rice explains that microsystems change as adolescents move in and out of different social settings. "In general, the peer microsystem increases in influence during adolescence, providing powerful social rewards in terms of acceptance, popularity, friendship and status. The peer group might also exert negative influences, encouraging irresponsible sex, drug use, and theft or cheating. A healthy microsystem offers positive learning and development that prepares the adolescent for success in adult life" (Rice, 1992:79).

### 3.3.2 The mesosystem

Keenan (2002:30) describes the mesosystem as the connection which brings together the different contexts in which a child develops, as it involves reciprocal relationships among microsystem settings. For example, what happens at home influences what happens at school and vice versa. According to Rice: "An adolescent's social development is understood best when the influences from many sources are considered in relation to each other. A mesosystem analysis would look at the frequency, quality and influence of interactions such as how family experiences are related to school adjustments, family characteristics and their relationship to peer pressures etc. A

microsystem and mesosystem can reinforce each other, or exert opposite influences. Trouble arises if basic values of the mesosystem and microsystem diverge; the adolescent may feel under stress as different sets of values are sorted out" (Rice, 1992:80-81). For example, if the values of tolerance and acceptance of all people are taught at home, but prejudiced and discriminatory behaviour are enforced in the local community adolescents may feel under stress because of these opposite influences.

### 3.3.3 The exosystem

The exosystem is made up of all of those settings that influence children but that they do not play an active role in. This could include community health services, parks, recreation centres, extended family, social support networks and the parent's workplace. Van Breda (2006:59) uses flexible work schedules, paid maternity and paternity leave and sick leave for parents whose children are ill as an example to illustrate how these work settings can assist parents in rearing their children and, indirectly, enhance the children's development. Negative impacts on development can also result when the exosystem breaks down. Emery and Billings (in Berk 2003:29) cite the example of increased rates of conflict and child abuse in families with few personal or community-based ties.

### 3.3.4 The macrosystem

The macrosystem is the outermost level of Bronfenbrenner's model and it includes all the ideologies, attitudes, mores, customs, laws and resources of a particular culture. As such, it includes a core of educational, economic, religious, political, and social values. According to Berk (2003:29), "The priority that the macrosystem gives to children's needs affects the support they receive at inner levels of the environment". Rice reminds us to keep in mind that cultures may differ in various countries and racial, ethnic or socio-economic groups. Differences can also occur within each group, for example differences in rural youth versus urban youths (Rice, 1992:81).

### 3.3.5 The chronosystem

According to Berk (2003:29), the chronosystem involves all aspects of time and how they impact on a child's development. Bronfenbrenner emphasised the dynamic nature of the environment and varied ways that it can impact on a child's development. The timing of a change in the environment (such as the birth of a sibling, the beginning of school,

parents' divorce) can also change the effect of its impact. To illustrate this, Berk (2003:29) uses the example of the arrival of a new sibling and contrasts the impact this will have on a school-age child with the impact it will have on a homebound toddler.

Changes in life events can be imposed on the child, but they can also arise from within the child, since children begin to select, modify and create many of their own settings and experiences as they get older. Children's physical, intellectual and personality characteristics and the opportunities presented to them by their environment will determine the kinds of settings and experiences that children will create (Berk 2003:29).

We thus see that, in bio-ecological systems theory, a child's development is not controlled by environmental circumstances, nor is it driven by the child's inner dispositions. "Instead, children are both products and producers of their environments, in a network of interdependent effects" (Berk 2003:29).

### **3.4 ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT DURING MIDDLE TO LATE ADOLESCENCE**

In the section that follows an attempt has been made to discuss the different aspects of adolescent development (namely physical, cognitive, emotional, social, moral and conative development) separately so as to provide greater clarity. However, it should be emphasised that all of these aspects of development are interrelated as they affect and are affected by, one another.

#### **3.4.1 Physical development (including sexual development)**

During middle adolescence the growth of the adolescent's torso catches up with the rapid growth of the adolescent's hands, legs and feet, which began during early adolescence (Sheehy et al in Berk 2003:171). As adolescents move between middle and late adolescence the proportion of the torso to the hands, legs and feet even out so that adolescents no longer appear as awkward and out of proportion as they did during early adolescence (Berk 2003:171).

By mid-adolescence sharp sex-related differences in gross motor development become apparent, as boys outperform girls in most sporting events (Malina & Bouchard in Berk 2003:177). Girls generally reach 98 percent of their adult height by the age of 16 years

and 3 months, but boys generally only reach 98 percent of their adult height by the age of 17 years and 9 months (Rice, 1992:174). During this period boys undergo further physical changes in that their shoulders and chests widen, they develop larger skeletal muscles, hearts and lung capacity than girls and the number of red blood cells (which affects the body's ability to carry oxygen from the lungs to the muscles) increases in boys but not in girls. Boys also continue to lose fat across their hips, whereas girls continue to acquire subcutaneous fat on their hips as the hips broaden relative to the waist (Rice, 1992:173). The rapid growth of the larynx (the Adam's apple) in boys causes changes in the boy's voice. According to Rice (1992:170-171), "the vocal cords nearly double in length, lowering the pitch one octave. Volume also increases, and the tonal quality is more pleasant. Roughness of tone and unexpected pitch changes may last until sixteen or eighteen years of age". Girls' voices also deepen slightly, but do not become as deep as that of their male counterparts (Berk, 2003:195).

According to Havighurst (in Steyn 2006:21), the individual has typically not undergone such rapid and profound physical changes as in adolescence, since babyhood and must learn to adapt to a new physical sense of self. The rapid growth in height and weight that takes place during this period often causes adolescents to feel alienated from their bodies.

The development of sexual characteristics initiated during early adolescence continues as reproductive organs become functional and sexual maturity is attained during middle and late adolescence (Shaffer; Gouws et al in Steyn 2006:19). By mid-adolescence girls' menstrual cycles have usually become regular and predictable, pubic hair and underarm hair have already appeared and their breasts continue to fill out to form adult conformation (Rice, 1992:194). In boys pubic and under-arm hair have also already started appearing during early adolescence, the testes have become enlarged and growth of the penis generally continues until mid-adolescence. The growth of the beard comes near the end of adolescence for boys and the indentation of the hairline usually indicates the final development of adolescence in boys (Rice, 1992:170-171).

Quite typically, adolescents have to learn to deal with the sexual urges that occur as a result of this sexual development, in socially acceptable ways. They are usually able to adjust to these sexual changes and to come to grips with these feelings and urges only

gradually, but sex remains a problem for most adolescents (and especially adolescent boys) until they develop satisfying relationships with romantic partners (Rice, 1992:172).

### 3.4.2 Cognitive development

According to McCormick and Pressley (2007:400), neurological maturity is achieved by mid-adolescence, as the brain typically reaches its adult weight and size by the time the individual reaches 16 years of age. But despite the attainment of neurological maturity many cognitive functions continue to expand throughout adolescence and as each year passes, the adolescent's ability to process information increases, due partly to the development of the brain and nervous system but mostly to learning experience and practice that improve mental abilities and strategies (Sigel & Cocking in Rice, 1992:232). Memory strategies, specifically, seem to increase as the teenage years proceed. Both the capacity of the functional short-term memory and that of the long-term memory increase. According to Botwinick and Storandt (in Rice, 1992:235), "adolescents are more efficient in deep processing and show superior ability in long-term memory. Interestingly enough, subjects of all ages ... can best remember sociohistoric events that occurred when the subjects were 15 to 25 years old, indicating that these are the most impressionable years as far as memory is concerned". What impact will a homosexual parent's disclosure or rejection or stigmatisation by the peer group during this impressionable period of memory development have on an adolescent and how does it relate to future adjustment? The ability to concentrate for long periods at a time also increases and adolescents become more efficient at inhibiting irrelevant thoughts. McCormick and Pressley (2007:401) state that both fluid and crystallized intelligence increase as adolescence continues.

Piaget, in particular, portrayed adolescence as the time when cognitive development culminates (McCormick & Pressley, 2007:400-401). Piaget proposed a four-stage theory of cognitive development in which progress through the stages, although it can occur at different rates, is always orderly and takes place in an invariant sequence (Feldman in McCormick & Pressley, 2007:61). According to Piaget children typically enter the last stage of cognitive development – the formal operational stage - during early adolescence. Formal thinking involves four major aspects: introspection, abstract thinking, logical thinking and hypothetical reasoning. Introspection enables individuals to

think critically about their own thoughts and abstract thinking enables them to think beyond the real to what is possible. According to Rice (1992:208-209), "This facility enables them to project themselves into the future, to distinguish present reality from possibility, and to think about what might be ... They become inventive, imaginative and original in their thinking ... This ability to project themselves into the future has many important consequences for their lives". Will the increasing ability to be creative and imaginative as a result of the development of abstract thinking affect the way in which adolescents conceptualise their parents' homosexuality or the way in which they disclose their parents' homosexuality to others? Logical thinking implies that individuals are able to consider all important facts and ideas and to form correct conclusions. This includes, for example, the ability to determine cause and effect. This ability could enable adolescents to predict that, if their friends were to know about their parents' homosexuality, they may reject them or tease them. Would their predictions of people's reactions and of their own future always be correct? Hypothetical reasoning enables individuals to formulate hypotheses and to examine the evidence for the hypothesis while considering numerous variables (Rice, 1992:208-209). Rice also describes how adolescents in the formal operational stage begin to utilize a second symbol system [a set of symbols for symbols]. For example, metaphorical speech or algebraic are symbols of other words or numerical symbols. He adds that this capacity to symbolize symbols causes adolescents' thinking to become very flexible (Rice, 1992:208-209).

According to Rice (1992:205-206), Piaget had further subdivided the stage of formal operations into sub stages. The first of these, sub stage-A, is thought to be attained during early adolescence and appears to be a preparatory stage in which adolescents, although they are able to make correct discoveries and handle certain formal operations, still display a rather crude approach to these functions, as they are generally still unable to provide systematic and rigorous proof of their assertions. The second sub stage, sub stage-B, is attained during middle adolescence when adolescents are capable of formulating more elegant generalisations and of advancing more inclusive laws. Most importantly, adolescents who have attained this sub stage are able to provide systematic proof of their assertions in a more spontaneously manner, since they understand the importance of method of thought.

Elkind (in Rice, 1992:206) refers to the formal operational stage of cognitive development as the conquest of thought and he describes how adolescents in this stage are able to assume the role of scientists because they have the capacity to construct and test theories. By the end of his life, however, Piaget came to realise that formal operations was not a universal attainment and that many adolescents do not become formal operational. Piaget found that the social environment and the adolescents' level of intelligence could either accelerate or delay the onset of formal operational thought (Rice, 1992:213). He also concluded that formal operational competence was most likely in domains that are very familiar to the thinker (McCormick & Pressley, 2007:401-402).

### 3.4.3 Emotional development

Berk (2003:402) states that adolescents begin to use internal strategies to control their emotions more often as a direct result of their improved ability to reflect on their thoughts and feelings. A well-developed system of emotional self-regulation will cause young people to acquire a sense of emotional self-efficacy (i.e. adolescents will begin to feel that they are in control of their emotional experience). According to Berk, this sense of emotional self-efficacy will foster a favourable self-image and an optimistic outlook on life for adolescents, which will further assist them in dealing with emotional challenges (Berk 2003:409). Yet, despite this feeling of being in control of their emotions, Tice, Buder and Baumeister (in Rice, 1992:213) suggest that self-consciousness in middle to late adolescence is generally higher than in any other stage of an individual's life. Will adolescents live in fear that their friends might find out about their parents' homosexuality? Will this constant fear cause adolescents to have higher than normal levels of anxiety?

Berk also points out that adolescents begin to display empathy, not only with others' immediate distress, but also with their general life condition, as a result of the adolescents' increased ability to view a phenomenon from different perspectives. Will adolescents display a sense of empathy towards their homosexual or lesbian parents based on their ability to view this phenomenon from the parents' perspective? Will empathic feelings towards their homosexual parents assist adolescents in accepting their parents' homosexuality? Hoffman (in Berk 2003:407) states that this ability to empathise with the poor, oppressed and sick is the most mature form of empathy as it



requires an advanced form of perspective taking in which the adolescent understands that people lead continuous emotional lives beyond the current situation (Berk 2003:407).

Adolescents also become aware of the fact that people can have mixed feelings and that their expressions may not always reflect their true feelings. Adolescents' sense of empathy continues to increase as their emotional understanding improves (Berk 2003:409).

#### 3.4.4 Social and personality development

Rice (1992:246) feels that whether individuals have an accurate self-concept or not is significant. According to Rice (1992: 246), "All people are six different selves: the people they are, the people they think they are, the people others think they are, the people they think others think they are, the people they want to become, and the people they think others want them to become ... With the onset of puberty, most young people begin to make a thorough assessment of themselves, comparing not only their body parts but also their motor skills with those of their peers and their ideals or heroes. This critical self-appraisal is accompanied by self-conscious behaviour that makes adolescents vulnerable to embarrassment. As a consequence, they are preoccupied with attempting to reconcile their selves as they perceive them with their ideal selves. By late adolescence, they may have managed to sort themselves out – to determine what they can most effectively be and to integrate their goals into their ideal selves".

How do adolescents view themselves? Berk (2003:445) explains that young adolescents tend to unify separate traits, such as "smart" and "talented," into higher order, abstract descriptors, such as "intelligent" when describing themselves. But these generalisations they make about the self are not interconnected, and often they are contradictory. According to Berk(2003:445), "These disparities result from social pressure to display different selves in different relationships – with parents, classmates, close friends, and romantic partners". Do adolescents perceive themselves differently when they are with friends or at school as compared to when they are with their homosexual parents? How do they integrate these different views of themselves into a personal, mature identity? "By middle to late adolescence teenagers combine their various traits into an organised system. And they begin to use qualifiers (I have a *fairly*

quick temper, I am not *thoroughly* honest). Older adolescents also add integrating principles, which makes sense of formerly troublesome contradictions” (Berk 2003:445). Social virtues, such as being friendly, considerate, kind and cooperative, are emphasised during adolescence as adolescents become pre-occupied with being liked and viewed in a positive light by others. Older adolescents’ self-concepts also seem to centre on personal and moral values (Berk 2003:445). How will adolescents with homosexual parents be affected by the so called moral or religious view that homosexuality is wrong and sinful?

Erik Erikson proposed a theory of personality development in which he outlined eight stages of human development throughout the lifespan (Steyn 2006:23). Each stage involves a central conflict, with either a positive or negative resolution of the conflict possible (McCormick & Pressley, 2007:145). The fifth stage is particularly relevant to adolescence. This stage is called “Identity versus Identity Confusion” (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen: 1997:229). In this stage the adolescents have to learn to use the adaptive mode of integration in order to establish a sense of identity and their place in society. During this stage of development adolescents may experience a crisis where they are expected to adapt to new tasks and to experiment with various identities in order to be able to answer the question “Who am I?” (Steyn 2006:23). Once adolescents have established a sense of who they are, they are able to forge unique ethnic, occupational and sex role identities. How will adolescents attempt to integrate a perceived negative trait such as having a homosexual parent into the achievement of a positive identity?

James Marcia devised a clinical interviewing procedure by which researchers can group adolescents into three categories, called *identity statuses*, which show the progress they have made toward forming a mature identity (Berk 2003:457). *Identity diffusion* describes the identity status of an individual who does not have firm commitments to values and goals and are not trying to reach them. Individuals in the *identity foreclosure* identity status have accepted the ready-made values and goals that authority figures have chosen for them. *Identity moratorium* describes a time frame in which previous stages can be revisited and lived through in a more positive way. In this time frame individuals can thus explore alternatives in an effort to find values and goals to guide their life. Individuals who can be described as *identity achieved* have explored and committed themselves to self-chosen values and goals (Berk 2003:457).

Will adolescent children reject their homosexual parents if their peer group holds a negative view of homosexual persons? Will adolescent children fear being rejected by a peer group that holds negative views of homosexual persons, based on their acceptance of their homosexual parents? How will adolescents integrate their peer group's negative views regarding homosexual persons into their acceptance of their homosexual parents?

Steyn (2006:20) points to the adolescent's desire to be more independent and autonomous and to "extricate himself from his parents and from the safety and security that his relationship with them offers. In his efforts to become and to be seen as an individual, it may sometimes seem as though he is being uncooperative" (Steyn 2006:20). Adolescents also have to come to terms with their sexuality and with the idea of what it means to be male or female. Gender intensification typically occurs during early adolescence. This means that for young adolescents gender stereotyping of attitudes and behaviour and movement toward a more traditional gender identity occurs. But as adolescents move toward a more mature personal identity, they become less concerned with other's opinions of them and more involved in finding meaningful values to include in their self-definitions. Would the development of a mature identity enable adolescents to accept their parents' homosexuality despite the negative opinions discussed by their peers or other members of their community in this regard? Berk (2003:54) explains that the inclusion of meaningful values in adolescents' self-definitions result in the decline of highly stereotypic self-perceptions, especially when parents and teachers encourage adolescents to question the value of gender stereotypes for themselves and their society.

Research by Willis (in Rice, 1992:3) indicates that adults generally dislike and mistrust adolescents more than any other age group. This dislike is usually based upon stereotypes of adolescents as delinquents that engage in anti-social behaviour that place them at risk. Now, although weak impulse control during early adolescence may contribute to behaviour that may fuel this stereotype, Ingersoll (in Steyn 2006:21) states that, as greater impulse control develops with increased maturity, adolescents begin to assess which behaviours are acceptable and which are risky and may have adverse effects. This may lead to increased self-control and behaviour that is more socially acceptable during middle and late adolescence.

Ingersoll (in Steyn 2006:20) also points out that acceptance by the peer group during middle adolescence is very important. After the age of 15, adolescents typically become more discriminating when it comes to their friends. The number of reported friendships they have usually decrease (Rice, 1992:431) and the quality of their friendships with a few close friends become more important. "The older they become, the more adolescents emphasise interpersonal factors and de-emphasise achievement and physical characteristics in friendship bonds. Other research also emphasises the importance of personal qualities as a criterion of popularity" (Rice, 1992:435). As they get older, adolescent self-disclosure to friends increases, although females of all ages generally exhibit greater emotional disclosure to both parents and peers than do males. "This finding is consistent with traditional masculine concepts that emphasize that males are not to express emotional concerns and feelings" (Rice, 1992:429).

During middle and late adolescence the individual's pleasure and friendships are usually found with those of both sexes, this is called heterosociality. Not only do adolescents establish more intimate friendship bonds, but they also begin to establish intimacy in romantic relationships. Paul and White (in Rice, 1992:438) emphasise that the development of intimacy is one of the most important challenges of late adolescence. "Failure to achieve a close relationship with a member of the opposite sex may result in severe anxiety, fears about one's sexuality and lower self-esteem. Older adolescents are particularly sensitive to vulnerable feelings of heterosexual inadequacy. Getting acquainted and feeling at ease with the opposite sex is a painful process for some youths" (Rice, 1992:438).

According to Hennessee (in Rice, 1992:441), the median age at which youths begin dating has decreased by almost three years since World War 1, partly because of peer pressure to date earlier and partly because parents exercise less control at earlier ages than they used to (Felson & Gottfredson in Rice, 1992:441). In 1924 the average age at which girls began to date was 16 years (during the stage of middle adolescence), but by 1992 girls started dating at an average age of 13 years (during the stage of early adolescence). We can thus expect that there will be even more pressure on adolescents in the middle and late stages of adolescence to establish intimacy with a romantic partner than there was in the past. Coleman, Ganong and Ellis (in Rice, 1992:441) have found that there is also some evidence that adolescents from non-intact families

begin dating earlier than those from intact, happy families. "Dating apparently meets emotional and social needs not fulfilled in their relationships with parents (Coleman et al in Rice, 1992:441).

McCormick & Pressley (2007:401) point out that peer relationships are critical to adolescents' overall development. Kohlberg, for example, emphasised how peer relations permit cognitive conflicts that promote increases in the development of moral thinking. Lawrence Steinberg and his associates (in McCormick & Pressley 2007: 401) documented how peer relations go far in affecting academic achievement in high school in that successful learners naturally tend to associate with other successful learners.

#### 3.4.5 Moral development

Kohlberg described the development of moral reasoning as a progression through an invariant sequence of six stages (McCormick & Pressley, 2007:75). But in outlining his stages, however, Kohlberg was careful not to equate each type with a particular age. Kohlberg stressed that individuals within any one age group could be at different levels of development in their moral thinking as some individuals would be retarded and others advanced in this respect. Kohlberg and Giligan (in Rice, 1992:469) indicated that the development of moral thought is a gradual and continuous process as the individual passes through a sequence of increasingly sophisticated moral stages. Table 3.1 provides a brief summary of the different stages of moral development as proposed by Kohlberg.

Table 3.1: Summary of Kohlberg's stages of moral development (Rice, 1992:469);  
(McCormick & Pressley, 2007:78)

<b>Level:</b>	<b>Stage:</b>	<b>Focus:</b>	<b>Motivation:</b>
Level 1: Preconventional morality	Stage 1	The focus here is on self-interest.	To avoid punishment by others
	Stage 2		To gain rewards from others
Level 2: Conventional Morality	Stage 3	The focus here is on maintaining social order	To avoid disapproval from others
	Stage 4		To maintain law and order and because of concern for the community
Level 3: Postconventional morality	Stage 5	The focus here is on shared standards and principles	To gain the respect of an individual or community
	Stage 6		To avoid self-condemnation for lapses

McCormick and Pressley (2007) state that Kohlberg initially proposed that postconventional moral judgement became a possibility during adolescence (in part because of the onset of formal operations during that period), but later came to realise that postconventional moral judgement often did not develop during adolescence. Kohlberg eventually proposed that postconventional thinking is much more likely to develop during early adulthood, as a result of increased opportunities to experience complex moral interactions requiring serious reflection (in McCormick & Pressley, 2007:402).

Peck and Havighurst espoused the idea that personality type controls moral behaviour. These authors identified five personality types and allocated each to a specific developmental stage from infancy to adulthood. They assigned the rational-altruistic personality type to the developmental stage of adolescence to adulthood. According to Peck and Havighurst (in Rice, 1992:475) "rational-altruistic persons are at the highest

level of moral behaviour; they are motivated by consideration for the welfare of others. Their behaviour is rational because they consider each situation on its own merit. The essential element in the motivation of the conduct of these persons is an altruistic impulse. They have a high regard for others. They cannot enjoy themselves at the expense of others and are unhappy at the prospect of harming others". Peck and Havighurst also concluded that basic personality structure, or character type, tends to persist, to remain fairly stable between the ages of 10 and 17. This suggests that an individual's conduct is relatively predictable (Rice, 1992:475).

Sigmund Freud proposed that, as children identify with significant others in their environment, including parents and educators, and eventually adopt their own standards of behaviour, the conscience develops. The manner in which parents enforce discipline may also affect a child's moral development. Mothers who use withdrawal of love, rather than physical punishment, are more likely to help foster the development of moral thinking and behaviour in their children (Louw 1998:409). In a homophobic society such as South Africa, the view is often held by individuals and organisations, such as churches, that homosexuality is wrong and sinful. How could this generally prevalent view influence adolescents with a homosexual parent?

#### 3.4.6 Conative development

Van Breda (2006:74) describes conation as the will or the longing function of the psyche and points out its usefulness in reflecting human motivational behaviour and will power. Conation includes achievement motivational distinction, such as need for achievement and need or fear of failure, as well as various beliefs about one's abilities and their use, feelings of self-esteem and self efficacy and attitudes and interests concerning particular subject matter learning; volitional aspects pertaining to persistence and academic work ethic, will to learn, mental effort investment and mindfulness in learning; intentional constructs reflecting control or regulation of actions leading toward chosen goals, attitudes towards the future and self awareness about proximal goals and consequences; and many kinds of learning styles and strategies hypothesised to influence cognitive processes and outcomes of instruction.

During middle and late adolescence adolescents continue to add new dimensions to their self-esteem and might, for example, evaluate themselves in terms of their romantic

appeal or job competence. Will the association with a homosexual parent affect an adolescent's gender identity and, if so, how will this affect their evaluations of themselves in terms of their romantic appeal or competence in certain tasks that are based on traditionally accepted gender-roles? Rice (1996:251) suggests that younger adolescents have higher self-esteem than older ones. He attributes this to the fact that adolescents become more critical about the world and themselves as they develop a greater capacity for logical thinking. But Berk explains that, after an initial drop, self-esteem adjusts to a more realistic level that matches the opinions of others as well as objective performance (Berk 2003:449). How will adolescents' self-esteem be affected by their association with a homosexual parent?

According to Rice, girls' earlier physical and social maturation may account for the fact that female adolescents generally have higher self-esteem than male adolescents. Having high self-esteem gives adolescents the courage to make choices independently. If adolescents' locus of control is internal, their decision-making authority resides within themselves. In general, older adolescents have higher internality than young adolescents (Rice, 1992:237).

### **3.5 WHAT IMPACT DOES THE ADOLESCENT'S LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT HAVE ON HIS OR HER UNDERSTANDING, ACCEPTANCE AND HANDLING OF A HOMOSEXUAL PARENT?**

Although definitive data regarding adolescent's attitudes towards homosexuality is very scarce, it has been found that living in an environment in which the individual is associated with an out group or possesses some characteristic or trait that is devalued tends to diminish self-esteem among adolescents (Adams, Gullotta & Markstrom-Adams 1994:255). As Nicol (2005:72-85) points out (cf Chapter 1) South African society can still be regarded as being largely homophobic and so homosexuals will generally be viewed as an out-group. Since adolescents are typically more self-conscious than persons in any other age group (Tice, Buder & Baumeister in Rice, 1992:213) it is expected that adolescents with homosexual parents will, through association with this out-group, have diminished levels of self-esteem.



On the other hand, it is also possible that the increasing development of empathy during adolescence may help adolescents to relate more empathically to homosexual persons and to relate to them since adolescents themselves are often viewed as an out-group and judged by stereotypes of adolescent behaviour (Willis in Rice, 1992:3).

The identity status that an individual has achieved may impact on how he or she views a homosexual parent. We may expect an adolescent in the identity diffused identity status to have a negative view of homosexuality, since greater society ascribes a negative meaning to it. But adolescents within the identity achieved status might possibly display increased levels of acceptance towards homosexual persons as they will have explored different alternatives for themselves and not simply accepted the view espoused by society.

During middle and late adolescence adolescents typically become less concerned with other's opinions of them and more involved in finding meaningful values to include in their self-definitions. This may result in the decline of highly stereotypic self-perceptions, especially when parents and teachers encourage adolescents to question the value of gender stereotypes for themselves and their society (Berk 2003:540). We might thus expect that adolescents in this stage of development will develop gender identities that fit true with them and is not influenced in a causative manner by a parent's homosexuality.

It is expected that a homosexual parent's modelling of socially acceptable displays of intimacy in a romantic relationship will help the adolescent child deal with the sexual urges that occur as a result of the adolescent's sexual development, in socially acceptable ways.

The developing ability to think abstractly might possibly help adolescents in the middle and later phases of adolescence to accept their homosexual parents on a cognitive level. These children thus might be able to accept the idea of having a homosexual parent, regardless of whether they have accepted the parent on an emotional level and made peace with the parents' homosexuality.

The adolescent's acceptance of the homosexual parent on a social level seems to depend a great deal on the values and attitudes of the adolescent's peer group during middle adolescence. During later adolescence though, family influences seem to be more important than the influence of the peer group.

It is important to remember though that adolescents who have mentors, supportive environments and who involve themselves in their communities have a greater propensity to be resilient (Steyn 2006:25) and so might experience having a homosexual parent as being positive. Individuals with greater resilience are generally regarded as having higher levels of psychological well-being.

Clarke-Stewart and Dunn (2006:289) also suggest that family structure in itself makes little difference to children's psychological development; what seems to matter is the quality of family life.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter adolescence was defined and Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system theory was discussed as it relates to child development. The developmental stages for the group of adolescents in this study was discussed and related to their handling of homosexuality. Typical adolescent-family interactions were reviewed. In the next chapter the research design of this study will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

From the preceding literature study it is evident that the experiential world of adolescent learners with homosexual parents is a complex phenomenon and requires a carefully planned procedure for its investigation. The design of this research project and the methods used to gather information will be discussed in this chapter.

The goal of the research is to obtain an understanding of how adolescent learners experience having a homosexual parent in a homophobic society, such as South African society. Thus, the problem statement for this investigation is: What is the nature of the experiential world of adolescent learners with homosexual parents in South Africa?

According to Leedy (1993:139) the choice of research methodology will be dictated by the nature of the data and the problem being investigated. The nature of this study necessitates that a qualitative mode of enquiry and a purposive sampling method be employed.

#### **4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

According to Berg (2007:8) qualitative research seeks to answer questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. The data that qualitative research seeks to understand is complex and can only be approached in context (Morse & Richards, 2007:47), since it seeks to understand how people make sense of the world and how they experience events. Qualitative projects aim to create understanding from data as the analysis proceeds and is thus not pre-emptive.

##### **4.2.1 Case studies**

Berg (2007:283) describes the case study as an approach capable of examining both simple and complex phenomena, with units of analysis varying from single individuals to large corporations and businesses; it entails using a variety of lines of action in its data

gathering segments, and can meaningfully make use of and contribute to the application of theory.

The case study is therefore not characterised by the methods used to analyse and collect data, but rather by its focus upon a particular unit of analysis: the case (Willig 2001:70). Bromley (in Willig 2001:70) defines a case as a natural occurrence with definable boundaries. The case study involves an in-depth, intensive and sharply focused exploration of such an occurrence.

According to Willig (2001: 70-71) the following are defining features of case study research:

1. An idiographic perspective: The researcher is concerned with the particular rather than with the general. The aim is to understand an individual case, in its particularity.
2. Attention to contextual data: Case study research takes a holistic approach, in that it considers the case within its context. This means that the researcher pays attention to the ways in which the various dimensions of the case relate to or interact with its environment.
3. Triangulation: Case studies integrate information from diverse sources to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This may involve the use of a range of data collection and analysis techniques within the framework of one case study. Triangulation enriches case study research because it allows the researcher to approach the case from a number of different perspectives. This, in turn, facilitates an appreciation of the various dimensions of the case as well as its embeddedness within its various (social, physical, symbolic, psychological) contexts.
4. A temporal element: Case studies involve the investigation of occurrences over a period of time. This means that a focus on change and development is an important feature of case studies.
5. A concern with theory: The detailed exploration of a particular case can generate insights into social or psychological processes, which, in turn, can give rise to theoretical formulations and hypotheses. In addition, case studies can also be used to test existing theories or to clarify or extend such theories.

Many qualitative investigators use the case study approach as a guide to their research. By concentrating on a single case the researcher aims to uncover the manifest interaction of significant factors characteristic of the case. But, in addition, the researcher is able to capture various nuances, patterns and more latent elements that other research approaches might overlook. The case study method tends to focus on holistic description and explanation; and as a general statement, any phenomenon can be studied by the case study method (Borg & Gall in Berg 2007:284).

#### 4.2.1.1. Case study design types

According to Willig (2000:73) there are a number of different designs for case study research, each of which allows the researcher to address different sorts of questions in relation to the case under investigation (Willig 2001:73). The different types of case study designs are discussed below:

##### a) Exploratory case studies

Yin (1994:41) explains that this type of case study may be seen as a prelude to a large social scientific study and must have some type of organisational framework that has been designed prior to beginning the research process.

##### b) Explanatory case studies

Explanatory case studies are useful when conducting causal studies. "Particularly in complex studies of organisations or communities, a researcher might desire to employ multivariate cases to examine a plurality of influences. This might be accomplished by using a pattern-matching technique, in which several pieces of information from the same case may be related to some theoretical proposition" (Yin 1994:41).

##### c) Descriptive case studies

In this type of case study the investigator is required to present a descriptive theory, which establishes the overall framework to follow throughout the study. This approach thus implies the formation and identification of a viable theoretical orientation before voicing research questions. The investigator must determine exactly what the unit of analysis in the study will be before he or she begins with the research (Yin 1994:41).

#### 4.2.1.2 Choice of a case study design for the present study

The approach used in this investigation may be viewed as descriptive because it was based on Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system's theory, which offered a contextual framework for the approach to the case studies. According to this approach, the environment may be regarded as a series of systems which includes the home, school and various broader community settings in which a person spends his or her life (Bronfenbrenner & Evans 2000:115-125)

The case study is not itself a research method and researchers need to select methods of data collection and analysis that will generate suitable material for case studies (Willig 2001:72). The description of the three case studies took place through detailed, in-depth data collection methods involving multiple sources of information that are rich in context. These included interviews, personality tests and projection media – namely incomplete sentence tests.

#### 4.2.2 Selection of respondents

For the purpose of this study the adolescent is defined as the person in the developmental stage that occurs between middle childhood and adolescence, that is, between the ages of 16 and 18 years of age. The adolescent phase of development can be divided into three stages, namely: early adolescence, which usually includes children between the ages of 10 and 14, middle adolescence which includes children between the ages of 15 and 17 years and late adolescence which includes children between the ages of 18 and 22 years (Berk 2003:170). For the purposes of this study, the researcher interviewed adolescents in the middle and late stages of adolescent development who ranged in age from 16 to 18 years. This group was selected for a number of reasons:

1. It has been the researcher's personal experience that the period of middle to late adolescence is viewed as being a very stormy time by adolescents themselves.
2. The dramatic physical, cognitive and socio-affective changes undergone by adolescents during this developmental stage (Carr-Gregg & Shale in Steyn 2006:6) may impact on how the adolescents experience having a homosexual parent. Carr-Gregg et al (in Steyn 2006:6) maintain that the period of middle to late adolescence is the time when the adolescent:
  - is most vulnerable to peer pressure;

- is searching for his or her identity;
  - is most likely to reject adult control and support;
  - is most likely to demonstrate possible rebellious behaviour and the likelihood of a breakdown in communication with care-givers;
  - is most likely to indulge in risk taking behaviour with drugs and sex;
  - has a growing need for a guide and mentor.
3. As mentioned in Chapter 1, very little of the research previously conducted focused on how adolescent children experience having a homosexual parent as the large majority of this kind of research has focused on the young children of homosexual parents.

Participant referrals were the basis for choosing respondents for this study. The researcher contacted friends, acquaintances and colleagues who might be likely to know adolescents with homosexual parents. The proposed research was described and then the help of these friends, acquaintances and colleagues was solicited locating eligible adolescents. A purposive sampling method was thus used. In this kind of study information rich cases are selected to be studied in-depth. According to Neuman (2006:222), purposive sampling (or judgmental sampling) uses the judgment of an expert in selecting cases or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind. With this kind of sampling, the researcher never knows whether the cases selected represent the population. Purposive sampling is appropriate for selecting unique cases that are especially informative and so a researcher may use purposive sampling to select members of a difficult to reach, specialised population. Purposive sampling is also useful when a researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation and the purpose is to gain a deeper understanding of types (Neuman 2006:222). It is important to note that all three families in the case studies are made up of a divorced heterosexual custodial parent and a homosexual non-custodial parent with whom the adolescents have various degrees of contact.

#### 4.2.3 Selection of assessment media for the case studies

According to Willig (2001:76), the research methods to be used in a particular case study should be selected in the light of the research question that motivated the study. The assessment media used in this study were selected in such a way that it would help to

gain a deeper understanding of the respondents, their functioning, personality and life-worlds in general. Each of the assessment media that were used in the case studies are discussed below:

#### 4.2.3.1 Interviews

Berg (2007:89) defines interviewing simply as a conversation with the specific purpose to gather information. He states that the interview is an especially effective method of collecting information for certain types of research questions and for addressing certain types of assumptions. Taylor and Bogdan (in Berg 2007:97) report that interviewing can provide a useful means of access, particularly when investigators are interested in understanding the perceptions of participants or learning how participants come to attach meanings to phenomena or events.

Interviews have the advantage of being comprehensive and yielding highly detailed information. The problem of unclear questions is reduced by having an interviewer presenting the questions, who can clarify uncertainties on the spot. However, the drawbacks of the interview approach are that it can be costly, it can be complicated logistically and interviewers may be biased (Goodwin 2008:443).

Interviews may be divided into three major categories, namely the standardised interview (also known as formal or structured interviews), the unstandardised interview (also known as informal or non-directive interviews) and the semi-standardised interview (also known as guided-semistructured or focused interviews). The major difference between these interview structures is their degree of rigidity with regard to presentational structure (Berg 2007: 93). Each of these interview structures will now be discussed in greater detail.

##### (a) Types of interviews

- The *standardised interview* is the most formally structured type of interview. No deviations from the question order are allowed and the wording of each question is asked exactly as it is written. No adjustments are made to the level of language and no questions about the interview are answered or clarifications made. Additional questions



may not be added. Standardised interviews are similar in format to pencil-and-paper surveys.

The rationale of the standardised interview is to offer each subject approximately the same stimulus so that responses to questions will (ideally) be comparable. With this type of interview researchers assume that the meaning of each question is identical for every subject (Berg 2007:93).

■ According to Willig (2001:21-22), *semi-structured interviewing* is the most widely used method of data collection in qualitative research in psychology. "This is partly because interview data can be analysed in a variety of ways, which means semi-structured interviewing is a method of data collection that is compatible with several methods of data analysis ... Another reason for the popularity of semi-structured interviews is that they are somewhat easier to arrange than other forms of qualitative data collection as there are fewer logistical difficulties in arranging a series of semi-structured interviews" (Willig 2001:21-22). These types of interviews are more or less structured and questions may be recorded during the interview. Questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the wording of the questions is flexible and the level of language may be adjusted to suit the research subject as the researcher aims to approach the world from the subject's perspective (Berg 2007:95). The interviewer may answer questions and make clarifications and he or she may add or delete probes to the interview between subsequent subjects (Berg 2007: 93). Morse and Richards (2007:114) feel that the use of semi-structured interviews is appropriate when the researcher knows enough about the study topic to frame the needed discussion in advance. Semi-structured interviews thus offer the researcher the organisation and comfort of pre-planned questions, but also the challenge of presenting them to participants in such a way as to invite detailed, complex answers.

■ Unstandardised *interviews* are, as the name suggests, completely unstructured and there is no set order to any of the questions. There is also no set wording to any of the questions and the level of language may be adjusted to suit the research participants. The interviewer may answer questions and make clarifications and he or she may add or delete questions between interviews (Berg 2007: 93). Typically, interviewers using this type of interview begin with the assumption that they do not know in advance what all

the necessary questions are and consequently, they cannot predetermine fully a list of questions to ask. They also assume that not all subjects will necessarily find equal meaning in like-worded questions as subjects may possess different vocabularies (Berg 2007:94).

(b) Motivation for the use of semi-structured interviews

It was decided to make use of semi-structured interviews in this investigation as the general purpose of the interviews was to gather information about and gain insight into the experiential world of the interviewees concerning their experiential world as an adolescent with a homosexual parent.

(c) Data collection

All of the interviews were conducted in person at the adolescents' homes and prior permission was sought from the adolescents and their parents to tape record the interviews and to transcribe them. The tape recorder was small, aimed at being as unobtrusive as possible and note taking was kept to a minimum, so as not to inhibit or distract the interviewee.

Issues recorded during the interviews that required further clarification were noted down as well as new trends and dynamics that emerged that required elaboration. Such clarification and elaboration was obtained when appropriate, which could have been at that stage, later during the interview or on completion thereof.

This was all done with the aim to facilitate the smooth flow and unfolding of information about the participants' attitudes and perception of having a homosexual parent. A similar introduction was used consistently for all interviews, which included a brief explanation of the purpose of the study, and all three participants were assured of confidentiality in the research report for ethical reasons. Full transcriptions of the interviews are in the safekeeping of the researcher and are available for reference if required. All the interviews were translated from Afrikaans into English.

(d) Data analysis

The data analysis was done by looking out for recurring themes such as peer attitude, self-esteem, parental relations et cetera.

The following structure was used to interpret the information that emerged from the interviews:

- ❖ Additional biographical information
- ❖ Family and environmental background
- ❖ Intellectual image
- ❖ Emotional image
- ❖ Physical image
- ❖ Conative image
- ❖ Moral image; and
- ❖ Summary of the interview

#### 4.2.3.2 High School Personality Questionnaire

The High School Personality Questionnaire (HSPQ) was developed in the US by Raymond B. Cattell of the University of Illinois and Mary D.L. Cattell of the Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, Illinois. It was adapted for use in the South African context by the Institute for Psychometric Research of the Human Sciences Research Council and was standardised for youths between the ages of 13 and 18 years of age. (Du Toit & Madge 1984:25).

Personality may be defined in different ways. According to Visser, Garbers-Strauss and Prinsloo (1992:1), personality may be defined as: “a term that refers to the integrated and dynamic organisation of an individual’s psychic, social, moral and physical characteristics, as it finds expression in his or her interaction with the environment and particularly with other people”. Cattell views personality as that which tells us what any human being may do when placed in a given situation (Visser et al 1992:1).

The HSPQ measures fourteen relatively independent personality dimensions or primary and various secondary factors. Each primary factor is represented as a bipolar continuum of which the two extreme poles are described: the left-hand pole (which represents a sten score of one to three) and the right-hand pole (which represent a sten score of eight to ten). Scores which fall in the two extreme poles on each of the continuums may be regarded as significant.

The fourteen primary HSPQ factors are briefly described in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: The fourteen primary HSPQ factors

FACTOR	Low score description	Standard sten score (STEN)										High score description
		Average										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
A	Critical, reserved, cool											Warm, soft-hearted, participating
B	Dull, less intelligent											More intelligent, bright
C	Emotionally immature and unstable											Emotionally mature, stable, realistic
D	Deliberate, stodgy, placid											Unrestrained, nervous
E	Obedient, mild, dependent											Assertive aggressive, rebellious
F	Sober, silent, serious											Happy-go-lucky, enthusiastic
G	Casual, quitting, undependable											Conscientious, persevering
H	Timid, threat-sensitive, shy											Venturesome, thick-skinned
I	Practical, tough-minded											Tender-minded, sensitive, protected
J	Vigorous, goes readily with group											Individualistic, obstructive, reflective
O	Secure, resilient, confident											Discouraged, self-reproaching
Q2	Group follower, values social approval											Makes own decisions, resourceful
Q3	Careless, ignores standards											Self-controlled, self-respecting
Q4	Relaxed, composed											Tense, driven, irritable

The following secondary order factors were calculated:

- Anxiety
- Extraversion

(a) Motivation for the inclusion of the HSPQ

It was decided to use this instrument based on the fact that a person's personality plays an important role in almost every aspect of his or her life. Therefore, this questionnaire was used in an effort to come to a reasonable understanding of the personality characteristics and functioning of the adolescent learner with a homosexual parent.

(b) Data collection

Form A of the HSPQ (Du Toit & Madge 1984:4) was administered individually to all three research participants. It was explained to the testees that there was no time limit for the completion of the questionnaire and that their answers could not be deemed either right or wrong. Testees were supplied with the required test booklet, an answer sheet, an HB-pencil and an eraser and were instructed in the correct method of completing the answer sheets. Completed tests are in the safe keeping of the researcher and are available for reference if required

(c) Data analysis

According to Cattell (in Visser et al 1992:13) the answer sheet for hand scoring (456 PP) should be used if manual scoring is preferred. This was the case in the present study where the scoring was done with the aid of two scoring stencils (679 and 680). Before the scoring commenced, the answer sheets were checked to make sure that only one answer was marked for each question. The raw scores were tabulated on the right hand side of the answer sheet and were then converted into norm scores, called sten scores, before the respondents' scores were interpreted. These sten scores enable one to relate a learner to other learners of a group to which he or she belongs, as regards his or her various personality characteristics and so aids interpretation (Van Breda 2006:106).

#### 4.2.3.3 Projection media – Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank

Van den Aardweg et al (1999:185) describe projective techniques as measures of personality in which a testee is asked to respond to ambiguous or an unstructured stimulus. The basic theory underlying projective devices is that each person unconsciously projects his or her private feelings and attitudes into his or her dealings with the everyday situations of the external world and that his or her actions thus have a symbolic as well as a literal reference. Sigmund Freud, as far back as 1894, described projection as a defence mechanism whereby a person unconsciously ascribes his or her

own unacceptable wishes, characteristics, attitudes and subjective feelings to others (Abt & Bellak 1959:13). As indicated by the above description of the term, projection is currently used in a much broader sense in the field of psychology, particularly in assessment media where semi-structured and unstructured stimuli (like the Thematic Apperception Test and the Rorschach Ink Blot Test) are included. In the use of self-report inventories, such as sentence completion, figure drawing and storytelling, the assumption is that an individual's responses to an unstructured stimulus are influenced by underlying needs, motives, and concerns. Thus, the individual can be assumed to project something of him- or herself into the response to these tasks. The interpretation of the responses should therefore yield important information about a person's basic personality structure and motivations (Benner in Van Breda 2006:109).

The Rotter Incomplete Sentences Blank (RISB) was developed out of earlier work done by Rotter and Willerman, Shor, Hutt, and Holzber, Teicher and Taylor (Goldberg 1965:777-813). Though stemming from work done in the military, Rotter extended the RISB for use with college and high school populations as well as the general adult population. According to Greene and Weiner (2008:535) the RISB is particularly useful in providing clues to persons' underlying conflicts and concerns, their feelings about themselves and other people, and their attitudes towards various life situations and experiences. The RISB consists of forty stems or stubs, consisting of one or more words, which the subject is instructed to combine with other words of his own choosing to make a sentence (Goldberg 1965:777-813). No pre-determined categories exist in which completed stems can be grouped, instead the RISB has been devised in such a manner that the respondents choose their own categories so to say, by way of their responses. In this sense it is thus possible for respondents to avoid difficult or threatening topics.

Rotter devised a scoring system for rating each of the RISB items on a 7 point scale from 0 (most positive adjustment) to 6 (most indication of conflict). Positive adjustment is scored from 0 to 2, depending on the extent to which sentence completions express such adaptive perspectives as an optimistic outlook, receptive attitudes toward people and an upbeat affective state. Conflict is scored from 4 to 6, depending on the intensity with which negative attitudes, interpersonal strains and various kinds of symptoms or concerns are expressed. Neutral responses that have no personal reference or consist

only of descriptions or catch phrases are given a score of 3. After adjustment or conflict ratings have been assigned for the 40 responses, they are totalled to provide an overall adjustment index, which can range from 0 to 240 (Greene & Weiner 2008:527). Should any of the items be left blank, the total score is prorated to maintain comparability with scores for a full 40-response protocol. The Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank was designed to provide a single score or index of personal adjustment or emotional stability. The test consists of 40 incomplete sentences, and the responses to each of the stems are rated on a scale ranging from 0 to 6. There are three classes of C (conflict) responses, three classes of P (positive) responses and a class of N (neutral) responses. The cumulation of the scores for the individual items provides a total score which represents an estimate of the subject's emotional stability. The lower the total score, the greater the degree of adjustment (Greene & Weiner 2008:527). This test is thus evaluated qualitatively and a quantitative value is then assigned to the qualitative evaluation.

(a) Motivation for the use of the Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank

As a result of the inherent projective qualities of this test, it was decided to explore and gather information concerning the relationships and attitudes of the three research participants included in the case study, by applying this test. The RISB was not only found to be highly effective in determining the content of subjects' attitudes, but is also fairly simple to administer.

(b) Data collection

The RISB was administered separately to each of the research participants in their homes. In order to complete the sentences, each research participant was supplied with a copy of the list with the partly completed sentences, an HB pencil and an eraser. The following instructions were given to each of the research participants before commencement of the test: "Below are 40 partly completed sentences. Complete these sentences to express your real feelings. Try to do every one. Be sure to make a complete sentence and be aware that there are items on both sides of the paper". Completed tests are in the safe keeping of the researcher and are available for reference if required.

### (c) Data analysis

On completion of the tests by the respondents, it was read through in order to obtain a global impression regarding each one's situation. Each test was studied again while notes were made of sentences that might have a bearing on each other and to identify eminent problems. The researcher's insight as an intern psychologist was applied in this regard. Each statement was considered individually and was assigned a score between 0 and 6 according to the guidelines of Rotter (in Greene & Weiner 2008:523) depending on whether the statement represented a conflict response, a neutral response or a positive response. The cumulation of the scores for the individual items were then calculated and the level of adjustment was determined.

### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

The main aim of this chapter was to provide a detailed description of the empirical investigation including the research design and research method. The main research problem and the sub-problems that were explored were stated. Then types and the value of the different research approaches that were embarked upon in conducting the investigation and how these are linked directly to the research problem and the specific aims of this study were outlined. Each assessment medium that was used in the study was fully explored in terms of its theoretical background, motivation for being included in the present study, administration and data analysis. The data analysis as well as the discussion and interpretation of the empirical research results were discussed in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 5

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter a detailed description of the empirical investigation including the research design and research method was provided. This chapter contains the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the results of the empirical research. The discussion of the results appears in the next chapter.

#### 5.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The types of data gathering methods that were used to conduct the qualitative research consisted of three in-depth case studies with three adolescent learners who have homosexual parents.

##### 5.2.1 Case studies

###### 5.2.1.1 Case study 1: Driekus

###### (a) Biographical information

Name	:	Driekus (pseudonym)
Gender	:	Male
Age	:	16 years
Home language	:	Afrikaans

###### (b) Interpretation of assessment media

## (i) Interview

I conducted the interview with Driekus on 25 August 2008 in his home in Pretoria. A full transcription of the interview is in the safe keeping of the researcher and is available for reference if needed. It should be noted that the interview was translated from Afrikaans to English.

Initially Driekus presented as reserved and cautious, but he eventually appeared to relax and became more talkative and open as the interview progressed. Driekus came across as a polite young man. His appearance is very neat and he is obviously very fit. Yet this posture does not communicate confidence. He walks with round shoulders, which makes him look shorter than he is and he interrupts eye-contact frequently.

The interview revealed that Driekus gets on very well with his mother and older sister, but that he has had a strained relationship with his father. He feels that his father is a nice person, but reports feeling very angry for a long time after his father's 'coming out' as a homosexual. He mentioned that he initially did not want to see his father. Eventually, he accepted the fact that his father is gay:

*At first I was quite angry for a long time ... and I did not really want to see him. But then I accepted it.*

"Ek was eers vir 'n hele ruk nogals kwaad gewees ... en ek wil hom nie regtig gesien het nie. Maar toe aanvaar ek dit maar. "

Driekus seems to blame his father for his parents' divorce and feels that his father became gay after the marriage. He does not believe that his father suspected that he was gay before the marriage:

*... my mother and he were married and then he became gay. And I think that's why I was angry, because that was the reason they got divorced.*

“... hy en my ma was mos getroud gewees en toe raak hy gay. En ek dink dis hoekom ek kwaad was, want dit was die rede dat hy en my ma geskei is.”

#### ■ Family and environmental background

Driekus is the younger of two children. He lives with his mother and his sister in a residential area near Pretoria. According to Driekus he has a good relationship with his mother. He feels that he can talk openly to his mother and enjoys spending time alone with her. He admits that they have occasional fall outs, but these are usually over small matters and they easily reconciled. His mother has recently started a new business and consequently spends less time at home than in the past. But Driekus reports that Sundays are their family days and the family prefers to spend this day relaxing together at home. Driekus indicated that he gets on well with his sister, but that she occasionally irritates him and that she can be bossy.

His parents divorced when he was a young boy and his father has been living as a gay man for over a decade. After the divorce Driekus' father moved around a lot and he abused drugs until the beginning of last year when he received counselling at a drug rehabilitation centre. Driekus describes his father as a nice person, but says that he has a quick temper and is easily agitated. Driekus yearns for a closer relationship with his father. However, their relationship is improving. Situational factors play a role as his father does not currently have a car and thus cannot often see his son. He feels that his father has a closer relationship with his sister than with him, but says that this does not bother him. Driekus feels that his father is more dependable now than he was in the past and that he no longer makes empty promises.

#### ■ Intellectual image

Driekus describes his school work simply as “okay” and admits that he enjoys the social aspects of school a lot more than the academic aspects. According to him he achieves very high marks in certain subjects and “okay” marks in others. He fares better in those subjects with a practical orientation such as engineering graphics and design and geography than he does in purely academic subjects such as mathematics. It can be

deduced that he relies more on practical thinking than abstract thinking, which might indicate that he has not yet fully achieved the formal operational stage of cognitive thinking. Keenan (2002:129) points out that even though the literature on adolescent reasoning clearly supports a distinction in the nature of thinking exhibited by adolescents and younger children, there seems to be considerable variation in the attainment of formal operations.

Driekus is able to think critically about his own thoughts and emotions regarding his father's homosexuality. This tends to suggest that Driekus is capable of introspection.

*Then it was quite difficult to convince myself that it won't help for me to be angry.*

"Toe's dit nogal moeilik om myself te oortuig dat dit gaan nie help ek's kwaad nie."

#### ■ Emotional image

Driekus admits to having felt sad after his parents' divorce and to having been very angry with his father for a long time after his father disclosed his sexual orientation. A lot of this anger stemmed from the fact that Driekus' father did not contact him for special occasions, such as his birthday. Thus, Driekus experienced his father as unreliable and possibly felt rejected by him.

Berk (2003:402) states that adolescents begin to use internal strategies to control their emotions more often as a direct result of their improved ability to reflect on their thoughts and feelings. Driekus displays signs of an internal locus of control when he talks about his realisation that he had to get over his anger and that if he stayed angry it would always affect only him.

*... I just decided if I'm always going to be this angry it will just stay with me. It will always be with me ... and then I realised it's not going to work, it's just going to make my life uncomfortable. So then I just decided it's better to accept it.*

“... ek het net besluit as ek altyd so kwaad gaan wees gaan dit net by my bly. Dit gaan altyd by my wees ... en toe't ek beseft dit gaan nie werk nie, dit gaan net my lewe ongemaklik maak. So toe besluit ek maar net dis beter om dit te aanvaar.”

According to Berk (2003:409), this sense of emotional self-efficacy fosters a favourable self-image and an optimistic outlook on life for adolescents, which assists them in dealing with emotional challenges.

Driekus appears to be rather self-conscious as he struggles to maintain eye contact and walks with hunched shoulders. According to Tice, Buder and Baumeister (in Rice, 1992:213), self-consciousness in middle to late adolescence is generally higher than in any other stage of an individual's life.

Driekus seems to avoid topics and situations that he finds threatening or uncomfortable. He describes how he tried to avoid his father when he was still very angry with him:

*I didn't want to see him at all and then I tried to avoid him ...*

“... ek wou hom glad nie gesien het nie, en toe't ek hom probeer vermy ...”

He also talked about how he left his father alone when his father was angry to avoid a conflict situation. Driekus mentioned that he avoids speaking to his father about his homosexuality. He also did not speak to others about his feelings regarding the divorce, but rather tried to cope with it on his own:

*I don't really talk to him about it. It's not difficult for me, but it's not really as if I wanted to talk to him about it.*

“Ek praat nie regtig met hom daaroor nie. Dis nie vir my moeilik nie, maar dis nie asof ek regtig wou met hom daaroor gepraat het nie.”

*I didn't really go talk to people, I just ... it just happened over a long time.*

“Ek het nie regtig met mense gaan praat nie, ek het maar net ... Dit het nou maar oor ‘n hele lang ruk gebeur”.

Driekus displays ambivalent feelings about discussing his father's homosexuality with others. Initially Driekus indicated that it was not easy for him to talk about his father's homosexuality; later in the interview he said that he felt comfortable discussing the issue in all contexts and it did not bother him at all. When this contradiction was pointed out to Driekus, he explained that it was sometimes easier to talk about it to strangers, since one was unlikely to see them again, but that he often wondered what other people think [about the fact that his father is gay].

*Yes, but ... it's sort of funny. Like, because ... sometimes it is easier to talk about it to people you don't know, because you won't really see them again. But like ... you always wonder what other people think.*

“Ja, maar ... dis soos half snaaks. Soos, want ... partykeer is dit makliker om met mense te praat wat jy nie ken nie, want jy gaan hulle nie regtig weer sien nie. Maar soos ... ander mense wonder jy half heelyd wat hulle dink.”

Thus, Driekus appears to struggle with conflicting emotions regarding his own comfort with discussing the topic of his father's homosexuality and, quite possibly, his acceptance of his father's homosexuality.

This apparent fear of rejection due to his father's homosexuality may further add to Driekus' self-conscious feelings.

Driekus' statement that he would not be judge a person with a gay parent as he understands what it is all about, suggests that the development of a sense of empathy. It also confirms Driekus' own difficulty with accepting his father's homosexuality.

■ Physical image

According to Van Breda (2006:146) the physical self (body image) seems to be more important during adolescence than at any other stage, except possibly old age, and can play an important role in self-esteem based on athletic ability, security based on physical strength and social acceptance based on an attractive face and body.

Sport and physical exercise are very important to Driekus and he spends almost all of his free time engaged in some or other physical activity. He talks with pride about the tournaments and competitions in which he participates. For Driekus, sport and social interaction are inextricably interlinked. When asked to talk about himself, Driekus mentioned his friends and sport:

*I quite enjoy socialising with my friends and I enjoy sport.*

“Ek hou nogals daarvan om saam met my vriende te kuier en ek hou van sport.”

He thus identifies very closely with his physical self. He also said that he usually spends his spare time playing tennis with his friends or jogging:

*If I have spare time I will usually organise to go and play tennis with a group of my friends. Or I go jogging.*

“As ek spaartyd het sal ek gewoonlik reël dat ek saam met klomp vriende gaan tennis speel. Of ek gaan draf.”

Driekus enjoys being fit and healthy and responded to my comment about his fitness:

*Yes. It's fun for me. I enjoy it.*

“Ja. Dis vir my lekker. Ek hou daarvan.”

According to Crain (2000:167), there is often a good deal of competition among adolescents because of the variations in development that they experience. Boys and girls often compare themselves with one another to see how they rate. Driekus acknowledges that he is shorter than most of his peers. However, this does not bother him as it does not hamper his participation in sport.

It is obvious that Driekus takes pride in his physical appearance. His hair is short and neatly styled and he wears well fitting, fashionable clothes. Yet despite his neat and fit physical appearance, Driekus does not come across as a very confident young man.

#### ■ Social and personality development

According to Rice (1992:431), the number of reported friendships that adolescents have usually decreases and the quality of their friendships with a few close friends become more important.

Driekus has a wide circle of friends, but gets on especially well with two or three close friends. He feels that his close friends understand him and that they have a lot in common. Driekus has one specific friend in which he can confide and this close relationship is mutual.

*I have a big circle of friends, but there are like two or three of my friends that I get along with really well. We just understand each other well and we like the same type of things like sport and so on.*

“Ek het ‘n groot vriendekring, maar daar is soos twee of drie van my vriende met wie ek baie goed oor die weg kom. Ons verstaan mekaar net goed en ons hou soos van dieselfde tipe dinge soos sport en so aan”.

According to Rice (1992:435) self-disclosure to friends increases as adolescents get older.



Driekus values trust in his relationships with his friends and he seems to appreciate that most of his close friends have accepted the fact that his father is gay so easily.

Driekus associates mostly with boys and says that he feels he has less in common with girls. Driekus has previously had girlfriends but does not have a current girlfriend as he says that he does not have time for a relationship. However, it is something that he might consider in the future. Paul and White (in Rice, 1992:438) emphasise that the development of intimacy is one of the most important challenges of late adolescence. "Failure to achieve a close relationship with a member of the opposite sex may result in severe anxiety, fears about one's sexuality and lower self-esteem. Older adolescents are particularly sensitive to vulnerable feelings of heterosexual inadequacy.

Driekus appears to be revisiting previous stages of his life. He is trying to conceptualise them more positively and thus appears to be experiencing the stage of identity moratorium as he explores alternatives in an effort to find values and goals to guide his life. This is apparent in his efforts to make peace with his father and in rebuilding their relationship. This might also be viewed as an attempt by Driekus to adapt his previous conception of himself into a comprehensive and integrated identity that includes the acceptance of his father's homosexuality and a closer relationship with his father. In this way Driekus seems to be trying to establish a very clear sense of who he is. According to Steyn (2006:23), adolescents are able to forge unique ethnic, occupational and sex role identities once they have established a sense of who they are.

Driekus appears to have an accurate self-concept based on his view of himself as a good sportsman. He is focusing a great deal on this aspect of his identity in an effort to effectively integrate his sporting goals into an ideal image of himself as a professional tennis player.

#### ■ Conative image

Driekus is very motivated and dedicated to his sporting activities. He spends every afternoon at school engaged in either tennis practice or practising for cycling competitions. He also attends private tennis lessons two evenings a week and he spends most of his free time playing tennis with his friends. He spends most of his

school holidays and weekends on sporting tours or competing in sporting competitions or scuba diving with his mother.

Driekus does not show the same amount of motivation in and dedication to his school work. He admits that he enjoys the social aspects of school more than the school work and that he mostly does well in those subjects that he enjoys. Driekus does not enjoy Life Orientation (L.O.) and he rushes through his L.O. homework to avoid detention for incomplete work.

*...usually I just quickly do my L.O. homework. Sometimes it is wrong, but at least it's done ... because otherwise you get detention if your homework's not done.*

“... meestal doen ek sommer vinnig net my L.O. huiswerk. Partykeer is dit verkeerd maar dan is dit darem gedoen ... want anders kry jy detensie as jou huiswerk nie gedoen is nie.”

Driekus is enthusiastic about his future. He dreams of representing South Africa in the international tennis arena and would like to become an engineer.

*I would really like to achieve something in my tennis. And just like to have a good job one day ... I think something like engineering or something like that ... I would really like to play tennis for South Africa.*

“Ek sal graag iets wil bereik in my tennis. En net om soos eendag ‘n goeie werk te kry ... ek dink iets soos ingeneurswese of iets soos dit ... ek sal baie graag vir Suid Afrika wil tennis speel.”

Driekus displays signs of unrealistic thinking in that he rushes through much of his homework just to avoid punishment, yet plans on becoming an engineer. This field of study is rigorous and requires hard work and dedication. Driekus' dream of playing tennis for South Africa (although he has not even been selected to compete on a provincial level in this sport) also appears unrealistic.

### ■ Moral image

According to Louw (1998:409), any given person is likely to show one predominant type of moral reasoning, but at times a person's moral judgements will fit a lower level and at times a higher level.

Driekus displays signs of pre-conventional moral thinking when he describes his main motivation for completing his L.O. homework as an effort to avoid punishment by his teacher. It is also evident in his decision to forgive his father to avoid the discomfort caused by his own anger. Could there be a link between Driekus' pre-conventional moral thinking and his possible low mental capacity as found in the High School Personality Questionnaire? (Please refer to page 88 in this regard).

### ■ Brief summary of the interview

Although Driekus initially presented as a quiet and withdrawn person he seemed more at ease as the interview progressed. His cooperation throughout the sessions was satisfactory.

It is clear that some of his ecological part systems such as his parents' divorce, his father's disclosure of his homosexuality, his father's unavailability to Driekus and the fear of negative societal reactions have influenced him negatively and have caused anger, unhappiness and the rejection of his father. But other part systems, such as his close relationship with his mother, his sister and his friends as well as his friends' acceptance of his father's situation, have played a supporting role in his life. These factors have helped him to come to terms with his father's homosexuality and to improve his strained relationship with his father.

Some of Driekus' intra-psychic part systems, such as his developing sense of empathy, an internal locus of control, continuous moral development, his efforts to integrate the different aspects of his life into a true identity and his accurate self-concept, play a very important role in helping him to overcome his self-consciousness and to support him in his aspirations to become a professional tennis player.

## (ii) High School Personality Questionnaire

The High School Personality Questionnaire was conducted on Driekus on the 25 of August 2008 at his home. I administered it and the results are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: The scores obtained in the HSPQ

FACTOR	Low score description	Standard sten score (STEN)										High score description
		Average										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
A	Critical, reserved, cool							•				Warm, soft-hearted, participating
B	Dull, less intelligent	•										More intelligent, bright
C	Emotionally immature and unstable								•			Emotionally mature, stable, realistic
D	Deliberate, stodgy, placid				•							Unrestrained, nervous
E	Obedient, mild, dependent					•						Assertive aggressive, rebellious
F	Sober, silent, serious							•				Happy-go-lucky, enthusiastic
G	Casual, quitting, undependable				•							Conscientious, persevering
H	Timid, threat-sensitive, shy		•									Venturesome, thick-skinned
I	Practical, tough-minded					•						Tender-minded, sensitive, protected
J	Vigorous, goes readily with group						•					Individualistic, obstructive, reflective
O	Secure, resilient, confident						•					Discouraged, self-reproaching
Q2	Group follower, values social approval					•						Makes own decisions, resourceful
Q3	Careless, ignores standards			•								Self-controlled, self-respecting
Q4	Relaxed, composed							•				Tense, driven, irritable

Each of the above-mentioned factors is represented by a bi-polar continuum of which the two extreme poles are described on the left-hand pole (which represents a standard score of 1 to 4) and the right-hand pole (which represents a standard score of 7 to 10). According to Van Breda (2006:150) one should guard against the assumption that the right hand 'high' pole is 'good' in some psychological sense or other and that the left-hand 'low' pole is 'bad'. Depending on which performances and purposes are considered, sometimes the left and sometimes the right-hand pole may be advantages. A brief discussion of the significantly high and low primary factors follows:

Significant high scores (standard sten scores 8,9,10)

Factor C – Emotional stability (8): A significant high score for this factor may indicate that Driekus may be regarded as someone who is emotionally stable, mature, calm, responsible, constant in interests and avoids difficulties.

Significant low scores (standard sten scores 1,2 and 3)

Factor B - Concreteness (1): This low score may reflect a low mental capacity, coupled with an inability to deduce relations and correlates.

Factor H - Shyness (2): This low score may indicate that Driekus is withdrawn, emotionally weary, feels threatened easily and is easily embittered. It may also indicate that Driekus has limited interests and that he is careful and cautious and sees danger quickly.

Factor Q3 – Low self-sentiment integration (3): A low score on this factor may be indicative of laxity and poor self-sentiment integration. It could also indicate that Driekus tends to follow his own urges and that he is generally careless as far as social rules are concerned. This correlates with Driekus' assertion during the interview that he does not complete his class work independently, as is expected of him, during his Life Orientation classes, but asks his friends for help with the work. He also puts minimal effort into the completion of his Life Orientation homework and prefers to get the correct answers from his teacher when the homework is reviewed.

The following second order factors were calculated:

- Anxiety
- Extraversion

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Anxiety} &= \frac{(11-C) + D + (11-G) + (11-H) + O + (11-Q3) + Q4}{7} \\
 &= \frac{3 + 4 + 7 + 9 + 6 + 8 + 7}{7} \\
 &= \frac{44}{7} \\
 &= 6.3
 \end{aligned}$$

The Second Order Factor score of 6.3 for anxiety that was obtained in the HSPQ is considered an average score and may indicate that Driekus experiences normal levels of anxiety.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Extraversion} &= \frac{A + F + H + (11-J) + (11-Q2)}{5} \\
 &= \frac{7 + 7 + 2 + (11-6) + (11-5)}{5} \\
 &= \frac{27}{5} \\
 &= 5.4
 \end{aligned}$$

The second order factor score of 5.4 for Extraversion that was obtained in the HSPQ is considered an average score, which may indicate that Driekus cannot be considered to be either an extroverted or an introverted person.

#### ■ Brief summary of the High School Personality Questionnaire

Considering Driekus' overall scores obtained in the HSPQ, it may be deduced that he is a sensitive, emotionally stable, mature, calm and responsible young man who is constant in his interests and tends to avoid difficulties. He may also present as withdrawn and emotionally wary and may display laxity, poor self-sentiment integration

and a general carelessness as far as social rules are concerned. A conflict can thus be noted in that Driekus can be considered a mature and responsible young man, but that he also displays laxity and carelessness. Is it possible that Driekus only displays the traits of maturity and responsibility in contexts where he feels comfortable and confident, such as his responsibility in ensuring that his sports bags are packed daily and that he is on time for practice sessions? However, he is lax and careless in contexts that he does not enjoy and feels uncomfortable with, such as his careless attitude towards his Life Orientation classes and homework.

(iii) The Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank

This test was administered on 25 August 2008 at Driekus' home. Driekus was presented with forty incomplete sentences, which he was instructed to complete by filling in the initial idea which came to mind. The first part of all the sentences appeared in normal letters, while Driekus' responses were written in italics. On completion of the tests, the responses were read to obtain a global impression regarding Driekus' life world. The test was studied again while notes were made of sentences that might have a bearing on one other and centre on a specific theme. According to the discussion in 4.2.3.3, no pre-determined categories exist in which completed stems can be grouped; instead the RISB has been devised in such a manner that the respondents choose their own categories by way of their responses. In this sense it is thus possible for respondents to avoid difficult or threatening topics. As discussed in 4.2.3.3, each statement was considered individually and was assigned a score between 0 and 6 according to the guidelines of Rotter (in Greene & Weiner 2008:523) depending on whether the statement represented a conflict response, a neutral response or a positive response. The cumulation of the scores for the individual items was then calculated and the level of adjustment was determined. The score assigned to each item is indicated next to the completed sentence. Responses were grouped according to the themes they centred on and short interpretive summary is given for each theme expressed.

A total of twenty-two positive responses, thirteen negative responses and three neutral responses were expressed. Two items were left blank. The total adjustment score was calculated at 74 which indicates a good level of emotional adjustment.

The following themes were expressed:

i. Attitude towards sports:

1. I like *to play tennis* (score = 1)
3. I want to know *what it feels like to win Wimbledon* (score = 1)
13. My greatest fear *is that something happens and I can't play tennis anymore* (score = 6)
16. Sports *is the best thing in the world* (score = 0)
17. When *I was a child I loved to ride my bike* (score = 1)
18. My nerves *start to work when I lose a game in tennis* (score = 4)
23. My mind *tells me I can be good in tennis* (score = 1)
30. I hate *soccer* (score = 5)
34. I wish *I could be the best tennis player* (score = 0)

*Interpretive summary:* Driekus truly enjoys tennis and cycling from a young age. He is very eager to achieve in tennis and places great pressure on himself to do so. It seems that Driekus' identification with tennis is so strong that he lives in fear that something might happen to him which will prevent his playing tennis in future. Although Driekus is very active, he does not enjoy all types of sport.

ii. Attitude towards friends:

2. The happiest time *will be with my friends* (score = 1)
6. At bedtime *I always go on Mixit* (score = 3)
8. The best *thing in life is friends* (score = 0)
15. I can't *make a day without my phone* (score = 4)
25. I need *more good friends* (score = 5)
27. I am best when *I am with my friends* (score = 1)
29. What pains me *is friends that lie to me* (score = 6)
37. I *like to be with my friends* (score = 2)

*Interpretive summary:* Friendship is very important to Driekus. He places a high value on trust in his relationships with his friends and he has experienced feelings of betrayal in his social relations. Driekus would like to have more close friendships than he has currently.



iii. Attitude towards school:

14. In school *I learn to read and write* (score = 4)

20. I suffer *when I don't do homework* (score = 4)

21. I failed *maths* (score = 5)

*Interpretive summary:* Driekus does not place a high value on his school work and he is aware that he does not do well in certain subjects. This can be linked to Driekus' admission during the interview that he works academically just to stay out of trouble (please refer to Annexure A in this regard).

iv. Attitude towards home:

4. Back home *I feel relaxed* (score = 1)

31. This place *is big and beautiful* (score = 1)

*Interpretive summary:* Driekus is very fond of his home and feels comfortable there.

v. Driekus' self-esteem:

7. Men *are smart* (score = 2)

12. I feel *excellent* (score = 0)

19. Other people *say they like me for who I am* (score = 2)

*Interpretive summary:* Driekus has a high self-esteem, but is very aware of how others perceive him. He identifies with men in general and believes that men are intelligent.

vi. Attitude towards mother:

11. A mother *is the most important thing in a child's life* (score = 0)

*Interpretive summary:* Driekus has a very close relationship with his mother.

vii. Attitude towards father:

35. My father *is a great chef* (score = 1)

*Interpretive summary:* Driekus is proud of certain of father's achievements.

viii. Attitude towards parents:

32. I am very *glad I have both of my parents left* (score = 2)

*Interpretive summary:* Driekus is grateful for the fact that both of his parents are available to him.

ix. Attitude towards women:

40. Most women *are very nice* (score = 1)

*Interpretive summary:* Driekus displays a positive attitude towards women.

x. Attitude towards men:

7. Men *are smart* (score = 2)

*Interpretive summary:* This statement suggests that Driekus believes men are intelligent and it seems that he identifies with men.

#### ■ Brief summary of the Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank

On the basis of the responses obtained from the Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank, the following concluding deductions can be made:

Driekus is very motivated and dedicated to his sporting activities, but places pressure on himself to achieve in this area. Driekus' identification with tennis is so strong that he lives in fear that something might happen to him which prevent playing tennis in future. He shows little motivation and dedication towards his schoolwork. Driekus is aware of some of his academic shortcomings and works just to stay out of trouble. Friendship is very important to Driekus. He places a high value on trust in his relationships with his friends and he has experienced feelings of betrayal in his social relations. Driekus would like to have more close friendships than he has currently. He has a close relationship with his mother and his family is also very important to him. Driekus is proud of his father's achievements, but does not have a close relationship with him. He is grateful for the fact that both of his parents are available to him. Driekus tends to be self-conscious. He believes that men are intelligent and identifies with men in general.

#### ■ Synthesis and conclusion of the case study: Driekus

Driekus is a 16 year-old learner who lives in a residential area near Pretoria. Based on the criteria set out in chapter four, Driekus was selected through the use of a purposive sampling method.

For the purpose of the case study, Driekus was interviewed on 25 August 2008. The data obtained from the interview has been organised into different categories and grouped into the ecological-systems within which they function, as discussed in 5.2.1.1. Direct quotations were presented verbatim, without any corrections, so as to maintain a

clear reflection of the true essence of Driekus' experiential world and his different levels of functioning. The quotations have been translated from Afrikaans into English.

It emerged from the interview that Driekus was affected a great deal by his father's disclosure of his homosexuality. He reports feelings of anger and animosity towards his father and underwent a process of coming to terms with his father's sexual orientation before he finally arrived at an acceptance of it. Yet, despite Driekus' strong negative emotions towards his father, he has always yearned for a closer relationship with him. Driekus still identifies with men in general, viewing them in a positive light despite his fathers' unavailability to him for a large part of his childhood years. Driekus eventually made a conscious decision to accept his father's homosexuality and is currently working very hard at trying to rebuild his relationship with his father.

Driekus seems unperturbed by the opinions of people who come and go in this life, but he is concerned about what people close to him think. This could mean that he may live a more or less isolated life, never being completely sure whether he can allow people too close. He has thus not completely established a view of the world as a safe place and may find it difficult to trust others. According to the HSPQ, Driekus presents as withdrawn and emotionally wary. In this sense, Driekus' sporting activities may be viewed as a way for him to maintain relationships with others governed by clear-cut rules. However, these relationships are kept at some distance: in other words, relationships that do not allow for the violation of trust.

Driekus appears to display traits of maturity and responsibility in those areas where he feels comfortable and confident; he displays carelessness and avoidance in areas where he feels less confident. This may be indicative of a low self-esteem, an aspect which is further affected by his fear of others' rejection of him based on his father's homosexuality.

### 5.2.1.2 Case study 2: Michelle

#### (a) Biographical information

Name : Michelle (pseudonym)  
 Gender : Female  
 Age : 18 years  
 Home language : Afrikaans

#### (b) Interpretation of assessment media

##### (i) Interview

I conducted the interview with Michelle 24 October 2008 in her home in Pretoria. A full transcription of the interview is in the safe keeping of the researcher and is available for reference if needed. It should be noted that the interview has been translated from Afrikaans to English.

Michelle is a very attractive young woman. She is tall and slender and she would be well suited to a modelling environment. Michelle seems to take great pride in her appearance and was very well groomed. She also appears to be very confident. She makes eye contact easily and she answered most questions without hesitation. Michelle was upbeat and polite throughout the interview anticipating all of my questions with a friendly smile.

##### ■ Family and environmental background

Michelle is the elder of two children. Michelle's parents divorced when she was a young girl and she lives with her mother and her fifteen year old sister in a residential area near Pretoria. Michelle reports that she has a good relationship with her mother and her sister.

Michelle's father is in a long term homosexual relationship and lives in Cape Town with his partner, where Michelle and her sister visit him during school holidays. According to Michelle, she has a very good relationship with her father and with his partner and she

enjoys spending time with them. Michelle's sister and father have a strained relationship and Michelle wishes that they would get along better.

Although divorced, Michelle's parents get along very well. The family seem to be experiencing some financial difficulties of which Michelle is very aware. She admires her parents' ability to always provide for her and her sister and she understands that it was possibly quite difficult for them at times. Michelle admires the fact that her parents never complain about not having money and always tried to give herself and her sister the best they had to offer.

#### ■ Intellectual image

Michelle's ability to project herself into the future and make realistic plans regarding her current financial situation and her intended studies is indicative of her abilities to think both logically and abstractly and suggests that she has attained the formal operational stage of cognitive development. This is further supported by Michelle's statement that she achieved high marks in all of her school subjects, including mathematics.

*I worked quite hard and I did quite well in all of my subjects*

“Ek het redelik hard gewerk en ek het nogal goed gedoen in al my vakke.”

#### ■ Emotional image

Michelle comes across as a confident and emotionally well-adjusted person. She had a difficult time accepting her father's sexual orientation, but she reports that these feelings only lasted for about a year or so.

*For about a year it really bothered me.*

“Vir seker so 'n jaar het dit my baie gepla”.

She reports being very upset when her father disclosed to her that he was gay and said that she was very worried about other people's reactions to this news.

*At first I just stared at him and then I burst into tears. I was afraid for what people would say about me and I thought that they would gossip about it.*

“Ek het hom eers net aangestaar en toe het ek begin huil. Ek was bang vir wat mense oor my gaan se en ek het gedink hulle gaan daaroor skinder.”

But Michelle reports that she now gets along very well with all the members of her family and that there is a great deal of trust between herself and her father. She feels that she can confide in him and that he really listens to what she has to say.

*We trust each other a lot and I feel I can be very honest with him and he actually listens to me.*

“Ons vertrou mekaar baie en ek voel ek kan baie eerlik met hom wees en hy luister eintlik na my.”

Michelle's apparent ability to reflect on her own thoughts could indicate that she has a well-developed system of emotional self-regulation. This ability to regulate her own emotions will help Michelle to feel that she is in control of her emotional experience. According to Berk (2003:409), this sense of emotional self-efficacy fosters a favourable self-image and an optimistic outlook on life for adolescents, which will further assist them in dealing with emotional challenges.

Michelle does not display any signs of self-consciousness in her speech or in her non-verbal behaviour. Michelle's realisation that her parents made many sacrifices to provide for her and her sister suggests that Michelle has developed a sense of empathy. Hoffman (in Berk 2003:407) states that this ability to empathise with the poor, oppressed and sick is the most mature form of empathy as it requires an advanced form of perspective taking in which the adolescent understands that people lead continuous emotional lives beyond the current situation (Berk 2003:407). Adolescents' sense of empathy continues to increase as their emotional understanding improves (Berk 2003:409).

### ■ Physical image

Michelle is a very active young girl and she goes to a great deal of effort to ensure that she looks attractive. She plays netball and goes to gym occasionally to keep fit.

Michelle is very well groomed.

Michelle enjoys modelling as a hobby. She has competed in several modelling competitions and takes part in various fashion shows. She describes these competitions as very tough and she puts some pressure on herself to remain fit and slender. But she still appears to have a realistic view of her body and admits that she does not need to lose too much weight before competing in further modelling competitions. She enjoys being well groomed and getting dressed up for the fashion shows. However, she usually does not go through the same amount of effort with her physical appearance when she is just relaxing at home.

*... most of the time I just sit around at home in my jeans without make-up. It's a nice change to be so dressed up. I like it.*

“...meeste van die tyd sit ek net by die huis rond in jeans en sonder grimering. Dis ‘n lekker verskil om so opgedress te wees. Ek hou daarvan”.

### ■ Social and personality development

Michelle describes herself as an outgoing person that likes to have fun. She enjoys socialising with her friends and gets on very well with people that she knows. She admits to being somewhat reserved around people that she does not know and has to move outside of her comfort zone in an effort to get to know people.

*If it's people that I don't know I'm usually rather quiet around them until I move out of my comfort zone and get to know them. Then I usually enjoy their company.*

“As dit nuwe mense is wat ek nie ken nie is ek gewoonlik redelik stil om hulle totdat ek half uit my comfort zone uit beweeg en hulle leer ken. Dan kuier ek gewoonlik lekker.”

According to Michelle all of her friends have accepted the fact that her father is gay. She valued her best friend's support throughout the process of her own acceptance of her father's homosexuality. She expressed appreciation that her friend left it to Michelle to tell others and did not tell anyone herself. She feels that this greatly added to the trust in their relationship.

*I told my best friend right from the start, because we were already friends then, and she supported me a lot. She never actually told people, she just kept quiet about it until I said something. That was nice for me. I felt I could trust her.*

“Ek het my beste vriendin reg van die begin af vertel, want ek en sy was toe al vriende, en sy het my baie ondersteun. En sy het nooit eintlik vir mense vertel nie, sy het nou maar stilgebly daarvoor totdat ek iets gese het. Dit was vir my nice. Ek het gevoel ek kon haar vertrou.”

It is interesting to note, however, that Michelle made use of the word “eintlik” (actually) when she spoke about her friend's silence on the topic of her fathers' homosexuality when in conversation with others. This seems to suggest occasions where Michelle's friend had disclosed her father's homosexuality to others. How would this have affected the trust in their relationship in particular and Michelle's perception of trust in her social relationships in general?

Michelle was initially very worried about negative societal reactions to her fathers' coming out. She reports worrying about others' reactions and of gossiping after her father's disclosure. But she feels that the more she spoke about her father's homosexuality to others, the less important the issue became for her.

*The more I told people the less of an issue it became for me.*



“Hoe meer ek vir mense vertel het daarvan hoe minder van ‘n issue het dit vir my geword”.

Michelle feels that people should be accepted despite their differences and is very aware of the gender stereotypes that dominate in general society. She finds many heterosexual men to be aggressive, but is very careful not to stereotype all heterosexual men as such.

*I know not all straight guys are like that, but many of them can become quite aggressive.*

“Ek weet nie alle straight ouens is so nie, maar baie van hulle kan nogal erg aggressief raak”.

Michelle thus appears to be in the identity achieved identity status as she has explored and committed herself to self-chosen values and goals of acceptance, open-mindedness and a critical consideration of societal stereotypes. Michelle’s claim that she has accepted her father as he is and does not care about societal reactions to him suggests that she has moved towards a more mature personal identity.

*If people want to reproach me because my father is gay that is really their problem. But I am open-minded and it doesn’t bother me. My father is my father.*

“As mense my wil verwyt omdat my pa gay is is dit regtig hulle probleem. Maar ek is baie open-minded en dit pla my nie. My pa is my pa.”

Michelle is currently involved in a heterosexual relationship with a young man of about the same age. They, like most other young couples have their “ups and downs”, but that they generally get along very well. She admits, however, that she was initially reluctant to introduce new boyfriends to her father because she feared their reactions. She did not talk to them about her father’s homosexuality unless it was necessary.

*I have to say, when I started getting older and boyfriends became an option it bothered me that my father was gay and it was difficult for me to introduce them to my father. I was afraid of what they might think and I didn't really talk about it unless it was necessary.*

“Ek moet sê, toe ek begin ouer word en boyfriends 'n opsie word het dit my begin pla dat my gay is en dit was vir my moeilik om hulle aan my pa voor te stel. Ek was bang vir wat hulle sou dink en ek het nie sommer daarvoor gepraat tensy dit nodig was nie.”

She seems very pleased that her current boyfriend gets along well with her father and his partner and that they enjoy spending time together.

*My boyfriend gets along very well with my dad and his friend ... when we are in Cape Town, we often go out with them and we enjoy it ...*

“My ou kom baie goed oor die weg met my pa en sy vriend ... as ons in Kaapstad is, dan gaan ons baie saam met hulle uit en ons hou nogal daarvan ...”

It is very important to Michelle to be financially independent one day.

Michelle appears to have an adequate and realistic self-concept, but seems to put some pressure on herself to remain slender with a view to competing in modelling competitions. She describes the competitions as tough and has to look her absolute best for these competitions.

#### ■ Conative image

Michelle presents as a very ambitious young woman. She is eager to achieve in all the different aspects of her life and reports working hard in school to achieve good marks in all her subjects. It is important to her to become a successful, independent business woman in the future. She was very motivated about saving in the following year so that she can study to beauty therapy in future.

- Moral image

Michelle displays empathy with her parents' struggle to provide for her and her sister and to give them the best possible.

She describes compromising with her father about going out in the evenings in order to arrive at a mutually suitable arrangement. Michelle is able to view the situation from her father's perspective and she tries to understand his motives.

*Look, my father and I also fight sometimes when he doesn't want me to go out at night, but I understand that he is just worried. Usually we make an arrangement that suits both of us.*

"Kyk, ek en my pa baklei ook partykeer as hy nie wil he dat ek in die aand mag uitgaan nie, maar ek verstaan hy is maar net bekommerd. Gewoonlik maak ons maar 'n reëling wat ons altwee pas."

She also realises that there is some mutuality in her relationship with her father. She feels that her father tries hard to understand her and to accept her unconditionally because he appreciates her unconditional acceptance of him and his partner unconditionally.

*I think he appreciates the fact that I accepted him and his friend just as they are and that's why he tries really hard to understand me as well and to accept me just as I am.*

"Ek dink hy waardeer eintlik die feit dat ek hom en sy vriend aanvaar het net soos hulle is en daarom probeer hy regtig hard om my ook te verstaan en te ervaar net soos wat ek is."

- Brief summary of the interview

It appears that Michelle was initially affected negatively by her father's disclosure, but that the support she received from many of her part systems, such as her friends and

her family, her fathers' honesty and willingness to talk about his homosexuality and the sound relationship between Michelle's parents, has helped Michelle to accept her father and his homosexual partner.

Michelle's intra-psychic part systems such as her developing sense of empathy, her positive and realistic self-concept, her careful and critical consideration of stereotypes, her development of a mature identity, her apparent efforts to establish personal values and goal and her positive outlook on the future have further contributed to her development into a well-adjusted young lady.

(ii) High School Personality Questionnaire

I administered the High School Personality Questionnaire to Michelle on 24 October 2008 at her home. The results are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Scores obtained in the HSPQ

FACTOR	Low score description	Standard sten score (STEN)										High score description
		Average										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
A	Critical, reserved, cool					•						Warm, soft-hearted, participating
B	Dull, less intelligent									•		More intelligent, bright
C	Emotionally immature and unstable						•					Emotionally mature, stable, realistic
D	Deliberate, stodgy, placid					•						Unrestrained, nervous
E	Obedient, mild, dependent								•			Assertive aggressive, rebellious
F	Sober, silent, serious							•				Happy-go-lucky, enthusiastic
G	Casual, quitting, undependable				•							Conscientious, persevering
H	Timid, threat-sensitive, shy						•					Venturesome, thick-skinned
I	Practical, tough-minded					•						Tender-minded, sensitive, protected
J	Vigorous, goes readily with group									•		Individualistic, obstructive, reflective
O	Secure, resilient, confident						•					Discouraged, self-reproaching
Q2	Group follower, values social approval							•				Makes own decisions, resourceful
Q3	Careless, ignores standards						•					Self-controlled, self-respecting
Q4	Relaxed, composed				•							Tense, driven, irritable

Each of the above-mentioned factors is represented by a bi-polar continuum of which the two extreme poles are described on the left-hand pole (which represents a standard score of 1 to 4) and the right-hand pole (which represents a standard score of 7 to 10). According to Van Breda (2006:150), one should guard against the assumption that the

right hand 'high' pole is 'good' in some psychological sense or other and that the left-hand 'low' pole is 'bad'. Depending on which performances and purposes are considered, sometimes the left and sometimes the right-hand pole may be advantages.

A brief discussion of the significantly high and low primary factors follows:

Significant high scores (standard sten scores 8,9,10)

Factor B – Abstract thinking (9) :

This score indicates that Michelle has high mental capacity, displays insight, learns quickly and is intellectually adaptable.

Factor E - Dominance (8) :

This score tends to indicate that Michelle is self-important, aggressive, competitive, stubborn, self-assured, independent and strict. It could also mean that she could be serious and unconventional and that she has a desire to be admired. This desire to be admired may possibly be a big motivating factor in her eagerness to compete in modelling competitions and to take part in fashion shows

Factor J – Careful individualism (9) :

According to this score Michelle tends to be reflective, inwardly controlled, wary and narrow minded. This trait could be helpful in that it may lessen Michelle's dependence on others' approval. This is supported by Michelle's assertion that others' reproach based on her fathers' lifestyle does not bother her.

The following second order factors were calculated:

- Anxiety
- Extraversion

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Anxiety} &= \frac{(11-C) + D + (11-G) + (11-H) + O + (11-Q3) + Q4}{7} \\
 &= \frac{(11-6) + 5 + (11-4) + (11-6) + 6 + (11-6) + 4}{7} \\
 &= \frac{37}{7} \\
 &= 5.3
 \end{aligned}$$

The Second Order Factor score of 5.3 for anxiety that was obtained in the HSPQ is considered an average score and may indicate that Michelle experiences average levels of anxiety.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Extraversion} &= \frac{A + F + H + (11-J) + (11-Q2)}{5} \\
 &= \frac{5 + 7 + 6 + (11-9) + (11-7)}{5} \\
 &= \frac{24}{5} \\
 &= 4.8
 \end{aligned}$$

The second order factor score of 4.8 for Extraversion that was obtained in the HSPQ is considered an average score, which may indicate that Michelle is neither an extroverted nor an introverted person.

#### ■ Brief summary of the High School Personality Questionnaire

Considering Michelle's overall scores obtained in the HSPQ, it may be deduced that she has a high mental capacity, displays insight into situations and learns quickly. It can also be deduced that she is competitive, stubborn, self-assured, independent and that she wants to be admired by others. Furthermore, her scores indicate that she is reflective, inwardly controlled, wary and narrow minded. There seems to be a discrepancy in Michelle's acceptance of her fathers' homosexuality on the one hand and her apparent narrow-mindedness, according to the HSPQ, on the other. Yet, this might be understood by Michelle's assertion that others' reproach based on her fathers' lifestyle does not bother her as it may assist in lessening Michelle's dependence on other's approval.

## (iii) The Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank

This test was administered on 24 October 2008 at Michelle's home. Michelle was presented with forty incomplete sentences and was instructed to complete them by filling in the initial idea which came to mind. The first part of all the sentences appeared in normal letters, while Michelle's responses were written in italics. On completion of the tests, the responses were read to obtain a global impression regarding Michelle's life world. The test was studied again while notes were made of sentences that might have a bearing on each other and that seem to centre on a specific theme. According to the discussion in 4.2.3.3, no pre-determined categories exist in which completed stems can be grouped; instead the RISB has been devised in such a manner that the respondents choose their own categories, so to say, by way of their responses. In this sense it is thus possible for respondents to avoid difficult or threatening topics. As discussed in 4.2.3.3 each statement was considered individually and was assigned a score between 0 and 6 according to the guidelines of Rotter (in Greene & Weiner 2008:523) depending on whether the statement represented a conflict response, a neutral response or a positive response. The cumulation of the scores for the individual items were calculated and the level of adjustment was determined. The score assigned to each item is indicated next to the completed sentence. Responses were grouped according to the themes they centred on and a short interpretive summary was given for each theme expressed.

A total of eighteen positive responses, fourteen negative responses and five neutral responses were expressed. Three items were left blank. The total adjustment score was calculated at 108 which indicates a good level of emotional adjustment.

The following themes were expressed:

## i. Personality development

1. I like *swimming, modelling, camping, hanging out with my friends* (score = 1)
2. The happiest time *of my life is right now because I get to make my own decisions, even if they are wrong I can learn from them* (score = 0)
12. I feel *happy* (score = 0)
32. I am very *sociable and outgoing* (score = 2)

*Interpretive summary:* Michelle is a happy, active and sociable young women and it is very important to her to be independent.



## iv. Attitude towards friends:

1. I like *swimming, modelling, camping, hanging out with my friends* (score = 1)

17. When I was a child *I loved sweets and I had lots of friends* (score = 2)

*Interpretive summary:* Michelle enjoys spending time with her friends and they are very important to her.

## iii. Family relationships:

34. I wish *my father and sister could get on better* (score =5)

*Interpretive summary:* Michelle is affected by the strained relationship between her father and her sister.

## iv. Attitude towards her mother:

11. A mother *is a gentle, loving person.* (score = 0)

*Interpretive summary:* Michelle has a good relationship with her mother

## v. Father:

35. My father *is a sweet, loving man, but he can be strict sometimes* (score = 5)

*Interpretive summary:* Michelle has a good relationship with her father, but feels that he can be strict.

## vi. Attitude towards home:

4. Back home *I enjoy just chilling on the couch in front of the TV* (score = 1)

31. This place *is comfortable and cosy* (score = 1)

*Interpretive summary:* Michelle enjoys just relaxing at home and she feels comfortable there.

## vii. Attitude towards school:

14. I school *I worked quite hard* (score = 2)

*Interpretive summary:* Michelle has a positive attitude towards school.

## viii. Attitude towards sports:

16. Sports *is a great way to keep fit and get rid of stress* (score = 1)

*Interpretive summary:* Michelle has a positive attitude towards sport.

ix. Attitude towards the future:

3. I want to know *whether I will be a successful business woman* (score = 2)

24. The future *always arrives quicker than you think* (score = 4)

26. Marriage *is something I would love to have one day* (score = 2)

37. I *want to become a beauty therapist* (score = 2)

*Interpretive summary:* Michelle is positive about her future but is anxious about achieving her goals in time.

x. Attitude towards finances:

23. My mind *is a little stressed out about finances* (score = 4)

25. I *need to save money next year* (score = 4)

*Interpretive summary:* Michelle worries about her family's financial circumstances and realises that she will have to save money to help realise her dreams.

xi. Attitude towards men:

7. Men *are more straight forward than women* (score = 4)

*Interpretive summary:* This sentence seems to imply that Michelle finds women to be less open than men.

xii. Attitude towards women:

40. Most women *are nice, but some think they are better than others* (score = 4)

*Interpretive summary:* Michelle has a positive attitude towards women in general, but feels that some women can be snobbish.

xiii. Attitude towards other people:

9. What annoys me *is when people talk about you behind your back* (score = 5)

10. People *can be very selfish sometimes* (score = 5)

29. What pains me *is when people are two-faced* (score = 5)

*Interpretive summary:* Michelle finds some people untrustworthy and selfish at times and she is hurt by this. It is possible that Michelle struggles about the fact that although people may seem friendly, they might talk about her father in her absence.

#### ■ Brief summary of the Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank

On the basis of the responses obtained from the Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank, the following concluding deductions can be made:

Michelle is a very sociable young woman and her friends are important to her. She has a good relationship with both of her parents, but views her father as the disciplinarian. Michelle is affected by the strained relationship between her father and her sister. She displays a generally positive outlook on life and is excited about her future, but anxious about achieving her intended goals in time. Michelle is very aware of her family's current financial difficulties. Michelle experiences some women as false, untruthful and snobbish. Michelle has been hurt by others' untrustworthy and selfish behaviour in the past and is wary of being hurt by similar behaviour again.

#### ■ Synthesis and conclusion of the case study: Michelle

Michelle is an 18 year old learner who lives in a residential area near Pretoria. Based on the criteria set out in chapter four, Michelle was selected through the use of a purposive sampling method.

For the purpose of the case study Michelle was interviewed on 24 October 2008.

The data obtained from the interview has been organised into different categories and grouped into the ecological-systems within which they function, as discussed in 5.2.1.2. Direct quotations were presented verbatim, without any corrections, so as to maintain a clear reflection of the true essence of Michelle's experiential world and her different levels of functioning.

The interview indicated that Michelle's initial reaction to her father's disclosure of his homosexuality was shock and despair. She feared other's reactions to her based on the fact that her father is gay and she placed a very high value on her best friend's non-disclosure of this to others. Michelle appears to have worked through the majority of these problems and reached a complete acceptance of her father's situation. Due in part to her development of abstract thinking abilities and a sense of empathy, Michelle appears to have integrated her father's homosexuality into a mature identity. Yet, she still seems to hold a view of others as untrustworthy and presents as emotionally wary.

Michelle reports being reserved with people that she does not know and has to make a conscious effort to move out of her so-called comfort zone in order to meet new people.

Although Michelle presents as somewhat undependable, she seems to have assumed some responsibility for alleviating her parents' current financial difficulties and in attempting to better her sisters' relationship with their father. This, along with Michelle's dedication to her goal of studying in the future, suggests that she is a very responsible young lady.

### 5.2.1.3 Case study : Yolandi

#### (a) Biographical information

Name : Yolandi (pseudonym)  
Gender : Female  
Age : 18 years  
Home language : Afrikaans

#### (b) Interpretation of assessment media

##### (i) Interview

I conducted the interview with Yolandi on 25 August 2008 in her home in Pretoria. A full transcription of the interview is in the safe keeping of the researcher and is available for reference if needed. It should be noted that the interview was translated from Afrikaans to English.

Yolandi presents as a talkative, lively young woman. She appeared to have a very keen fashion sense and wears her hair in a modern short style. She has a very animated way of speaking and telling stories with frequent gestures and a variety of facial expressions. She is slightly overweight, but dresses very well for her body type and has a warm and inviting manner. She also laughed and smiled frequently throughout the interview and maintained eye contact easily. Yolandi spoke very easily throughout the interview and seemed to have used the interview as an opportunity to vent certain feelings and to reflect on her relationship with her father and her acceptance of his homosexuality.

##### ■ Family and environmental background

Yolandi is the elder of two children. She lives with her mother and her sister in a residential area near Pretoria. According to Yolandi she has a very good relationship with her mother and describes her mother as her best friend. She feels that she can talk openly to her mother and says that even though they have occasional arguments, they usually resolve these issues quite easily. Yolandi indicated that she gets on well with her brother although he was cheeky and irritating at times.

Yolandi's parents divorced when she was a young girl and her father has been living as a gay man for over a decade. After the divorce Yolandi's father moved around and had abused drugs until the beginning of last year when he received counselling at a drug rehabilitation centre. Yolandi describes her relationship with her father as close, but admits a time when they did not get on very well. She described this time as a dark, dirty, disgusting time in her father's life. Yolandi feels that she is becoming more comfortable with her father as she gets older and understands many things better now that she is starting to think "more like an adult".

Yolandi was in grade one at the time of her parents' divorce and she describes how she hated her first years of school largely as a result of the effect of the divorce on her emotional state at the time. Her continual weeping irritated her teachers and they eventually lost all patience with her.

Yolandi recently experienced the death of one of her best friends through a violent, seemingly senseless crime and she is still grieving and trying to make sense of all that happened.

#### ■ Intellectual image

Yolandi feels that there has been a definite shift in the way she used to think as a teenager and the way she now thinks as a young adult.

*I will say now for the first time I'm really beginning ... I won't say growing up, but really thinking like a grown up instead of a teenager.*

"Ek sal sê nou vir die eerste keer begin ek regtig .. ek sal nie sê groot word nie, maar regtig soos 'n groot mens begin dink in plaas van 'n tiener".

Her parents' divorce when Yolandi was in grade one affected her very negatively. As a result of her emotional state, Yolandi did not enjoy school. She reported feeling very unhappy and was always crying in class.

*I hated going to school. I didn't enjoy it at all. I cried all the time in the class.*

“Ek het dit gehaat om skool toe te gaan. Ek het niks daarvan gehou nie. Ek het die heelyd gehuil in die klas.”

She feels that her negative experience during her first years at school and her father's disclosure of his homosexuality when she was in grade four were important factors in her dislike of primary school. This could have negatively affected her ability to learn at that stage and appears to have had a lasting effect on Yolandi's scholastic performance. Yolandi herself admits that she does not enjoy learning:

*I don't like learning.*

“Ek hou nie van leer nie”.

Yolandi had a more positive experience in high school. However, she is not strong academically and barely passed all her subjects. She enjoyed the social aspects of school and described her matric year as a lot of fun.

Yolandi enjoyed Drama as well as Tourism and said that she found it easy to study for Tourism because she found the content interesting. This suggests that she found her other subjects boring which made studying them difficult.

*... tourism was interesting for me to study ... I enjoyed studying it. The others weren't so nice.*

“ ... toerisme was vir my interresant om te leer ... dit was vir my lekker om dit te leer. Die ander was nie so lekker nie.”

Yolandi describes herself as a fun-loving, but responsible person who considers things before doing them, implying a developing sense of responsibility as she matures.

*I'm a very fun person ... but I'll also first think before I do something.*

“Ek's 'n baie fun persoon ... maar ek sal ook eers dink voordat ek iets doen.”

This ability to hypothesise about the possible consequences of her behaviour suggests that Yolandi has achieved some of the components of formal operational thought.

■ Emotional image

Yolandi initially reported feeling a little stressed about the interview and indicated that she was nervous talking to someone in the mental health profession as she had never spoken to a psychologist before. She said that she was expected to just deal with her emotions throughout her parents' divorce and her fathers' disclosure of his homosexuality. According to Yolandi, she coped with these occurrences by taking each day as it came and by talking to her mother about her thoughts and feelings. This suggests that Yolandi employed internal strategies to manage her emotions.

According to Yolandi, her father's homosexuality bothered her until she was in about grade seven. She reports having been very angry with her father at his disclosure and because he did not talk openly about it to herself and her brother. Yolandi was disappointed when she realised that her father was abusing drugs. She felt neglected by him when he slept all day after a night out.

*... when I realised that my father was using drugs I was very disappointed ... it sort of felt as if he was neglecting us.*

"... toe ek besef my pa gebruik dwelms was ek baie teleurgesteld ...dit het soortvan gevoel asof hy ons verwaarloos het".

Yolandi felt that her father tried to bribe herself and her brother with gifts so that he could go out at night. She remembers feeling very scared at night when she woke up and realised that their father and his partner had left them home alone.

*And then some nights he would also ... like when we visited him I would wake up and then there's no one there. Then we were alone. Then I was really very scared.*

"En dan party aande sou hy ook ... soos as ons by hom was het ek wakker geword dan's niemand daar nie. Dan's ons alleen. Dan was ek regtig baie bang"



Yolandi does not display any signs of self-conscious behaviour. She displays empathy in her efforts to understand her father's motivations in entering a heterosexual marriage, despite his homosexual urges.

Yolandi admits that she misses the idea of having a perfect family and would have liked greater paternal involvement in her life.

Yolandi has ambiguous feelings regarding societal reactions to her father's sexual orientation. On one hand, she does not care what others say about gay people and their reactions do not bother her; on the other, she describes others' negative reactions to homosexuals as a "trigger mechanism". In response, she will leave a conversation where people make derogatory remarks or jokes about homosexual persons.

Yolandi feels that her father's homosexuality has had an effect on her life: it has made her a stronger person. She affirms that she is proud to say that her father is gay.

*... I can proudly say that my father's gay.*

"... ek kan soos proud sê my pa's gay."

However, she will not summarily announce to others that her father is gay and appears relieved that her father does not look obviously gay.

*I won't just go and announce that my father's gay ... and people won't say that my father is gay if they just see him walking with me or something ...*

" Ek sal ook nou nie gaan uitblaker my pa's gay nie ... en mense sal ook nie as hulle my pa sien saam met my loop of iets sê hy's gay nie ..."

#### ■ Physical image

Yolandi describes her reserve at once having to buy her own tampons and her awkwardness at having to ask her father to do this for her. She appears self-conscious about her developing body and it has been difficult for her to adjust to the changes in her body during puberty.

Yolandi reports always being tired and not getting enough sleep with all the work she currently has to do.

■ Social and personality development

Yolandi describes herself as a fun-loving person who is not afraid to venture but who acts responsibly.

Yolandi reports that she has a big circle of friends, but does not specifically mention a best friend or a particularly close friendship. She also has several gay friends and reports preferring to spend time with some of her male friends as she feels men are often less catty than women.

*Girls can sometimes be catty and I don't like it.*

“ Meisies kan partykeer katterig wees en ek hou nie daarvan nie.”

Yolandi feels that as she gets older, she is getting to know herself better and feels more comfortable talking to her father.

*As you get older you really get to know yourself.*

“Soos jy ouer word leer jy jousef rêrig ken.”

This indicates that Yolandi is currently in a process of successfully completing the crisis of Identity Formation versus Identity Confusion according to Erikson's theory of personality development (Meyer et al 1997:229). She is maturing and starting to integrate the different aspects of her life.

Yolandi is aware of stereotypes and labels. She illustrated this by describing her anger at two strangers' derogative comments about her gay friend which she felt were based on his sexual orientation. She feels very strongly that gay people need social

acceptance. However, she indicates her own concrete thinking about gender identities when she indicated her disapproval of homosexual men who act in a feminine way. She feels that the latter give masculine looking homosexual men a bad name. She herself used a derogatory term to describe feminine gay men. She mentioned her enjoyment of her father and his friends' jokes about feminine homosexual men.

*I don't like it when men try to be like women. It's things like that give gay men a bad name. A gay man should still act like a man and if a woman is lesbian, she should still act like a woman.*

“Ek hou nie daarvan as mans soos vrouens probeer wees nie. Dis sulke goed wat gay mans 'n slegte naam gee. 'n Gay man moet nog steeds soos 'n man optree en as 'n vrou lesbies is moet sy ook soos 'n vrou optree.”

Yolandi tries to justify this contradictory statement with a religious argument.

“ ... die Here het hom 'n geslag gegee en hy moet daarby hou ...”

*... the Lord gave him a gender and he should stick to it ...*

However, Yolandi also uses a religious argument when she pleads her case for the acceptance of homosexual people:

*I feel the Lord never said you're not allowed to be gay. It doesn't appear in the Bible or anything.*

“ Ek voel die Here het nooit gesê jy mag nie gay wees nie. Dit staan nêrens in die Bybel of niks nie”.

The use of these religious arguments to justify her views seems particularly interesting in the light of Yolandi's statement in the RISB that she sometimes feels unsure of her religion (please refer to page 126 in this regard).

She also displays some stereotyping in her reference to homosexual men as "them".

*Many of them are very funny.*

"Baie van hulle is baie snaaks."

#### ■ Conative image

Yolandi finds studying boring and has too much energy to sit still and study.

*... I have too much energy to sit still and study. It's boring.*

"... ek het te veel energie om stil te sit en te leer. Dis vervelig."

Yolandi is very enthusiastic about her future and would like to study to become a hairdresser. She would like to work in Paris and in Cape Town and do models' hair for photo shoots and fashion shows.

#### ■ Moral image

Several important conflicts can be noted in Yolandi's moral thinking which tends to suggest that she has not yet fully accepted her father's homosexuality. She criticises others for their rejection of homosexual men based on stereotypes, but she herself revealed several stereotypes regarding feminine homosexual men. She states that she can admit her father is gay with pride; however, she will not disclose this summarily. She rationalises about biblical statements to support her arguments that gay men should

be accepted but this does not apply to gay men who display feminine characteristics. Yolandi's moral reasoning serves largely to justify her thoughts and behaviour. Her use of predetermined religious principles to govern others' behaviour indicates that she still functions largely within a conventional morality and has not yet fully achieved a postconventional morality.

Yolandi displays empathy with her brother as she realises that she was also at a developmental stage when she was cheeky and displayed a precocious attitude. However, this still irritates her about him. Yolandi also displays empathy with her father's reluctance to disclose his homosexuality to his own parents before his marriage as she feels that they would have rejected him. She also understands his marriage to her mother as an attempt to deny his homosexual urges. She believes this was an endeavour to cope with these inclinations.

*But I think he married my mother to avoid it and when that still didn't work he probably thought lets have children, maybe that will work.*

“Maar ek dink hy't met my ma getrou om dit te vermy en toe dit nog steeds nie werk nie toe dink hy seker kom ons kry kinders, dit sal miskien werk.”

#### ■ Brief summary of the interview

Although some of Yolandi's ecological part systems, such as her supportive home environment and friendships with her peers have exerted a positive influence on Yolandi, many of her other systems have exerted a negative effect on her development. These include the murder of one of her closest friends, her primary school teachers' insensitivity to her fragile emotional state and her father's physical and emotional unavailability for a large part of her life.

Yolandi's intra-psychic part systems, such as her ability to reflect on her emotions and her emotional self-efficiency, her developing sense of identity and empathy and her positive outlook on the future seem to be supporting Yolandi in her continuing effort to

accept her fathers' homosexuality. However, her conventional moral reasoning and stereotyped thinking still hampers her in this regard.

(ii) High School Personality Questionnaire

The High School Personality Questionnaire was completed by Yolandi on 25 August 2008 at her home. I was personally responsible for the administering thereof. Table 5.2 presents the scores that were obtained in the HSPQ.

Table 5.2: Scores obtained in the HSPQ

FACTOR	Low score description	Standard sten score (STEN)										High score description
		Average										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
A	Critical, reserved, cool							•				Warm, soft-hearted, participating
B	Dull, less intelligent									•		More intelligent, bright
C	Emotionally immature and unstable					•						Emotionally mature, stable, realistic
D	Deliberate, stodgy, placid						•					Unrestrained, nervous
E	Obedient, mild, dependent							•				Assertive aggressive, rebellious
F	Sober, silent, serious									•		Happy-go-lucky, enthusiastic
G	Casual, quitting, undependable			•								Conscientious, persevering
H	Timid, threat-sensitive, shy							•				Venturesome, thick-skinned
I	Practical, tough-minded					•						Tender-minded, sensitive, protected
J	Vigorous, goes readily with group						•					Individualistic, obstructive, reflective
O	Secure, resilient, confident					•						Discouraged, self-reproaching
Q2	Group follower, values social approval							•				Makes own decisions, resourceful
Q3	Careless, ignores standards		•									Self-controlled, self-respecting
Q4	Relaxed, composed						•					Tense, driven, irritable

Each of the above-mentioned factors is represented by a bi-polar continuum of which the two extreme poles are described on the left-hand pole (which represents a standard score of 1 to 4) and the right-hand pole (which represents a standard score of 7 to 10).

According to Van Breda (2006:150), one should guard against the assumption that the right hand 'high' pole is 'good' in some psychological sense or other and that the left-hand 'low' pole is 'bad'. Depending on which performances and purposes are considered, sometimes the left and sometimes the right-hand pole may be advantages.

A brief discussion of the significantly high and low primary factors follows

Significant high scores (standard sten scores 8,9,10)

Factor B – Abstract thinking (9):

This score indicates that Yolandi has a high mental capacity, displays insight, learns quickly and that she is intellectually flexible.

Factor F - Carefreeness (9):

This score indicates that Yolandi is enthusiastic, carefree, unworried, talkative and expressive.

Significant low scores (standard sten scores 1,2,3)

Factor G - Opportunistic (3):

This score indicates that Yolandi does not accept moral standards, ignores rules, is unreliable and ignores obligations towards others.

Factor Q3 - Low self-sentiment integration (2)

This score indicates that Yolandi is lax, follows her own urges and ignores social rules. It also indicates that she may be undisciplined, unreflective and may display emotionality and a narcissistic rejection of cultural demands.

The following second order factors were calculated:

- Anxiety
- Extraversion



$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Anxiety} &= \frac{(11-C) + D + (11-G) + (11-H) + O + (11-Q3) + Q4}{7} \\
 &= \frac{(11-5) + 6 + (11-3) + (11-7) + 5 + (11-2) + 6}{7} \\
 &= \frac{44}{7} \\
 &= 6.3
 \end{aligned}$$

The Second Order Factor score of 6.3 for anxiety that was obtained in the HSPQ is considered an average score and may indicate that Yolandi experiences normal levels of anxiety.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Extraversion} &= \frac{A + F + H + (11-J) + (11-Q2)}{5} \\
 &= \frac{7 + 9 + 7 + (11-6) + (11-7)}{5} \\
 &= \frac{32}{5} \\
 &= 6.4
 \end{aligned}$$

The second order factor score of 6.4 for Extraversion that was obtained in the HSPQ is considered an average score, which may indicate that Yolandi cannot be considered to be either an extroverted or an introverted person.

#### ■ Summary of the High School Personality Questionnaire

Considering Yolandi's overall scores obtained in the HSPQ, it may be deduced that she has a high mental capacity, displays insight and that she is enthusiastic, carefree, unworried, talkative and expressive. It may also be deduced that Yolandi does not accept moral standards, ignores rules, is unreliable and ignores her obligations towards others. Yolandi displays conditional acceptance of moral standards in her rejection of the general religious view that homosexuality is sinful, yet uses religious arguments to justify her prejudices regarding feminine homosexual men. She might be undisciplined and unreflective and display a narcissistic rejection of cultural demands. During the interview Yolandi indicated that she was not disciplined enough to sit still and study for

exams. She displays some signs of introspection in her description of the shift in her thinking from a child into an adult.

(iii) The Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank

This test was administered on 25 August 2008 at Yolandi's home. Yolandi was presented with forty incomplete sentences, which she was instructed to complete by filling in the initial idea which came to mind. The first part of all the sentences appeared in normal letters, while Yolandi's responses were written in italics. Yolandi is fluent in both Afrikaans and English, but she preferred to complete most of the English stems in Afrikaans as she felt it added to the spontaneity of her responses. A translation of the Afrikaans responses into English is given in brackets next to each response. On completion of the tests, the responses were read to obtain a global impression regarding Yolandi's life world. The test was studied again while notes were made of sentences that might have a bearing on each other and that centred on a central theme. According to the discussion in 4.2.3.3, no pre-determined categories exist in which completed stems can be grouped, instead the RISB has been devised in such a manner that the respondents choose their own categories so to say, by way of their responses. In this sense it is thus possible for respondents to avoid difficult or threatening topics. Each statement was considered individually and was assigned a score between 0 and 6 according to the guidelines of Rotter (in Greene & Weiner 2008:523) depending on whether the statement represented a conflict response, a neutral response or a positive response. The cumulation of the scores for the individual items were then calculated and the level of adjustment was determined. The score assigned to each item is indicated next to the completed sentence. Responses were grouped according to the themes they centred on and a short interpretive summary is given for each theme expressed.

A total of eighteen positive responses, five neutral responses and seventeen negative responses were expressed. One item was left blank. The total adjustment score was calculated at 112 which indicates a good level of emotional adjustment.

The following themes were expressed:

i. Attitude towards self

- 23. My mind *dink altyd oortyd (always thinks overtime)* (score = 4)
- 25. I need *niks, ek het alles wat ek wil hê (nothing, I have everything I want)* (score =0)
- 28. Sometimes *voel ek lonely (I feel lonely)* (score = 5)
- 32. I am very *happy person* (score = 0)
- 36. I secretly *wonder oor my geloof (wonder about my religion)* (score = 4)
- 37. I *wil baie gewig verloor soos 12kg (want to lose a lot of weight like 12kg)* (score = 5)

*Interpretive summary:* Yolandi appears to be a happy, contented person but is unhappy about her weight and feels that her mind is overactive. There seems to be a conflict in Yolandi's completion of stems 25 and 32. In the former she asserts that she is a very happy person and has everything that she needs. In her completion of stem 28 she indicates that she sometimes feels lonely. This conflict possibly reflects Yolandi's apparent indecisiveness regarding the acceptance of her father's homosexuality and might be linked to her current grieving process after the unexpected death of one of her best friends (please refer to Annexure C in this regard).

ii. Attitude towards friends:

- 1. I like *kuier saam vriende, net partykeer niks doen nie (visit with friends, just do nothing sometimes)* (score = 2)
- 8. The best *my vriende en familie ek love hulle (my friends and family I love them)* (score = 0)
- 10. People *ek love people, weet nie wat ek sonder hulle sou doen nie (I love people, don't know what I would do without them)* (score =2)
- 19. What annoys me *wanneer mense aan my karring (when people needle me)* (score = 6)

*Interpretive summary:* Yolandi is a very sociable person and her friends are very important to her, but she interacts with them mainly on her terms. Her completion of stem 19 suggests that she becomes annoyed when people ask her questions about certain topics that she prefers not to discuss.

## iii. Attitude towards family:

8. The best *my vriende en familie, ek love hulle (my friends and family, I love them)*  
(score = 0)

29. What pains me *dat ek nooit die happy gesin ding kon gehad het nie (that I never had the happy family thing)* (score = 6)

*Interpretive summary:* Family is important to Yolandi and she feels that she never had the opportunity to happy family life.

## iv. Attitude towards home:

31. This place *maak my happy, my huis, Pretoria (makes me happy, my home, Pretoria)*  
(score = 0)

*Interpretive summary:* Yolandi feels happy at home.

## v. Attitude towards School:

2. The happiest time *my matriek jaar (my grade 12 year)* (score = 1)

5. I regret *dat ek nie beter in skool gedoen het nie (that I didn't do better in school)*  
(score = 4)

15. I can't *wag vir die vakansie nie (wait for the holiday)* (score = 2)

18. My nerves *oor eksamen in November (over exams in November)* (score = 4)

*Interpretive summary:* Yolandi enjoyed her matric year and cannot wait for the coming holiday. However, she is nervous about the coming exams and regrets not having done better at school.

## vi. Attitude towards other people:

9. What annoys me *wanneer mense aan my karring (when people needle me)*  
(score = 4)

10. People *ek love people, weet nie wat ek sonder hulle sou doen nie (I love people, don't know what I would do without them)* (score = 2)

12. I feel *party keer moet mense dink voordat hulle iets doen (sometimes people have to think before they do something)* (score = 5)

19. Other people *mense wat ek nie ken nie is 'n goeie ding want ek kan hulle leer ken (people I don't know is a good thing, because I can get to know them)* (score = 0)

*Interpretive summary:* Yolandi is a very sociable person and she enjoys meeting new people. However, she interacts with people mainly on her terms and feels that people can act irresponsibly at times.

vii. Attitude towards the future:

24. The future *hoop ek gaan ek baie suksesvol wees (I hope I will be successful)*

(score = 1)

26. Marriage *het nog nie baie daaroor gedink nie, maar dit sal kom (have not thought about it a lot, but it will come)* (score = 2)

34. I wish *ek kan in Kaapstad 'n besigheid begin (I can start a business in Cape Town)*

(score = 2)

*Interpretive summary:* Yolandi is enthusiastic about her future and has made various plans in that regard.

viii. Being tired:

6. At bedtime *voel ek 'yes' ek kan nou slaap (I feel 'yes' now I can sleep)* (score = 4)

30. I hate *om altyd moeg te wees (to always be tired)* (score = 4)

*Interpretive summary:* Yolandi has very little physical energy at the moment and does not enjoy the feeling of constant tiredness.

ix. Feelings about crime:

3. I want to know *hoekom moet mense mense doodmaak vir jy lief is net vir sommer (why people have to kill people you love just for the sake of it)* (score = 6)

*Interpretive summary:* Yolandi was recently affected by a violent crime and is still grieving and trying to make sense of what happened.

x. Attitude towards mother:

11. A mother *my maatjie, ek's baie lief vir haar, weet nie wat ek sonder haar sou doen nie (my friend, I love her very much, don't know what I would do without her)* (score = 1)

39. My greatest worry is *wanneer my ma doodgaan (when my mother dies)* (score = 5)

*Interpretive summary:* Yolandi has a very close relationship with her mother and fears the time when her mother will no longer be around.

xi. Attitude towards father:

35. My father *baie lief vir my pa maar hy het sy goedjies* (love my father very much but he has his little things) (score = 4)

*Interpretive summary:* Yolandi has a very close relationship with her father, but views him as having flaws.

xii. Women:

40. Most women *are bitches* (score = 6)

*Interpretive summary:* Yolandi has a negative attitude towards most women and views them as threatening.

■ Brief summary of the Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank:

On the basis of the responses obtained from the Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank, the following concluding deductions can be made:

Yolandi appears to be a happy, contented person but is unhappy about her weight and feels that her mind is overactive. Yolandi is a very sociable person and her friends are very important to her. However, she interacts with them mainly on her terms as she indicated that she feels annoyed when people ask her questions about topics that she prefers not to discuss. She loves her family members, but regrets that her family never lived up to her ideal idea of a family. Yolandi is enthusiastic about her future and has made various plans in that regard. Yolandi has very little physical energy at the moment and does not enjoy the feeling of constant tiredness. Yolandi was recently affected by a violent crime and is still grieving and trying to make sense of what happened. She fears the time when her mother will no longer be around. Yolandi views her father as having some flaws. Yolandi has a negative attitude towards most women and views them as threatening. Yolandi appears to still be undecided about her acceptance of her father's homosexuality and does not yet seem to have successfully integrated this aspect of her life into a crystallised identity.

■ Synthesis and conclusion of the case study: Yolandi

Yolandi is an 18 years old learner who lives in a residential area near Pretoria. Based on the criteria set out in chapter four, Yolandi was selected through the use of a purposive sampling method.

For the purpose of the case study Yolandi was interviewed on 25 August 2008.

The data obtained from the interview has been organised into different categories and grouped into the ecological-systems within which they function, as discussed in 5.2.1.3. Direct quotations were presented verbatim, without any corrections, so as to maintain a clear reflection of the true essence of Yolandi's experiential world and her different levels of functioning. Translations from Afrikaans to English were made.

Emerging from the interview Yolandi was greatly affected by her parents' divorce and her father's disclosure of his homosexuality. The timing of these events have had a lasting negative effect on Yolandi in that she felt isolated and rejected by her teachers in her formative schooling years as a direct result of her response to these events. Yolandi's initial negative view of school has played a large role in her dislike of academic learning and her relatively poor school achievement, despite her apparent intelligence.

Although Yolandi is working hard at rebuilding her strained relationship with her father, she has not yet fully accepted his homosexuality, despite her claims to the contrary. Her father's physical unavailability to her along with his perceived neglect of her emotional needs during her early and middle childhood years have played a large role in her view of people as irresponsible. This, along with the recent murder of one of her best friends seems to have left Yolandi with the perception of the world as an unsafe place in which trust should not be given too easily. In this respect, Yolandi reports having a large circle of friends, but few particularly close friendships.

### 5.2.2 Concluding summary of all three respondents

In view of the qualitative nature of the research, the aim was not to compare the three respondents involved in the case studies. Not all of the emotional or social problems that the learners in the case studies have, can or should be attributed to the homosexuality of their respective fathers. The aim of this research was to give a picture of their life worlds and their experiences. Hence I deem it functional to present some of the commonalities shared by the respondents in a relatively broad outline on a qualitative level. Furthermore, the findings cannot be generalised to other learners.

In all three case studies their father's disclosure of their homosexuality to the adolescent learners affected them to a great extent. Acceptance of their fathers' homosexuality came or is still developing through a long process of emotional conflict. Despite their initial negative reactions to their father's homosexuality, all the learners have chosen to accept their father's orientation and desire a relationship with him. All the respondents mentioned some emotional discomfort in their personal relationships (a feeling of hurt, friends' lying to them, gossip) which could result in them distancing themselves from emotional relationships and isolating themselves to a certain extent. All three respondents have a problem with complete trust and acceptance.

## 5.3 CONCLUSION

Chapter five was concerned with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the results of the empirical research. The analysis of the data that emerged from the various qualitative research methods was discussed. Chapter six provides a broad overview of the entire study and will also discuss the results of the analyses of the qualitative data.



## CHAPTER 6

### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the results of the empirical research were discussed. This chapter aims to supply a broad overview of the entire study. The aim of this study was to investigate the experiential world of adolescents with a homosexual parent.

#### 6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION

In an attempt to investigate the experiential world of adolescents with a homosexual parent, an extensive literature study was conducted to investigate various aspects of these adolescents' worlds, including:

- A definition of homosexuality
- The rights of homosexual persons in South Africa
- Homosexuality in the South African context
- Societal reactions to homosexuality
- Homosexual parents in South Africa
- Findings from the literature regarding homosexual parents' ability to parent
- A definition of adolescence
- Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of child development
- Aspects of development during middle to late adolescence
- The impact that adolescents' level of development have on their understanding, handling and acceptance of homosexual parents

I have opted to base the empirical investigation on the principles of Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of child development which offers a relevant, comprehensive and yet uncomplicated account of child development.

The empirical investigation was carried out according to the qualitative research methodology. In depth case studies were done on three adolescents with a homosexual parent and the methods employed in the case studies included interviews, personality questionnaires and projection techniques (incomplete sentences).

### **6.3 SYNTHESIS OF SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS**

#### 6.3.1 Main findings and concluding summary of the literature study

##### 6.3.1.1 Homosexuality

###### (i) Defining homosexuality

As discussed in 2.2 homosexuality can basically be defined as same-sex desire and same-sex sexual behaviour. This simplistic definition may be expanded by describing a person's sexual identity in terms the person's biological sexual appearance that shapes his or her view of self as anatomically male or female, the person's gender identity that reflects his or her basic conviction of being male or female, the social sex-role that reflects a person's perception of self as masculine or feminine in accordance with its culturally ascribed characteristics and the person's sexual orientation that defines his or her affectional and physical preference for same-sex or opposite sex sexual partners.

###### (ii) The rights of homosexual and lesbian persons in South Africa

The Constitution of South Africa prohibits unfair discrimination against anyone on one or more grounds, one of which is sexual orientation. South Africa's post-apartheid constitution was the first in the world to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation. On 1 December 2006 South Africa made history by becoming the fifth country in the world, and the first country in Africa, to legalise same-sex marriage. There are currently three laws that provide for the status of marriage in South Africa. These are the Marriage Act (Act 25 of 1961), the Customary Marriages Act (Act 120 of 1998), which provides for the civil registration of marriages solemnised according to the traditions of indigenous tribes, and the Civil Union Act (Act 17 of 2006). Previously the age of consent to partake in sexual activity for lesbians and gay men was nineteen, but

just more than a year after the legalisation of same-sex marriages in South Africa an equal age of consent was achieved. Since 1 January 2008, the age of consent in South Africa is 16, regardless of sexual orientation and all sexual offences are described in gender-neutral terms.

#### (iii) Homosexuality in the South African context

Despite the advanced laws regarding gay and lesbian rights in our country, South African society is still characterised by an underdeveloped gay cultural separatism when compared to other countries, like the USA. The South African National Constitution, which came into effect in February 1997, contains an Equality Clause that explicitly ensures the protection of people from discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation. This constitutional protection is being used with widespread and increasing success to fight discrimination and ensure equality under the law.

Gay liberation was carried in great part by black liberation during the apartheid struggle in South Africa. Despite proclamations that homosexuality is un-African, it has been pointed out that exclusive homosexuality or gayness has in recent history become more visible in black communities. As discussed in 2.3, it is the practice of exclusive lifelong homosexuality assumed as an identity and as an equivalent to a heterosexual model, and not same-sex sexual practices, that is foreign to African cultures.

Based on evidence to be found in 2.3, a correlation appears to exist between the degree of homophobia and whether one lives in a rural or an urban setting. There is a general perception that city centres are more positive and affirming whereas rural areas are more conservative. The same correlation also appears to exist in terms of religion, for instance, the Christian and Muslim faith's condemnation of homosexual acts. Yet there are indications that a more inclusive, public and assertive gay identity is emerging in South Africa, albeit in scattered and embryonic forms.

#### (iv) Societal reactions to homosexuality

As discussed in 2.4, cultural beliefs regarding attitudes to homosexuality have changed and become increasingly negative with the passage of time. Freud hypothesised that

humans are constitutionally bisexual and that masculine and feminine currents exist in everyone. Between the 1930's and 1960's, however, psychoanalytic thinking about masculinity moved away from Freud's idea and writers stressed the concepts of mental health, gender orthodoxy, conventional heterosexuality, and marriage. Homosexuality is seen as unmanly in many cultures. Some view gay relationships as unnatural on the grounds that humans are biologically designed to be heterosexual and to procreate. This perception that a gay lifestyle undermines the family unit and threatens the survival of the species because it does not result in procreation, further adds to homophobic attitudes in society.

When a loved one is found to be homosexual family members often feel as if there has been a 'death in the family' and react with angry, ambivalent feelings toward the homosexual person. Young children do not react to homosexuality with the same strong visceral negativism of adults. However, children show increasingly negative, adult-like reactions as they get older, with adolescents demonstrating attitudes very similar to that of adults. Older adults, again, may react differently than younger or middle-aged adults and generally display more moderate reactions to homosexual persons. It has been found that heterosexuals react more negatively to homosexuals of their own sex than those of the opposite sex and men tend to react more harshly than women towards homosexual persons of both sexes, but especially towards gay men.

Although South African gays' and lesbians' rights have been achieved at the national level, it may not immediately reduce homophobia at the community level and consciousness raising at the community level is very important in this regard. Just as negative as the effects of societal homophobia on homosexual persons, however, seem to be the effects of the internalised homophobia of homosexual persons themselves.

#### (v) Homosexual parents in South Africa

##### (a) Societal reactions to homosexual parents

As discussed in 2.5, the issue of homosexuality and children is extremely volatile and that homophobia appears to be widespread in the child-welfare system. The dilemmas experienced by homosexual men who become parents seem to reflect the dilemmas faced by society about homosexuality that are manifested in heterosexist and

homophobic attitudes. The widespread misconception that homosexuality constitutes a threat to children may be viewed as a social prejudice and this notion that homosexuality is incompatible with children or child-rearing may contribute to the image of homosexuals as 'family-less'.

Based on evidence in 2.5, homosexual parents not only receive negative societal reaction from heterosexuals, but are often also rejected by other homosexuals. This stereotype emphasises that gays are anti-family in their lifestyle and orientation to group living. Homosexual persons also appear to suffer from internalised homophobia in their role as parents and often believe they must prove to be more than simply 'ordinary' parents. It is important that homosexual persons be reminded repeatedly that they have a reproductive right to have children and that they do not have to be 'perfect' parents.

#### (b) Children's reactions to their homosexual parents

Based on evidence in 2.5, much of the research conducted has demonstrated no harmful effects on children of having or living with a homosexual parent. Few differences have also been found in adjustment between adolescents living with same-sex parents and those living with opposite sex parents. More than half of children with a homosexual or lesbian parent have an initially negative or uncertain reaction to parental disclosure. However, the majority of both gay mothers and fathers report that they are open with their children about their homosexuality, and that disclosure improved their emotional relationships with their children in the long-term. Age seems to play a role in children's reaction to their parent's homosexuality. Younger children do not seem to experience the feelings of estrangement that older relatives do, because they do not yet have an idea of what homosexuality is or of its implications for personal identity. However, research suggests that older children, especially adolescents, are at least aware of the social stigma of homosexuality. A minority of children with homosexual or lesbian parents fear what can be called 'identity contamination' (being abused by others because their parent is homosexual). Some adolescents express resentment toward their parents for this social difficulty, while others blame society. This problem often results in homosexual parents practising and advising their children to practise discretion with their peers.

It has been found that almost all children who reject their father as being gay continue to accept him in his caregiving role as their father. Adolescence is typically the most difficult time for children to initially deal with paternal homosexuality and children may even undergo some discomfort during adolescence despite being informed earlier. This seems to be explained by the fact that adolescence is a time of such high peer affiliation needs and individual sexual identity development. However, children who learned of their father's homosexuality as teens often report feeling closer to their gay or bisexual father. It thus appears that an initial crisis can engender growth of the parent-child relationship. Same-sex adolescent children are also reported to experience greater difficulty in handling their father's disclosure than opposite sex children. This is possibly due to the fears of some same sex children that they may also be gay and the greater sensitivity to homophobic attitudes of other males their age.

Some children of gay fathers attempt to control information regarding their parent's homosexuality as well as the image projected by their homosexual parent to their peer group. The more feelings of mutuality or connectedness the child has with the father and the less obtrusive the child believes the father's homosexuality to be, the less the child will use controlling strategies. Older children who live independently of their gay fathers also tend to employ controlling strategies less often.

#### (c) Societal reactions towards the children of homosexual parents

Researchers suggest that it is not unusual for children of homosexual parents to experience bigotry and discrimination when other children become aware of their father's sexual orientation. Child welfare organisations often raise the concern that children with homosexual parents will be stigmatised because of their non-traditional family structure. It has been found that, compared with children from heterosexual families, children with homosexual parents are not more likely to be teased but they are more prone to family-related teasing incidents. As discussed in 2.5, it has been found that, despite these negative societal reactions, children with homosexual parents' global evaluation of themselves as a person is as positive as that of children who are growing up in a heterosexual context and these children feel as much accepted by their peers as do children from heterosexual families

(v) Findings from the literature regarding homosexual parents' ability to parent

Based on evidence in 2.5, scientifically sound research suggests that homosexual parents are effective, highly committed, and do no harm to the welfare and developmental progress of their children. Parents' ability to be open about their homosexuality will help children to feel less burdened by the secret of their parents' homosexuality.

As discussed in 2.5, a comparative study of the children of lesbian mothers with the children of heterosexual mothers found a clear correlation between children's self-concept and self-esteem and their mother's self-esteem and found no correlation with the mother's sexual orientation. From these findings it can be deduced that child rearing style is more a product of the mother's attitudes, values, and personality characteristics than of her sexual orientation. No study has found that lesbian mothers are less tolerant of cross-gender play and more supportive of girls developing male interests.

Studies on lesbian mothers have found no support for the notion that a lesbian mother's sexual orientation has any damaging consequences to the child's development. Children of two-mother families have been found to be less aggressive and hostile, more aware of their feelings (both positive and negative), and to regard themselves and be regarded by others as a bit more likeable compared to children from heterosexual families.

Although many lesbian families are headed by a dual-career couple that bring two incomes to the family, the quantity of the child's experience with an involved parent is typically not jeopardised because both partners are, and expect to be, full partners, sharing parenting tasks and time (unlike most heterosexual dual-career couples). Two-mother lesbian families also model effective functioning in their non-hierarchical, flexible process. Partners assume equal responsibility for housework and child-care and thus do not appear to experience the alienation from one another that often accompanies the skewed role balances of most heterosexual couples as they pass through the transition to parenthood.

It has been found that despite the heavy cultural conditioning that shapes our ideas of parenting roles, reliance on gender norms to determine who does what and how in child rearing is largely absent in homosexual couples.

It was suggested in 2.5 that homosexual parents may be more effective in their parenting role than heterosexual parents as gay fathers have been found to be more endorsing of paternal nurturance, less endorsing of economic providing as a main ingredient of fathering behaviour, and somewhat less traditional in their overall approach to parenting. Other research has found that most gay fathers have positive relationships with their children, the father's sexual orientation is of little importance in the overall parent/child relationship and gay fathers try harder to create stable home lives and positive relationships than what would be expected among traditional heterosexual parents. Several studies have examined specific parenting behaviours of gay fathers and have found no differences between heterosexual and homosexual fathers in problem-solving, providing recreation for children, encouraging their autonomy, handling problems relating to child rearing, having relatively serious problems with children or having generally positive relationships with children. Homosexual parents also report going to greater lengths than heterosexual fathers in promoting cognitive skills of children by explaining rules and regulations and as such, they may place greater emphasis on verbal communication with children.

As discussed in 2.5 homosexual fathers also appear to go to extra lengths to act as a resource for activities with their children and they express the same levels of intimacy toward their children than heterosexual fathers. It has been suggested that, regardless of actual stress levels, children of lesbian mothers may be more conscious of their affective states in general or more willing to report their experiences of negative emotional states than children in heterosexual families. This greater tendency of lesbian mothers' children to admit feeling angry, upset, or scared might be attributed not as much to differences in experiences of stress as to greater awareness and expression of emotional experience of all kinds.

(vi) A definition of adolescence

According to Steyn in 3.2, adolescence may be described as a transitional period in which individuals experience major physical, cognitive and socio-affective changes



towards maturity. Adolescence may also be regarded as a process during which the attitudes and values necessary for effective participation in society are achieved.

(vii) Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of child development

Bronfenbrenner conceptualised the child's ecology as a multi-layered set of nested and interconnecting environmental systems all of which influence the developing child, but with various degrees of directness. The adolescent is at the centre of the systems and these environmental systems may be grouped into a series of systems that include and extend beyond the adolescent. These systems are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

(a) The microsystem

The most immediate influences on the child are within the microsystem and include the immediate family, friends, school, health services, religious groups, neighbourhood playgroups, and various social groups to which the adolescent belongs. The child is viewed as an active force as the child exerts an influence on those around him or her and on the relationship he or she has with others

(b) The mesosystem

The mesosystem is the connection which brings together the different contexts in which a child develops, as it involves reciprocal relationships among microsystem settings. A microsystem and mesosystem can reinforce each other, or exert opposite influences.

(c) The exosystem

The exosystem is made up of all of those settings that influence children but that they do not play an active role in. This could include community health services, parks, recreation centres. Negative impacts on development can result when the exosystem breaks down.

(d) The macrosystem

The macrosystem is the outermost level and includes all the ideologies, attitudes, mores, customs, laws and resources of a particular culture. The priority that the macrosystem

gives to children's needs affects the support they receive at inner levels of the environment.

(e) The chronosystem

The chronosystem involves all aspects of time and how they impact on a child's development. The timing of a change in the environment can also change the effect of its impact.

(viii) Aspects of adolescent development during the middle and late adolescent phases

(a) Physical development (including sexual development)

As discussed in 3.4.1 adolescents have typically not undergone such rapid and profound physical changes since babyhood and must learn to adapt to a new physical sense of self, especially as the rapid growth in height and weight that takes place during this period can cause adolescents to feel alienated from their bodies. The development of sexual characteristics initiated during early adolescence continues as reproductive organs become functional and sexual maturity is attained during middle and late adolescence. Quite typically, adolescents have to learn to deal with the sexual urges that occur as a result of this sexual development, in socially acceptable ways.

(b) Cognitive development

Despite the attainment of neurological maturity at the age of about sixteen, many cognitive functions continue to expand throughout adolescence. And as each year passes, the adolescent's ability to process information increases, due partly to the development of the brain and nervous system but mostly to learning experience and practice that improve mental abilities and strategies. As discussed in 3.4.2, the onset of adolescence marks the commencement of abstract thinking as children reach the formal operational stage of cognitive development. Formal thinking involves four major aspects: introspection, abstract thinking, logical thinking and hypothetical reasoning. But formal operations is not a universal attainment and many adolescents do not reach this stage. The social environment and the adolescent's level of intelligence could either accelerate or delay the onset of formal operational thought.

(c) Emotional development

With the onset of adolescence, children begin to use internal strategies to control their emotion more often as a direct result of their improved ability to reflect on their thoughts and feelings. This sense of emotional self-efficacy is thought to foster a favourable self-image and an optimistic outlook on life for adolescents, which will further assist them in dealing with emotional challenges. As a result of the adolescents' increased ability to view a phenomenon from different perspectives they begin to display empathy, not only with others' immediate distress, but also with their general life condition.

(d) Social and personality development

Whether adolescents attain an accurate self-image or not is significant. Often adolescents' critical self-appraisal is accompanied by self-conscious behaviour that makes them vulnerable to embarrassment. As a consequence, they are preoccupied with attempting to reconcile their selves as they perceive them with their ideal selves. By late adolescence they are typically able to determine what they can most effectively be and to integrate their goals into their ideal selves.

As discussed in 3.4.4, during middle and late adolescence adolescents strive to establish a sense of identity and their place in society. During this stage of development adolescents may experience a crisis where they are expected to adapt to new tasks and to experiment with various identities in order to be able to answer the question "Who am I?" Once adolescents have established a sense of who they are, they are able to forge unique ethnic, occupational and sex role identities.

Depending on the progress that adolescents have made toward forming a mature identity they may be grouped into three categories, called *identity statuses*. The first of the identity statuses is referred to as *identity diffusion* and describes an individual who does not have firm commitments to values and goals and is not trying to reach them. Individuals in the *identity foreclosure* identity status have accepted the ready-made values and goals that authority figures have chosen for them while individuals who can be described as *identity achieved* have explored and committed themselves to self-chosen values and goals. *Identity moratorium* describes a time frame in which previous stages can be revisited and lived through in a more positive way.

During middle and late adolescence adolescents typically display an increased desire to be independent and autonomous. Adolescents also have to come to terms with their sexuality and with the idea of what it means to be male or female. But as adolescents move toward a more mature personal identity, they become less concerned with other's opinions of them and more involved in finding meaningful values to include in their self-definitions and this usually results in the decline of highly stereotypic self-perceptions, especially when parents and teachers encourage adolescents to question the value of gender stereotypes for themselves and their society. As greater impulse control develops with increased maturity, adolescents begin to assess which behaviours are acceptable and which are risky and may have adverse effects. This may lead to increased self-control and behaviour that is more socially acceptable during middle and late adolescence.

Adolescents tend to place a very high value on being accepted by the peer group during middle adolescence. As adolescents become older the number of reported friendships they have usually decrease and the quality of their friendships with a few close friends become more important. Adolescents' self-disclosure to friends also increases as they get older. During middle and late adolescence the individual's pleasure and friendships are usually found with those of both sexes, this is called heterosociality and not only do adolescents establish more intimate friendship bonds, but they also begin to establish intimacy in romantic relationships. It has been found that peer relationships are critical to adolescents' overall development as they permit cognitive conflicts that promote an increase in the development of moral thinking.

#### (e) Moral development

Kohlberg and Giligan (in Rice, 1992:469) indicated that the development of moral thought is a gradual and continuous process as the individual passes through a sequence of increasingly sophisticated moral stages. Kohlberg initially proposed that postconventional moral judgement became a possibility during adolescence (in part because of the onset of formal operations during that period), but later came to realise that postconventional moral judgement often did not develop during adolescence. Kohlberg eventually proposed that postconventional thinking is much more likely to develop during early adulthood, as a result of increased opportunities to experience complex moral interactions requiring serious reflection. Peck and Havighurst (in Rice,

1992:475) espoused the idea that personality type controls moral behaviour. These authors identified five personality types and allocated each to a specific developmental stage from infancy to adulthood. They assigned the rational-altruistic personality type to the developmental stage of adolescence to adulthood. According to Peck and Havighurst “rational-altruistic persons are at the highest level of moral behaviour; they are motivated by consideration for the welfare of others.

(f) Conative development

In an effort to explain the term conative development use was made in 3.4.6 of Van Breda's definition of conation as “The will or the longing function of the psyche” (2006:74). Conation is thus very useful in reflecting human motivational behaviour and willpower.

During middle and late adolescence adolescents continue to add new dimensions to their self-esteem. Younger adolescents have higher self-esteem than older ones and this can be attributed mainly to the fact that adolescents become more critical about the world and themselves as they develop a greater capacity for logical thinking. But after an initial drop, self-esteem adjusts to a more realistic level that matches the opinions of others as well as objective performance. Having high self-esteem gives adolescents the courage to make choices independently and if adolescents' locus of control is internal, their decision-making authority resides within themselves.

ix. What impact does the adolescent's level of development have on his or her understanding, acceptance and handling of their homosexual parent?

Although definitive data regarding adolescent's attitudes towards homosexuality is very scarce, it has been found that living in an environment in which the individual is associated with an out group or possesses some characteristic or trait that is devalued tends to diminish self-esteem among adolescents. This section focused on how adolescents' levels of development would influence their understanding and acceptance of persons in such an outgroup. Questions and hypotheses were posed regarding the impact that a developing sense of empathy, the integration of a perceived negative trait into the adolescents identity, the identity status achieved, the fear of rejection and discrimination by the peer group, the development of gender identities, the existence of

stereotypes and the adolescents' perception of parental support will have on adolescents' understanding, handling and acceptance of homosexual families.

### 6.3.2 Main findings and concluding summary of the empirical investigation

#### 6.3.2.1 Qualitative research

Three respondents were selected through use of a purposive sampling method for the purpose of conducting in-depth case studies. The inclusion of all three respondents in the case studies was subject to their own willingness to participate as well as by obtaining permission from their parents. All three adolescents that participated in the case studies lived with their heterosexual mothers who has been divorced for some time from the homosexual fathers with whom the adolescents have varying degrees of contact.

##### (i) Main findings and conclusive summary of the case study on Driekus

From the interview that was conducted with Driekus it appeared that his supportive family environment and close friendship bonds have, to some extent, acted as a buffer against the strained relationship with his father. Although Driekus was angry with his father after the disclosure of his homosexuality, his father's apparent unreliability, empty promises and lack of interest in Driekus' life seem to have played a bigger part in Driekus' initial rejection of him than his sexual orientation.

Driekus seems to be moving towards an acceptance of his father's homosexuality and longs to have a closer relationship with him. Despite Driekus' feelings of disappointment with his father, he remains very loyal to him and tries to minimise the impact that this has had on his life. He prefers to focus on the positive changes his father is currently making in their relationship

Driekus values his friendships and time spent with his family. He is a fit and active young man with healthy friendship bonds and big dreams for the future. Although his apparent lack of motivation regarding his schoolwork has caused him to do poorly in some of his

subjects, it does not seem to be affecting him in a negative way. Driekus presents as rather self-conscious and is trying to integrate all the different aspects of his life in an effort to answer the question: Who am I?

Driekus' personality assessment reveals that he tends to be sensitive, emotionally stable, mature, calm and responsible. He is constant in his interests and tends to avoid difficulties. He may also present as withdrawn and emotionally weary and may display laxity, poor self-sentiment integration and a general carelessness as far as social rules are concerned.

(ii) Main findings and conclusive summary of the case study on Michelle

Michelle presents as a friendly, confident young woman. She experiences her family and friendship relationships as close and supportive and she values trust in these relationships. Although Michelle reports an initial negative reaction to her father's disclosure of his homosexuality, this was short lived and she admits to being more concerned with other's perceived reactions to this news than the actual fact of her father's homosexuality. The mutually respectful relationship between Michelle's parents, her father's openness and honesty regarding his sexuality as well as his stable long-term relationship have all played a major role in Michelle's positive attitude towards and acceptance of her father's homosexuality. Michelle is very aware of her parents' difficult financial situation at this stage and she desires the strained relationship between her father and sister would improve.

Michelle appears to be developing a sense of empathy and she is careful not to make use of stereotypes. Michelle shows a positive, heterosexual gender-identity and she has been able to successfully integrate the different aspects of her life into a mature personal identity. She tries to establish personal values and goals for herself and she has a positive and realistic outlook on the future.

From Michelle's personality assessment it appears that she has a high mental capacity, displays insight into situations and learns quickly. It can also be deduced that she is competitive, stubborn, self-assured, independent and that she wants to be admired by

others. Furthermore, her scores indicate that she might be reflective and inwardly controlled.

In terms of personal relationships Michelle reports to getting on very well with all of her friends and family members, including her father's partner but she experiences some women as false, untruthful and snobbish. This is possibly related to the stressful, competitive world of modelling competitions in which Michelle participates. Michelle has been hurt by others' untrustworthy and selfish behaviour in the past and is wary of being hurt by similar behaviour again.

### (iii) Main findings and conclusive summary of the case study on Yolandi

Yolandi presents as a friendly, warm person and she talks easily and openly about all the different aspects of her life. The recent murder of one of her best friends has had a grave impact on Yolandi and has left her grieving and trying to make sense of all that has happened in this regard. During the interview Yolandi indicated that she has positive relationships with friends and family members, but that her relationship with her father has not always been positive. Although Yolandi reports to having a negative reaction to the news of her father's homosexuality, it appears that the impact of her parents' divorce played a far bigger role in her difficulty to adjust to a new home and school environment. She would have preferred her father to have spoken to her and her brother about his sexuality and regards her father's inability to do this as cowardice.

Yolandi's perception of her primary school teachers' irritation with her constant crying at the time of her parents' divorce possibly played a causative role in Yolandi's dislike of the academic aspects of school. Yolandi feels that her father has been unreliable and neglectful of her and her brother in the past, but seems to have dealt with this by compartmentalising this time in her father's life as a dark, dirty, disgusting period that belongs to the past. Yolandi concentrates on the positive aspects of her current relationship with her father and is attempting to strengthen the bond between them as she becomes more secure in her sense of self and integrates these aspects into a mature personal identity.



According to Yolandi's personality assessment it appears that she has a high mental capacity, displays insight and that she is enthusiastic, carefree, unworried, talkative and expressive. It may also be deduced that Yolandi does not accept moral standards, ignores rules, is unreliable and ignores her obligations towards others. She might be undisciplined and unreflective and display a narcissistic rejection of cultural demands.

Yolandi seems keenly aware of the fact that she is overweight and would like to lose weight. Yet she dresses well for her body type and carries herself with confidence, so this does not seem to have a major effect on her self-esteem. Yolandi regrets that she did not have the chance to grow up in an intact family unit and appears to idealise this family form. Yolandi is enthusiastic about her future and has a rather specific plan for her future. Although Yolandi reports very positive, loving relationships with her mother and friends, she perceives most women to be untrustworthy and threatening.

#### (iv) Summative findings on case studies

It became apparent in all three case studies that the adolescent learners' discovery of their fathers' homosexuality affected them a great deal. Acceptance of their fathers' homosexuality came and is still developing through a rather long process of emotional conflict. Yet, despite their initial negative reactions to their father's homosexuality all three learners have chosen to accept father's position and still want to have a relationship with him. According to the findings in the literature investigation, children who learned of their father's homosexuality as teens often report feeling closer to their gay or bisexual father (please refer to 2.6.2 in this regard). This was found in all three case studies. It should be noted though that all of the respondents mentioned still feeling some form of emotional discomfort in their personal relationships (hurt, friends' lying to them, gossip) which could result in them distancing themselves from emotional relationships and isolating themselves to a certain extent. It thus appears that all three respondents have a problem with complete trust and acceptance.

## 6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study and on the expressed needs of the respondents in the case studies, the following recommendations can be made:

(a) Recommendations for parents:

- A homosexual parents' ability and willingness to openly discuss or answer any questions their adolescent children might have regarding the parents' sexual orientation will assist children in their positive adjustment to this phenomenon.
- A mutually respectful and cooperative relationship between the divorced heterosexual parents of adolescents in homosexual parent families seem to lessen the likelihood that these children will be angry with their homosexual parent, as they will not perceive this parent as having rejected and betrayed the family unit.
- Homosexual parents might expect an initial negative reaction from the children upon disclosure of their homosexuality as all the adolescents in the case studies reported such negative reactions. But it is very important that the homosexual parent assure their children that they want to maintain a close relationship with them, as all the respondents expressed the need for such a relationship.
- It is very important that issues of trust be addressed with the children of homosexual parents and that a parent's homosexuality should not be kept from the children any longer than it needs to, as all three respondents appear to have difficulty in trusting others completely. This difficulty with complete trust might cause children to distance themselves from emotional relationships.
- Homosexual parents need to remain consistent in their role as loving caregivers to their children after disclosure of their homosexuality in an effort to normalise the situation for the children.

- Both the heterosexual and the homosexual parent need to be available to their children and willing to discuss issues regarding homosexuality with them. This seems especially important in light of the fact that the adolescents in the case studies reported often feeling too shy to talk to their homosexual parent about the issue of homosexuality.
- The effects of divorce and of a parent's disclosure of a homosexual identity on a family are often likened to a death of the family unit as reported in the literature. It will help to discuss expected feelings of grief and the stages of grief with children which should occur before positive acceptance of these changes can take place.

(b) Recommendations for teachers

- Children with a homosexual parent often express the felt need to have contact with similar children as they feel that these children will have a better understanding of what it is that they are experiencing. The value of support groups for such children at school and community centres is thus immense. New support groups can easily be started in areas where they do not already exist. It is also important to mention the value of support groups for homosexual parents, such as the OUT-group in Cape Town, in this regard.
- It is vital that teachers are very aware of how a child's negative emotional state might impact on their overall development and that teachers offer a comprehensive support and positive acceptance of children whose parents are in the process of getting divorced or whose parent might have disclosed his or her homosexuality.
- Teachers need to keep a very close watch for discrimination of any kind and be very aware of discrimination against or rejection of a child based on a parent's homosexuality.
- The issue of homosexuality needs to be discussed openly and honestly at school in a non-threatening manner so as to decrease homophobic attitudes as well as discrimination based on sexual orientation.

## **6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

In view of the difficulty that I had in acquiring research participants for this study and especially as regards to lesbian mothers' unwillingness to allow their children to participate for fear of evoking underlying negative and hostile emotions, I think it would be worthwhile to study the experiential world of adolescents with a lesbian mother or with two lesbian parents in particular and to investigate lesbian mothers' apparently higher levels of internalised homophobia. Although the phenomenon of children being born and adopted into gay and lesbian affirmative families is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa, it will be useful to study the experiential world of these children when they reach adolescence and to compare it to the experiential world of adolescents from post-divorce families who have a homosexual parent.

## **6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study was qualitative with a small sample and it is thus not possible to generalise the findings of the study. However, generalisability was not the aim. The study was also limited to adolescents with a non-custodial homosexual father. Due to the difficulty in obtaining adolescent participants with a lesbian parent, these adolescents were excluded.

## **6.7 CONCLUSION**

Despite the Constitution of South Africa's outlawing of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, homophobic attitudes and discrimination against homosexual persons are common in many communities. Homosexual parents express a great concern that their children will be discriminated against and teased or rejected if the fact of their parents' homosexuality were to become known in their communities.

Homosexual and lesbian parents fear that their adolescent children are particularly vulnerable targets for these homophobic attitudes and discriminatory behaviour because of the volatility of the specific developmental phase that they are in. Yet it appears that these children are less affected by their parents' homosexuality or by real levels of discrimination than by the perceived threat of this discrimination. The participants in this study all expressed the fear of expected societal reactions in response to their parents'

homosexuality while none of them had in fact experienced any negative reactions in this regard. It thus seems clear that a lot of work needs to be done to foster tolerance and acceptance of homosexual and lesbian parents in South African communities before these parents' levels of internalised homophobia may be lowered and their adolescent childrens' fears regarding the perceived threat of societal reactions to their parents' homosexuality can be reduced. It is sincerely hoped that this study will be valuable in this regard.

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**Annexure A: Letter of request to parents**

Dear parent

REQUESTING YOUR PERMISSION FOR YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN  
RESEARCH ON ADOLESCENT LEARNERS WITH HOMOSEXUAL PARENTS:

Your permission is hereby requested for your son/daughter to participate in a study regarding how adolescents experience having a homosexual parent. The aim of the research is to try to gain deeper insight and understanding into the experiential world of adolescent learners with homosexual parents.

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby grant  
permission for my son/daughter

\_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the study.

Kindly mark your response with an x:

YES	NO
-----	----

Thank you

G.C. Annandale  
(Intern Educational Psychologist)

## Perceptual development in children 0 – 5 years

Perception: the process where the brain interprets the impulses received from the senses to give meaning to it.

**Development of all the senses is absolutely essential – don't just focus on visual and auditory skills**

**Visual perception:**

- **active process** between the **child and his environment**.
- **different abilities** called **visual perceptual skills**.
- **needs to form concepts of colour, size and shape**.

**Visual perceptual skills develop in a natural sequence:**

Step 1 → the child learns about the concept by using his **body** as reference point

Step 2 → the child learns about the concept on a **3D** level

Step 3 → the child learns about the concept on a **2D** level

**Concept of colour – sequence of development:**

Step 1 → the child becomes aware of colours

Step 2 → the child learns to discriminate between colours

Step 3 → the child learns to identify a specific colour

Step 4 → the child learns to name a specific colour

\* The primary colours (**red**, **blue**, **yellow**) are normally learned first

**Concept of shapes – sequence of development:**

Step 1 → the child witnesses and **becomes aware** of shapes in his environment

Step 2 → the child learns to **recognise** the shape after repeated exposure

Step 3 → the child can **identify** the shape on a **3 dimensional** level

Step 4 → the child can **identify** specific shapes on a **2 dimensional** level

Step 5 → the child can **name** a specific shape on a **3 dimensional** level

Step 6 → the child can **name** a specific shape on a **2 dimensional** level

Step 7 → the child can learn to **copy or draw** different shapes

**Visual figure-ground:**

The ability to focus one's attention on one object or figure (against a complex background) in such a way that the background becomes less important and the figure or object becomes more important.

At a later stage the child will need this skill when he reads to enable him to focus on one sentence at a time. He will perceive the sentence he is reading on the foreground and the other sentences on the background.

## Visual discrimination:

The ability to perceive the similarities and differences between objects, shapes and symbols. Visual discrimination enables one to categorise, match and sort things. The child has to learn to discriminate between colours, position, size and shape.

At school the child will use this skill to discriminate between numbers and letters. E.g. similar words like “land” and “sand”

The amount of differences and similarities will also play a big role. E.g. it is easier to discriminate between a circle and a square than between a circle and an oval.

## Spatial relationships:

Enables the child to orientate his body in relation to other objects, as well as to orientate objects in relation to one another. Important concepts are:

- above
- under
- behind
- in front of
- next to
- on top
- inside
- on

Spatial awareness includes:

- sequence of direction, i.e. moving up, down, to the right, to the left
- sequencing – which refers to the fact that time estimation is very important for any movement in space. When the child is older it will enable him to learn and understand other sequences like the days of the week, months of the year, counting etc.

In mathematics, for example, it is important to write numbers correctly underneath each other and not next to each other:

$\begin{array}{r} 30 \\ + 400 \\ \hline \end{array}$	and not	$\begin{array}{r} 30 \\ + 400 \end{array}$
--	---------	--

This skill also enables children to write sufficiently on a straight line



## Position-in-space

Enables the child to orientate his body or an object in space. E.g. is the object turned upside down etc.

In school the child will need this skill to discriminate between letters like “b” and “d” when he reads and writes.

## Visual closure

The ability to complete a figure, word or sentence which is perceived as incomplete, in order to give it meaning.

The child needs this skill to enable him to identify an object if it is partially hidden behind something else. He will also use this skill to when reading different handwritings.

## Visual constancy

The realisation that an object has traits which don't change, even if the colour, position, size, background or texture changes.

In school he needs this skill to enable him to know that the following symbols all represent the same concept.

a a a   a a a

He will also learn to find a square in a table, sheet of paper, and in a box.

## Visual memory

The ability to memorise information received from the eyes. The child has to develop different aspects of visual memory:

- Short-term memory – memorising visual information for a few seconds or a few hours
- Long-term memory – Memorising visual information for a longer period of time, thus over a period of days/weeks/months
- Visual sequential memory – memorising visual information in the correct order i.e. a telephone number

Memory will be influenced by:

- Detail: it is easier to remember a simple picture than a detailed one
- The amount of information which has to be memorised: it is easier to remember a sequence of three numbers of objects, than a sequence of six

- The time of exposure to the visual stimulation: it is easier to memorise something if one has enough time to look at the visual stimulation than when you only have a few seconds

## Visual motor integration

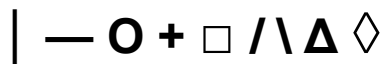
The ability to integrate the muscles of the visual system and the motor skills in order to enable the child to copy pictures or drawings or what people do. Thus, it enables the child to learn from what he sees because he can copy it.

At a later stage this will enable the child to copy what his teacher has written on the blackboard.

The child will learn to copy actions or symbols in the following sequence:

- Step 1 → The ability to copy with one's own body, what other people do.  
 Step 2 → The ability to copy from a 3D level to a 3D level (e.g. build a pattern with blocks and ask him to copy it with his blocks)  
 Step 3 → The ability to copy from a 2D level to a 3D level (e.g. give him a picture of a pattern built with blocks, ask him to copy it with his blocks).  
 Step 4 → The ability to copy from a 2D to a 2D level. (e.g. give him a picture of a square and ask him to copy it on paper).  
 Step 5 → the ability to copy from a 3D to a 2D level (e.g. when you build a pattern with matches and ask him to draw what you built, on paper).

The child will learn to copy lines and geometrical shapes in the following sequence:



The sequence in which the concepts as well as all the visual perceptual skills develop in relation to one another:

The concepts of colour, size and shape develop



The visual perceptual skills develop, i.e. visual figure ground, visual discrimination, spatial concepts, visual closure and visual constancy



**If** the above process as well as the development of the child's motor skills have taken place sufficiently, visual motor integration can take place



Cognition develops, i.e. memory, problem solving, judgement, abstract thinking, self-control, concentration, organisation etc.



The above process will develop further. The child will go to school and learn to use these skills when learning to read and write.

## **Auditory Perception**

Refers to the processing and interpretation of information received by the brain, from the ears. The brain has different abilities which it can use to make sense out of and give meaning to the information it receives from the ears. These abilities are called auditory perceptual skills.

### **Auditory figure ground discrimination:**

Enables one to focus on one sound between a background of other sounds. The child will use this ability to hear his teacher's voice and what she says even when some children next to him make a noise.

### **Auditory discrimination**

The ability to hear similarities and differences between sounds. E.g. words like "bad" and "bat" or "met" and "net".

### **Auditory closure**

Enables the child to complete or add sounds which were not heard, in order to understand what was heard. E.g. when the teacher talks to the child while a truck goes by, he might only hear "Go...and fe...your bo..." Auditory closure enables one to complete the sentence in order to make it understandable: "Go and fetch your book".

### **Auditory spatial awareness**

Enables one to determine the direction from where a sound comes from, thus the source of the sound.

### **Auditory Analysis**

The ability to divide words into syllables as well as sentences into words, i.e. computer = com+pu+ter. This skill is essential for spelling.

### **Auditory synthesis**

The ability to put sounds or words together to make a new word or sentence, i.e. c+a+t=cat. This skill forms the basis for reading.

### **Auditory memory**

The ability to memorise the information received from the ears. The child has to develop different aspects of auditory memory:

- Short term memory: Memorising auditory information for a few seconds or a few hours

- Long term memory: Memorising auditory information for a longer period of time.
- Auditory sequential memory: The child has to be able to hear and remember sounds, words and instructions in the correct sequence. E.g. the mother tells a child: "Go to the bedroom, open the second drawer of the black cupboard, take out my purse and put it on the kitchen table".

#### Universal development of DAP (draw a person)

- under 2 years → Scribbles
- 2-3 years → Controlled scribble
- + - 3 years → Mandala
- 3 – 3 ½ years → Head + arms
- 3 ½ - 4 years → Head-Legging
- 4 – 5 yrs → Various figures (Dismorphic, Hairpin, Head-legging face, Tadpole, Sunshine face)
- 5 years → Better definition and more detail/features
- 6 years → 2 - Dimensional  
(\* See attached)

#### Perceptual development in children birth to 1 year

Age	Vision	Hearing
1 month old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Can follow a moving object with eyes</li> <li>*Can focus eyes on an object a distance away</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Has good sense of hearing, but cannot yet find the direction from where a sound is coming from</li> </ul>
2 month old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Can follow a large, coloured object or a person with his eyes – within his visual field (eyes can follow an object moving up and down as well as sideways)</li> <li>*Eyes can adjust easier to focus on objects further away as well as closer to him</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Shows a reaction to sounds – thus we can see that he hears the sound</li> <li>*Can find the direction where a sound comes from, by turning head in the direction of the sound</li> </ul>
3 month old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Can focus eyes on an object and might stare intently at it</li> <li>*Can follow a moving object with his eyes while turning his head</li> <li>* He can focus from one object to another</li> </ul>	
4 month old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Visual capacity nearly that of an adult (can see very well)</li> <li>*Eyes can focus on an object further away and close by – can perceive the smallest of details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Can hear very well – recognises familiar sounds</li> </ul>
5 month old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Visual memory – can remember a face for about 3 hours</li> </ul>	
6/7/8/9 month old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Has extremely accurate vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Hearing capacity is very good</li> <li>* Recognises voices of familiar people</li> </ul>

10/11/12month old	*Will find an object if he saw where it was put away *Starts to show an interest when mother names pictures and objects		15 months old:
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• B

body awareness: can indicate at least one body part (self/picture/picture) when asked to

- Visual perception: - understands “up” and “down”  
- can “post” appropriate block into a hole of its own size and shape

18 - 24 months:

- Can point to at least 5 basic body parts you ask him to
- Recognises pictures of familiar objects when paging through a book

2 years old:

- Can sort according to colour (if only 2/3 colours)
- Count up to 3
- Knows the difference between “one” and “many”
- Can point to “biggest” and “smallest” object between a choice of two objects
- Can distinguish between “thick” and “thin”
- Can orient himself in relation to another object e.g. behind, next to, under, on top of the chair
- Can complete a 3 – 4 piece puzzle
- Can sort objects (e.g. cats, dogs, birds)

3 years old:

- Knows parts of the face as well as 8 gross parts of the body
- Knows his gender and can differentiate between boys and girls
- Starts to know functions of the body i.e. “I see with my eyes”
- Drawing of a man consists of 4 parts
- Can identify circle, triangle, square
- Starts to **name** colours
- Can count from 1 – 5
- Can count 2 concrete objects
- Knows concepts: biggest, longest, smallest, far away, near by
- Can fit a 3D object with its 2D picture
- Can complete 3 – 10 piece puzzle

4 years old:

- Can know point to most body parts
- Drawing of a man consists of at least 8 parts
- Can also identify oval, star, rectangle, crescent
- Can see the difference between a rectangle and a square

- Can count from 1 – 10
- Can count 3/4 concrete objects
- Can arrange about 7 items from “biggest” to “smallest”
- Can complete a 15-25 piece puzzle

#### 5 years old

- Can **identify** and **name** most body parts
- Can name the position of the different body parts e.g. my nose is above my mouth
- Draws all the basic body parts of a person – detailed picture
- Can also identify cross and diamond
- Should know all the primary and secondary colours as well as white, black and pink
- Can organise shades of the same colour from light to dark
- Can count from 1 – 13
- Can count 10 concrete objects
- Can copy numbers 1-5 on paper
- Can calculate within 5 numbers: “e.g. I have 3 apples and I eat one. How many apples do I have left?”
- Knows most basic opposites
- Can follow instructions where he has to orientate one object in relation to another. E.g. “Put the ball next to the chair”
- Should know address
- Knows days of the week, months of the year
- Can identify small differences between similar objects
- Can play snap
- Can complete 20 – 50 piece puzzle
- Can copy a 3D pattern with blocks and shapes

#### What can go wrong?

#### Autism

#### Problems with

- Reading
- Spelling
- Writing
- Math
- etc

#### The Tactile Defensive child:

- Over-sensitivity to touching different textures
- Caused by too much sensory stimulation reaching the brain due to poor filtering of sensory info
- Might even experience touch as painful

- Overwhelmed by situation

Look out for:

- Children who don't like to be touched
- Don't like people standing behind him/her
- Pushes others away – fights
- Dislikes cleaning activities
- Fussy about clothing or shoes
- Extremely ticklish
- Doesn't walk barefoot
- Dislikes messy play
- Fear of hairdresser or dentist
- Picky eaters
- Overreaction to painful stimuli
- Baby – resists being placed in certain positions, esp. on stomach

Results:

- Can cause or aggravate hyperactive behaviour
- Lack of concentration
- Poor socialisation
- Poor body awareness
- Insufficient development of motor skills
- Poor self-esteem, irritability, aggressive behaviour
- Poor spatial awareness
- Baby → poor bonding with mother → poor eating + sleeping habits, emotional problems

The Tactile Dormant Child:

- Too little sensory stimulation reaches the brain and too low intensity

Look out for:

- Less intense reaction when hurt
- Rougher interaction with people – less sensitive to deep pressure
- Seeking tactile input – clingy

Result:

- Poor body awareness
- Poor pencil grip, pencil control and fine motor coordination
- Poor quality of gross motor skills
- Low muscle tone
- Lack of emotional responses
- Social isolation
- Clumsiness

Gravitational Insecurity:

- Abnormal anxiety and distress caused by inadequate integration or inhibition of sensations received by the brain from the vestibular



system when the child moves in space. Thus the child experiences fear or anxiety during movement or when his feet leave the floor.

Symptoms:

- Anxious when not in contact with the earth
- Avoids moving objects (swings, escalators)
- Doesn't like heights (climbing)
- Motion sickness
- Dislikes rolling activities or somersaults
- Dislikes jumping or moving on raised surfaces
- Clumsiness and poor spatial orientation

Results:

- Could affect muscle tone and balance
- Insufficient bilateral integration and crossing the midline
- Insufficient eye control
- Poor spatial awareness
- Behaviour problems
- Social withdrawal
- May be related to hyperactive behaviour

Neophobia (Fussy eaters):

- A reluctance to be adventurous or try new foods
- Might indicate tactile defensiveness or oral defensiveness
- Can cause children to favour foods with a particular consistency, avoid certain foods, gag on others

Do:

- give small portions
- try finger food
- lead by example
- be flexible

Don't:

- deny sweets
- withhold food as punishment
- use sweets as reward
- force-feed

**Recipes – see attached**